

Philosophy of Childhood and Education

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Sample Syllabus

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is Education? What is the purpose of education, both for the student and for the community? How do our conceptions of childhood influence our understanding of the nature and goals of education? Should education be conceived of as the transmission of knowledge, or as the cultivation of inquiry and critical thinking skills? This course will explore many of these central questions in the Philosophy of Education and the Philosophy of Childhood in Western philosophical thought. Many of our beliefs about the nature of education and the nature of childhood are cultivated by our own early experiences, as well as our participation in various educational settings. These beliefs will be affirmed or challenged by the course readings we will discuss in class. As such, this course requires students to approach readings and discussions with an open mind and a desire to become more self-reflective about the beliefs that form our own educational philosophies. Students are encouraged to examine their existing beliefs about education, to analyze those beliefs, defend or critique them, and adopt a more philosophically sound foundation for them through class discussions and written assignments.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Recognize and explain the key problems and theories in philosophy of education and philosophy of childhood
2. Know how to read and compare philosophical arguments that cover a range of viewpoints
3. Bolster critical thinking skills as they are applied to reading and comparing philosophical arguments
4. Refine writing skills through course papers and written exams

COURSE SCHEDULE

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| Week 1 | Introduction
Plato: <i>The Meno</i> (selections) |
| Week 2 | Plato: <i>The Republic</i>
• Book II (368–376d) |

- Book III (412b–417b)
- Book IV (427d–434d)

Nel Noddings: “Philosophy of Education Before The Twentieth Century - Socrates And Plato”

- Week 3 **David Kennedy:** *The Well of Being* (selection)
John Locke: *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*
- Week 4 **John Stuart Mill:** “Inaugural Address at St. Andrews”
Amy Gutmann: *Democratic Education* (selection)
- Week 5 **Gareth Matthews:** “Theories and Models of Childhood”
Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Emile*
 Book I
 Book II
 Book IV
- Week 6 **Maria Montessori:** *The Absorbent Mind*
 • The Child and World Reconstruction
 • Education for Life
 • The Absorbent Mind
Gareth Matthews: “Childhood Amnesia”
- Week 7 **John Dewey:** *Experience and Education* (selections)
Paolo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (selections)
- Week 8 **Jean-Jacques Rousseau:** *Emile*
 Book V
Jane Roland Martin: *Reclaiming A Conversation* (selection)
- Week 9 **Nel Noddings:** *Caring*
Nel Noddings: “The Challenge to Care in Schools”
- Week 10 **John Dewey:** *Democracy and Education*
 • Education as a Necessity of Life
 • The Democratic Conception in Education
 • Aims in Education
bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*
 (selection)
- Week 11 **Nel Noddings:** *Philosophy of Education*
 • Inequality in Physical Resources

- Inequalities in Basic Relationships
- Curricular Inequalities

Maxine Greene: "The Passions of Pluralism"

Week 12 **Joel Westheimer** and **Joseph Kahne:** "What Kind of Citizen?"
Jennifer M. Morton: "The Educator's Dual Role: Expressing Ideals
While Educating in Nonideal Conditions"

Week 13 **Matthew Lipman:** "The Reflective Model of Educational Practice"
Matthew Lipman: "Thinking in Community"
Martha Nussbaum: "Cultivating Humanity"

Week 14 **Matthew Lipman:** "The Emotions in Thinking and in Education"
Gareth Matthews: "Childhood and Death"