

## **Philosophy of Education**

Spring 2011

M 1:00-4:00pm

Arthur Kill Correctional Facility

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This course will look at the history of philosophical writings on education. The texts will follow a tentative historical trajectory—beginning with Plato and the Greeks, through Rousseau and the Modern period, to contemporary and critical theories of pedagogy. Special emphasis will be placed on the pedagogical philosophies of Rousseau, Paulo Freire, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and bell hooks. This, of course, is a flexible spine that will move according to the rhythms and interests of the students in the course, all the while returning to the common themes that suture each of the thinkers and their philosophies.

It is no mistake that the history of philosophy effectively begins with scenes of education and conversation, epitomized by Plato's famous dialogues. Arguably, the primary role of the philosopher is not simply to analyze the world in a dry and objective way, but to engage with it in a dynamic, living way that requires listeners, students, other speakers, and the larger community. Which is to say, the primary role of the philosopher is to always educate and always be educated.

Philosophy and education overlap in important thematic and historical ways. Both fields have many of the same concerns and ask many of the same questions: What is knowledge? How is knowledge attained? Are there different modes of knowledge? Can knowledge be taught? What knowledge should be taught? How should knowledge be taught? What is it to educate? What is the relationship between teacher and student? What role does/should the community play in this process? What are the ways in which in historical and current institutions of education have helped or hindered this process? How much should authority override the concerns of the child, or vice versa? What of experience and education? And, the overarching meta-question: Is education even possible?

Philosophy and education intersect at these questions, questions that may not have final and definitive answers, but nonetheless should remain perpetually asked to ensure that the models of education do just that—educate. Educate to ensure that learners remain connected with their living world, a world that is in constant conversation with the past, present and future. Educate to create deep dialectical connections between experience and knowledge such that both are enhanced and nourished in the dialogue. Educate to make the person a “whole” person, and, perhaps an inseparable corollary, to make the community a “whole” community.

### Assessment:

Presentation/Summary(15% )  
Pedagogical Experiences Essay (15%)  
Analytic Paper (15%)  
Attendance/Participation (10%)  
Final Paper (40%)

### Student Presentation and Summary

Each student will be responsible for an **oral, in-class presentation, approximately 15 minutes** at the beginning of the appropriate seminar discussion. The student will highlight the major themes and relevant questions from that selection. Presentations are to be primarily **exegetical**, a solid ground from which a spontaneous and organic discussion can develop for the rest of the course. The purpose of the presentation is primarily to put the student in the "role" of the teacher, emphasizing the "active" aspect of teaching and learning. To assist each presenter, the instructor will provide a basic outline of the major themes to be emphasized from the text. I am not expecting a specific, nuanced reading of the text, only something that is tight, well-presented, and relevant to the themes of the course. It is a way to get “the juices flowing” so to speak and to open the educational space for genuine participation and communication.

Students will turn in a **1-3 paragraph summary** of the themes emphasized in the presentation.

### Pedagogical Experiences Essay

The first paper will be **4-6 page** meditation upon the student’s personal pedagogical experiences—past, present, and future. Following Dewey, the purpose of this paper is to emphasize the **role that personal experience** (both nutritive and detrimental) plays in one’s education. Textually, it will be grounded in a certain existential/psychoanalytic reading of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” (to be explained more clearly during the lecture on this topic), but the student is encouraged to highlight other relevant themes from the course. Questions to be asked: What are my pedagogical caves? Have there been traumas in the history of my education that have placed me in this cave? What are the explosions, struggles, blossomings that have helped me to get out of the cave, or, at least, begin the “rough ascent” away from chains, bondage, fear? How do these personal pedagogical caves connect with the societal and institutional caves that are endemic to prevalent educational models? What might be done to correct this? Anything?

The prompt for this first assignment is intentionally broad. There will be plenty of time, during your presentation and final paper, to engage in a theoretical, conceptual, and specific reading of the texts. This exercise is meant to “set the tone” for the course, and to serve as a tangible reminder of how the ideas that we discuss must always somehow relate to the embodied, historical, political, living, breathing, bleeding, ephemeral, complex tapestry that is our world. If we do not keep this in mind, then what we do in this course has no intellectual, emotional, or political force.

### Analytic Paper

This is a simple **4-6 page exegesis** of a thinker or theme discussed in class. This will most likely take the form of a written statement of the ideas the student presented or will present for their oral presentation and some of the objections, issues raised by other thinkers. This paper should emphasize **straight exegesis** over speculative ideas, using a dialectical/dialogical approach to emphasize the nuances and complexities of the issues at stake. Students may expand on the particular thinker upon which they presented, or they may choose another thinker altogether. Careful use of **at least four quotes**, as well as **scholarly citations** will be required.

### Attendance & Professionalism

Along with the university attendance guidelines (listed in detail below), this component of the course includes *prompt* attendance and relevant participation. Students are to have **no more than two unexcused absences**, after which, the student will be penalized. “Professionalism” also includes turning papers in on time, in the proper format (with proper citations), and without the slightest scent of plagiarism (see also below). Basically, this part of the course means, “act with respect if you wanted to be treated with respect.”

### Final Paper – Paideia Proposal

The final paper will be a **10 page research paper** that engages with one or two of the thinkers that we discuss in the course. Students will use these sources as tools for critiquing institutions of education—primary education, secondary education, universities, as well as education in a broader political context. Students are encouraged, however, to also be critical and/or supportive of the ideas themselves.

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#### **University Policy on Attendance and Lateness**

Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course. More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the following:

- an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a physician (with documentation)
- a family emergency, e.g. serious illness (with written explanation)
- observance of a religious holiday

The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework.

For significant lateness, the instructor may consider the tardiness as an absence for the day. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

#### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc), intentional or

unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29. Procedures concerning allegations of plagiarism and penalties are set forth in the Lang catalog.

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### **Required Texts:**

- Plato, *Republic*, trans. Alan Bloom (Basic Books, 2nd Ed). [ISBN-13: 978-046069347]  
Note: This is the most used translation and the one used for the course, though other translations will suffice.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Alan Bloom (Basic Books, 1979). [ISBN-13: 978-0465019311]
- Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood* (Ballantine Books, 1992). [ISBN-13: 978-0345305831]
- John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (Free Press, 1997). [ISBN-10: 0684838281]
- Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Continuum, 2000). [ISBN-13: 978-0826412768]
- bell hooks, *Teaching To Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (Routledge, 1994). [ISBN-13: 978-0415908085]

All other required reading will be available in the SUPPLEMENTAL READING PACKET (henceforth RP)

### **Supplementary Reading**

Guttek, Gerald L. *A History of the Western Education Experience*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Waveland Press, Inc.  
Nel Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

### **Additional Texts:**

Plato, *Laws*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Prometheus: Amherst, 2000).  
Isocrates, Cicero, John Locke (*Some Thoughts Concerning Education*), Immanuel Kant (*On Education*),  
Paolo Freire (*Pedagogy of Hope*), Henry Giroux  
Van Cleve Morris, *Existentialism in Education: What it Means* (Waveland Press, 1990). [ISBN-13: 978-0881334975]  
Jacques Ranciere, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Stanford University Press, 1991) [ISBN-13: 978-0804719698]

## SCHEDULE

### UNIT I: Foundations

#### Week 1 (1.24): *Paideia*, "The Allegory of the Cave"

Introduction / philosophy and education / *Paideia* – educating the whole person, culture and education / *educare* vs. *educere* – “to lead out of”, “to nourish” / pedagogy & the body / freedom, education, trauma / Socrates—dialectic, theory of knowledge, struggle, the examined life, *eros* and education, "corrupting the youth"

Readings: “The Place of the Greek in the History of Education,” from Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, vol. 1 (Oxford: New York, 1973) [RP], “The Allegory of the Cave” from Plato’s *Republic*

#### Week 2 (1.31): Plato

*Meno* – *anamnesis*; Plato’s basic philosophy / the soul and the city / censorship, lying / music and gymnastics

Readings: *Meno* [RP]; Plato, *Republic* – Books II & III [R], *Laws* – Book VII [RP]

#### Week 3 (2.7): Plato

Readings: Plato, *Republic* – Books V & VII, *Laws* – Book VII (cont.)

#### Week 4 (2.14): Aristotle and Locke

types of knowledge / experience and knowledge / *eudaimonia* / habit and virtue / *ethos* and the *polis*

Readings: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 1, 2, and 10

### 2.21 – NO CLASS (President's Day)

#### Week 5 (2.28): *Émile*

The Primacy of Nature / City vs. Country / Freedom of Movement / The Language of Tears

Readings: Rousseau, *Emile* – Books I & II

#### Week 6 (3.7): *Émile*

necessity → utility → morality

Readings: Rousseau, *Emile* – Books III & IV

### 3.14 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

## **UNIT II: Critical Pedagogy**

### **Week 7 (3.21): John Dewey**

Readings: Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed" [RP]

### **Week 8 (3.28): John Dewey**

Readings: Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (selections), *Experience and Education*

### **Week 9 (4.4): Maria Montessori**

the psychic life of the child / psychoanalysis and education/ Christianity / movement / the hand

Readings: Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*

### **Week 10 (4.11): Play and Education**

hands and feet / toys and games / field trip to Kid

Readings: G. H. Mead, "Play, the Game, and the Generalized Other" [.pdf]

### **Week 11 (4.18): Master/Slave, Oppressor/Oppressed**

Hegel-Marx primer / Lordship and Bondage / what is oppression? / the internalized oppressor / capitalism and education / banking pedagogy vs. problem-posing pedagogy / pedagogy and love

Readings: Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage"; Frederick Douglass, "The Education of Frederick Douglass"; Malcolm X, "Saved"

### **Week 12 (4.25): Paolo Freire (cont.)**

### **Week 13 (5.2): Race, Class, Gender**

the education of Sophie / love and care / teaching the sexes

Readings: Nel Noddings

### **Week 14 (5.9): bell hooks**

ecstasy, eros, emancipation

Readings: hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

### **Week 15 (5.16): FINAL CLASS**