

Philosophy of Education

MW 11:35-12:50 am

Prof. Jason Stanley

Philosophy of education, historically and conceptually, is at the heart of the discipline of philosophy. In this class, we shall be studying this strong overlap between philosophy and education. The focus will be on the connection between education and political philosophy. Ultimately, the course is aimed at reflection upon the normative shape and form of education in liberal democracy. This means that we will simultaneously be discussing political systems and education systems. One theme of the course will be the dispute between education as a means to provide for *social efficiency*, versus education as a means for *liberal democratic citizenship*. Another theme, within the liberal democratic tradition in education, concerns the nature of an education for liberal democratic citizenship. Is such an education a means for establishing common general interests, something akin to what Rousseau calls the *General Will*, or is a means to establish a citizenry of independent minded persons who pursue their own individual interests?

Throughout, we will bring classic (and some contemporary) texts in philosophy – mostly social and political philosophy - to bear on the subject of education. If education is where one acquires the capacity for knowledge, then should education involve freedom of speech and thought, or should it involve rather restrictions on freedoms? What is the difference between education and indoctrination? What is the proper relation, in a liberal democracy, between civic education and vocational education? Should the goal of education be social efficiency, or should the goal of education be freedom? What is the shape and form of a system of education devoted to liberal ideals?

The class will be focused on student participation and discussion. Students should be prepared to come to each class with questions based on the reading, and draw on their own thinking about and experience with education systems. The course requirements will be regular participation, two 5-8 page papers, and one 750 word “op ed”, written as a public journalism piece, that applies the concepts in the course to a contemporary issue about education. Everyone must complete one Op Ed by the end of the semester, but there is no fixed due date for this assignment – just write when you find a topic that is of interest. The Op Ed must be written in consultation with the instructor, and in two drafts.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Week One

Overview

Social Efficiency versus Autonomy

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “The Solitude of Self”

Woodrow Wilson, “The Meaning of a Liberal Education”

David Labaree, “Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Higher Education”

Recommended: Daniel Markovits, "[Meritocracy Harms Everyone \(Links to an external site.\)](#)"

Weeks Two & Three Ideology

Ideology

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

"[Detroit's Public Schools are in Crisis \(Links to an external site.\)](#)"

Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology", Chapter 11 of *Black Feminist Thought*

Miranda Fricker, "Hermeneutical Injustice", Chapter 7 of *Epistemic Injustice*

Week Four

Justice and Social Efficiency

Plato, Books I, II, and III of *The Republic*

Ralph Wedgwood, "The Coherence of Thrasymachus"

Justice and Social Efficiency, cont'd

Plato, Books IV, V, and VI of *The Republic*

Week Five

Justice and Social Efficiency, cont'd

Plato, Books VII and VIII of *The Republic*

FIRST PAPER ASSIGNED

Week Six

Rousseau and the Communitarian Ideal

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Part II

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (selections)

Week Seven Nationalism and Education

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses on the German Nation* (excerpts)

Weeks Eight and Nine

W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History", final chapter of *Black Reconstruction*

[Executive order on patriotic education](#)

Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Our Democracy's Ideals were False When They Were Written"

(More materials on the 1619 Project Debate)

Week Nine

Dewey on Education

John Dewey, “The Democratic Conception in Education”, Chapter 7 of Democracy and Education

Dewey on Education, cont'd

John Dewey, “Experience and Education”

David Labaree, “How Dewey Lost: The Victory of David Snedden and Social Efficiency in the Reform of American Education”

FIRST PAPER DUE

Week Ten

Vocational Education versus Liberal Education

Booker T. Washington, “Industrial Education for the Negro”

W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk

Week Eleven

Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro

SECOND PAPER ASSIGNED

Weeks Twelve and Thirteen

Paolo Freire, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Week Thirteen

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Week 14

Danielle Allen, Education and Equality

***** END OF SEMESTER *****

Graded Requirements

There will be two 5-8 page essays assigned, an op-ed. These papers should be written drawing on the reading and discussions in class, unless permission is given otherwise. Grades will be based upon these assignments, regular attendance, and civil, regular participation.

Discussion Policy

Student input and participation is a central part of this course. Please come to class prepared to participate, with suggestions for what to discuss based on the readings and the direction of the class. Participation must be civil and respectful; please do not dominate discussion or speak over fellow class participants.