

# **How We Think (And How We Can Think Better). Advanced English course**

## **Syllabus**

**Instructor: Mattew Overstreet, Ph.D.**  
[mwover@gmail.com](mailto:mwover@gmail.com)

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Protocol # 3

### **1. Course Description**

This is an elective advanced English course. It will explore the nature of perception, cognition and knowledge. What is thinking? What is consciousness? How does the human body translate “the outside world” into lived experience? And how can we know if something is real or true?

We will approach these questions from a number of different angles. First, we will study the work of William James and John Dewey, members of the school of philosophy known as American pragmatism. After that, we will read Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hannah Arendt, thinkers associated with the European tradition of phenomenological philosophy. In the third part of the course, we will examine what modern psychology and neuroscience have to say about thought and perception.

### **2. Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

Students will learn to write weekly blog posts, and write and revise essays. They will also learn how to create an audio essay in which they explore one of the course readings.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- State some of the basic tenants of American pragmatism and European phenomenology, and explain how these traditions understand the nature of thought and perception.
- Explain how modern psychology and neuroscience understand thought and perception.
- Apply key philosophical and psychological concepts to their own lives and thought.
- Read and understand short philosophical essays, as well as full-length non-fiction books written in English for a popular audience.
- Draft a well-supported and technically proficient academic essay.
- Produce an entertaining and engaging audio essay.
- Use revision and peer-feedback to expand and complicate writing and thinking.

### **3. Course Plan**

Topic 1. American Pragmatism (William James and John Dewey)

Topic 2. Phenomenology (Heidegger and Mugerauer)

### Topic 3. Modern Psychology & Neuroscience (Kahneman and Greenfield)

#### 4. Reading List

##### a. Required

1. Dewey, John. How We Think. – United States, North America: Boston, D. C. Heath & co., 1910. – URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015005471852>
2. James, William. Pragmatism, a new name for some old ways of thinking: popular lectures on philosophy. – United States, North America: New York etc. Longmans, Green, and co., 1925.- URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015008563135>
3. Puente Lozano, P. 2010. “Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings by Robert Mugerauer.” CANADIAN GEOGRAPHER. <http://proxylibrary.hse.ru:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbl&AN=RN281993367&site=eds-live>
4. Kahneman, Daniel. Thinking, Fast and Slow. - Practical Neurology (BMJ Publishing Group); Aug2015, URL: <http://proxylibrary.hse.ru:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=108564706&site=eds-live>

##### b. Optional

1. Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich. Teaching Thinking: Moral and Political Considerations. - Heldref Publications, 2003. – URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40177228>
2. Pinker, Steven. How the Mind Works. - American City Business Journals, Inc., 2000. – URL: <http://proxylibrary.hse.ru:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbig&AN=edsbig.A61836795&site=eds-live>

#### 5. Grading System

Participation is essential. To get a passing grade, you must complete every assignment. You should also be prepared to speak (and write) in every class meeting.

Your final grade will be based on the degree to which you: 1) complete every assignment as directed; 2) present evidence of sustained effort and engagement; and 3) progress towards achievement of the course learning goals.

The scheduled tasks (subject to change):

- Reading Journal
- Response Papers (x3)
- Essays (x3)
- Revised & Expanded Essay
- Podcast

The relative weight of each task:

- Participation 20%
- Response Papers 25%
- Essays 25%
- Revised Essay 20%
- Podcast 10%

## **6. Attendance:**

Regular and timely attendance is very important. For each of your first two absences you lose two points (out of 100). For each of your first two lates you lose one point. For your next two absences/lates you lose three points per absence and 1.5 points per late. After that, you lose four points per absence and two points per late.

You are marked “absent” if you miss more than forty minutes of any class period. You are marked “late” if you arrive after I take role, but before forty minutes have passed. There are no excused absences in this class.

## **7. Public Writing:**

To get better at writing, you must get feedback. As such, in this class, be prepared to share everything you write. When we workshop an essay or blog post, I will make an effort to conceal the author’s name. Be aware, though, that anonymity is often not possible.

Drafts:

At various points during the semester you will be asked to submit rough drafts of certain projects for workshop purposes. It is very important that you submit drafts when due. Failure to submit a draft will result in minus four points (out of 100).

## **8. Deadlines & Extensions:**

Unless otherwise stated, assignments are due by classtime. If something comes up and you can’t make a deadline, let me know and I will likely give you extra time. As a general rule, it’s better to be a little late than to rush and submit an inferior product.

## **9. Make-Up Work:**

If a student receives a failing grade in the course, he/she may complete any major assignments that resulted in the failing grade. These assignments will be completed during the designated make-up period and will be assessed by the course instructor. If the student tries, and fails, to complete the assignments to a sufficient level of quality, he/she may make another attempt. The student’s second make-up attempt will be assessed by a panel of three instructors. In either case, to determine the student’s final grade, the make-up assignments will be plugged into the regular assessment formula.

## **10. Academic Honesty:**

This course seeks to uphold the Joint Program’s commitment to ensuring academic honesty. All work submitted in this class must be the student’s own (obviously). Assignments calling for the use of outside sources must contain both a reference page and in-text citations. MLA is the citation format for this course.

### **11. Communication:**

Our primary mode of communication will be email. You should check your nes.ru email account every day. Email is always the best way to reach me.

### **12. The Writing & Communication Center:**

The WCC is a free student support service designed to assist you with all your writing needs. Consultants (both English and Russian speakers) are available to meet with you for 45-minute sessions. You may sign up for a consultation using the “WCC” tab on my.nes.ru. Limited walk-in hours are also available.

### **13. Special Equipment and Software Support**

In this class, we will use the following software programs:

Microsoft Word

Microsoft PowerPoint

Audacity

These programs are available for free, and for either PC or Mac. You will need access to computer capable of running them. Please bring your laptop to every class.