Course Syllabus

PHH 3700: American Philosophy

University of Central Florida Department of Philosophy

Dr. Nancy Stanlick

Spring Term 2013 SYLLABUS

Instructor, Course, and Contact Information

- Nancy A. Stanlick, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Philosophy & Assistant Dean, CAH
- Class meets Tues and Thurs 1:30-2:45 p.m. in CL1 120
- Final Exam: Tuesday, April 30, 1:00-3:50 p.m.

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<th>Instructor, Course, and Contact Information</th>
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<td>• PSY 240 (Dept. of Philosophy, 4078232273) and CAH 190 (Dean’s Office, 4078232161)</td>
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<td>• <a href="mailto:Nancy.Stanlick@ucf.edu">Nancy.Stanlick@ucf.edu</a></td>
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<td>• Office Hours: Tues 3:00-4:00 in PSY 240 &amp; Thurs 3:00-4:00 in CAH 190 and by appointment.</td>
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Holidays, Important Dates, and Breaks:

- Drop/Swap Deadline: Thursday, January 10
- Add Deadline: Friday, January 11
- Martin Luther King, Jr.: Monday, January 21
- Spring Break: March 4 – 9
- Withdrawal Deadline: Monday, March 11
- Founder’s Day: Wednesday, April 3
- Classes End: Monday, April 22
- Study Day before Finals: Tuesday, April 23
- Your Final Exam: Tuesday, April 30, 1:00-3:50 p.m.
- Grades Due: Friday May 3, noon

Course Description: PHH 3700, 3 cr hrs, is a course in the history of American philosophy with emphasis on several themes that may characterize American thought. Some historians of American philosophy tend to focus attention largely if not solely on American Pragmatism, recognizing it as the unique contribution of American philosophers to the history of philosophy. While it is true that Pragmatism is a unique contribution to this history of thought, it is not the whole of what American philosophers have done or that they continue to do. To see that this is the case, consider the emphasis in American philosophical thought on individualism, optimism,
reform, practicality, revolution, evolution and justice, rights, and equality. Concentrating on these thematic elements of American philosophy, we begin the course with the Great Awakening, continue on into the philosophies of the American Revolutionary generation, proceed through reform movements in abolitionism and women’s rights, and go beyond this to American Transcendentalism, American Pragmatism, and the contributions of recent American philosophers to the philosophy of science, ethics and political philosophy, Native American Philosophy, and African American philosophy.

A spirit of optimism often characterizes American philosophy. It is the attitude that things can always be made better and it is found in much of American literature and poetry (consider Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, for example) and in the founders of the new American republic in the 18th Century. Individualism has characterized much of American thought from the beginning of its political existence and the early modern and Enlightenment optimism that is the foundation of “America” as the United States is in large part informed by faith in the individual not only to know despite authority and tradition, but to be able to act on one’s own decisions and make a valuable life for oneself. Reform, perhaps above all other things, characterizes American thought and Americans. We will not sit idly by and wait for things to change. We actively change them – sometimes for the better, and other times for the worse. But the optimism lurking in the American will not wait. If something can be improved, if it can be made to fly higher, longer, faster, better, and if something can be made bigger and stronger, we insist on trying. Whether we are sometimes or perhaps even often deluded about our powers and abilities, about the direction of the changes we make, and of the responsibilities we take on, there may be something in the history of American philosophy that can help us to understand what these things mean, what they imply, and what we might be able to do to make positive changes and improvements.

I believe, and I will teach this course in a manner consistent with this notion, that there is something important, unique, distinct, and valuable in American philosophy. American philosophy is in many ways derivative. Even though American philosophy obviously begins in the United States (or the “Colonies” of Britain prior to the American Revolution), it actually begins before it begins with developments from the thought of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, G.W. Leibniz, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant, among others, and continues to this day to be heavily influenced by classic British and European philosophical trends and theories. Since that is the case, we will pay attention to non-American works in philosophy as they are useful and relevant. Much of American thought is influenced by European and Native American thought, but there are distinct elements of it that you will see throughout this term and that you will see in some if its best and worst manifestations in our past and present social and political climates.

Course Objectives: The objectives of this course are to become conversant about major facets of the history of American philosophy from the early 1700s to the present day, to be able to write and speak critically and analytically about various problems, theories and principles in American thought, and to develop a more complete understanding of the nature of American philosophy.

Texts: There are two texts for the course, both of which should be available from the UCF bookstore and area bookstores. If not, they can be obtained through Amazon.com or the
publishing companies for each one. In addition, there will be additional readings available online or through the UCF Library. The two main texts are:

- Additional readings and resources will appear in the course Web site.
- Important Notice: The University of Central Florida requires that I do not receive any royalty payments from your purchase of the books that I wrote or that I and Bruce Silver wrote for this course. So please fill out the form that you will receive either in class or online and indicate whether you purchased new or used books. I prefer that you get the used copy of *Philosophy in America, Volume I* since it is cheaper and there is no issue of royalty fees to be paid or received. Further, you may be able to get by without *Philosophy in America, Volume I* since almost all the works in it are available online. Those that are not available online are available at the UCF Library and other libraries.

### Requirements, Assignments and Grades:

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<th>History of American Philosophy</th>
<th>Critical Reading and Writing</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Collaborative or Discussion based</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>While I rarely take attendance in some formal way, there are some in-class assignments that will verify your attendance at various times throughout the term.</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Every person in this course is required to produce and defend a position in a presentation done in class. Presentations are 10-15 minutes in length and must be accompanied by a PPT, Prezi, or other document.</td>
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<td>Exam Questions Assignments</td>
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<td>There will be two of these assignments. They are designed to serve as reviews for the two content examinations in</td>
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The course (midterm and final) and are composed of the creation of YOUR reasonable questions that are suitable for inclusion on those examinations.

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<td>Essays/Discussions</td>
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<td>Short Readings Quizzes</td>
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- Midterm Exam: The content is expected to be from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4 of *American Philosophy: The Basics* and associated sections of chapters from *Philosophy in America, Volume I* and additional content.
- Final Exam: The content is expected to be from Chapter 5 to Chapter 8 of *American Philosophy: The Basics* and associated sections of chapters from *Philosophy in America, Volume I* and additional content.
- Essays/Discussions: At least one, and at most three, short essays and/or discussions are required. They will be announced as assigned. Generally speaking, these essays/discussions are approximately 1-3 pages in length and centered on an issue, figure, or problem in the history of American philosophy.
- Short Readings Quizzes: From time to time, and potentially during any class meeting, short “three-minute” reading
essays or quizzes will be required.

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<td>Final Collaborative Paper</td>
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See below on Special Elements of Final Collaborative Paper

Comments on Grading and course content:

- Discussion essays and short reading papers will all be read, but may not receive instructor comments.
- Your preparation is essential to be able to get the most out of the content that is presented in books, online readings, lectures, and online content.
- Read the required works. There is a significant number of readings in this course.
- It is a very plainly misguided and erroneous view to believe that it is not necessary to read anything for the course and to count only on content in lectures. Lectures in this course are not reiterations of what is in books, articles, or online readings. There will be mention of what is in the readings, but much of the lecture-based content concerns extensions, analyses, comparisons, and critical evaluations of readings and related content. It is up to you to be sure to keep up with all of this.
- You will not get as much out of this course if you do not contribute to your own education by reading, analyzing, evaluating, and actively participating in the process of doing philosophy. If you are a philosophy major, you already know this; if you are not a philosophy major, you know it now.
- This is an upper-level undergraduate course and as such it requires your attention, active participation, attendance, and careful writing, reading, discussion, and preparation. Your grade depends on these things.

Grading Scale: + and standard grading

- A: 90-100, Excellent to superior performance – exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and goes well beyond the basics.
- B+: 86-89.x, far above average and exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course works; fully understands the basics and can deal with concepts beyond that level.
- B: 80-85.x, just above average and meets average understanding as evidenced in course work; can deal with most concepts above the average level.
- C+: 76-79.x, minimally above average, exceeds some minimum expectations and satisfies course requirements.
- C: 70-75.x, average, meets minimum expectations and satisfies course requirements.
- D+: 66-69.x, below average, meets most minimum expectations and satisfies all or most course requirements with minimal understanding of course work.
- D: 60-65.x, below average, meets some minimum expectations and satisfies all or most course work with bare minimal understanding of course work.
• F: 0-59.x, fails to meet minimum expectations in understanding and course work as evidenced by performance and submission of graded assignments.

**Grading Rubric for Papers and Essays:**

• Content: the use of sources, accuracy of factual information, and presentation of information appropriate and relevant to the topic. 35%
• Analysis: the presence and quality of your argumentation. Making errors in reasoning, presenting incomplete reasoning, or not presenting an argument at all reduce the analysis section of the paper. 35%
• Structure: this is grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Good papers cannot be good papers if there are more than a few minor errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You may be perfectly clear about what you mean in what you write, but the idea is to make sure that anyone reading your paper is clear about what you mean. Furthermore, at this level, careful writing is something that you produce as a matter of course as a person pursuing advanced education. Generally speaking, a paper having 10 or more structural errors receives no more than 10 of the 30 points available. 30%
• Note: This rubric applies to any and all written work for this course. Points are subtracted based on the number and severity of errors. I take careful writing very seriously. You should take it seriously, too, since a clear indication of one’s educational attainment and progress is the ability to write clearly, properly, carefully, and with precision. See this link for common errors that you should be especially careful to avoid.

**Special Elements of Final Collaborative Paper:** To be able effectively to write your sections of the final collaborative paper and to understand the reasoning and purpose behind doing so, read this article: Nancy A. Stanlick, “Individual-Centered Collaborative Research: Method and Theory” from the journal, *Teaching Philosophy*, 30.1 (2007): 85-110. The article is available through the UCF Library and/or in a file link in the course’s Web site in Canvas/WebCourses. There is also information regarding this method of assigning and writing papers at [http://www.teachphilosophy101.org/Default.aspx?tabid=124](http://www.teachphilosophy101.org/Default.aspx?tabid=124).

The general idea is this: Various topics regarding course content are available from which groups of 3-5 students choose one. Each of those students then writes her or his own, individual paper on an aspect of the topic. The individual papers of the students in the group are then combined into one large (collaborative) final paper with a common theme. The final collaborative paper will include an introduction (written by all students in the group in which all the individual papers are given unity), the body of the paper (composed of each individual paper), a conclusion (written collaboratively by all the students in the group to provide an overview, implications, and other elements of a concluding section of a paper), and works cited (containing the works used by all the students in the group). If a member of the group does not participate in writing the collaborative sections of the paper, that student does NOT receive credit for those sections. Each person is responsible for her or his own individual paper, but each member of the group is responsible for reviewing and commenting on every other person’s contribution. Individual student grades for the final collaborative paper are determined by a combination of the individual’s own paper that is part of the collaborative project and the
collaborative sections. The same grading rubric is used for the collaborative paper that is used for any individual paper.

**Academic Honesty and Course Policies:** Plagiarism or cheating on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an “F” for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an “F” for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule for further information. Plagiarism of any kind is a violation of the “Golden Rule” as published in the UCF Catalog. Academic honesty and integrity are expected of everyone all the time. In other words, don’t cheat or assist anyone else in doing so. Assignments or any graded element of the course must be your own work. There is nothing wrong with seeking the assistance of others (in fact, helping each other to study for examinations is highly recommended) for help in understanding principles, concepts, or methods of analysis, but simply obtaining answers or text and content from another person and turning them in as your own is certainly unacceptable.

I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. I will also adhere to those standards, so please do not ask or expect me to change your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not and cannot apply to everyone.

All papers and written work in this course are subject to submission to turnitin.com. If written work is to be checked, it will be done by the instructor, so you do not need an account for turnitin.com.

I rarely actively take attendance in this course. It is up to you to keep track of yourself. If you do not intend to attend and keep up with readings and assignments on a regular basis, you may wish to re-think taking this course. You do not get “credit” for showing up for class or for simply being online for any web-component. You are responsible for meeting all the course requirements, being present in person or online for examinations, quizzes, and assignments, and submitting all required course work on time. You are responsible for being in class and for any exams or assignments you may miss. Much of the material covered in class may not appear in the texts or in any notes in the syllabus or online. If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining any notes or information you missed. Office hours are not held to repeat a lecture already given in class. They are held to clarify points, provide assistance, and otherwise attend to academic matters relevant to this course. Graded assignments can be made up only with good, legitimate, and verifiable reasons. There is no extra credit available in this course. Also keep in mind that grades are earned, they are not “given.” Changes of grade are made only for legitimate reasons (e.g., clerical errors) after the semester has ended.

Common courtesy is expected all the time. If you have a cell phone and it is on while you are in class, set it to ring very low, or set the buzzer, or shut it off.

**Course Schedule:**

The schedule is meant only as a guide. Changes and alterations in the schedule of topics, examination dates, paper due dates, assignments, and other schedule-related information may be
made from time to time to facilitate completion of all major sections listed. See the "Home" page list of modules in WebCourses2 for the updated course schedule and list of assignments, readings, suggested readings, attachments/files, etc. Below is a general schedule.


- Week 1: Jan 8, 10 – Introduction to American Philosophy. Chapter 1 of APB and associated sources.
- Weeks 5 and 6: Feb 5, 7, 12, 14 – The Continuing Revolution: Women’s Rights and Civil Rights. Chapter 4 of APB and selections from Chapter 10 of PIA; associated sources.
- Week 7: Feb 19, 21 – Review and Midterm Exam
- Week 8: Feb 26, 28 – The Transcendentalists
- SPRING BREAK – MARCH 5, 7
- Weeks 9 and 10: Mar 12, 14, 19, 21 – The American Pragmatists. Chapter 6 of APB. Chapter 4 of PIA, Chapter 5 of PIA, selection on Rorty from Ch. 8 of PIA, and selection from Dewey in Ch. 11 of PIA.
- Weeks 11-14: Mar 26, 28, Apr 2, 4, 9, 11, 16 18 – Recent American Philosophy: Parts I and II (includes contemporary philosophy of science, Native American Philosophy, African American Philosophy, Feminist Ethics, and contemporary American ethics and politics)
- Final Exam Week