Course Description:
This graduate seminar will examine what pragmatism has to offer those engaged in the study of rhetoric. The classical pragmatists often praised communication and community, but they seemed to leave it up to us to produce detailed pragmatic views of rhetorical theory and criticism. We will examine the thought of the classical pragmatists in an attempt to figure out what pragmatism would mean for theories of rhetoric and communication, ideal senses of community, the art of rhetoric, as well as method in the study of rhetoric. Here the thought of Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey will assume particular prominence. Additionally, we will look at the work of some contemporary pragmatists, in communication studies and beyond, to see how they engage issues in rhetoric and communication.

Students will be expected to emerge from this course with a grasp of the basic problematics driving classical and modern pragmatism, as well as how these relate to issues in rhetoric and communication studies. Students will produce an academic research paper at the end of this course instantiating the skills necessary for rigorous argumentation and independent research.

Required Texts:


John Dewey, Art as Experience, Perigee Trade, 2005, AE.


Robert Danisch, Pragmatism, Democracy, and the Necessity of Rhetoric, University of South Carolina Press, 2007, PNR.
Assignments:

- Participation: 15%
- Reading Response Papers: 25%
- Discussion Presentation: 10%
- Research Paper Proposal: 5%
- Research Paper: 45%

Grading:

- 93-100% = A
- 87-89% = B+
- 77-79% = C+
- 67-69% = D+
- 59 and below = F
- 90-92% = A-
- 83-86% = B
- 73-76% = C
- 63-66% = D
- 60-62% = D-

Assignment Descriptions:

This class is a seminar. As such, I expect you to listen attentively while I discuss certain points and to engage in productive, on-topic comments while we are discussing various issues and readings. Come to class having done the reading and ready to talk about what you understand and what you don’t. My observations of your role in the classroom community will constitute your participation grade.

For each class session (save our first meeting), please prepare a reading response paper. These should be 1-2 pages in length (12 pt font, double-spaced, 1” margins, with just your name at the top). I will not prepare discussion questions in advance of each class. Instead, I want you to begin to sense the important issues and moves in each piece on your own. Your response paper can be your critical response to any part of the assigned reading(s) for that class. Another way to think of these would be as chances to connect a topic in the reading to some issue in rhetorical theory or practice. I will evaluate these papers based upon their engagement with substantive points in the reading, as well as the depth of critical thought displayed (albeit for a paper of this length). What we don’t want to do on these papers, say, is to link James’ essay to something you witnessed on our family vacation, to write about our emotional reaction to his point, etc. Argue something. You argue something, don’t burn up all your space by throwing quotations or airy introductions in there. Try to argue something interesting or important. Also, keep the sort of formal voice you would have in an academic piece—these are not article length pieces, but the sort of critical thinking and argument should be of the same cloth.

Over the course of the semester, each student will be a “discussion leader” for one session. There will be (at most) one student discussion leader per section. For that week, this student will not need to prepare a reading response paper. Instead, they will lead a 45 minute discussion presentation. You will choose some subset of the assigned readings for that day, present thoughts on it, and lead a discussion about it. This will involve you presenting some main points of the reading(s) and then critically analyzing them. If you want to link the reading(s) in question to larger concerns in rhetoric or to other class readings, that is fine. Also be prepared to stimulate class discussion for a while. We will start the process of picking days for presentations in the first class session.

Each student will write a research paper (15-25 pages) dealing with a significant issue involving pragmatism and rhetoric. This paper must include research outside of assigned course materials and
must involve critical reflection and argument. You must inform me (in a 1-2 page document) of your proposed topic for feedback on its suitability. This is your chance to link discussed ideas in pragmatism to your own areas of study in rhetoric or to expand on something that only received a bit of treatment in the course. More details concerning this paper will follow in class. It would be a good idea to share drafts of your paper with your classmates to get their feedback on it, although I will not require this. Ideally, your final paper should be ready for submission to a regional or national conference in communication studies. To help reach this goal, each student will briefly (7-10 minutes) present their paper on our final meeting (probably during final exam week). Your completed research paper will be due May 14 by 5pm.

Notes to Syllabus:
- Due dates: assignments must meet the due dates or be subject to a 20% penalty if turned in within a week (after that, a zero must be recorded).
- The university policy on plagiarism will be strictly enforced. Using the text or ideas of someone else in your papers or presentations without clearly citing them is the stealing of those words or ideas, and significant cases will result in an “F” for the course (less significant cases will result in an “F” on the assignment). Using written work you prepared for other courses is also not allowed. As graduate students, I expect that none of you will resort to cheating on papers or presentations in this course.

Disability Statement:
Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed.

Blackboard:
This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. Blackboard is available at http://courses.utexas.edu. I will use Blackboard to distribute handouts, as well as to post any additional information or comments. Also, I encourage you to post questions or comments on the “discussion board” part of Blackboard. This can only be read by students in this class and it can count as “participation” to some extent if you sign your comments (anonymous posts can’t be linked to a student name, obviously). I’ll try to respond to these comments and questions in a timely manner.
**Course Calendar**
The listed readings are subject to change with adequate notice.

(1) **January 25  Pragmatism and Charles S. Peirce on Communication**


(2) **February 1  William James on Pragmatism, Truth, and Rhetoric**


(3) **February 8  William James on Habit, Consciousness, and Radical Empiricism**


(4) February 15 William James on the Ideal, Orientation, and Ethics


William James, “The Gospel of Relaxation,” Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Life's Ideals, 1899.


(5) February 22 John Dewey on Experience, Value, and Activity


(6) March 1 John Dewey’s Concepts of Inquiry, Reflective Thinking, and Habit

John Dewey, “Analysis of Reflective Thinking,” How We Think, 1933, ED2 137-144.


(7) March 8   **John Dewey on Inquiry, Community, and the Public**


March 15 – Spring Break – No Class – Be Pragmatic

(8) March 22   **John Dewey on Art and Aesthetic Experience**


(9) March 29  John Dewey and the Art of Communication


(10) April 5  Richard Rorty, Neopragmatism, and Rhetoric


(11) April 12  Pragmatism, Meliorism, and Rhetoric


**Research paper proposal due by Thursday, April 15th at 5pm via email**

(12) April 19  **Kenneth Burke and Pragmatism**


(13) April 26  **Pragmatism, Criticism, and Rhetoric**


Scott R. Stroud, “John Dewey and the Question of Artful Criticism.”


(14) May 3  Pragmatism and Interpretation


(15) May ______ Research Presentations

**Final Papers due May 14 by 5pm in my mailbox (CMA 7.114)**