

DVPR 44700:
American Religious Naturalism Following James

Winter term, 2015
Swift Hall 208
Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00-11:20

Instructor: Dan Arnold

Office hours: Swift 401A, Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30 (or by arrangement with instructor); for appointments during regular office hours, sign up on the sheet kept by Julia Ivory-Woods (773-702-7049) in the Martin Marty Center

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Objectives of the Course:

This course will take several soundings in a trajectory of American religious thought that can be said to center on William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, perhaps especially insofar as that is read in light of the late-career philosophical project that James referred to as "radical empiricism." This tradition of thought might just as well be referred to as "American religious *empiricism*," or ~ *pragmatism*, or ~ *process philosophy*; in styling this a tradition of religious "naturalism," though, I mean not only to make contact particularly with the work of John Dewey, but also (and more importantly) to advance the project of recovering an understanding of "naturalism" that is antithetical to what John McDowell has referred to as "bald naturalism" – where the latter seems, these days, often to be what philosophers suppose we must be talking about in referring to "naturalism."

Course Requirements:

In addition to exhibiting regular attendance and spirited participation in discussion, students will be required to submit a paper of modest length (12-15 pages), **due Friday, March 20**. N.b.: *Late papers will not be accepted without prior notice*.

Required Readings:

A small number of our readings are short selections available electronically through Chalk; the following books are all on reserve at Regenstein Library, and are also available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore:

- **William James**, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Penguin, 1982 [first published 1902])
- **John Dewey**, *Art as Experience* (Perigree, 2005 [first published in 1934])
- **Cheryl Misak**, *The American Pragmatists* (Oxford University Press, 2013)
- **Nancy Frankenberry**, *Religion and Radical Empiricism* (SUNY Press, 1987)
- **Delwin Brown**, *Boundaries of Our Habitations* (SUNY Press, 1994)
- **Charles Hartshorne**, *The Divine Relativity* (Yale University Press, 1948)
- **David Ray Griffin**, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism* (Cornell University Press, 2000)
- **Mark Johnston**, *Saving God* (Princeton University Press, 2009)

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Week 1 (Monday, January 5; Wednesday, January 7)

Course introduction: On the various senses of “naturalism,” and the idea of a distinctively American tradition thereof. **Reading** (for Wed.): Charles Sanders Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”; “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God” (both available on Chalk)

Week 2 (Monday, January 12; Wednesday, January 14)

A seminal text for religious studies, and also for American religious naturalism. **Reading:** William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902)

Week 3 (NO CLASS ON MONDAY, JANUARY 19! [MLK HOLIDAY]; Wednesday, January 21)

What makes James’s empiricism “radical”? **Reading:** James, “A World of Pure Experience”; “The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience”; “The Continuity of Experience” (all on Chalk)

Week 4 (Monday, January 26; Wednesday, January 28)

John Dewey on the significance of speaking of “an experience”: Lectures on aesthetics. **Reading:** John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, pp.1-105, 245-338

Week 5 (Monday, February 2; Wednesday, February 4)

Interlude: An assessment of the tradition, with due appreciation for the imprecision of James and the influence of Peirce. **Reading:** Cheryl Misak, *The American Pragmatists*, pp.1-76, 99-151, 225-237, 246-254

Week 6 (Monday, February 9; Wednesday, February 11)

Notwithstanding James’s protests, the significance of his radical empiricism for understanding James on religion. **Reading:** Nancy Frankenberry, *Religion and Radical Empiricism*

Week 7 (Monday, February 16; Wednesday, February 18)

Thinking theologically with (and critically of) radical empiricism. **Reading:** Delwin Brown, *Boundaries of our Habitations*

Week 8 (Monday, February 23; Wednesday, February 25)

On whether this stream of thought really precludes *metaphysics*. **Reading:** Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*

Week 9 (Monday, March 2; Wednesday, March 4)

Process philosophy as philosophy of religion. **Reading:** David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, as much as you can read

Week 10 (Monday, March 9; Wednesday, March 11)

A Princeton philosopher's critique of recently flourishing "undergraduate atheism."

Reading: Mark Johnston, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry*

Final papers due Friday, March 20th!