PRAGMATISM AND SOCIOLOGY

Reading Load: Sociology 915 is a reading-intensive course. The reading load is fairly heavy—150 pp./wk.—and consists mostly (although not exclusively) in original texts. The reading load in Weeks 2-4 is more than 150 pp./wk., but the readings those weeks are relatively easy. In fact, during two of those three weeks—Weeks 3-4—we focus entirely on Robert Westbrook’s intellectual biography of John Dewey, a highly enjoyable and unstressful read. Just as English courses ask students to do a lot of novel reading, and just as history courses ask students to do a lot of history reading, so too I ask you to do a lot of intellectual biography reading those particular weeks. But once past Week 4, our reading load settles back into a 150 pp./wk. pattern. (You will notice that many Weeks list quite a few required readings. But nearly all those readings are brief.)

Recommended Reading: Good study habits and time management are important in a course such as this one. For useful guidance on these matters, read The Clockwork Muse, by Eviatar Zerubavel ($11.95). A copy has been placed on reserve at College Library. I recommend it highly.

Readings: Books are on sale at Rainbow Bookstore (426 W. Gilman St.) and on reserve at College Library. See the complete list of books for purchase on p. 2 of this syllabus. There are also some additional readings that are electronically available through MyUW-Madison—but not on sale or on reserve in hard-copy form, so students will have only this electronic-reserve option.

Note about Printing Electronic Reserve Materials: Please conserve paper in whatever way possible! Please use double-sided printing and perhaps even try to fit multiple pages of text on each side.

A Note about the Syllabus: Please do the readings in the exact order given in the syllabus.

Examinations: Grading in this course will be on a 100-point scale and will depend entirely on a series of weekly thirty-minute examinations. Each of these examinations will consist in ten short questions on the week’s readings and will be open-book/open-notebook. Students whose first language is not English will be allowed to start their examinations twenty minutes ahead of time. Each examination will be worth 10 points. Your lowest four examination scores will automatically be dropped, leaving you with ten scores, or a total of 100 (possible) points. Note: no make-ups for these weekly examinations will ever be allowed under any circumstances—so please don’t even bother to ask. Another note: you will benefit greatly from not using up your dropped examinations too early in the semester. Plan ahead and save for a rainy day. The examinations will be set up in such a way that the large majority of students who have given the readings a good-faith effort will be able to score a 9 or 10. The examinations will be non-cumulative (i.e., focused exclusively upon that week’s readings). Please note that there will be no weekly examination in Week 1. The
examinations will commence in Week 2.

Attendance: Attendance all the way through each class meeting will be required, with the exception of four excused absences. If you are not in attendance for the entire class meeting, then that will count as a missed class—one of the four you are allowed to miss. Each absence after the fourth one will subtract 13 points from your overall possible score of 100. Note: beyond the four allowed absences, there will be no such thing as an excused absence in this course, except in case of an extended, sustained, several-weeks-long personal illness or family emergency. Otherwise, please don’t even bother to ask. No need to contact me about the occasional missed class.


What to expect: The grading scale given immediately above looks really formidable. But historically, my average semester grade in graduate courses has tended to fall between an A and an A/B (far closer, in fact, to an A): in other words, it’s quite lenient. The only real challenge is that you will have to spend a fair amount of time reading! That’s the trade-off in this course. If you put in the time reading, you won’t have much—or any—trouble at all. But you will have to read. Note: apart from the weekly examinations and class attendance, there will be no other requirements for this course. No midterm examination. No short essays. No term paper. No final examination. The weekly examinations will require you to keep up with the reading assignments. They will test whether you have done the readings slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully.

Weekly Class Format: We shall start each weekly class meeting with an examination punctually at 9 a.m. As mentioned above, students whose first language is not English will be encouraged to start twenty minutes early (at 8:40 a.m.) in the same classroom. At 9:30 a.m. each week—i.e., after 30 minutes—I shall collect your examinations. Then we shall have a 15-minute break before reconvening for discussion. There will be another brief break around 10:50. Examinations will be returned the very next week after you take them. Again, no examination the first week of the term.

Books on sale at Rainbow Bookstore (in alphabetical order by author):

Martin Bulmer, The Chicago School of Sociology.
Morris Dickstein, ed., The Revival of Pragmatism.
Susan Haack, ed., Pragmatism Old and New
Hans Joas, The Creativity of Action.
Roberto Unger, The Self Awakened.
Robert Westbrook, John Dewey and American Democracy.

The Emirbayer Rules

(1) When you speak in class, please refer exclusively to authors and texts we happen to be reading
that day (or read earlier in the semester). Do not attempt to show off your intellectuality by dropping
the names of Wittgenstein, Althusser, or Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. Let’s stay focused.

(2) Please try whenever possible to respond to the person who spoke right before you, rather than
offering something entirely disconnected. Let’s have a genuine conversation. If you aren’t able to
maintain this continuity, then temporarily cede your place in line; we’ll return to you a bit later.

(3) Please be relatively succinct and to-the-point in your remarks. Let’s be dialogic. It’s okay to be
confused when confronting such challenging material, but I’ve found that confusion can most
effectively be addressed when your comments are kept fairly brief, so that others can respond.

(4) Please do all the reading by yourself and don’t share the reading assignment in a group division
of labor. I’m letting you take your weekly examinations in an open-book/open-notebook format.
This doesn’t mean it’s okay for you to be consulting notes you’ve distributed among yourselves.

**Course Syllabus**

1 – Setting the Stage

*TROP*: Ray Carney, “When Mind is a Verb.”
*TROP*: Morris Dickstein, “Introduction: Pragmatism Then and Now.”
*TROP*: John Patrick Diggins, “Pragmatism and its Limits.”
*PON*: 9-12, 15-27, 107-38, 144-50.

Part One: Classical American Pragmatism

2 – William James and John Dewey

Please (re)read the first paragraph of the syllabus.
*PON*: 27-40, 273-441. (Pp. 443-64 are also recommended.)

3 – John Dewey

Note: (1) Most of this reading is quite straightforward, with the exception of a
couple of passages in chs. 1 (on neo-Hegelianism) and 5 (on neo-realism). I won’t
be asking you any specific or difficult questions on those passages. Please try to
get through them as best you can. (2) The reading is lengthy, but the examination
itself will only cover the preface and pp. 1-149.

4 – John Dewey

E-Reserve: Charlene Haddock Seigfried, “John Dewey’s Pragmatist Feminism.”

5 – Horace Kallen, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Alain Locke

*TROP*: Ross Posnock, “Going Astray, Going Forward.”
E-Reserve: W.E.B. Du Bois, selections from his writings.
*TROP*: Nancy Fraser, “Another Pragmatism.”
E-Reserve: Alain Locke, selections from his writings.

6 – Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and George Herbert Mead

E-Reserve: Marilyn Fischer, “Jane Addams’s Critique of Capitalism as Patriarchal.”
E-Reserve: Charlotte Seigfried, “Introduction” *Democracy and Social Ethics*.
E-Reserve: Jane Addams, “Introduction” to *Democracy and Social Ethics*.
E-Reserve: Jane Addams, “Charitable Effort.”
E-Reserve: Jane Addams: “A Function of the Social Settlement”
E-Reserve: Jane Upin, “Charlotte Perkins Gilman.”
E-Reserve: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper.” (Recommended only.)
*PON*: 40-42, 465-86.

Part Two: Pragmatism in Mid-Century

7 – An Overview of Chicago Sociology

Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology*: preface; chs. 1-7, 12.
E-Reserve: Sudhir Venkatesh, “Chicago’s Pragmatic Planners.”

8 – The First Chicago School

E-Reserve: Hans Joas, “Pragmatism in American Sociology.”
E-Reserve: W.I. Thomas, selection to be announced.
E-Reserve: Charles Horton Cooley, selection to be announced.
E-Reserve: Andrew Abbott, “Of Time and Space.”

9 – The Second Chicago School

E-Reserve: Dmitri Shalin, “Pragmatism and Social Interactionism.”
E-Reserve: Herbert Blumer; “Society as Symbolic Interaction.”
E-Reserve: Herbert Blumer, “Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position.”
E-Reserve: Everett Hughes, “Mistakes at Work.”

10 – Sidney Hook and C. Wright Mills

E-Reserve: Cornel West, “Sidney Hook” and “C. Wright Mills.”
E-Reserve: Sidney Hook, “Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life.”
E-Reserve: Sidney Hook, selection to be announced.
E-Reserve: C. Wright Mills, “Pragmatism, Politics, and Religion.”
Online: C. Wright Mills, "Language, Logic and Culture." _ASR_ October 1939.
Online: C. Wright Mills, "Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive." _ASR_ December 1940.
Online: C. Wright Mills, "Methodological Consequences of the Sociology of Knowledge." _AJS_ November 1940.

Part Three: The Pragmatist Revival

11 – Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, and Richard Bernstein

E-Reserve: Richard Bernstein, “The Resurgence of Pragmatism.”
_TROP_: James Kloppenberg, “Pragmatism.” (Recommended only.)
_PON_: 623-76.
_TROP_: Richard Rorty, “Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism.”

12 – Jurgen Habermas and Hans Joas

E-Reserve: Dmitri Shalin, “Critical Theory and the Pragmatist Challenge”
E-Reserve: Jurgen Habermas, “Some Concluding Remarks.”
TROP: Hans Joas, “The Inspiration of Pragmatism.”
E-Reserve: Josh Whitford, “Pragmatism and the Untenable Dualism and Means and Ends.”

13 – Pragmatist Feminism and Cornel West

E-Reserve: Lisa Heldke, “How Practical is John Dewey?”
E-Reserve: Jane Duran, “The Intersection of Pragmatism and Feminism.”
E-Reserve: Cornel West, “Autobiographical Prelude.”
E-Reserve: Cornel West, “Prophetic Pragmatism.”
E-Reserve: Cornel West, “The Limits of Neopragmatism.”
E-Reserve: Cornel West, “Pragmatism and the Sense of the Tragic.”
E-Reserve: Eddie Glaude, “Tragedy and Moral Experience.”
E-Reserve: Steven Seidman, “Pragmatism, Difference, and a Culture of Strong Democracy.” (Recommended only.)

14 – Roberto Unger

Roberto Unger, The Self Awakened: selections to be announced.

15 – Still Other Pragmatisms

E-Reserve, Robin Wagner-Pacifici, “Theorizing Contingency” (on historical events).
E-Reserve: selection to be announced (on conflict resolution).