

Philosophy of Education

Course Description

What are the goals of education? How can they be achieved in ways that promote the dignity and flourishing of every member of society? Philosophy of education is concerned with questions like these, which lie at the intersection of educational endeavor and philosophical reflection on broader issues of justice and knowledge. In this class we will explore these issues, drawing on a variety of disciplinary perspectives and historical periods, from Plato to *Brown vs. Board of Education* and contemporary social science.

Course Goals

By taking this course, you will **learn**:

- How education raises epistemological, ethical, and political questions
- How philosophers have approached questions about education, especially the nature of a liberal education

By taking this course, you will **be better able to**:

- Understand contemporary debates about education
- Put contemporary educational debates into historical context
- Write precisely, reasonably, and persuasively
- Deliberately assess real-world educational systems and policies

By taking this course, you will **become**:

- A more informed citizen
- Better able to understand and articulate what you want out of your own education

Texts

Randall Curren, *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology*.

Select other readings provided by the instructor.

Assignments and Grades

Quizzes (20% of course grade)

We will have a closed-book quiz almost every day at the start of class. (We won't have quizzes the first day, or days when you are taking tests. I may elect to forgo a quiz other days as well, but it won't happen often.) This is a much better idea than it may sound: it will help your learning and your grades significantly.

Each quiz will have 2-4 questions. At least one question will be about the reading assigned for the day, and at least one will be about material covered in class the previous class day. You will be able to drop 2 quiz grades. You will also do some quizzes as a group, sharing a grade for the day.

Tests (30% of course grade)

We will have two tests. Each will involve essay writing and short answer questions, and perhaps some author identification, matching, and fill in the blanks.

Papers (35% of course grade)

This class has two sorts of writing assignments: a series of short papers designed to gradually teach you the skills needed to write philosophy (the "levels assignment", described below), and a final paper.

Class Participation (15% of course grade)

You will be expected to attend class regularly and engage with what goes on there.

Tentative List of Readings

Pt. 1: The Nature of Education

Plato, "Knowing How to Rule and be Ruled as Justice Demands"

Isocrates, "An Educated Person Can Speak Well and Persuade"

Aristotle, "Liberal vs. Mechanical Education"

Locke, "The Exercise of Reason"

Rousseau, "The Education of Nature"

Pt. 2 Education and Justice

Chief Justice Warren, "Brown vs. Board of Education", excerpts

Feinberg, "The Child's Right to an Open Future"

Mill, "Education and the Limits of State Authority"

Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education"

Green, "The Law of Zero-Correlation"

Gutmann, "Interpreting Equal Educational Opportunity"

Pt. 3 Critical Thinking and Learning

Locke, "Reasoning with Children"

Rousseau, "Against Reasoning with Children"

Rousseau, "Learning by Discovery"

Grandy, "Constructivisms and Objectivity: Disentangling Metaphysics from Pedagogy"

Elgin, "Education and the Advancement of Understanding"

Pt. 4 Curriculum and the Content of Education

Curren, "Cultivating the Moral and Intellectual Virtues"

Brighouse, "Should We Teach Patriotic History?"

Reiss, "Conflicting Philosophies of School Sex Education"

Baddorf Philosophy of Education Syllabus

Pt. 5 Sectarian Education in Diverse Societies

Levinson and Levinson, "‘Getting Religion’: Religion, Diversity, and Community in Public and Private Schools"

Hand, "A Philosophical Objection to Faith Schools"