

## Philosophy and Education BEF 504

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*“Ultimately, the best teachers are philosophers, not technicians. For it is this that makes teaching a profession.”*

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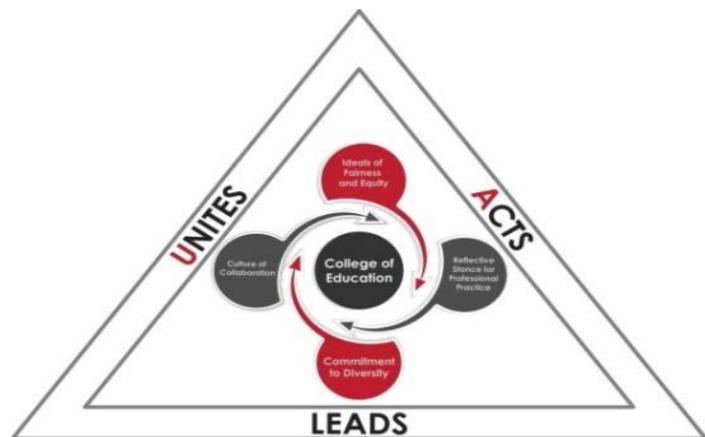
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The vision of the College of Education (COE) at The University of Alabama is to develop effective, ethical, and reflective professionals who advance the theme of the COE: Unites, Acts, and Leads (UA Leads). By engaging in theoretically informed and intellectually advanced effective practice our graduates will

**UNITE** with the larger community to collaboratively nurture cultural competence, empathy, and a vision of equity and justice for all learners;

**ACT** to develop the full potential of all learners to be excellent professionals in their field; and

**LEAD** through continuous research-based critical inquiry of policy and reflective practice to enable transformative change in our diverse local and global communities.



### *Catalogue Description*

An examination into the meaning and purpose of education in light of major philosophical problems of knowledge, value, and reality. Offered in alternate semesters and in summer school.

### *Course Overview*

This course is a survey of the Philosophy of Education. Its purpose is to provide an introductory review of some of the major branches of philosophical inquiry --epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, metaphysics, and axiology -- and of the major schools of thought that have shaped the field. As we work through the four required texts, we will explicitly consider three of the major branches of philosophy: epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. In so doing, we will sort through the myriad ways that philosophy, as a discipline, can inform the ways that we look at the practices, policies, and purposes of formal education. Thus, our working assumption is that there is some relationship between the fields of philosophy and education. Connecting philosophy and its intellectual tools to education is a step in the process of developing a philosophy of education that addresses a number of questions: What should we teach in schools? How should we teach it? Why should we teach it? To whom should we teach it? It should be clear here why the study of the specific branches of philosophy must be pursued, even if only in an introductory way. For example, how can we judge what knowledge to teach before

understanding what it means to know? The course will be an exercise in understanding what philosophy is, what philosophers do, and how they think.

### *Required Texts*

Anyon, J. (2011). *Marx and Education*. New York: Routledge.

Brighouse, H. (2006). *On education*. New York: Routledge.

Knoester, M. (2012). *Democratic education in practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Plato. (1998). *The republic of Plato*. (R. Waterfield, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional articles as assigned and provided online.

### *Grading and Assignments*

Letter grades will reflect the following point standard: 100-90, A; 90-80, B; and so on. This standard will be strictly followed (i.e., 89 is the same as 80 to my mind).

1. Attendance and Participation (20 points). Participation involves drawing from class reading, discussion, and your own professional experience (and, importantly, connecting these) to ask questions, answer questions, pose problems, brainstorm, provide critique, analyze, proffer opinions, among other things. As regards opinions, please note that they are not free and you are not entitled to them in this class. All opinions must be paid for through reading, dialogue, and reflection.

2. Essays x 4. (40 points). You will prepare a 2-3 page response to the discussion questions. By response, I do not mean simply answering the questions individually. Your response should make an argument which necessarily includes laying out the conceptual foundation of the argument and reads your particular article together with the main text. The essay for the first weekend is **due** January 31 by 5:00 pm. All subsequent essays are **due** at the beginning of class on Fridays.

3. Teaching x 4 (40 points). In addition to the text for the month, you will be assigned one other article or book chapter to read along with a partner in the class. Together you will teach the content of the article in a way that makes direct connections to prior readings and the main text. You will have 30-45 minutes for your presentation and should have prepared a one-page handout for your classmates. You will be given 45-60 minutes in class to prepare your presentation. You should have read your assigned article thoroughly in order to optimize the time given.

Presentation pairings are as follow:

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Pairing 1	Gary, Savanna	Kyle, Trish	Savanna, Caleb	TBD
Pairing 2	Kyle, Teresa	Caleb, Gigi	Teresa, Gary	TBD
Pairing 3	Caleb	Savanna, Teresa	Kyle, Gigi	TBD
Pairing 4	Trish, Gigi	Gary	Trish	TBD

## *General Policies*

Submission of assignments: All written work should be word-processed, double-spaced, have 12 point font, and follow APA style for references and citations. Late assignments will be penalized 2 points for each day or part thereof that they are late. Requests for extensions will be honored if made at least 3 days prior to the due date. Your paper should have a title page and numbered pages. Just staple it; DO NOT put it in a folder, plastic cover, binder, etc.

Statement of Equal Treatment and Disabilities. The instructor and students in this course will act with integrity and strive to engage in equitable behavior with respect to differences arising from age, gender, race, physical ability, religious preferences, sexual orientation, and national origin. If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary to assure your full participation in the class. If you have a disability but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call 354-5175 or visit Osband Hall to register for services.

Academic honesty: Avoid [plagiarism](#)! Quotation marks should be used if the material is copied directly from the readings and text citations should be used. Quotations are followed by the author, year, and page number in parenthesis of the source of the quote (Petrovic, 1998, p. 15). If you paraphrase something, put just the author and year after the paraphrased material (Petrovic, 1998). You will be in violation of The University of Alabama policies if you fail to follow standard referencing rules. Submitting work done for another class, submitting someone else's work as your own, copying and pasting from the internet, are all violations. (Internet sources may be used, but you must follow standard referencing rules.) By policy, all suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Associate Dean of the College of Education for further action.

Attendance: Informed discussion, exchange of ideas, and debate comprise the heart of the class. Thus, attendance at every class meeting is expected and your grade will reflect your attendance in combination with your participation (see "grading" above). I appreciate that family or professional responsibilities may arise, not to mention illnesses. Your first 3 hours of absence will not be counted against you; all others will.

## *Learning Outcomes*

By the end of this course, students will

understand epistemology, the social construction of knowledge, and how this should inform teaching and policy,

recognize different ethical positions and their role as professional educators,

be able to critically analyze educational practice and policy from different philosophical perspectives,

develop a conception "democratic education" and an understanding of the myriad purposes of education in democratic societies,

be able to apply philosophical methods to understand educational policy, practice, and reform.

## Course Schedule

### **Weekend 1 (February 19-20)**

*Alfred North Whitehead once described philosophy as a “series of footnotes to Plato.” Thus, we begin there. For it is not just philosophy write large that might be a footnote but philosophy of education. In his Republic, Plato covers the interrelated philosophical terrains of epistemology, political philosophy, and education, among others. He also sets out what is probably the earliest philosophy of education in Western society. Plato’s project was to discover justice and the just society. The achieving of a just society required the development of an educational philosophy such that education would both reflect and promote that just society.*

#### Reading:

Everyone : Plato, Chapters 2-9

Presentation 1: Jane Roland Martin, [The ideal of the educated person](#)

Presentation 2: Patricia Hill Collins, [Black feminist epistemology](#)

Presentation 3: Barbara Thayer-Bacon, [Navigating epistemological territories](#)

Presentation 4: Amy Gutmann, [States and education](#)

Discussion questions, presenters 1-3: What is epistemology? What is Plato’s epistemology? What is the epistemology of the author you read and how does or might she critique Plato and why? What are the implications for teaching and learning?

Discussion questions, presenters 4: What is the just state for Plato and what are the implications for educational policy and practice? How does Gutmann critique Plato and why?

### **Weekend 2 (March 4-5)**

*Even as he sought to change the social order, Plato’s philosophy of education must be considered a quintessentially conservative one through the sociopolitical lens of contemporary society. Therefore, upon completion of some study of Plato, we turn to the work of Jean Anyon, a “radical” social theorist/philosopher, who takes up the same overarching question as Plato: What is the state of society and is it just? Of course, the sociopolitical and economic situation is much different. Anyon problematizes contemporary society by asking, What role does capitalism play in promoting or undermining justice? What is the role of schools/education in a just society and a capitalist society? Can/should schools seek to change the social order?*

#### Reading:

Everyone : Anyon, in its entirety

Presentation 1: McLaren & Muñoz, [Contesting Whiteness](#)

Presentation 2: Wilson, [Being poor, black, and American](#)

Presentation 3: Reardon, [The widening income achievement gap](#)

Presentation 4: Amiran, [Aims of higher education](#)

Discussion questions, presenters 1: What is capitalism and how is it connected to the construction of race and racism? What is the authors' critique of multicultural education (as it is traditionally implemented at least)? What does it mean to challenge whiteness and what is the connection to capitalism?

Discussion questions, presenters 2: What does it mean to be poor and black in the US? What is capitalism and how would you argue that the answer to the first question traces to capitalism? How does capitalist schooling reproduce these conditions?

Discussion questions, presenters 3: What is capitalism and how would you argue that the widening income gap and, thus, the achievement gap trace to capitalism? How do the author's recommendations square with Anyon's research on capitalist schools?

Discussion questions, presenters 4: What does the author mean by the "corporatization of schools" and how does this manifest? What is capitalism and how is it implicated in the corporatization of schools? How does Saltman's argument speak to the notion of "accumulation by dispossession" (in terms of the redistribution of economic control from public to private interests)?

### **Weekend 3 (April 15-16)**

#### Reading:

Everyone: Brighouse, in its entirety

Presentation 1: Hewitt, [Priming the pump](#)

Presentation 2: Hand, [Should we promote patriotism](#)

Presentation 3: Smith & Howe, [Lower wall...church/state](#) & [School choice in the cave](#)

Presentation 4: Ben-Porath, [Citizenship as shared fate](#)

Discussion questions, presenters 1: What does Hewitt mean when he suggests that there is no such thing as freedom in general and what role does capitalism and/or economic individualism play in that? What is the importance in understanding Dewey's notion of habit here? Explain the three purposes of schooling that Brighouse identifies, how he defends them, and how Hewitt's paper speaks to those purposes.

Discussion questions, presenters 2: Should we promote patriotism in schools? What is the difference between patriotism and citizenship? What are Harry Brighouse and Michael Hand's views? Do they agree or disagree? Explain the three purposes of schooling that Brighouse identifies, how he defends them, and how the discussion on patriotism informs those purposes.

Discussion questions, presenters 3: Explain the three purposes of schooling that Brighouse identifies, how he defends them, and how he uses them to support his argument that religious schools should receive government support. In other words, what are the consequences that he foresees of such support? What is Smith's argument toward the same end and in what ways does it echo or diverge from Brighouses'? How/why does Howe disagree with both Smith and Brighouse?

Discussion questions, presenters 4: Ben-Porath notes a tension between celebrating diversity and developing civic capacity (p. 382). How does shared-fate citizenship resolve this tension? In what ways do the principles of shared-fate citizenship and the educational policies and practices that support it speak to or against the three purposes of schooling that Brighouse outlines? What is the problem with patriotism in this regard for Brighouse?

## **Weekend 4 (May 6)**

### **Reading:**

Knoester (or other assigned text), in its entirety

May 6, by midnight, is the due day/time for this final project. Since it is making up for missed class time, the project will be broader in scope and slightly longer (3-5 pages). For those of you reading Knoester, please address the prompts below. Remember, you should strive to integrate the content/question into a coherent paper that makes an argument.

1. What do you think Knoester means by thin and thick democracy both in and out of schools? Drawing on both Knoester and Anyon, explain how the dominant ideology (capitalism, neoliberalism) undermines democracy and democratic schooling. According to Knoester, how does thick democracy manifest in his school in terms of curriculum, teaching, policy structures, etc.?
2. Summarize the mission of Knoester's school, fleshing it out where appropriate by drawing on the purposes of schooling identified by Brighouse (e.g., his notion of education for flourishing). How does Knoester's school serve this mission and achieve these purposes in practice?
3. What does education for democratic citizenship look like in Knoester's school and what are the habits of mind (p. 72) necessary to it? Why/How might you relate some of these habits to or include among them Brighouse's notion of reciprocity? (Note the nice deconstruction/explanation of these habits on p. 87.)