

Winter 2009

Dr. Jeffrey Morgan

## Philosophy/Education 362

# Philosophy of Education

Wednesday 7:00 – 9:50

Room: D138

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**Office Hours:** Monday & Wednesday 6:00-6:45, or by appointment

**Course Text:**

Brighouse, Harry (2006). *On Education*. Routledge.

Winch, Christopher and John Gingell (2004).

*Philosophy and educational policy: A critical introduction*. RoutledgeFalmer.

A coursepack will also be required.

**Course Description:**

*Zixia said: "As for persons who care for character much more than beauty, who in serving their parents are able to exert themselves utterly, who give their whole person in the service of their ruler, and who, in interactions with colleagues and friends, make good on their word—even if it were said of such persons that they are unschooled, I would insist that they are well educated indeed."*  
(The Analects of Confucius, 1.8)\*

What is education? Children, it is sometimes said, have a right to education, but to what exactly does this right entitle them? One possibility is that children have a right to go to school. Indeed,

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\* Translated by Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr. (1998). Ballantine.

sometimes the word 'education' is used as a synonym with schooling, but other times we refer to education as something we might attain (or fail to attain) *through* our schooling. Also, we know that people need not go to school in order to become educated, and some well-schooled people are, unfortunately, poorly educated. Consider, for example, Confucius's comment above. Confucius appears to think that education is an ideal, specifically a matter of acquiring certain virtues—albeit not necessarily virtues that we embrace today in the western world—and that one can be educated without going to school. Today, some people withdraw their children from schooling, partly because they worry that schools are failing to educate. Indeed, the right to education is hollow and frivolous if all it means is that children have a right to go to school but we don't insist that what goes on at school is worthwhile!

However, if we disagree with Confucius about what makes a person educated, then we must consider what does make a person educated. Is education a matter of accumulating knowledge, becoming a critical thinker, fitting into society, developing the capacities of democratic citizenship, acquiring job skills, developing reason, acquiring religious faith, or becoming autonomous? This question is of the utmost importance, for our conceptions of education guide us as teachers, school administrators, parents and citizens in a democratic state. Essentially, we are concerned with the goals to which our schools ought to be aiming; without clarifying these goals we cannot even determine whether our schools are doing a poor job or not.

PHIL/EDUC 362 introduces the study of the philosophy of education, the area of applied philosophy and educational theory concerned with abstract and reflective questions about the nature, aims and methods of education. It is both practical and theoretical. Like all philosophy, it is intensely theoretical, involving closely argued reasoning about concepts such as knowledge, learning, education, teaching, intelligence, development, indoctrination, authority and autonomy. Especially for teachers and students, but also for those concerned with educational policy—and indeed for all thoughtful moral agents—it is intrinsically valuable to understand these concepts and their inter-relations. Without such understanding, one's educational practices might seem to be without meaning, adrift from other significant aspects of life. However, there is a significant practical dimension to philosophy of education as well. Practicing teachers—as well as educational policy makers, parents, coaches and other youth leaders—will find the abstract reflection on the concepts above to be helpful in examining and inspiring their own practice. For example, teachers who believe that critical thinking is a teachable generic skill that can be applied across subject matters will choose curricula that differ from that chosen by teachers who believe that critical thinking is always learned in a specific discipline. Teachers who believe that education is a matter of passing on information to children will proceed differently from those teachers who believe that

education is a matter of developing an excellent character. If you believe that autonomy is the highest educational ideal, then you will treat your students differently than those who believe that fitting into society (socialization), preparation for a paying career, or adherence to a specific faith is the most important educational value.

This course is principally a seminar, not a lecture course, although I will indeed lecture from time to time. My overriding goal is to make you think hard about educational policy and practice—about your own teaching if you are or intend to be a teacher (or parent)—and to come to your own conclusions. I will present arguments, as would any philosopher, and the course readings will be argumentative, but I expect you to respond to these arguments with arguments of your own.

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to analyze and understand principal concepts, themes and issues in the philosophy of education
2. Students will be able to appreciate the essentially normative character of educational theory
3. Students will acquire familiarity with a range of issues in contemporary educational policy
4. Students will acquire the skills and understanding necessary to do competent applied philosophy
5. Students will develop their abilities to write clear, rational and persuasive argumentative essays
6. Students will acquire a detailed understanding of a particular issue in the philosophy of education

### **Evaluation:**

Attendance & participation	10%
Midterm (in class)	15%
Short paper	20%
Longer paper	30%
Take home final	25%

Attendance will count as 6 points and up to 4 points will be awarded for participation. Note that poor attendance will necessarily lead to a poor participation score. Usually I take attendance after the break and I award half points for students who arrive late or leave early. You may miss two classes without incurring any penalty. Third and subsequent absences will incur a one-point penalty per class. Thus, if you miss four classes you will get a score of 4/6 for attendance. You will also be penalized in your participation score.

The in-class midterm will consist of one short essay question and a few short answer questions. It will be written in the second half of one class.

The short paper will require writing a 750-word paper on a topic chosen by the instructor. You will have at least two weeks to write this paper.

The longer paper will require a modest amount of library research. I will suggest a few topics, but the ultimate choice of topic will be up to you. If you choose, you may write this paper with a partner. I will provide written instructions for the longer paper in the first few weeks of class.

The take-home final will be discussed in the last few weeks of class. At this time, I can say that the best means of preparing for the final is to complete all reading and to participate wholeheartedly in class.

### **Assignment and Test Policies:<sup>†</sup>**

1. Assignments should be submitted on time. If you have a bona fide excuse for submitting your paper late, then I urge you to see me. If your paper is on time, I will do my best to mark and return it the following class. If it is less than two days late (i.e., submitted by Friday afternoon by 4:00), then I will not deduct points, but marking it within a week will not be high priority for me. If it is more than two days late without a good excuse (usually supported by a doctor's note indicating that you are/were unable to complete the assignment), then I will grade the paper but my comments will be minimal.
2. If you miss the midterm, then see me as soon as possible with the reason. Supporting documents (e.g. a doctor's note) will be expected. If you have a good excuse, then an alternate midterm test and date will be arranged.
3. Do your own work. Obviously, this means that you cannot submit someone else's work as your own, by for example buying a paper, hiring someone to write your paper, or copying a paper you found on the internet. Further, if you draw on the ideas or words of another person, then you must cite appropriately. Failing to do this might constitute plagiarism—the UFV Student Conduct policy can be found at [http://www.ucfv.ca/\\_shared/assets/3102360.pdf](http://www.ucfv.ca/_shared/assets/3102360.pdf). The penalties for academic misconduct can be severe, depending on the seriousness of the infraction and the number of prior offenses committed. I must report offenders to Student Services. It is *your*

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<sup>†</sup> Note: These policies are a deviation from my practices in the past. My relaxed practices have led to abuse, and I intend to firmly apply the following policies.

responsibility to be aware of UFV's policies on academic dishonesty.

4. There are more specific requirements for each assignment. Failing to follow the requirements can result in loss of points or even outright rejection of the assignment, for example, if an assignment is not typed, single-spaced or lacks adequate margins.

### Course Schedule<sup>‡</sup>

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READING</b>
Jan 7	Introduction: What is philosophy of education?	Winch, pp. 1-4
Jan 14	Values, aims and society	Winch, pp. 5-15 Martin, J. "Becoming Educated"
Jan 21	Culture and the curriculum	Winch, pp. 17-34 Brighouse, pp. 1-10
Jan 28	Brighouse's four principles of education I	Brighouse, pp. 13-41
Feb 4	Brighouse's four principles of education II	Brighouse, pp. 42-73
Feb 11	Teaching and learning: Knowledge and the imagination <b><i>First Paper Due</i></b>	Winch, pp. 35-49 Barrow, R. "Curriculum Content"
<b>Feb 18</b>	<b>Semester Break</b>	<b>No Class</b>
Feb 25	Pedagogy, good practice and educational research & Standards, performance and assessment	Winch, pp. 51-78 Passmore, J. "The Concept of Teaching"
Mar 4	Moral, personal and civic education & Autonomy and liberal education	Winch, pp. 79-107 Callan, E. The Great Sphere: Education Against Servility

<sup>‡</sup> I reserve the right to make changes as necessary.

Mar 11	Vocationalism, training and economics & Should schools teach patriotism? <b>Midterm</b>	Winch, pp. 109-122  Brighthouse, pp. 95-114
Mar 18	Markets, politics and education	Winch, pp. 123-137
Mar 25	Should governments support religious schools?	Brighthouse, pp. 77-94
Apr 1	Education and multiculturalism & Should citizenship education be compulsory? <b>Second Paper Due</b>	Winch, pp. 139-153  Brighthouse, pp. 115-130  Gutmann, A. "Unity and Diversity in Democratic Multicultural Education"
Apr 8	Conclusion	