

ELPS 420 – Philosophy of Education

Course Instructor

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Office hours after class on Saturday morning by appointment; at almost any other time during the work week by appointment.

Course description

Introduction

Thomas Nagel, an American Philosopher active in the second half of the 20th century, explains philosophy in this way: "Philosophy, unlike most other subjects, does not try to extend our knowledge by discovering new information about the world. It tries to deepen our understanding by reflection on what is already closest to us -- the experiences, thoughts, concepts, and activities that make up our lives, and that ordinarily escape notice because they are so familiar. Philosophy begins by finding utterly mysterious things that pervade our everyday lives, such as language, perception, value and truth. For everyday purposes we don't have to know how these things are possible: we talk, we judge that this action is wrong or that assertion true. But it is possible, in the tradition deriving from Plato, to stop and think about what we are really doing, not for a practical purpose but just in order to understand what lies beneath the familiar surface of life." ("In the Stream of Consciousness," *The New York Review of Books*, April 11, 2002.)

This course is an opportunity to stop and think about what really happens in the familiar activities of teaching, learning, and schooling. That people learn, that individual persons appear to be different and react differently to schooling, that particular students profit more from schooling and because of schooling than others, that society expects certain outcomes from schooling, that individuals may have a vision for their own development which may not agree with that proposed by others, all this is familiar but, when you stop and think about it, also mysterious or at least intriguing. What really is going on in teaching, learning, and schooling? That is the question for this course. In fact, the course itself, as a locus for teaching and learning, for interest and boredom, for the pursuit of goals, for human development, is an event that begs for careful consideration of what is really happening, at this moment.

This examination of teaching, learning, and schooling seeks to develop in students an understanding of fundamental questions embedded in these activities and basic responses that have been developed to them in the tradition of philosophic thought: is it possible to attain knowledge; how can claims about human excellence be justified; how are distributions of social benefits justified; how is the tension between individual freedom and the interests of society negotiated. The readings selected for the course introduce students to the Western philosophic tradition as the context for discussing these questions. A central purpose of the course is to demonstrate that answers to these questions are necessarily implied whenever teaching, learning, or schooling occur and that it is worthwhile to make these answers and their justification explicit.

In addition, this course gives particular attention to three ethical issues: how is virtue acquired; what is human excellence; what is a just distribution of educational benefits. With regard to the first, students will understand the different approaches taken by Plato and Aristotle to the development of human virtue and the consequences of each approach for pedagogical practice. With regard to determinations of human excellence, students will understand the difference

between intellectual and moral good and between objective and subjective accounts of good. With regard to the distribution of educational benefits the students will understand the act of teaching and schooling as mechanisms for distributing educational goods to which social goods are attached. They will understand the nature of arguments for distributive justice as these can be applied to education and the ways in which the distribution of educational goods can be considered to be unjust. All of this, of course, relates directly to the conceptual framework of the School of Education which is summarized as "Professionalism in the Service of Social Justice."

Finally, the course gives explicit attention to how the provision and practices of schooling relate to human and group diversity and support or not the values associated with multiculturalism. This involves examining the justification for requesting special treatment in the schools on the basis of particular identities and testing these requests against other values in a democratic society such as equal treatment for all.

Course objectives:

The goals of this course are:

1. To become familiar with major philosophical theories about educational practice, especially as these relate to pedagogical practice, curriculum development, and the response of schools to particular individual, community, and societal interests.

Selections from various educational theorists are assigned for study. These theorists are read to determine: 1) the conditions for citizenship and how these are realized through education; 2) the criteria to judge which social and economic influences are relevant to the provision of schools in a democratic society; 3) the way in which schools are used to distribute social goods and allocate social roles in a democratic society, 4) the ways in which differences are appropriately recognized by schools and the basis for doing so.

Specifically, some of the readings examine the rights respectively of the family and the community in determining educational policy, developing programs, and selecting assessment processes. Serious issues centering on family rights to determine the values and futures of their own children, the rights of the children to independent choices about the kind of persons they wish to become, and the interests of the community in developing citizens with suitable character for life in a democracy and with the skills and knowledge necessary to sustain a way of life arise over the particular arrangements to be found in the schools. Special attention is also given to the philosophical basis for claiming and recognizing difference and to the tension between personal and community identities

The course features close study of philosophic arguments on the rights of family, the individual, and the community in determining arrangements for educating the young. Candidates are asked to read these arguments (Aristotle, Gutman, Scheffler, Rousseau, Freire, Taylor), write reaction papers on the readings, engaged in class discussion that analyzes the readings, and answer questions on mid-term and final examinations that involve sorting out the claims various parties can make with regard to educational practice. The goal here is to provide an understanding of the basis on which groups external to the school can advance claims to be partners in developing the agenda of the schools.

Addresses following ELCC standards:

- 1.6: Act with a reasoned understanding of major historical, philosophical, ethical, social and economic influences affecting education in a democratic society.

3.4: Design curricula with consideration for philosophical, sociological, and historical foundations, democratic values, and the community's values, goals, social needs and changing conditions.

11.6: Analyze the major philosophical tenets of contemporary intellectual movements and analyze their effect on school contexts (e.g. *critical theory, feminism, poststructuralism, fundamentalism, etc.*).

Addresses following ISBE standards:

1G. Has knowledge of the philosophy and history of education.

1R. Analyzes school problems with an understanding of major historical, philosophical, ethical, social and economic influences in a democratic society.

3J. Analyzes, evaluates, and monitors operational plans and processes to accomplish strategic goals, using practical applications of organizational theories.

5E. Analyzes school problems with an understanding of major historical, philosophical, ethical, social, and economic influences in a democratic society.

6B. Recognizes the role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation.

4A. Recognizes emerging issues and trends that potentially impact the school community.

2. To acquire the ability to develop valid philosophical arguments about educational practice.

The course emphasizes the development of valid and sound arguments justifying policies that relate to issues of culture, ethnicity, race and special interests in the schools. The course also seeks to broaden the candidate's appreciation of what aspects of contemporary culture might be relevant to the way in which education is perceived and received by diverse ethnic and racial groups and by special interest groups.

Clarity of communication is developed primarily through the writing assignments and through the class discussions. In these the emphasis is on the quality of arguments that are used to justify educational practices. In addition, candidates are asked to do presentations on aspects of contemporary culture that have relevance for the attempt to provide schooling for diverse populations. In these the candidates present a contemporary cultural event, typically one that has special mean for a particular group or sector of society, and then develop the philosophical issues bearing on education that are generated by this aspect of contemporary culture. The evaluation of the presentation is based on: the sensitivity manifested to the cultural forces and particular experiences that affect the receptiveness of candidates to the instruction offered in the schools; the recognition of claims for particular education treatments that can be advanced in terms of particular cultural experiences; the coherence of the bridge made between cultural event or experience and the claims for the quantity and quality of educational benefits.

The readings include examples of the following schools of thought: fundamentalism (Plato, Aristotle, Whitehead), critical theory (Freire), feminism (Gutman), poststructuralism (Rorty). In addition, contemporary philosophical movements are related to the historical traditions in philosophy, e.g. feminism in Plato's *Republic*, poststructuralism in the work of John Dewey, critical theory in Whitehead and Rousseau.

The course features close study of texts representative of contemporary intellectual movements with attention to their implications for school practices. Readings from authors listed above are included in the syllabus for this course. Guiding questions are included on the web site for this course to help candidates locate the significant issues in the readings. After completing the reading, candidates write a reaction paper in which they present a statement that either supports or challenges a position advanced in the reading and then provide reasons for their opinion. The desired outcome here is an argument fashioned by the candidate that is valid, and perhaps even sound. The reaction papers help the candidate prepare for the class discussions in which the readings are analyzed. The discussions aim at examining the way in which basic principles and values advanced and justified by various schools of thought provide the basis for developing particular pedagogies and curricula. Over the class sessions, comparisons between the schools of thought that have been considered are developed. The candidate's comprehension of these differences is tested in both the mid-term and final examinations.

Addresses the following ELCC standards:

10.3: Communicate effectively with various cultural, ethnic, racial, and special interest groups in the community.

Addresses the following ISBE standards:

5I: Communicates effectively with various cultural, ethnic, racial, special interest groups and other diverse populations in the community.

4L: Articulates the district's or school's vision, mission and priorities to the community and media and understands how to build community support for district for school priorities and programs.

3. To become adept at identifying philosophical issues embedded in current educational practice and controversies, especially as these relate to promoting the values of a democratic society, accommodating the interests of the society and particular groups within it, and the realization of social justice.

The assigned readings provide for a philosophical examination of the basic questions that underlie curriculum development, e.g. the nature of human happiness (Aristotle, Rousseau), the possibilities of attaining knowledge (Plato, Aristotle, Dewey, Rorty), the balance between individual good and the needs of society (Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau), the place of individual interest in developing a curriculum (Dewey, Whitehead, Freire), the rights of parents, the state, and educational professionals in laying out a curriculum (Gutmann), the democratic purposes that have to be addressed in a curriculum (Plato, Dewey).

The readings focus study on important philosophical discussions of the special demands on education in a democracy (Gutmann, Freire, Aristotle). The examination emphasizes the particular ethos that informs curricular design in a democracy, e.g. the rights of various parties to participate in the discussion, the claims persons with a particular heritage can make in having their needs honored in the curriculum, the issues of distributive justice that arise in differentiating curricula for distinct groups, the determination of the ultimate purposes served by a curriculum. In this way, fundamental principles of curriculum development are emphasized.

Addresses the following ELCC standards:

- 1.7: Manifest a professional code of ethics and values.
- 2.4: Analyze and interpret educational data, issues, and trends for boards, committees, and other groups, outlining possible actions and their implications.
- 7.4: Promote multicultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and racial and ethnic appreciation.
- 11.5: Make decisions based on the moral and ethical implications of policy options and political strategies.

Addresses following ISBE standards:

- 5B. Recognizes the various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics.
- 5D. Is aware of the professional code of ethics.
- 5F. Manifests a professional code of ethics and values.
- 4G. Assess emerging issues and trends to determine their impact on the school community.
- 1A. Has knowledge and understanding of learning goals in a pluralistic society.
- 1H. Designs curricula with consideration for philosophical, sociological, and historical foundations, democratic values and the community's values, goals, social needs and changing conditions.
- 5H: Promotes the values and challenges of the diverse school community.
- 5G. Bases decisions on the moral and ethical implications of policy options and political strategies.
- 6P. Bases decisions on the moral and ethical implications of policy options and political strategies.

- 4. To understand the philosophical bases for clarifying issues of social justice that bear upon the distribution of educational benefits.

Addresses the understanding of social justice which is the fundamental concept in the School of Education's conceptual framework.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Steven M. Cahn, ed., *Classics and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Education* McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1997.

Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton University Press, 1994

Course Schedule

January 22: Introduction to the course.

January 29: Plato, *The Meno*. Cahn pp. 5-31.

February 5: Plato, *The Republic*, selections. Cahn pp. 39-90

February 12: Plato, *The Republic*, selections. Cahn pp. 90-109.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, selections. Cahn pp. 111-121.

February 19: Aristotle, *Ethics* and *Politics*, selections. Cahn pp. 124 (paragraph 6) -143.

February 26: No reading assignment - mid-term examination. The exam will be available by 4:00 PM on February 25 and will be due back on February 28 by 9:00 AM.

March 5: Rousseau, *Emile*, selections. Cahn pp. 163-196.

March 19: Dewey, selections. Cahn pp. 276 - 288; 288-295; 309-317.

March 26: Freire and Whitehead, selections. Cahn pp. 460-471; 262-273.

April 2: Gutmann and Neill, selections. Cahn pp. 411-435; 368 - 376; Erik Eckholm, "In Efforts to End Bullying, Some See Agenda" and "Manhattan Free School" (found under "Documents" in Blackboard, entry under "Gutmann").

April 9: Rorty. "Hermeneutics, General Studies, and Teaching," Cahn, pp. 522-36; Searle, "Traditionalists and Their Challengers," Cahn pp. 536-546; William Deresiewicz, "The Disadvantages of an Elite Education" (found under "Documents" in Blackboard, entry under Rorty").

April 15: Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, pp. 25-73; K. Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival," pp. 149- 163; Patricia Leigh Brown, "Supporting Boys or Girls When the Line Isn't Clear" (found under "Documents" in Blackboard, entry under Taylor: "Gender Identity Rights").

April 30: The final examination will be distributed by 4:00 PM on April 29 and is due back by 9:00 AM on May 2.

Course requirements

1. Submit for each individual class's reading assignment a one-page reaction paper. These are to be critical commentaries on the reading assignments in which you provide cogent arguments for the positions you take. These will be evaluated in terms of the adequacy of the reasons provided in support of the opinions advanced in the paper.
2. Participate in class discussions. Much of the work in this course is done during the review and discussion of the assigned readings. Each of us needs to be an actively engaged in analyzing the readings and applying the philosophical conclusions to contemporary educational issues and practices. Student participation will be evaluated in terms of its relevance to the topic being discussed and the willingness of the student to test out ideas.
3. Participate in the two written examinations: mid-term and final. These will be open-book, essay examinations. These examinations will be evaluated in terms of the accuracy of the student's understanding of the philosophic positions considered in the course, the ability of the student to compare and contrast philosophical positions, and the efficacy of the student's application of philosophical theories to contemporary educational events.

Technology

All papers and tests in this course will be managed electronically through Blackboard and LiveText.

Evaluation

Grades in this course will be assigned on the following basis:

Item	Percentage
Reaction papers	40%
Mid-term	25%

examination	
Final examination	35%

The Final Examination and the School of Education's Conceptual Framework

The final examination will include two questions that relate to two standards within the School of Education's conceptual framework, namely CF-3 which deals with understanding of distributive justice and CF-8 which deals with the ability to shape ethical arguments. Here are the rubrics that will be used in assessing students on these two standards:

CF-3: Distributive Justice

	Target	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Distributive justice IL-LUC-CF.3	Student precisely understands the ways in which questions of distributive justice enter into educational practices and policies. The student is able to elucidate the complexities of these issues using the writings of educational theorists. The student is able to construct a valid argument for an educational policy or practice that attempts to address these issues.	Student has a general understanding of the ways in which questions of distributive justice enter into educational practices and policies. The student is acquainted with some of the ways in which educational theorists have developed responses to these issues. The student is able to suggest reasons for an educational policy or practice that attempts to address these issues..	Student fails to identify the ways in which questions of distributive justice enter into educational practices and policies. Student fails to recognize the ways in which educational theories seek to address such issues. The student is unable to offer reasons to justify educational policies and practices that aim at resolving issues of distributive justice.

CF-8: Ethical decision making

	Target	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Ethical justification IL-LUC-CF.8	Students precisely understands the ethical and moral dimensions of the question and can develop a valid argument for educational policies and practices that are morally justified.	Student has a general sense of the ethical and moral implications of the question and the student's statements about educational practices and policies, even though not fully justified, nonetheless point to the way in which an argument would need to be developed.	Student ignores or is mistaken about the ethical and moral implications of the question. ing of the educational theory in question. The student makes claims about educational policies and practices without a supporting argument.
Educational theory IL-LUC-CF.8	Student demonstrates an accurate	Student demonstrates general familiarity with the educational theory	The student fails to apply educational theory in interpreting

	Target	Acceptable	Unacceptable
	understanding of the educational theory relevant to interpreting the question and can use that theory in developing a valid argument for educational policies and practices that are morally justified.	relevant to interpreting the question. The student's application of this theory in developing an argument for particular educational practices is reasonable even if not tightly organized.	the question or misunderstands how the educational theory is relevant.
Overall IL-LUC-CF.8	Student both understands the ethical and moral implications of issues raised in the question and demonstrates an accurate understanding of educational theory in developing an argument for ethically correct and morally good educational policies and practices.	Student understands, at least in part, the ethical and moral implications of issues raised in the question and understands the relevance of educational theory to developing an argument for ethically correct and morally good educational policies and practices, even if the student does not accurately use the theory or does not construct a valid argument.	Student does not recognize the ethical and moral implications of the question and fails to use educational theory in developing a recommendation for educational policies and practices that are ethically correct and morally good.

Technology

Please note that all papers and examinations in this course will be managed electronically through Blackboard

Diversity

As is readily evident from the above reading list, issues of diversity are embedded in various ways in the assigned readings and the class discussions. Among these are: the ethical justifications for multiculturalism; the implications of recognizing ascribed and achieved identities; the tension between personal freedom and identity assignment and recognition.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is an expression of interpersonal justice, responsibility and care, applicable to Loyola University faculty, students, and staff, which demands that the pursuit of knowledge in the university community be carried out with sincerity and integrity. The School of Education's Policy on Academic Integrity can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_integrity.shtml. For additional academic policies and procedures refer to: http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_main.shtml

Accessibility

Students who have disabilities which they believe entitle them to accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) office. To request accommodations, students must schedule an appointment with an SSWD coordinator. Students should contact SSWD at least four weeks before their first semester or term at Loyola. Returning students should schedule an appointment within the first two weeks of the semester or term. The University policy on accommodations and participation in courses is available at: <http://www.luc.edu/sswd/>

Harassment (Bias Reporting)

It is unacceptable and a violation of university policy to harass, discriminate against or abuse any person because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. Such behavior threatens to destroy the environment of tolerance and mutual respect that must prevail for this university to fulfill its educational and health care mission. For this reason, every incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse undermines the aspirations and attacks the ideals of our community. The university qualifies these incidents as incidents of bias.

In order to uphold our mission of being Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University-- a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith, any incident(s) of bias must be reported and appropriately addressed. Therefore, the Bias Response (BR) Team was created to assist members of the Loyola University Chicago community in bringing incidents of bias to the attention of the university. If you believe you are subject to such bias, you should notify the Bias Response Team at this link: <http://webapps.luc.edu/biasreporting/>