Brief Description:

The topic of this seminar will be Kant and a couple of American pragmatists: Charles Sanders Peirce and C. I. Lewis. Both Peirce and Lewis engaged intensively with Kant, and it would be interesting to explore the nature of their engagement and their motivation for it. Our concern will not be simply to figure out which aspects of Kant’s philosophy they were responding to, but how they were responding to them. There comes a point when a philosopher’s ideas are no longer in her or his hands, namely at that point when other philosophers take up these ideas, evaluate them and modify them either for their own purposes and/or for the purpose of helping those ideas yield the fruit originally expected from them by the person who first thought them up. The question of the seminar will be what happened to Kant’s ideas once Peirce and Lewis laid their hands on them. In a way, the seminar will explore a perhaps neglected chapter in the history of Kant reception. Kant reception is more usually associated with the advent of German idealism and neo-Kantianism. But it had an American chapter too. I would like to learn about it and would invite anybody else who is curious to join me.