

ICS Calendar Title: Pragmatism and Religion: Rorty and Stout
ICS Course Code: ICS 1522/2522 F08
Instructor: Dr. Ronald A. Kuipers
Term and Year: Fall 2008, Tuesdays 1:30-4:30 PM
Last updated: September 17, 2008

Pragmatism and Religion: Rorty and Stout

1. Course Description

This course will explore a number of questions regarding the mutual influence between the philosophical movement known as pragmatism and the religious traditions that form part of its historical context: How do the passions and commitments of pragmatism relate to religious concerns? How does the pragmatic tenet that the meaning and worth of ideas lies in their practical consequences comport with religious forms of life and the understandings of morality they fund? How might its suspicion regarding traditional "supernaturalist" theologies affect the way we wish to think about religion, God, and our place in the world? What have pragmatists suggested are the best ways for religious groups to comport themselves in a democratic society? Finally, how does pragmatism's emphasis on futurity and experimental flexibility fit with the religious concern to carry forward and pass along an age-old tradition? In exploring various pragmatists' answers to these questions, this course will explore the potential resources that this philosophical tradition might offer to our contemporary understanding of religious life patterns. In addition to exploring the insights of such "classical" pragmatists as Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, this course will also focus on the work of such contemporary pragmatists as Richard Rorty, Jeffrey Stout, and Roberto Unger.

2. Class Schedule

<p>Week 1 Sept. 9</p> <p>19 pp.</p>	<p><i>Introduction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuart Rosenbaum, "Introduction" (Rosenbaum 1-12, in class) • John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (Rosenbaum 21-33, in class) • Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (Rosenbaum 24-27, in class)
<p>Week 2 Sept. 16</p> <p>64 pp.</p>	<p><i>Roberto Unger, The Self Awakened I.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction: The Philosophy of the Age" (Unger 1-2) • Chapter 1: "Rejected Options" (Unger 3-9) • Chapter 2: "The Perennial Philosophy and its Enemy" (Unger 10-25) • Chapter 3: "Pragmatism Reclaimed" (Unger 26-51) • Chapter 4: "The Core Conception" (Unger 52-64)
<p>Week 3 Sept. 23</p> <p>61 pp.</p>	<p><i>Roberto Unger, The Self Awakened II</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5: "Time and Experience" (Unger 65-80) • Chapter 6: "The Reality of Time" (Unger 80-110) • Chapter 7a: "Self Consciousness" (Unger 111-126)
<p>Week 4 Sept. 30</p>	<p><i>Roberto Unger, The Self Awakened III</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7b: "Self Consciousness" (Unger 126-144)

69 pp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 8: "What Then Should We Do?" (Unger 145-170) • Chapter 9: "Society: the Perpetual Invention of the Future" (Unger 171-181) • Chapter 10: "Politics: Democracy as Anti-Fate" (Unger 182-195)
Week 5 Oct. 7 60 pp.	<p><i>Roberto Unger, The Self Awakened IV</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 11: "A Moment of Reform: the Reinvention of Social Democracy" (Unger 196-207) • Chapter 12: "Religion: the Self Awakened" (Unger 208-229) • Chapter 13: "Philosophy: Beyond Superscience and Self-Help" (Unger 230-237) • "First Digression: Nature In Its Place" (Unger 239-242) • "Second Digression: the Universal Grid of Philosophy" (Unger 243-256)
Week 6 Oct. 14 64 pp.	<p><i>Classical Sources I: Thoreau, Emerson, Peirce</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry David Thoreau, "Walking" (Rosenbaum 28-39) • Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles" (Rosenbaum 40-49) • Charles Sanders Peirce, "Evolutionary Love" (Rosenbaum 50-65) • Robert Cummings Neville, "A Peircean Theory of Religious Interpretation" (Rosenbaum 277-302)
Oct. 20-25	Reading Week
Week 7 Oct. 28 *Paper outline due 86 pp.	<p><i>Classical Sources II: William James</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Philosophy" (Rosenbaum 66-84; or <i>Varieties</i> 469-498) • "Conclusion" (<i>Varieties</i> 528-564, on reserve) • "The Will to Believe" (James 1956 1-31, on reserve)
Week 8 Nov. 4 75 pp.	<p><i>Classical Sources III: John Dewey</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Christianity and Democracy" (Dewey 1971 3-10, on reserve) • "The Relation of Philosophy to Theology" (Dewey 1971 365-68, on reserve) • "Creative Democracy: the Task Before Us" (Rosenbaum 91-96) • "Religion Versus the Religious" (<i>A Common Faith</i> 1-28, on reserve) • "Faith and its Object" (<i>A Common Faith</i> 29-57, on reserve)
Week 9 Nov. 11 71 pp.	<p><i>Neo-Pragmatism and Religion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John J. McDermott, "The Aesthetic Drama of the Ordinary" (Rosenbaum 107-117) • Richard J. Bernstein, "Pragmatism's Common Faith" (Rosenbaum 129-141) • Douglas R. Anderson, "Awakening in the Everyday: Experiencing the Religious in the American Philosophical Tradition" (Rosenbaum 142-52) • Sandra B. Rosenthal, "Spirituality and the Spirit of American Pragmatism: Beyond the Theism-Atheism Split" (Rosenbaum 229-242) • Nancy K. Frankenberry, "Pragmatism, Truth, and the Disenchantment of

	Subjectivity" (Rosenbaum 243-264)
Week 10 Nov. 18 68 pp.	<i>Richard Rorty I</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids" (Rorty 1999 3-20) • "Pragmatism without Method" (Rorty 1991 63-77) • "Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility, and Romance" (Rorty 1999 148-67) • "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism" (Rorty 2007a 27-41)
Week 11 Nov. 25 67 pp.	<i>Richard Rorty II</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Looking Back from the Year 2096" (Rorty 1999 243-251) • "Religion as Conversation Stopper" (Rorty 1999 168-74) • "Religion in the Public Square: a Reconsideration" (Rorty 2003 141-49) • "Anti-Clericalism and Atheism (Rorty and Vattimo 2005 29-41) • Richard Rorty, Gianni Vattimo, and Santiago Zabala "What is Religion's Future after Metaphysics?" (Rorty and Vattimo 2005 55-81) • "The Fire of Life" (Rorty 2007b 129-131)
Week 12: Dec. 2 67 pp.	<i>Jeffrey Stout, Democracy and Tradition, I</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction" (Stout 1-15) • Chapter 1: "Character and Piety from Emerson to Dewey" (Stout 19-41) • Chapter 3: "Religious Reasons in Political Argument" (Stout 63-91)
Week 13: Dec. 9 72 pp.	<i>Jeffrey Stout, Democracy and Tradition II</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4: "Secularization and Resentment" (Stout 92-117) • Chapter 6: "Virtue and the Way of the World" (Stout 140-161) • Chapter 11: "Ethics without Metaphysics" (Stout 246-269)

3. Course requirements:

Total reading: 1250 pages, including research for paper, of which approximately 55-70 pages per week is required to prepare for class.

In-seminar leadership: Two presentations: one presentation A; one presentation B. Presentation A is intended to be more exegetical, presentation B more exploratory.

Presentation A: Assigned reading discussion generator, taking the following format:

1. The presentation leads off with a 'pressing question' that the assigned reading raises for the student. This question might be pressing for intellectual, but also existential and religious reasons.
2. Identify and transcribe the *particular* location(s) in the text where this question emerges.
3. Provide a *close reading* of that limited portion of text. This close reading should take the form of a line-by-line analysis of the selected text, and include a suggested interpretation *and* explanation of the reasons that portion of text raises the question it does. This interpretation may in turn radiate out from that selection and touch on other parts of the assigned text, but *complete coverage is neither required nor requested.*

4. (optional). Suggest further questions for discussion that may have arisen in the course of dealing with the initial pressing question.

Presentation B: Truth and Consequences: Testing the Value of Pragmatic Tenets in the light of Religious Concerns (as defined by you):

Pragmatic philosophy pursues and encourages a radical rethinking of traditional Western understandings of, among other things, humanity, society, the world, transcendence, time, and action. More particularly, its emphasis on practical consequences as a yardstick for determining the meaning, worth, and truth of ideas encourages an experimental flexibility and openness with regard to the future, emphasizing thoughtful action over passive contemplation. This pragmatic emphasis on futurity tends to be suspicious of any notion that humanity owes a debt to the past, considering such notions to constitute mainly a conservative roadblock to the urgent human need (and ability) to experiment with changing habitual modes of being for the sake of improving the human situation.

1. In this assignment, you will compare the religious interest in maintaining “memorial” continuity with a traditioned past against the pragmatic suspicion of conservatism, religious or otherwise. To focus the discussion, select a particular public debate currently underway in which radical changes to human ways of existing are being contemplated. Current discussions around the possibilities and dangers of such things as reprogenetic technology, genetically modified food, nano-technology, end of life care, etc., provide some examples. Bring a newspaper or magazine clipping on the issue to read in class.
2. Introduce the debate, explaining the nature and potential of the change being contemplated, and describe the salient and controversial issues it raises
3. Initiate a discussion that explores how both pragmatists and religious folk (not necessarily mutually exclusive categories) might insert themselves into the debate. What concerns or emphases would they share? Where would you see them disagreeing? Why? What are the benefits and pitfalls of pragmatism, as you understand it, when it comes to discussing the issues raised? What are the benefits and pitfalls of the religious voices you imagine inserting themselves into the debate (or the benefits and pitfalls of actual religious voices that have so inserted themselves)? What concerns does a religious camp tend to ignore that it shouldn't? What concerns do you think a pragmatist position is likely to ignore that it shouldn't? How would you insert yourself into the debate, if you could?
4. Conclude your presentation with question that open up further discussion of your issue in relation to pragmatist and religious concerns.

Course paper: One course paper whose theme arises from in-class reading and discussion. Length: Master's: 3000–5000 words; Doctoral: 5000–7000 words. *A substantive outline*, including tentative thesis statement (50-100 words), outline, and proposed extra reading is *due on Oct. 28, 2008*. *The paper* is *due on Jan. 26, 2009*.

4. Description and weighting of elements to be evaluated:

Class Participation 10%; *Seminar Presentations:* 30%; *Paper:* 60%.

5. Required Readings

- Dewey, John. 1971. *The Early Works of John Dewey: Volume 4*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B945 .D4 1967 v.4]
- _____. 1934. *A Common Faith*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL48 .D4 c.2)
- James, William. 1956. *The Will to Believe: Human Immortality and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York: Dover: 1-31. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B945 .J23 W5 1960]
- _____. 1994. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a Study in Human Nature*. New York: Random House. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR110 .J3 1911 ed and BR110 .J3 2002]
- Rorty, Richard. 1991. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B945 .R52 1991 v.1]
- _____. 1999. *Philosophy and Social Hope*. New York: Penguin. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B945 .R52 1999]
- _____. 2003. Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration. In *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31/1: 141-49. (On reserve in ICS library.)
- _____. 2007a. *Philosophy as Cultural Politics: Philosophical Papers, Volume 4*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B945 .R52 1991 v.4]

- _____. 2007b. The Fire of Life. In *Poetry* 191/2: 129-131. (On reserve in ICS library.)
- Rorty, Richard, and Gianni Vattimo. 2005. *The Future of Religion*. New York: Columbia. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL48 .R54 2005]
- Rosenbaum, Stuart, ed. 2003. *Pragmatism and Religion: Classical Sources and Original Essays*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL51 .P725 2003 ; ROBA: BL51 .P725 2003]
- Stout, Jeffrey. 2004. *Democracy and Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 368 pp. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL2525 .S76 2004]
- Unger, Roberto. 2007. *The Self Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B832 .U55 2007; ROBA: B832 .U55 2007X]

6. Recommended Readings

- Allen, Barry. 2004a. What Knowledge? What Hope? What New Pragmatism? In *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy: Contemporary Engagements between Analytic and Continental Thought*. Ed. William Egginton and Mike Sandbothe. Albany: SUNY Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B832 .P7525 2004]
- Anderson, Victor. 1998. *Pragmatic Theology: Negotiating the Intersection of an American Philosophy of Religion and Public Theology*. Albany: SUNY Press. [ICS Library: ON ORDER]
- Brandom, Robert, ed. 2000. *Rorty and his Critics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. [ICS Library: B945 .R524 R66 2000]
- Clebsch, William A. 1973. *American Religious Thought: A History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [ROBA: BR515 .C54]
- Frankenberry, Nancy, ed. 2002. *Radical Interpretation in Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [SMC: BL21 .R33 2002]
- Gross, Neil. 2008. *Richard Rorty: the Making of an American Philosopher*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [ROBA: B945 .R524 G76 2008X]
- Guen Hart, Carroll. *Grounding without Foundations: a Conversation Between John Dewey and Richard Rorty to Ascertain Their Kinship*. Toronto: Patmos. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B936 .G8 c.2]
- Gutting, Gary. 1999. *Pragmatic Liberalism and the Critique of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B833 .G88 1999X]
- Hadwick, Charley D. and Donald A. Crosby, eds. 1997. *Pragmatism, Neo-Pragmatism, and Religion: Conversations with Richard Rorty*. New York: Peter Lang. [ICS Library: B832 .P765 1997]
- Hart, Hendrik. 2000. Consequences of Liberalism: Ideological Domination in Rorty's Public/Private Split. In *Towards an Ethics of Community: Negotiations of Difference in a Pluralist Society*. Ed. James H. Olthuis. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press: 37-50. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD394 .T68 2000]
- Kloppenber, James. 1998. *The Virtues of Liberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press. [ROBA: JC574.2 .U6 K58 1998X]
- Kuipers, Ronald A. 1997. *Solidarity and the Stranger: Themes in the Social Philosophy of Richard Rorty*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM216 .K85]
- _____. 2006. Stout's Democracy without Secularism: But is it a Tradition? In *Contemporary Pragmatism* 3/1: 85-104. [ICS Library: PER]
- Kuklick, Bruce. 1985. *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press [ROBA: BT30 .U6 K85 1985]
- Mouffe, Chantal, ed. 1996. *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*. London: Routledge. [ICS Library: ON ORDER]
- Rockefeller, Steven. 1991. *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism*. New York: Columbia University Press. [ROBA: B945 .D44 R57 1991]
- Rothleder, Dianne. 1999. *The Work of Friendship: Rorty, His Critics, and the Project of Solidarity*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B945 .R524 R68 1999]
- Seigfried, Charlene Haddock. 1996. *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B832 .S45 1996]
- Taylor, Charles. 2002. *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL53 .J363 T39 2002X]
- West, Cornel. 1993. The Historicist Turn in Philosophy of Religion. In *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*. New York: Routledge: 119-134. [ROBA: E185.615 .W427 1993]
- _____. 1989. Prophetic Pragmatism: Cultural Criticism and Political Engagement. In *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press: 211-239. [ICS Library: ON ORDER]
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. 2003. An Engagement with Rorty. In *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31/1: 129-39.