

Special Topics: Axiology  
Syllabus

STH TT 890; GRS PH 883

Robert Neville, Instructor, [rneville@bu.edu](mailto:rneville@bu.edu)

Office: STH 334; hours: Tue: 11-12, Wed.: 10-11

Fall 2017

Tues: 8-10:45 a.m.

STH 115

This course examines the claim that all thinking is valuational or axiological in some sense. Four kinds of thinking will be examined: imagination, interpretation, theorizing, and practical reason. The core readings will be the instructor's trilogy *Axiology of Thinking*, namely, *Reconstruction of Thinking*, *Recovery of the Measure*, and *Normative Cultures*. We will also read Kant on sensibility and imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Charles Peirce on interpretation in several of his essays, and Whitehead on theorizing and practical reason in his *Modes of Thought*. The format of the course will be a seminar with students making seminar presentations and producing a research term-paper at the end.

**Learning Goals.**

Goal 1. To help students become aware of the philosophical alternatives lurking behind conceptions of valuation, alternatives that might be in contradiction with one another.

Goal 2. To help students become expert in the standard moves or arguments that lead thinkers to embrace one alternative or another.

Goal 3. To enable students to develop their own systematic positions concerning issues of valuation in thinking regarding imagination, interpretation, theorizing, and the pursuit of responsibility

Goal 4. To improve students' ability to write research papers with imagination at an advanced level.

**Books.** Please acquire the following books, which should be available at the BU Bookstore, Barnes and Noble.

1. Kant, Immanuel, *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Any edition.
2. Neville, Robert, *Reconstruction of Thinking*, SUNY Press.
3. Neville, Robert, *Recovery of the Measure*, SUNY Press
4. Neville, Robert, *Normative Cultures*, SUNY Press
5. Peirce, Charles, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume 2*. Edited by the Peirce Edition Project. Indiana UP
6. Whitehead, Alfred North, *Modes of Thought*. Any edition.

**Structure and Grades.** The class will be conducted as a seminar with a student making a 15 minute presentation on the assigned readings each week, with comments from each of the other students. Students will be required to write a term paper of about 20 pages, 5,000 words, on a relevant part of those topics with reference to at least some of the readings in the course. Term paper topics should be approved by the instructor before

Thanksgiving; students are encouraged to speed-read all the books in the first two weeks so as to have some idea of the positions to be discussed toward the end of the course that might be of interest for the term paper. Students also will be expected to participate in the seminar discussions, and to make seminar presentations on the material; each student taking the course for credit should make at least one seminar presentation, and auditors who do the readings are invited to present as well. Grades are based on a combination of class participation, seminar presentations, and (mostly) the term paper. **Term papers are due at the last class. Incompletes will not be given except in cases of emergency as approved by the School of Theology registrar.**

**Disabilities:** Any students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should meet with the instructor as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure your full participation in the successful completion of course requirements.

**Code of Conduct:** The STH Academic Code of Conduct may be found on the STH website at: [www.bu.edu/sth/academic/academic-conduct](http://www.bu.edu/sth/academic/academic-conduct). All students are required to familiarize themselves with this code, its definitions of misconduct, and its sanctions. Students should especially familiarize themselves with the section on plagiarism. **Do not plagiarize!**

**Class assignments:** Please prepare the assigned readings according to the following schedule.

9/5 Introduction

9/12 Neville, *Reconstruction of Thinking*, Part 1 (chapters 1-4)

9/19 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 50-A 147; read both the A and B Transcendental deductions.

9/26 Neville, *Reconstruction of Thinking*, Part 2, chapters 5-6

10/3 Neville, *Reconstruction of Thinking*, Part 2, chapters 7-8.

10/12 Monday class schedule, no class, no office hours.

10/17 Peirce, *Essential Peirce*, vol. 2, chapters 10-17, 24-29

10/24 Neville, *Recovery of the Measure*, Division 1

10/31 Neville, *Recovery of the Measure*, Divisions 2-3

11/7 Neville, *Recovery of the Measure*, Division 4

11/14 Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, entire.

11/21 No class; attend the AAR.

11/28 Neville, *Normative Cultures*, Part 4 (chapters 1-4).

12/5 Neville, *Normative Cultures*, Part 5 (chapters 5-8)

12/12 **Term papers due at the beginning of class. One grade will be deducted for every 24 hours of lateness.** Be prepared to read the abstract of your paper and have it discussed.