



PHL 359

Pragmatism

S2 External 2014

Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Albert Atkin

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Contact via albert.atkin@mq.edu.au

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

39cp or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

The pragmatist tradition is an influential philosophical movement that emerged in the United States of America during the late nineteenth century. The unit explores some of the writings of three classical pragmatists – Charles S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey – along with contemporary pragmatists such as Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam and Robert Brandom. The unit focuses on pragmatist ideas about truth and objectivity, including James's claim that the true is what it is satisfactory to believe and Peirce's claim that the truth is what we are destined to believe in the long run. As well as looking at James's view that it can be rational for our beliefs to be shaped by non-evidential considerations such as the passions, we shall consider the claim of modern pragmatists that values have a fundamental role in shaping our understanding of the facts.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement

Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement

Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history

Explore wider applications of pragmatism

Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
1. Diagnostic Reflection One	5%	Week 2
2. Diagnostic Reflection Two	5%	Week 12
3. Reading Sheets	30%	On-going
4. Philosophical Paper	40%	Week Twelve
5. Participation	20%	Ongoing

1. Diagnostic Reflection One

Due: **Week 2**

Weighting: **5%**

A short reflection giving the student and lecturer a sense of where their understanding is at the start of the course.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

2. Diagnostic Reflection Two

Due: **Week 12**

Weighting: **5%**

A short reflection giving the student and lecturer a sense of where their understanding is at the end of the course.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

3. Reading Sheets

Due: **On-going**

Weighting: **30%**

This is a formative assessment *for* learning. Students will submit weekly reading sheets answering questions on the papers allocated for each topic. The best six papers will constitute the students mark. Students may submit as many as they please (e.g. all twelve and take the six best, just six and take all six marks, none and receive nothing).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

4. Philosophical Paper

Due: **Week Twelve**

Weighting: **40%**

A long paper or project (word limits minimum of 2000 – upper limits to be agreed with convenor) taking the form of either (a) a standard essay; or (b) an application of pragmatist ideas to some previously studied philosophical or academic topic; or (c) an application and exploration of pragmatist themes and ideas in a non-academic setting.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

5. Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **20%**

Taking part in discussion and analysis (either in seminar or on-line) of the assigned papers each week will be a significant part of the assessment for the course.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history

- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Delivery and Resources

The class will consist of two lectures and a tutorial. It is expected, however, that the lectures will be closer to a seminar style with lots of discussion.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)

- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism

Assessment tasks

- 1. Diagnostic Reflection One
- 2. Diagnostic Reflection Two
- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper
- 5. Participation

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally

and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Assessment tasks

- 1. Diagnostic Reflection One
- 2. Diagnostic Reflection Two
- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper
- 5. Participation

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Assessment tasks

- 2. Diagnostic Reflection Two
- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper
- 5. Participation

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
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Assessment tasks

- 1. Diagnostic Reflection One
- 2. Diagnostic Reflection Two
- 3. Reading Sheets
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- 5. Participation

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the central themes of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Assessment tasks

- 1. Diagnostic Reflection One

- 2. Diagnostic Reflection Two
- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper
- 5. Participation

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Assessment tasks

- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the key claims of the key figures of the pragmatism movement
- Understand the development of the pragmatist movement across its history
- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Assessment tasks

- 1. Diagnostic Reflection One
- 2. Diagnostic Reflection Two
- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper
- 5. Participation

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Explore wider applications of pragmatism
- Engage in philosophically active reading and discussion

Assessment tasks

- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper
- 5. Participation

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Explore wider applications of pragmatism

Assessment tasks

- 3. Reading Sheets
- 4. Philosophical Paper