

UWG PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM

PHIL 3120 sec. 01-W
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY (3 hours)
Spring Semester 2015
MW 2-3:30pm
Prerequisites: PHIL 2010 or permission of instructor
Classroom: Humanities 205
Web site: <http://www.westga.edu/~rlane/american>
Email: rlane@westga.edu*

Instructor: **Dr. Robert Lane**, TLC 2247
Office Hours:
M: 9-9:45am; 11am-1:45pm; 3:30-4pm
W: 9-9:45am; 11am-12pm; 1-1:45pm; 3:30-4pm
F: 8:45-9:45am; 11am-1pm
and by appointment
My office telephone: (678) 839-4745
English/Philosophy telephone: (678) 839-6512

***All email communication must be conducted from your official UWG email account. Students are obligated to check their UWG email accounts on a regular basis and to ensure that their mailboxes do not become full.**

UWG Severe Weather Policy: http://www.westga.edu/police/index_2277.php

This is a **Discipline Specific Writing (DSW)** course, fulfilling one of two DSW requirements for the College of Arts and Humanities. All DSW courses require that students write a minimum of 4,000 words across multiple assignments, not including revisions. There will be multiple written assignments that will be evaluated for subject matter, grammar, punctuation, spelling, thoroughness, and organization, among other things.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: What is truth? What is the best way for me to form beliefs about the world? Is absolute certainty possible, or must we be satisfied with beliefs that are not certain? What is philosophy, and what is its relationship with science? This course tackles those questions and others by examining how they were treated by the thinkers who founded pragmatism, America's distinctive philosophical tradition. In particular, we will study the works of three classical American pragmatists: Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. We will also study the ideas of the neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the semester, each student will be able to explain and critically discuss the following:

- Peirce's criticism of Cartesianism; his views on belief, truth and reality, including his account of various methods of "fixing" belief; his Pragmatic Maxim; and his pragmatic accounts of truth and reality.
 - James's distinction between the tough- and tender-minded temperaments in philosophy; his Pragmatic Method; and his pragmatic view of truth.
 - Dewey's pragmatic theories of knowledge and truth.
 - Rorty's so-called "vulgar pragmatism," including his views on epistemology and metaphysics.
- These course-specific learning outcomes contribute to the departmental learning outcomes of the Philosophy Program by enabling students better to
- discuss the general historical development of the discipline of philosophy, including the views of at least three major historical figures of philosophy;
 - incorporate a philosophical position in oral and written communications;
 - critically outline and analyze philosophical issues;
 - exhibit critical thinking skills.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION: The typical class session will consist of about 75% lecture and 25% class discussion. Lectures are intended to elucidate and provide supplementary information relevant to the reading assignments and to form the basis for a vigorous class discussion of the arguments and theories at hand. Reading assignments will be made on a regular basis. In order to benefit fully from lectures and to participate meaningfully in class discussion, **it is a must** that you do the reading when it is assigned.

READING:

- *Pragmatism, Old and New*, ed. Susan Haack, Prometheus Books, 2006 (\$32). [required]
- Online lecture notes (after most class meetings, I will post my own lecture notes for that day on the class web site; you should read and study these notes on a regular basis).

TIME REQUIREMENTS: UWG grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of (approximately) one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For this three credit-hour course, **students are required to spend (approximately) three hours (160 minutes) in class each week and to conduct at least an additional 6 hours of work relevant to this course outside of class each week.** You should expect to work more hours than this outside of class during periods when you are preparing for an exam.

EVALUATION:

- **Mid-term examination (20%).** Essays and short answer questions.
- **Comprehensive final examination (30%).** Essays and short answer questions. This will cover nearly all of the material we will consider throughout the entire semester.
- **Response papers (20%).** Minimum length: 1,300 words per response paper. See "Instructions for Writing Response Papers" on the class web site.
- **Term paper (30%).** Minimum length: 2,000 words. See "Writing a Philosophy Paper" and "Term Paper Instructions" on the class website.
- **Class participation does not contribute to your final grade in any fixed way, but I will consider giving borderline students the next highest grade if their in-class questions and contributions to class discussions warrant my doing so.**
- **GRADING SCALE:**
 - A 100 – 90.1%
 - B 90.0 – 80.1%
 - C 80.0 – 70.1%
 - D 70.0 – 60.1%
 - F 60.0 - 0%
- I am prohibited by UWG rules from disclosing your grades via email, even to your UWG email address. Your grades in this class will be posted in CourseDen as soon as they are available.

MISSED TESTS / EXTRA CREDIT:

- If you know that you will need to miss class on a day on which a test is scheduled (for example, due to a UWG sponsored event), you must let me know about your absence as far in advance as possible so that we can schedule another day and time for you to take the test (or a make-up test). If you miss a test without receiving my explicit permission beforehand and making arrangements for a make-up test, you will be permitted to take a make-up test if and only if one of the following conditions applies: (a) Your absence was due to illness or injury serious enough to require professional medical care and which prevented you from contacting me before the test; or (b) Your absence was due to other extenuating circumstances beyond your control. I will determine on a case-by-case basis what constitutes "extenuating circumstances beyond your control." You may be required to provide documentation pertaining to your absence before you are allowed to take a make-up test. **Make-up tests will usually be longer and potentially more difficult than the original test that you missed.**
- **Extra-credit work will not be given under any circumstances. Work completed for other courses will not be accepted in this course.**

ATTENDANCE, LATE ARRIVAL, EARLY DEPARTURE

- **You may miss four class meetings (two weeks of class) with no effect on your grade. Beginning with your fifth absence, you will lose five points from your final average for every class meeting you miss.** This policy applies to the first week of class, even for days on which you have not yet registered for the class. I will make exceptions for absences necessitated by UWG-sponsored events or by other circumstances that were absolutely outside your control. However, I will make these exceptions **only if ALL of your absences can be accounted for in one of these ways** (e.g., if you miss five classes and you have documented, acceptable reasons for missing only four classes, then your fifth absence will still count against you). Documentation will be required in all cases in which I make an exception to this attendance policy.
- **Students who miss 8 class meetings (four weeks, or one month, worth of classes) or more will not earn a passing grade in this course.** In this case the reason for your absences is irrelevant. If you are unable to attend class for a month due to medical reasons, a family emergency, or any other reason, you should withdraw from the course; if the withdrawal date has passed, you should apply for a hardship withdrawal.

- An early departure or late arrival may be counted as an absence, depending on the circumstances. I will decide in each case whether an early departure or a late arrival counts as an absence. If you know before class that you will not be able to stay for the entire class session, please inform me of this before class and sit as close to the door as possible, so as to cause as small a distraction as possible when you leave.
- **From the *UWG Undergraduate Catalog*:**
 - “Instruction begins the first day of class. In face-to-face courses, if students fail to attend the first day and have not contacted the instructor to explain their absence, they may be dropped during the Drop/Add Period to make room for other students.”
 - “Class attendance policies are determined by each instructor for his or her courses and may be found in the syllabus. Since course policies differ, students are responsible for understanding attendance requirements for each course. Failure to comply with those requirements may significantly affect grades.”
 - **“Students are expected to attend each class meeting.** Students absent from class while officially representing the University or observing religious holidays should generally not be penalized in the calculation of final grades, as long as they provide advance notice and expeditiously make arrangements to complete any missed work.
 - “University-sponsored activities include but are not limited to the following: intercollegiate athletic competitions; musical/theatrical/art performances or exhibitions associated with a degree program; debate competitions; and research conferences. Activities not considered to be university-sponsored include participation in clubs, even if they are affiliated with UWG, or events associated with social organizations such as fraternities or sororities.
 - “Regardless of the reason for the absence, each student is responsible for the material covered in class, for completing any assignments, and for making specific arrangements with the instructor for any work missed. The degree to which missed work can be made up will depend upon the nature of the work and its intended purpose. Make-up is at the discretion of the instructor.
 - “Any student who must be absent for more than one week of class should notify the Patient Advocates in Health Services, telephone 678-839-6452. The student should also notify the instructor or department.”

COMMON COURTESY

- **You may use laptops and tablets during class only for class-related purposes, e.g., taking notes and consulting online lecture notes. No other use of electronic devices in class is permitted. Smartphones must be turned off and put away before class begins.**
- **Do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely essential that you do so.** Leaving the classroom while class is in session (e.g., to visit the restroom) is both disrespectful and distracting. So when you come to class, be prepared to remain in the classroom for the full duration of the class period.
- **Do not study material from other classes while this class is in session.** While you are in this class, I expect your attention to be focused on it rather than on your other courses.
- **Students may be dismissed from any class meeting at which they exhibit behavior that disrupts the learning environment of others.** Such behavior includes – but is not limited to – arriving late for class, allowing cell phones to ring, speaking disrespectfully to the instructor and/or to other students, and using personal audio or visual devices. **Each dismissal of this kind will count as an absence and will be applied toward the attendance policy above.**

CONVERSION TO HONORS CREDIT

- Any student wishing to receive honors credit for this course must get the approval of the professor and complete all the necessary paperwork during **the first week of class**. No honors forms will be signed after this point.

Please carefully review the following information at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/UWGSyllabusPolicies>. It contains important material pertaining to your rights and responsibilities in this class. Because these statements are updated as federal, state, and accreditation standards change, you should review the information each semester. Topic covered include: **The Americans with Disabilities Act; UWG’s Email Policy; UWG’s Credit Hour Policy; and UWG’s Honor Code.**

COURSE SCHEDULE. THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE IS **TENTATIVE** AND MAY CHANGE AS THE SEMESTER PROGRESSES. THIS INCLUDES TEST DATES AND DUE DATES FOR PAPERS, WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. I will maintain an up-to-date version of the course schedule on the class web site. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with test dates, due dates, and reading assignments, either by checking the class web site or contacting me directly. All readings are from Haack, *Pragmatism, Old and New*.

Jan.	Topic	reading due	tests / papers due
M 5	Introduction to Pragmatism	--	
W 7	Peirce: Anti-Cartesianism	"Some Consequences..." (69-72)	
M 12	Peirce: Anti-Cartesianism	"Some Consequences..." (69-72)	
W 14	Peirce: Belief, Doubt and Inquiry	"The Fixation of Belief" (107-15)	
M 19	MLK HOLIDAY: NO CLASSES		
W 21	Peirce: Methods of Fixing Belief	"The Fixation of Belief" (115-23)	Response Paper #1
M 26	Peirce: The Scientific Method & Realism	"The Fixation of Belief" (123-26)	
W 28	Peirce: The Pragmatic Maxim	"How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (127-44)	

Feb.	Topic	reading due	tests / papers due
M 2	Peirce: The Pragmatic Maxim	"How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (144-50)	Response Paper #2
W 4	James: Two Philosophical Temperaments	"The Present Dilemma..." (273-280)	
M 9	James: The Pragmatic Method and Pragmatic Theism	"What Pragmatism Means" (289-308)	
W 11	James: Truth and Knowledge	"Pragmatism's Conception of Truth" (309-15)	Response Paper #3
M 16	James: Truth and Knowledge	"Pragmatism's Conception of Truth" (315-28)	
W 18	THIS CLASS DOES NOT MEET; DR. LANE IS ATTENDING A CONFERENCE		
M 23	Catch-up / review for test #1		
W 25	--	--	TEST 1

March	Topic	reading due	tests / papers due
M 2	Discussion of term paper assignment. Introduction to Dewey	--	
W 4	Dewey: Knowledge	"The Quest for Certainty" (379-84)	
M 9	Dewey: Knowledge	"The Quest for Certainty" (384-94)	Response Paper #4
W 11	Dewey: Truth	"Truth and Consequences" (341-52)	
M 16	SPRING BREAK: CLASSES DO NOT MEET		
W 18	SPRING BREAK: CLASSES DO NOT MEET		
M 23	Dewey: Truth	"Truth and Consequences" (352-61)	Term Paper Draft
W 25	Rorty's "vulgar pragmatism"	"Pragmatism, Relativism & ..." (635-40)	
M 30	Rorty's "vulgar pragmatism"	"Pragmatism, Relativism & ..." (640-43)	

Apr.	Topic	Reading	tests / papers due
W 1	Rorty's "vulgar pragmatism"	"Pragmatism, Relativism & ..." (643-54)	
M 6	Rorty's "vulgar pragmatism"	"Pragmatism as Anti-..." (657-67)	
W 8	Rorty's "vulgar pragmatism"	"Pragmatism as Anti-..." (667-72)	
M 13	Catch-up / review for final exam	--	
W 15	Course evaluations	--	Term Paper
M 20	FINAL EXAM: Monday April 20, 2-4:30pm		