

Political Science 284: Democratic Theory  
Fall 2019 ~ Wegman Hall 1005 ~ MW 11:50-1:05  
Instructor: James Johnson  
Office Hours: M 1:30-2:30 & W 9:30-10:30  
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The course this year will focus on some intersections, actual and potential, between the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism and aspects of the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality among African Americans. We will be especially concerned with the multiple relationships between power, conflict, knowledge, education, expertise, and democracy. In effect, we will be asking of 'theory' holds or might hold in practice. In many respects our inquiry will be speculative; in all ways it will be tentative and subject to revision.

**READINGS:** The required reading for this course is difficult, it is diverse, and there is a lot of it. Moreover, none of the reading is presented in predigested textbook form. In both senses the reading load for this course might seem totally unreasonable! It is. My excuse is that the problems we will be addressing are crucially important and complex. In that sense, it is imperative that you do the reading and that you do so prior to class. I have ordered books (marked \*) at the University Bookstore. All also are readily available from your preferred e-purveyor. I will make the other readings available via a course drop box file. A number of the assigned readings are, as is clear from the syllabus, available directly on line – I have provided links where this is the case.

I

\* Barbara Ransby. 2003. *Steadfast Love: The Black Church and the Struggle for Freedom*. UNC Press.

II

\* John Dewey. 1927. *Human Nature and Conduct*. Swallow Press.

Charles S. Peirce. 1877. "The Fixation of Belief." In *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Edited by Robert Talisse & Scott Aikin. Princeton University Press.

Charles S. Peirce. 1878. "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." In *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Edited by Robert Talisse & Scott Aikin. Princeton University Press.

John Dewey. 1939. "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us." In *Human Nature and Conduct*. Edited by Robert Talisse & Scott Aikin. Princeton University Press.

III

Jeffrey Isaac. 1999. "Is the Revival of Pragmatism Practical, or What Are the Consequences of Pragmatism?" *Journal of American Studies* 33(2): 561-587.

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.. 2010. "The Problem of African American Public(s): Dewey and African American

Michael Dawson. 1994. "A Black Counterpublic?"

7: 195-223.

VII

\* John Dewey. 1938.

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**Grading:** I do not care what grade you get in the course. By that I mean that while I would like you to do well, and hope that happens, whether you do so or not really depends on you. If you do the required work, it is extremely likely a good grade will follow; if not, it is almost certain that a good grade will not follow. The work here includes both participating in class discussion and writing a final paper.

There is no party line in the course, meaning I do not care if you agree or disagree with me, with one another, or with any (or all?) of the readings. I care about your willingness to stick your neck out, to think critically, and to articulate and defend



