

Study Guide  
William James and John Dewey  
American Pragmatism

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PHIL 1301: Introduction to Philosophy  
Government, Legal Studies, and Philosophy  
Tarleton State University

**Do not plagiarize these answers for your exam; doing so will result in a zero, no retakes.**  
Instead, paraphrase using your own words. Practice rewriting these ideas in your own words.

The numbers on the left refer to the week and either part one or part two of the aforementioned week in the following convention: WW.PP, such as 03.02 for Week 3, Part 2.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Author, Reading.</b>
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10.01	James, "What Pragmatism Means."
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1. *How does pragmatism hinge on the functionalist account of meaning?*
  - a. The pragmatic method is to compare the world-states of adopting two contradictory beliefs. The world-state is a function of the meaning of the idea; the full meaning of the idea includes its causal consequences out in the world itself, enacted by those who hold the given belief-systems or at least are indirectly impacted by their consequences and corollaries. The pragmatic method uses meaning as function to evaluate the worth of ideas.
2. *How is the genetic theory of truth different from universal claims of truth?*
  - a. The genetic theory of truth offers a descriptive account of the natural, unavoidable, idiosyncratic (unique to each person) process of making sense and making meaning out of one's experiences. This process involves new experiences which disrupt the previous stock of belief and require the participant to rethink their beliefs, categories, and various truth-systems of stabilized perception and coherence. This reciprocal fine-tuning of truth allows optimization unique to each person's differential lived experience and embodied historicity, empowering a pluralism of survival strategies.

10.02-11.01	Dewey, Ch. 1, "The Live Creature," <i>Art as Experience</i> .
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1. *How do the rhythms of disintegration and consummation between the live creature and its environment produce esthetic experience?*
  - a. Esthetic experience itself is the gratifying feeling between rhythms of the live creature with its environment and past. Without disintegration, strife, conflict, and effort, consummation would not be possible. Without reunion and consummation, conflict would be painful without meaning or purpose.

2. *How does mind-body dualism separate art from everyday experience and thereby estrange the live creature from intrinsic spiritual fulfillment?*
  - a. Compartmentalization of life prevents esthetic consummation and privatizes access to what should be a universal right to fulfillment. The spiritual is a refinement of the material, in a living body.
3. *How does emotional sense in direct experience produce but also absorb intellectual, linguistic symbolism?*
  - a. Because artworks are a language, we can see the continuity of expressive thought and communication. Sense is organized and refined into its more technical forms, such as math and science. Because sense evokes language and historical knowledge, we can infer that holistic sense absorbs such language.

11.02-12.01 Dewey, Ch. 2, "The Live Creature and 'Etherial Things,'" *Art as Experience*.

4. *What is the difference between mere recognition and esthetic perception?*
  - a. Mere recognition is about identifying something without engaging with it on a deeper level, whereas esthetic perception is about experiencing it while also connecting an emotional response to it dependent on one's past. Recognition is quickly identifying something familiar from past experiences without much thought. Perception involves a deeper engagement where you fully appreciate the details and emotions of what you are experiencing, without reducing it to what you already know and without assuming what it will become. In perception, the past surges forth to invigorate the present, rather than conquering the present and reducing it to the past idea or experience.
5. *Why is art primary to science, i.e., why is science merely a handmaiden to the arts?*
  - a. The purpose of the arts is to enrich life's intrinsic meaning; science as a specific, refined, technological art is only ultimately useful or meaningful insofar as it supports esthetic enrichment. Art is the complete culmination of nature. Therefore, science is its handmaiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue.
6. *What is art's relation to material and etherial things?*
  - a. Art is a bridge between material and etherial things. Art acts as a ley line from past to present, unifying supposed dualities. Art is a material expression of etherial things through-via-with-as the medium of matter.
  - b. Artmaking is the transformation (organization) of material (matter) into etherial things.
  - c. Art is the melding of material things to express, symbolize, convey, and form etherial experiences. Our relation to art is not just with the complete art piece but with our experiences and formation of the art. Works of art transform material (matter) into etherial things.
7. *How does art's capacity for emotional resonance and affection across diverse bodies and histories provide the foundations for a common civil life of democracy and for sharing being-existence-consciousness-experience?*

- a. The fact that works of art can have overlapping, pseudo-universal common impacts despite our differences implies a common biological life, which simultaneously can serve and function as the stable grounding of democracy; moreover, art promotes this democratic grounding.
  - b. Artworks (in experience) intensify and crystallize universal biological processes and struggles as previous experiences, i.e., as histories, and as future goals, i.e., as needs. This common biological life stably grounds democracy in shared interactions.
  - c. The fact that works of art can resonate with diverse sets of lived experience implies a universal common life of all live creatures deep below conscious awareness, which we might call “primitive relationships.” This grounding stabilizes democracy.
8. *How is animism related to esthetic experience?*
- a. Animism (i.e., spirits-gods animating-pervading the material world) speaks to uncanny and untimely experiences where the esthetic is not properly understood and does not transparently disclose-reveal itself.
  - b. The experience of spirits-gods in animals and nature (i.e., animism) is a misattribution of the inherent esthetic-spiritual-ideal qualities in culminative, consummative, harmonious, in-step, present, engaged environment-material experiences in (i.e., with-through) the world.
  - c. The belief that spirits animate matter (i.e., animism) is a fundamental misattribution of esthetic experience as a fluid hyper-awareness of the present.
9. *How does reasoning require deflection and abeyance of objections in favor of intuition and imagination?*
- a. True reason is impossible and instead requires grace but is fine when instinctive and impulsive; philosophers must ignore their counterarguments when writing. One must obey the overpowering intuition and esthetic imagination — i.e., emotionally charged sense.
  - b. All writers, if they don’t get stuck in their self-criticisms, have had to ignore foreseeable objections in pursuit of their conclusions. Reasoning as instinctive, as impulsive, is fine; it has grace. “Beauty is truth; truth, beauty.” – John Keats
  - c. Expression requires ignoring conflicting thoughts, but earnest, instinctive efforts are still fine; they have grace. Intuition seeks and pursues its goal.
10. *How does esthetic perception require acceptance of half-knowledge?*
- a. Half-knowledge frees the live creature onto the present moment in full force, simultaneously allowing for the effortful, tense strife which serves as the precondition for the esthetic consummation of experience doubling back on itself to intensify.
  - b. Esthetic perception and experience take the mysteries and half-knowledge of life and turn them back on themselves to intensify living itself.
  - c. Esthetic perception turns life’s uncertainties in on itself to intensify living; this is the production and refinement of art and esthetic experiences. (This is half-knowledge, itself; I don’t know.)

1. *How is an experience different (from inchoate experience)?*
  - a. An experience has a beginning and an end, which is not a cutting stop but which is itself a consummation of the previous disorder (distinct but not disintegrated from the rest of your life or itself).
  - b. Self-organized; composed; integrated within; demarcated; self-sufficient; game of chess; dinner with family; political campaign
  - c. Interchange: flows freely without seams, unfilled blanks, mechanical junctions (dovetails), or dead centers; yet self-identity of parts-elements.
  - d. Experience at large vs. specific experiences; its own beginning and end
  - e. Each with its own unrepeated quality pervading it throughout
  - f. Real experiences; “that was an experience!” *That* meal; *that* storm; *that* quarrel with a friend
  - g. Chapters; acts; scenes; in a drama
  - h. Total integral experiences that are intrinsically worthwhile.
  - i. Stairsteps vs. incline vs. sinusoidal rhythms
  - j. Whole-phases as a unity-multiplicity hybrid; leads into another and carries on
  - k. Continuous merging, interchanging, and blending;
  - l. Pauses and places of rest that punctuate movement
  - m. Rounded out; whole
  - n. Premises and conclusion arise all at once.
2. *Why can the esthetic not be sharply marked off from intellectual experience?*
  - a. Both involve engagement, perspectival interpretation, and personal value to yourself. A conclusion is the consummation of a movement — not a separate thing (interwoven). Without esthetic fulfillment, thinking is inconclusive.
  - b. The esthetic possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement. Conclusions of thought are arrived upon as esthetic consummations, fulfillment of a process.
  - c. The conclusions of intellectual experience are fulfillments of an experience, the fulfillment which is itself esthetic consummation. “It possesses integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement.”
3. *What is required for a stone rolling down a hill to have an experience?*
  - a. The stone starts from somewhere and moves, as consistently as conditions permit (such as experiencing gravity or hitting oppositional forces, e.g., trees, branches, rocks, walls, etc.), toward a place and state where it will be at rest — toward an end. In other words, experience needs a coherent, self-organizing process with gratification. The stone looks forward with desire to the final outcome, and it is interested in the things it meets on its way, conditions that accelerate and retard its movement with respect to their bearing on the end. The stone having *an* experience acts and feels toward them according to the hindering or helping function it attributes to them. The final coming to rest is related to all that went before as the culmination of a continuous movement.
4. *How are emotions related to experiences?*

- a. “Experience is emotional, but there are no separate things called emotions in it.” Unique emotions are attached to unique events and unique objects in their movement. Emotion is the moving and cementing force of the miracle of mind that provides unity in and through the varied parts of experience. (Not simple, compact, or discrete.)
  - b. Emotions are the felt quality carried by the vehicle of unique occasions and events. Different emotions from different qualitative feelings from different environmental interchanges and experiences. “Experience is emotional, but there are no separate things called emotions in it.” Emotions are attached to events and objects in their movement, as vehicles or occasion. Emotions unify and cohere a diverse history of past experiences in conscious thought, which is to say conscious perception.
  - c. “Experience is emotional, but there are no separate things called emotions in it.” Emotions are attached to events and objects in their environment. The dominant emotion pervades *an* experience and subtly changes throughout with different shades. The predominant emotion is attached to the whole event (both spatial whole of the environment and temporal whole of *an* experience), and the varying shades are attached to the objects, moments, scenes, and beats. The environment as occasion carries (like a vehicle) and produces emotions in the nexus of the subject (like a resonating chamber).
  - d. Different qualities of the same general kind of emotions (or sensual-emotional-qualitative perceptions) operate in different experiences, specific to each environmental (environing on the mental) and mental context (e.g., different fears, different joys, different loves, different reds, different blues, different senses each time). Specific emotions are carried and produced alongside the vehicle of the occasion-event-environment.
  - e. “Emotion is the moving and cementing force of the miracle of mind, selecting what is congruous and dying [painting, staining, coloring, or tinging] what is selected, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar, in and through the varied parts of an experience.”
5. *What are the common patterns of every experience?*
- a. Doing and undergoing, not in alternation, but in simultaneous relationship, happening always at the same time and in the same action under different perspectives. Equal but opposite reactions, i.e., Newton’s Third Law of Motion. The lifting of a stone with my arm and with my hand is both an intentional doing as well as a responsive undergoing whereby I also feel the weight of the stone on my musculature, the data from which informs the forthcoming action, as a responsive mutual fine-tuning. In this way, artworks determine themselves by communicating to the artist the missing feedback of their achievement, the expectation of their arising re-creation.
6. *What gives meaning?*
- a. Meaning is perceived through the unified perception of cause and effect, especially as relations between mean and consequence or between method and outcome via creative, practical intention — i.e., being able to perceive

the effect with the cause, simultaneously, as part of the same process, as one flowing, continuing act. Undergoing determines further doing insofar as the feedback informs the success of my actions and intentions through a given means. The excess of doing (e.g., a flurry of activity; mechanical; overstimulated) and the excess of undergoing (i.e., of receptivity; e.g., a flitting, a sipping) hinder one's being given meaning or coming to perceive it for themselves. Further, Dewey's instrumentalist view of knowledge and meaning are akin to Aristotelian and utilitarian means-ends reasoning.

7. *What kind of intelligence does the artist require?*

- a. Bonus question: *Does listening to jazz piano make you more intelligent?*
  - i. Listening to complexities in different sense-languages does increase mental activity and promote increasingly nuanced and complex thought-forms. Listening contours and shapes our perceptual and cognitive mental pathways.
- b. Dynamic intelligence because they have to be able to engage with the world and interpret the qualitative, sensory aspects with sensitivity and causal reasoning (means-ends reasoning; doing and undergoing in relation, in alternation, and simultaneously). Awareness of the relations between what was just done and what is about to be done; of the relations between work and impact on the audience, which requires active listening; of the relations between process and product. See below.
- c. Perception of the Relationships of Qualities (but what kinds of relationships?)
  - i. Process to Product (in process; envisioning the product, especially how the vision of the product changes in response to a present perception of whether the work is affecting the desired feeling)
  - ii. Parts to Whole (in the product, how each part contributes to the whole, i.e., to the anticipated consequent end-result experience of the work of art)
  - iii. Parts to Parts (how the qualities work together, whether auditory, visual, or tactile)
  - iv. Artwork to Audience-Perceiver (how it will impact; between the independent product of the work of art and the experience of the viewer and/or artist)
  - v. Moment to Moment (technique; how methods achieve certain results; from one undergoing [of the brush on the hand and on the canvas] to the next doing)
  - vi. Moment to Envisioned Whole (how a technique achieves the end)
  - vii. Adaptation of the Whole Envisaged (in response to the present; see above, under Process to Product)
  - viii. Technical Experimentation (to find new techniques to achieve a vision)
  - ix. Historical Differentiations (how different histories in an audience will perceive a work)
  - x. Cause and Effect (Method toward an Intentional Purpose)
  - xi. Doing and Undergoing (common elements of all experiences)

8. *How are the production and the perception of artworks interwoven?*
  - a. Artistic (e.g., doing; production) vs. Esthetic (e.g., undergoing; perception)
  - b. Artistic Production (Undergoing Artist; Active-Receptivity):  

The artist refines the production process in response to a present esthetic experience, and esthetic experience [of the work of art] is imbued in the work of art only insofar as the artist had an esthetic experience while making it.

The artist consciously, esthetically perceives the work of art in its production, to allow the perception of qualities to determine their own outcomes by informing the artist of whether such qualities reinforce esthetic experience through the work of art. Insofar as the artist has an esthetic experience in the process of production, they imbue the esthetic experience into the work (through a present perception of the work's power), thereby allowing the work to produce esthetic experience in other viewers.

Artistic production by an artist is a doing, but it is also an undergoing insofar as the artist must refine their work in production through an active, ongoing process of esthetic perception. Insofar as they have an esthetic experience while making it, the work of art is more likely to produce such an esthetic experience in the viewer.

The measure of the value of what is prepared is found in consumption (cook and customer). The artist constantly takes up and furthers esthetic perception in the process of production, allowing to ensure esthetic effect and imbue the work with a capacity for esthetic experience. The viewer has esthetic experience insofar as the artist did while making it.

The measure of excellence in execution is determined by the consumer, viewer, or audience of the work.

"The doing or making is artistic when the **perceived** result is of such a nature that **its** qualities **as perceived** have controlled the question of production."
  - c. Esthetic Perception (Doing Audience; Receptive-Activity):  

See below, #11, *How is [esthetic] perception also a form of doing-making (through surrender)?*
9. *How do artworks make themselves?*
  - a. "The doing or making is artistic when the **perceived** result is of such a nature that **its** qualities **as perceived** have controlled the question of production."
  - b. Production is regulated by the qualities of the product as perceived.
  - c. Until the artist is satisfied **in perception** with what she is doing, she continues shaping and reshaping. The making comes to an end when its result is experienced as good, in direct perception.
  - d. "In as far as the development of an experience is **controlled** through reference to these immediately felt relations of order and fulfillment, that experience becomes dominantly esthetic in nature."

- e. “He makes it in a way so regulated by the series of perceptions that sum up the serial acts of making, that the bowl is marked by enduring grace and charm.”
- f. Present esthetic perception of the work redirects what the artist does; the materials, in tandem and interaction with the artist, refine and determine the final product. Qualities are perceived either as belonging together or as jarring, as reinforcing or as interfering, and such perceptions determine making. Perception as gestation of a work of art is a form of organization, which in turn creates a further depth for a piece of art, possibly creating an entirely new piece.
- g. Artworks make themselves by informing the artist of how the vision should change. They reshape what the artist intends. If they do not, then the artist is not undergoing esthetic perception in the act of production-doing-making, and the product will not produce esthetic experience in other viewers.
- h. Recognition (reducing the present to the past for some **other** purpose) vs. perception (letting the present redirect the past; the past surging forth and enriching the consummate present moment [of esthetic perception which always involves consummation])

10. *What three traits are required of the artist?*

- a. Relations of Qualities (i.e., Causal Intelligence; Doings and Undergoings)
- b. Skillful action; technique; mechanical prowess; powers of execution; dexterity in production (i.e., Excellent Doing)
- c. Acuity and sensitivity of perception; unusual sensitivity to the qualities of things (i.e., Excellent Undergoing)

11. *How is perception also a form of doing-making (through surrender)?*

- a. “Taking in” requires activities comparable to those of the creator.
- b. Receptivity is not passivity, but rather a series of responsive acts, otherwise there is not perception (past → [informs and empowers] present; can change directions) but recognition (present → [reduced to] past; narrow-minded; traditionalist; ritualistic; proceduralist; dogmatic).
- c. “Recognition is perception arrested before it has the chance to develop freely.”
- d. “An ordering of the elements of the whole[...].”
- e. “Recognition is too easy to arouse vivid consciousness [no friction].”
- f. “Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it.”
- g. “We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to **take** in.”
- h. “For to perceive, a beholder must **create** his own experience.”
- i. “Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art.”
- j. Perception makes the present with the materials of the past. Perception is always interpretive. Experiences and perceptions change over time, even from the same person. Years later, you experience your hometown or familiar favorites (e.g., comfort foods; memorable songs; etc.) differently,



strangely. (Present, unique, coherent) perceptions are the consummation-fulfillment of the original making, as fresh makings. The viewer creates a specific construction of the work of art unique to them.

- k. Active yielding of the self to meet the demands of a present perception (effortful listening).
- l. There is a different listening-making the first time a piece of music is heard (imperfectly) versus a later, more detailed perception when the same piece of music is heard and understood more perfectly.
- m. The viewer must recreate the artwork in their own experience (learning).
- n. Summon energies to match the demands of what you're perceiving, pitch it at a responsive key. Receptivity is not passivity.

*12. How do emotions permeate their material occasions?*

- a. An act of perception proceeds by emotional waves that extend serially throughout the entire organism. If emotion does not permeate the material perceptions or is not thought of by proceeding in this way, then the aroused emotion is either:
  - i. Preliminary (developing; still in germ)
  - ii. Pathological (delusional; not grounded or anchored in reality)
- b. Experiences are material emotions, emotional material.**
- c. Superimposed permeation (pathological; recognition — reducing a present environment to a previously felt, predetermined emotion) vs. grounded perception of emotion (present perception redirects action, knowing, vision, feeling, emotion, quality).

*13. Which characteristics of experience are dominant in esthetic experience?*

- a. Esthetic experience emphasizes those characteristics which are subterranean, subordinate, architectonically proto-structural, and subdued in other common (i.e., intellectual and practical) experiences — namely the characteristics which make all experiences coherent and integral, integrated, consummate, and unified. The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself, but as the integration of parts. It has no other existence. Discretion is emphasized. Esthetic experience involves “the conversion of resistance and tensions into a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close.”
- b. Esthetic experience has worth **only** in itself; it does not produce a conclusion that can be acted upon for further work. The overlooked, subterranean elements which harmonize all integral experiences are emphasized in dominantly, distinctively esthetic experiences, controlling its production.
- c. “The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself but as the integration of the parts.”
- d. “That which distinguishes an experience as esthetic is conversion of resistance and tensions, of excitations that in themselves are temptations to diversion, into a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close.”
- e. Esthetic experience emphasizes those characteristics which are ignored, beneath the surface of all other experiences, but which are necessary for

any integral experience, in themselves, for their own sake; the end, the terminus, is significant only as the integration of its parts.

14. *What do James's birds' flights and perchings symbolize or represent?*

- a. Growth involves nested back-and-forth rhythms, undulating within each other, always inchoate and developing in germ and out of germ.
- b. Flights-Perchings
- c. Doing-Undergoing
- d. Making-Perceiving
- e. Activity-Rest (Accruing Energy)
- f. Accumulation-Consolidation
- g. Intaking-Outgivings
- h. Outgivings-Intakings
- i. Producing-Incubating
- j. Expressing-Impressing
- k. Always in each other at every moment, in oscillating-alternating rhythms.

15. *When (i.e., under what conditions) is an object peculiarly and dominantly esthetic?*

- a. An object is peculiarly and dominantly esthetic “when the factors that determine anything which can be called *an* experience are lifted high above the threshold of perception and are made manifest for their own sake,” becoming relevant and beneficial to all live creatures.

13.02

**American Pragmatism Written Exam 2025.04.16-17.**

Exam Prompts:

- 1. Explain pragmatism, according to William James.
  - a. James, “What Pragmatism Means.”
  - b. Include at least some of the following ideas in your explanation:
    - i. Functionalist Account of Meaning
    - ii. Pragmatic Method
    - iii. Genetic Account of Truth
    - iv. Justified Religious Belief
    - v. Self-Fulfilling Beliefs
- 2. Explain *an* esthetic experience, according to John Dewey.
  - a. Dewey, “Having an Experience,” *Art as Experience*.
  - b. Include at least some of the following ideas in your explanation:
    - i. Works of Art (Esthetic Objects) vs. Esthetic Experience
    - ii. Dualism vs. Monism (Museums vs. Daily Life; Spiritual vs. Material)
    - iii. Emotions, Sense, Formal Language, and the Technological Sciences
    - iv. The Live Creature
    - v. Rhythms of Disintegration and Consummation
    - vi. Inchoate Experience vs. *An* Experience
    - vii. Elements of all Experience: Doing vs. Undergoing;
    - viii. Artistic Intelligence: Making vs. Perceiving
    - ix. Novel Perception vs. Mere Recognition
    - x. Artworks' Self-Determination
    - xi. Esthetic Experiences' Self-Creation