EDPS 612: Philosophy of Education
Professor Campbell F. Scribner
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Mondays, 4:15-7:00
Office: Benjamin Building 2204
Office hours: By appointment only

Decisions about how, what, and whom we teach necessarily depend on deeper questions about why we teach. One’s educational philosophy derives from deep-seated beliefs about human potential, social organization, and the nature of power. The purpose of this course is to identify some of the primary questions about education in Western philosophy, encourage students to engage with those questions, and help them develop habits of philosophical thinking. Students should expect to read deeply, to participate in active discussion, and to write with concision and insight. The course is meant to be relevant but not necessarily practical, which is to say that we will rarely talk about applied problems in education or propose particular solutions for school reform. Rather, the course will consider foundational models and assumptions about the purpose and methods of education, which, in turn, should illuminate contemporary issues of educational psychology, pedagogy, assessment, and school administration.

Grading—

1) Weekly Reading Responses (25% of final grade)

Each week, students will need to post a short response to the assigned reading. The response should provide an overview of the author’s argument, at least one direct reference to the reading, and one question that we might take up in discussion. Students are encouraged to respond to classmates’ posts, both before and after class discussion. Responses are due no later than midnight on the Saturday before class, providing classmates time to review them before Monday’s meeting. Responses will be graded for accuracy, insight, and clarity of writing. Students may skip one week’s response without penalty.

2) Class Participation (25% of final grade)

Students are expected to arrive in class each week with a hard copy of the reading, ready to pose or respond to the discussion questions posted online. Strong participation grades reflect a willingness to engage in sustained discussion on a topic and answer difficult questions, as well as mastery of the reading. Knowing that our class is a community of shared deliberation, students should demonstrate generosity and respect to their classmates; all should feel equally welcome to engage. If you need to miss class, please send a brief email in advance.
3) Analysis of Outside Reading (Draft 5%; Full Paper 45% of final grade)

The culminating assignment in this course will be an analytical paper of at least twenty-five pages (inclusive of notes) on a philosophical work outside of our reading list. Students should review the unit summaries below for possible titles, although they are also welcome to find titles of their own, with the professor's approval.

The final paper should provide a close reading of one philosopher's argument, a critical appraisal of its merits, and perhaps a discussion of its connection to our collective readings. Please note that the assignment is not merely a book review. Students should scrutinize the methods, symbols, and values at work in the piece they choose, and should offer their own analysis of their legitimacy.

*A complete draft of the paper is due in class on April 24th. Final papers are due in my mailbox by 4:00 P.M. on Friday, May 12th. Late work will not be accepted without a prearranged extension.*

Students With Special Needs—

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil-rights protection for people with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires all schools, colleges, and universities to make reasonable accommodations for disabled students so that they can have access to an equal learning environment. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please let me know so I can make the appropriate arrangements.

Readings—

I would recommend reading our texts with an element of enchantment and good cheer. Proceed generously, conversationally, delightedly with the writers. Be slow to criticize and eager to understand. Think about their foundational concerns and values. Pose questions from previous readings. If you find yourself disagreeing with the drift of an argument, ask why. When readings seem to contradict each other, consider how we might choose between them.

The following titles are available for purchase through the campus bookstore or through online retailers. I would recommend buying these editions, both for the clarity of their translations and so that all students have a common reference. All other readings, marked with an [R], are available on electronic reserve through our course website, at elms.umd.edu.
John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Echo Library, 2007)

**Schedule of Meetings—**

**The Ancient Greeks**

"The unexamined life is not worth living..." – Socrates

Analyzing the death of Socrates and the ruminations of his student, Plato, will introduce fundamental methods of Western philosophy (dialogue, metaphor, paradox, etc.) while raising questions about the relationship between knowledge and power, humanity’s capacity for reason, and the pedagogical uses of irony and deception. Ultimately, these first readings will offer different visions of an educated person and his/her place in a just society.

Interested students may continue with Plato's *Meno* and Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* or *Politics*. Seneca, a Roman philosopher, also had helpful reflections on the meaning of education.

**Week #1 (01/30/2017)**—
- Introductions, course expectations
- Plato, *The Apology* [R]
- Nickolas Pappas, “Socrates, Cynics, and Flat-Nailed, Featherless Bipeds” [R]

**Week #2 (02/06/2017)**—
- Plato, *The Republic* (Books I and II)

**Week #3 (02/13/2017)**—
- Plato, *The Republic* (Books III and IV)
Week #4 (02/20/2017)—
- Plato, The Republic (Books V, VI, and VII)
- (Optional) Martin, “Plato’s Female Guardians” [R]

European Philosophy: Romanticism, Idealism, and Anti-Foundationalism

“Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains...” –Rousseau

In Enlightenment Europe, a renewed faith in human potential fueled social upheaval and political revolution. Thinkers from Kant to Robespierre attributed these trends to a single book: Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Emile, a meditation on education and the origins of freedom. While repriming earlier questions about power and the individual’s place in society, Emile will also offer new insights into the state of childhood and the role of natural growth in education. These trends continue in our discussion of Romantic authors, for whom childhood assumed divine significance, and of Friedrich Nietzsche, heir to Rousseau’s quest for self-actualization in a vulgar society.

Students interested in Emile should also read John Locke’s Some Thoughts Concerning Education, Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Women, and Immanuel Kant’s On Pedagogy. Rousseau’s methods and Kant’s idealism would become instrumental for early kindergarten reformers—see Michael Shapiro’s Child’s Garden: The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey—and influence later philosophers, including Mill, Kierkegaard, Hegel, Heidegger, and Sartre. Those interested in Nietzsche might take special interest in Marx, Foucault, and writers of the Frankfurt School.

Week #5 (02/27/2017)—
- Rousseau, Emile (Books I and II)
- (Optional) Rousseau, The Confessions (Chapter 1) [R]

Week #6 (03/06/2017)—
- Rousseau, Emile (Books III, V)
- (Optional) Martin, “Rousseau’s Sophie” [R]

Week #7 (03/13/2017)—
- Excerpts from American and British Romantics [R]
Week #8 (03/20/2017)—
No class meeting. Spring break.

Week #9 (03/27/2017)—
- Nietzsche, *Anti-Education: On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*
- (Optional) Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator”

**American Philosophers**

"What the best and wisest parent wants for his child, that must we want for all the children of the community." – Dewey

American commitments to egalitarianism and civic participation require a type of democratic education that few actually receive: a space for collective deliberation, community action, and an integration of different facets of living. Enmeshed in a world of intellectual flux and scientific progress, education assumed a central role in the development of pragmatism, a uniquely American school of thought. Our discussions will question the nature of modernity, the paradoxes of the democratic classroom, the role of science in human knowledge, and the possibility of achieving social equality through schools.

Interested students might review Dewey’s other educational writings (*My Pedagogic Creed; The School and Society; The Child and the Curriculum; and Experience and Education*) or his debate with Walter Lippmann in *The Public and Its Problems*. Those interested in pragmatism and education should review William James’s *Talks to Teachers* and Richard Rorty’s “Education as Socialization and Individualization.” Louis Menand’s *Metaphysical Club* could also offer helpful background. Other American philosophical works include John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* and Harry Brighouse’s *On Education*.

Week #10 (04/03/2017)—
- Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Chapters 1-7)

Week #11 (04/10/2017)—
- Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Chapters 8-18)

Week #12 (04/17/2017)—
- Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Chapters 19-26)
Week #13 (04/24/2017)—
- Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work*

*A completed draft of your final paper is due at the beginning of class. Late work will not be accepted without a prearranged extension.*

**Non-Western Philosophies of Education**

“Our Master skillfully lures people on step by step. He broadens me with culture and restrains me with ritual.” –Yan Hui

In recent years, philosophy courses have been rightly criticized for Western bias. If other cultures orient education toward social outcomes that seem remote to our own, perhaps we should examine their wisdom with a critical eye and an open mind. Without collapsing the many schools of thought from the global East or South, our selections will offer two “types” of non-Western education, both occupied with questions of individual virtue, group identity, and social reproduction.

Students interested in non-Western philosophies of education have many from which to choose. Most works of Eastern philosophy, from the *Tao Te Ching* to the *Tripitaka*, include reflections on education. Students interested in education’s role in indigenous cultures might read John Lame Deer’s *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*. Those interested in postcolonial theory should see Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* or Rabindranath Tagore’s “Founding a New Education.”

Week #14 (05/01/2017)—
- Confucius, *The Analects*

Week #15 (05/08/2017)—
- de Heer and Djigirr, “Ten Canoes”
  (A copy of the film will be available on reserve at the library. I recommend watching the “Making of Ten Canoes” documentary as well if you have time.)
- den Boer, “Spirit Conception: Dreams in Aboriginal Australia” [R]
- Mead, “The Past: Postfigurative Cultures and Well-Known Forebears” [R]

*Final papers due in my mailbox by 4:00 P.M. on Friday, May 12th.*