

# EDUCATION 646: EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Fall 2004

Wednesday 4:30-6:30PM

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GSE 429

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This course surveys basic issues in the philosophical and social foundations of education. It does so by presenting three central questions that have been raised about educational philosophy and practice.

- (1) What is an “educated” person? Education is a teleological process—a process directed toward a goal. In educating someone, our goal is to help him or her become a certain kind of person. What kind of person does our educational system aim toward producing? *After a student has been educated, what kind of person should s/he be?*
- (2) How does the inevitable fact of social groups in school—ethnic groups, linguistic communities, economic classes—affect students’ education? Do members of different groups receive different educations, even in the same schools? Should they?
  - (a) One aspect of this question addresses issues of equity. What constitutes “equal” treatment of students? *How should schools allocate resources to meet the needs of different groups?*
  - (b) Another aspect of this question addresses issues of separation and integration. *Should schools encourage students to assimilate to some norm, or should they encourage diverse and perhaps divergent beliefs and practices?*
- (3) Should education focus on transmitting the knowledge and skills that humans have accumulated, or should it focus on material more directly relevant to the students? *Should the student alter his/her preferences to meet the standard curriculum, should the curriculum be altered to fit the student’s interests, or is it possible to do both?*

The readings present various answers to these questions, and the students are expected to learn the authors’ positions and their arguments. But this will not be sufficient. The course also demands that students develop their *own* views on these questions. With questions as fundamental as these three, neither the readings nor the instructor can provide students with an authoritative answer. This may be frustrating at times during the term, as you search for solid answers. But this lack of closure also provides an opportunity: since you will not be told what to think, you will be able to develop and defend your own beliefs about these issues.

This course has two broad goals: (1) to help students critically evaluate prevalent assumptions about the purposes of schooling and the role of social context in shaping educational processes, such that students develop a critical, reflective approach to these topics; and (2) to introduce

students to several basic frameworks that have been used to understand the social foundations of education. Like all ELD core courses, this course should help students see how various conceptual approaches illuminate different aspects of educational phenomena, while hiding other aspects that might be brought out by alternative approaches.

The central assignment of the course is for each student to develop her or his own social philosophy of education. After learning about the strengths and weaknesses of several important perspectives on education, you should build on these perspectives to begin forming your own provisional answers to the three large questions of the course. Because these three larger questions bridge across philosophical concerns about the ends of education and social concerns about diverse groups of students, your emerging views will have to be both philosophical and social.

### Readings

- Sept. 8            Introduction
- Sept. 15            Virtue.  
Plato, *Meno*  
Plato, *Republic* (Book VII)  
Woodruff, P. (1998). Socratic education. In Rorty, A. *Philosophers on Education*. NY: Routledge.
- Sept. 22            Equality.  
Perkinson, H. (1995). *The imperfect panacea* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (ch. 1, 2 & 4). NY: McGraw Hill.  
Pole, J. (1993). *The pursuit of equality in American history*. (Ch. 6 & 13). Berkeley: University of California.  
Noll, W. (1997). *Taking sides* (9<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw Hill.  
Chapter 15: "Should tracking and ability grouping be eliminated?"  
Vonnegut, K. (1968). Harrison Bergeron. In K. Vonnegut, *Welcome to the monkey house*. NY: Delacorte.
- Sept. 29            Liberalism  
Locke, J. (1988). *Two treatises on government* (selections). P. Laslett (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Locke, J. (1989). *Some thoughts concerning education*. J.W. Yolton & J.S. Yolton (Eds.). New York: Clarendon Press.  
Taylor, C. (1992). The politics of recognition. In *Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition* (pp. 25-44, 51-73). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.  
Mehta, U. (1999). *Liberalism and empire: A study in nineteenth-century British liberal thought* (Ch. 1 and conclusion). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Oct. 6 Empire  
Willinsky, J. (1998). *Learning to divide the world: Education at empire's end*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Oct. 13 Social Reproduction.  
Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J-C. (1979). *The inheritors*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.  
Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. NY: Greenwood.  
Bourdieu, P., Passeron, J-C, & de Saint Martin, M. (2000). *Academic discourse* (Intro. & Ch. 1). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.  
Collins, J. (1993). Determination and contradiction. In C. Calhoun, M. Postone & E. LiPuma (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical perspectives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Oct. 20 Subjectification.  
Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish*. NH: Vintage
- Oct. 27 Power/Knowledge.  
Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. In H. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  
Interview with Michel Foucault. (1980/2000). In *Essential works of Foucault* (Vol. 3) (pp. 239-297). NY: The New Press.  
Luke, A. (1992). The body literate. *Linguistics & Education*, 4, 107-129.
- Nov. 3 Oppression and Multiculturalism  
Doerr, N.M. (2004). Desired division, disavowed division: An analysis of the labeling of the bilingual unit as separatist in an Aotearoa/New Zealand school. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 35(2), 233-253.  
Noll, W. (1995). *Taking sides* (9<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw Hill. Chapter 13: "Do Black students need an Afrocentric curriculum?"  
Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (Chs. 1 & 2) New York: Continuum International Publishing Group. (30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition).
- Nov. 10 **The oral exam takes place on this day; drafts are due November 9.**
- Nov. 17 NO CLASS
- Nov. 24 Micro/Macro.  
Holland, D. & Lave, J. (2001). History in person: An introduction. In D. Holland & Lave, J. (eds.), *History in person: Enduring struggles, contentious practice, intimate identities*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.  
Wortham, S. (forthcoming). *Learning identity*. (Chs. 2 and 4).  
Lemke, J.L. (2000). Across the scales of time: Artifacts, activities, and meanings in ecosocial systems. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 7, 273-290.

- Dec. 1 Democracy I.  
Dewey J. (1916). *Democracy & education*. NY: Macmillan. Chs. 1-14.
- Dec. 8 Democracy II.  
Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy & education*. NY: Macmillan. Chs. 15-26.
- Dec. 15 Freedom.  
Greene, M. (1988). *Dialectic of freedom*. NY: Teachers College.

## Assignments

- (1) There will be one oral exam given, on or about November 10. The question for the exam is below. The exam will be given in groups, and the format will be as follows. One day before the exam, you will submit a 1-1 1/2 page (single spaced) written answer to the question. This answer should be submitted, via email, to me and to all the others in your exam group. During the exam we will discuss the answers and try to push our thinking forward. As you answer the question, you will be formulating your own social philosophy of education.

(1a) *First Exam Topic.* Please answer the following question: should schools teach one standard curriculum to all students, or should they allow grouping—like “tracking” of academic abilities or different curricula like “Afrocentric” ones? Justify your position with reference to your vision of education—your beliefs about what an educated person should be. In other words, take a position on Question 2a or 2b, articulate it with reference to concrete educational phenomena like tracking or ethnically-specific curricula, and defend your position by answering Question 1. My goal in giving this exam is to have you formulate and defend your own position. Please do not try to figure out what you think I want to hear. I want to hear what *you* think, and why. The oral part of the exam will be given in groups. The schedule will be worked out in class.

- (2) For each class, about three students will write brief (3-page) reflections on the readings—summarizing the main points, connecting the readings to topics we are discussing in class and raising questions for discussion. At least one of your reflections should be based on observations in a school or other educational setting. The reflection should describe a salient event observed, plus an analysis of how the act or event helped you reflect on issues raised in class readings or discussions. You should go beyond descriptions of events to analyze them, using concepts from readings and class discussions. These reflections should be submitted to the email list for the class (EDUC646-001-04C@LISTS.UPENN.EDU), by noon on the day before class.
- (3) By the end of the day on December 17, students should hand in a final reflection. Describe the development in your own social philosophy of education—i.e., your own developing answers to the three questions on the first page of the syllabus—that has taken place over the term. What did you initially think? How did you deepen or change your views? What sorts of evidence can you give now to support your views? How does your position integrate answers to the central questions of the course? As you articulate your social philosophy, use at least three of the central authors from the course. Describe how the authors’ arguments have been useful to your own developing views.

### Books and Bulkpacks

The following books are available at the Penn Bookstore:

Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J-C. *The inheritors*. (This book is unavailable. A copy will be on reserve and several copies are available to borrow. See Betty Deane.)

Dewey, J. *Democracy and education*

Foucault, M. *Discipline and punish*

Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum International Publishing Company.  
(30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition, 2000)

Greene, M. *Dialectic of freedom*

Perkinson, H. *The imperfect panacea* (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.)

Plato, *Meno*

Willinsky, J. *Learning to divide the world: Education at empire's end*.

All remaining readings are available in a bulkpack at University Copy Service (898-5320), Houston Hall Lower Level.