

PHIL 4190: American Pragmatism, Evolution, and Ethics

UNC Charlotte, Fall 2015

Wednesdays, 3:30-6:15pm, Winningham 107

Instructor: Trevor Pearce Office Hours: M/W 11am-12pm or by appt
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Description

When Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, it changed the world. Evolution bridged the gap between human and animal, calling into question our eternal or spiritual nature. But even Darwin admitted that "of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important." Surely ethics was sacrosanct? In this class, we will explore a series of attempts at reconciling evolution and morality. After a look at the work of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, who together brought the idea of evolution to popular consciousness, we will focus on the American pragmatists—the first philosophers to truly embrace evolutionary ideas. John Dewey, for example, argued that moral principles were merely a set of tools to be applied when the environment demanded it. Outside the university, Jane Addams—a philosopher and social activist—thought about how ethics would need to change following industrialization, urbanization, and mass immigration. In the last part of the class, we will read the writings of three recent philosophers inspired by biology and/or the pragmatists: Philip Kitcher's *The Ethical Project*, Joshua Greene's *Moral Tribes*, and Elizabeth Anderson's *The Imperative of Integration*.

Required Texts

John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (Dover, 2002) [ISBN #9780486420974]
(or online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=Ws0RAAAAYAAJ>)

Philip Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (Harvard UP, 2011) [ISBN #9780674284289]
(or online at <http://www.degruyter.com/librarylink/uncc.edu/viewbooktoc/product/184582>)

Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes* (Penguin, 2013) [ISBN #9780143126058]

Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton UP, 2010) [ISBN #9780691158112]

These four books should be available for purchase at the university bookstore, though it's likely cheaper to purchase them used online. All other texts will be available at the course website via <https://moodle2.uncc.edu/>.

Evaluation

5%	Participation	
10%	Attendance	
20%	Summaries	September 2 to November 18
20%	Paper 1 (1500 ± 250 words)	October 4
15%	Presentation (10-15 minutes)	December 2 or 9
30%	Paper 2 (2000 ± 500 words)	December 16

Your attendance grade is calculated by dividing attended classes by total classes. I automatically excuse one absence. Requests for additional excused absences due to medical emergencies, family emergencies, military orders, or court orders should be made to the Dean of Students Office (http://unccdsso.uncc.edu/academic_accommodations), and not to me directly.

'Participation' means making comments and asking questions that reflect your having read and thought about the text under discussion. **Your participation grade cannot be higher than your attendance grade.** I often call on individual students following the small-group discussion or the summary write-up. **You must bring a copy of the reading to each class**, or you will not be able to effectively participate.

Each class, you must hand in a summary of the reading for that week, which must include (a) the overall claim or thesis of the reading and (b) a summary of the arguments or evidence the author gives to support this claim or thesis. (Sometimes I will ask you to do this for a debate between two different authors; sometimes you will have to pick only one of several readings.) **Your summary should be no more than two double-spaced pages** (one-inch margins, 12-point font). In preparing your summaries, use only the assigned readings. Late summaries will not be accepted. Summaries submitted via e-mail will not be accepted. **Absence from class is not a valid excuse for not turning in a summary** unless you receive accommodation from the Dean of Students office (see above). The lowest summary grade will be dropped.

The topic(s) for Paper 1 will be circulated by e-mail on September 23. You must pick your own topic for Paper 2. I encourage you to talk to me about your paper before you submit it. I am happy to give feedback on outlines or introductory paragraphs. **The two papers must be submitted by 7pm on the due date at the Moodle 2 site via turnitin.com.** Papers that are too long or too short will be penalized a minimum of half a grade point. Late papers will be penalized half a grade point per day.

Your presentation will be on December 2 or 9. You will take 10-15 minutes to summarize the thesis and arguments of your second paper, and then respond to questions from the rest of the class for 5-10 minutes. It might be helpful to have your paper completely drafted by the time you present.

The use of cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is therefore prohibited during class except in emergencies. Students are permitted to use computers during class for note-taking and other class-related work only.

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by e-mail notice.

University Policies

All students are required to read and abide by the Code of Student Academic Integrity. Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code. The Code is available from the Dean of Students Office or at <http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-407>.

As a condition of taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. No student papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com without a student's written consent and permission. If a student does not provide such written consent and permission, the instructor may: (i) require a short reflection paper on research methodology; (ii) require a draft bibliography prior to submission of the final paper; or (iii) require the cover page and first cited page of each reference source to be photocopied and submitted with the final paper.

Students who miss classes, examinations or other assignments because of a religious practice or belief must provide reasonable notice of the dates of religious observances on which they will be absent by submitting a Request for Religious Accommodation Form (<http://goo.gl/I1Ncv0>) to the instructor prior to September 4, 2015.

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services (<https://ds.uncc.edu/>) and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

Reading Schedule

Aug. 26 – **Introduction**

Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), Chapter 3

Spencer, *The Principles of Biology*, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate), Chapter 6

Sep. 2 – **Adaptation & Progress**

Darwin, *Descent of Man*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871), Chapter 3.

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Spencer, *The Data of Ethics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), Chapters 1-3 & Chapter 15.

Sep. 9 – **Evolution & Society**

Huxley, "The Struggle for Existence: A Programme," *The Nineteenth Century* 23 (1888): 161-180.

Kropotkin, "Mutual Aid among Animals," *The Nineteenth Century* 28 (1890): 337-354.

Kropotkin, "Mutual Aid among Savages," *The Nineteenth Century* 29 (1891): 538-559.

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Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics. Prolegomena," in *Evolution & Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1894), pp. 1-45.

Dewey, "Evolution and Ethics," *The Monist* 8 (1898): 321-341.

Sep. 16 – **The Chicago School**

Dewey, “The Evolutionary Method as Applied to Morality,” *Philosophical Review* 11 (1902): 107-124, 353-371.

James, “The Chicago School,” *Psychological Bulletin* 1 (1904): 1-5.

Mead, “The Philosophical Basis of Ethics,” *International Journal of Ethics* 18 (1908): 311-323.

Dewey, *Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1909) [pamphlet]

Moore, “Absolutism and Teleology,” *Philosophical Review* 18 (1909): 309-318.

Sep. 23 – **Social Ethics**

Addams, “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,” in *Philanthropy and Social Progress: Seven Essays*, ed. Henry C. Adams (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1893), pp. 1-26.

Addams, “The Objective Value of a Social Settlement,” in *Philanthropy and Social Progress: Seven Essays*, ed. Henry C. Adams (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1893), pp. 27-56.

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Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), Chapters 1-2.

Sep. 30 – **Ethics & Psychology I**

Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922), Parts 1-2.

Oct. 7 – **Ethics & Psychology II**

Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922), Parts 3-4.

Oct. 14 – **Truth and Progress I**

Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), Introduction & Part 1.

Oct. 21 – **Truth and Progress II**

Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), Parts 2-3.

Oct. 28 – **Tribal Legacies I**

Greene, *Moral Tribes* (New York: Penguin, 2013), Parts 1-3.

Nov. 4 – **Tribal Legacies II**

Greene, *Moral Tribes* (New York: Penguin, 2013), Parts 4-5.

Nov. 11 – **Nonideal Theory & Policy I**

Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapters 1-5.

Nov. 18 – **Nonideal Theory & Policy II**

Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapters 6-9.

[Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASS]

Dec. 2 – **Presentations**

Presentations

Dec. 9 – **Presentations**

Presentations