

News item. Retrieved from <http://www.commens.org/news/item/cfa-pragmatism-and-philosophy-history>, 07.01.2026.

**Category:** Publication

**Title:** CFA: Pragmatism and the Philosophy of History

**Description: Journal of the Philosophy of History**

Special Issue 2019

The Journal of the Philosophy of History will publish a special issue on the topic of “Pragmatism and the Philosophy of History.” The issue will seek to clarify what pragmatism can contribute to the philosophy of history and historiography. More specifically, it will explore what it might mean to speak of a distinctively pragmatist approach to the task of philosophizing about history, and it will try to identify the philosophical assumptions that have been at work in the attempts of pragmatists to write their own history. Regardless of focus, all contributions to the issue will be assessed with an eye to their philosophical merit: that is, they should illuminate some philosophical aspect of the relation between pragmatism and the philosophy of history.

The editors invite the submission of abstracts of roughly 300 to 500 words. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is March 1, 2018. The authors of successful abstracts will be invited to write essays of approximately 6000 to 8000 words. The deadline for completed papers will be December 20, 2018. Completed papers will be peer reviewed.

The editors of this special issue are Serge Grigoriev (sgrigoriev [at] ithaca.edu) and Robert Piercy (robert.piercy [at] uregina.ca). Authors who are unsure of whether their abstracts are appropriate for this special issue are encouraged to contact one of the editors before submitting.

Please submit abstracts by e-mail to jphsi2019 [at] gmail.com.

### **Aims of the Issue**

It has long been recognized that there are affinities between pragmatism and the philosophy of history. But it is unclear whether these affinities are merely generic—such as a shared commitment to fallibilism and pluralism—or indicative of a deeper conceptual bond. What could it mean to speak of a distinctively pragmatist stance in historiography, including intellectual history? What philosophical assumptions have been at work in the attempts of pragmatists to write their own history? How have these assumptions shaped, and perhaps distorted, our understanding of the movement?

Our hope for this issue is to collect a number of interesting and fresh contributions addressing questions of this sort. To gain a general impression of

the potential affinities (and conflicts) between pragmatism and philosophy of history is the general goal, although we must not underestimate the complexity of such an undertaking. Both pragmatism and philosophy of history are contested territories. Aside from a shared agreement on several canonical figures—Peirce, James, and Dewey—there is no consensus on what pragmatism is or on which contributions exemplify it best. Some thinkers associated with the movement are usually not considered pragmatists, such as Emerson, Royce, Santayana. There are those who are not really pragmatists at all, but are said to feature prominently some important pragmatist themes (e.g. Quine). There are Rorty and Brandom, who are called “neo-pragmatists” because they do not fit the strictures of classical pragmatism. Importantly, there are central figures whose contributions have been (until recently) written out of pragmatist history: e.g. Jane Addams, Ella Lyman Cabot, W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary Parker Follett, and Alain Locke.

For its part, philosophy of history has been split between several disciplinary fields, including philosophy, history, intellectual history, and political theory. Its different currents are at times antagonistic (e.g. speculative and critical philosophy of history), and at times indifferent to each other (as has long been the case with narrativist and epistemological philosophy of history). Some philosophers of history are concerned explicitly with historiography, its methods, and presuppositions. Others are concerned with questions of the temporality of human existence and the historicity of cultural outlooks. Still others focus on morally, existentially, and politically urgent themes such as memory, trauma, oppression.

Given the impossibility of providing a general overview of either field in a single issue, our hope is to capture the sense of diversity of possible topics, problems, and strands of discussion that arise at the intersection of pragmatism and philosophy of history. To this end, we welcome contributions that are suggestive and provocative (without sacrificing professional rigor)—contributions that pose questions and problems, or provide interesting new perspectives on the issues at hand. We expect the writing to be oriented toward an interdisciplinary audience, and to be accessible to an educated general readership. We are open to comprehensive discussions, as well as to more specific contributions highlighting the unexpected and possibly overlooked affinities between history and pragmatism. We especially welcome contributions emphasizing the human relevance of both pragmatism and philosophy of history, with attention to their moral and political implications, for problems of emancipation, equality, human dignity, historical memory and identity, and resistance to all forms of injustice—political, cultural, and economic.

**Link:** [Journal](#)