

The Evolution of Pragmatism and Buddhism in India

Scott R. Stroud, Ph.D. (Temple University, 2006)

Department of Communication Studies

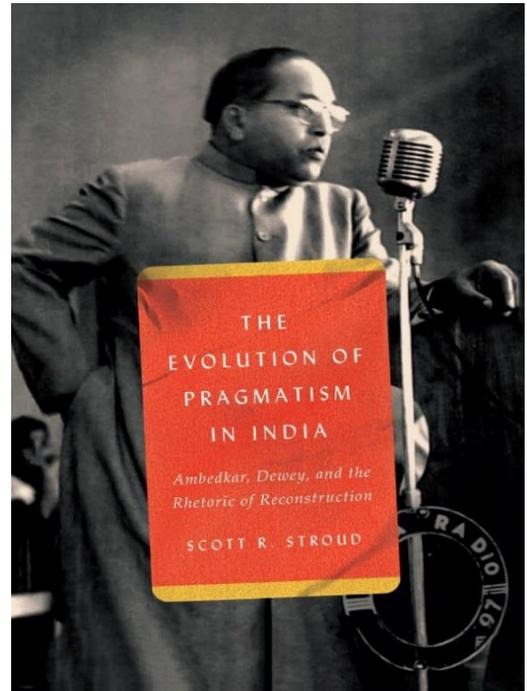
University of Texas at Austin

Co-sponsored by: Dept. of Religion,

Dept. of Philosophy, and Asian Studies

March 28, 11:00-12:00 / Mazur Hall, 8th

(Women's Study Lounge, Room 821)



Abstract:

Most know that Bhimrao Ambedkar, chief architect of the Indian constitution and powerful proponent of rights and respect for India's most oppressed, thought highly of his former teacher, John Dewey. Ambedkar took three of Dewey's courses while the young Indian reformer was studying at Columbia University in 1913-1916. But what do we know about the specifics of their relationship? What difference did it make to Ambedkar's reconstruction of Buddhism later in his life? In this talk, Scott R. Stroud discusses some of the main themes in his recently published book, *The Evolution of Pragmatism in India: Ambedkar, Dewey, and the Rhetoric of Reconstruction* (University of Chicago, 2023). The historical contours of their educational and intellectual relationship will be detailed, as well as the appropriation of Deweyan concepts and methods by Ambedkar to forge a new vision of pragmatism and Buddhism. Building on and resisting important themes in Dewey's courses and subsequent books, Ambedkar's pragmatist vision of Buddhism represents an approach that centers social democracy, the dignity of human personality, and the need to relieve oppression while creating the conditions for fraternity.

Speaker Biography:

Dr. Scott R. Stroud (Temple PhD, 2006) is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He writes on various topics in ethics, rhetoric, and philosophy. He is the author of two books, *John Dewey and the Artful Life* and *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*. He is the co-founder of the first "Center for John Dewey Studies" in India at Savitribai Phule Pune University. His latest book, [*The Evolution of Pragmatism in India: Ambedkar, Dewey, and the Rhetoric of Reconstruction*](#) (University of Chicago/HarperCollins India, 2023), is the most comprehensive account to date of Bhimrao Ambedkar's encounter with Deweyan pragmatism at Columbia University during 1913-1916 and the ways it shaped his innovative pursuit of social justice in India.