First Essay Assignment (Classical Pragmatism)  
(due to me in class Monday October 7)

I. In 3 well-written and thoroughly proof-read pages (thoroughly spell checked, 
grammar checked, style checked, etc.), address the following. Please use (and cite!) 
passages from our readings as appropriate:

(i) Identify at least 3 distinct conceptions or articulations of pragmatism or the 
pragmatic maxim that can be found in the work of James and Peirce.

(ii) For what specific purposes do these authors mean to apply the pragmatic maxim, or 
to what specific uses do these authors attempt to put these conceptions of pragmatism?

(iii) What are the common threads that run through these conceptions?

(iv) What are the differences between them, and why might those distinctions be 
significant or important?

II. Spend 2-3 pages (again, well-written and thoroughly proof-read!) discussing one of 
the following. Again, please use (and cite!) passages from our readings as appropriate:

1. Why (and on what grounds) does James reject the subjective horn of the dilemma of 
determinism?

2. Compare and contrast Peirce’s and James’ various accounts of truth or reality. 
Specifically, how would each respond to the other’s account.

3. Identify and comment on any significant Emersonian or Wrightian strands of thought 
that can be found in either Peirce or James.

4. Drawing from our readings by Emerson, Wright, Peirce, or James, comment on how 
well the portrait Menand paints of that figure in The Metaphysical Club jibes with what 
you’ve read.