Philosophy of Education

Paper Code: 2

Course Overview
The Philosophy of Education course develops those areas of philosophy that are crucially relevant to our understanding of education. It is split into five areas:

SECTION A: Conservatism and Education
SECTION B: Liberalism and Liberal Education
SECTION C: Epistemology and Education
SECTION D: Pragmatism and Education
SECTION E: Postmodernism and Education

In Lent there are 5 SEMINAR sessions to allow further analysis of the issues raised in the Michaelmas and Lent lectures and their implications for education. These are intended to be student led seminars. One or two students should prepare a 10 -15 minute introduction to the topic and raise questions for further discussion. These may be e.g., issues of clarification, similarities and differences amongst the perspectives or educational implications arising from the viewpoints. Further details will be given during the Michaelmas term.

Teaching Team:
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Lecture schedule:

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<td><strong>Michaelmas</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Block A</strong></td>
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<td>11th Oct</td>
<td>Conservatism and Education 1</td>
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<td>Liberalism and Liberal Education 1</td>
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Assessment:

The course is assessed by means of a three hour examination, in which candidates need to answer 3 questions.

Supervisions:

It is recommended that students have FIVE supervisions for this paper. Supervisions are given by the person who takes the lectures. There is no set pattern to the supervisions but you are strongly advised to spread them throughout the year rather than leave them until the Easter Term.

Supervision Questions:

Block A:

1. Identify and critically discuss those principles which would characterise a traditional conservative philosophy of education.
2. 'Oakeshott’s view of education provides a valuable alternative to much contemporary thinking about education and schooling.' Discuss.

Block B:

1. Critically discuss what you consider to be amongst the most controversial epistemological issues that face education.
2. How may knowledge be distinguished from wisdom? What implications, if any, might this have for education:
Block C:

1. Is liberalism excessively individualistic? What implications does your answer have for education?
2. In what sense(s) should education be liberating? Explain and justify your views.

Block D:

1. Critically evaluate what you see to be the defining characteristics of a pragmatist approach to education

Block E:

2. Is the 'postmodern challenge' to education a significant one?
3. What might be meant by the term 'postmodernism'? Critically evaluate the implications of this notion, if any, for educational principles and practice.
Readings

Block A - Conservatism and Education

Ian Frowe

These sessions will examine the philosophical basis of conservatism and identify some of its key ideas and beliefs. In particular the work of Michael Oakeshott will be explored and his views on education critically assessed.

Conservatism and Education - Readings

Readings

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The Work of Michael Oakeshott

Oakeshott was born in 1901 and died in 1990. Educated at Cambridge, he was Professor of Political Science at the LSE until 1967. A collection of Oakeshott's most influential writings can be found in:

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• Oakeshott, M (1975) 'A Place of Learning' in Fuller (1989) pp 17-42

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• Also in Dearden, Hirst and Peters (eds) Education and the Development of Reason London: Routledge

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• Oakeshott, M. (1951) 'Political Education' in Fuller (1989) pp 136-158

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McIntyre, K. (2013) 'Liberal Education and the Teleological Question; or Why a Should a Dentist Read Chaucer?' in Journal of Philosophy of Education, vol. 47, no.3. 341-363 (Also relevant for sessions on Liberalism). Available online


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- There is a new website devoted to Oakeshott: http://www.michael-oakeshott-association.org

**Block B - Liberalism and Education**

**Ian Frowe**

Liberalism is one of the most influential political systems and in these two sessions the key ideas and principles of liberal thought will be examined. Much educational thought and practice either explicitly or implicitly draws on liberal ideas and these will be critically explored.

**Liberalism and Education - Readings**

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Block C - Epistemology and Education

Mary Earl

Education is pre-eminently concerned with serious and sustained learning. At the heart of learning lies the acquisition of knowledge. But what is knowledge? (See Zagzebski) and how is it distinguished from belief? (See Scheffler) Is it attainable? Or should we rather concentrate our efforts in education on other forms of cognition such as understanding? (see Elgin) Are there different kinds of knowledge? (See Hirst, Pring and Bailey) These kinds of questions have a direct bearing on education. For example considerations of the nature of knowledge have informed curriculum theory. (See Hirst) However, these questions belong to the branch of philosophy known as epistemology. In the sessions we shall address some of them. In particular we shall review the traditional account of knowledge that arises in antiquity through Plato’s *Theaetetus* (see reference below) and which in one way or another has influenced most contemporary accounts.

One point that will emerge from a reflection upon the nature of knowledge is that it is *anormative* concept. Indeed, there are degrees of stringency and leniency in the various concepts of knowledge that we have. For Plato - in his *Republic* at least - knowledge is only attainable for the few whilst *social* epistemologists believe that it may be attained just from the say-so of others who know. (see Welbourne) The stance that we take on knowledge reflects the *epistemic values* that we hold. So, it is not surprising that various views on knowledge are embodied in the contrasting theorists from the previous blocks of the course and these will also be discussed.

Epistemology and Education - Readings

  
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- Scheffler, I. (1965) Conditions of Knowledge: An Introduction to Epistemology and Education, Scott, Foresman: Atlanta
  
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Pragmatism is really a cluster of related ideas and has been one of the most influential theoretical systems of thought throughout the last century and into the present. Philosophers such as William James and Charles S. Pierce were originators but John Dewey has long been acknowledged as the philosopher who has had most influence in education. As the name Pragmatism suggests, it is closely aligned to educational practice, since thinkers of this persuasion claim that the meaning of any idea or proposition will lie inevitably in its observable, practical consequences. In terms of education, ideas such as the social construction of knowledge, the value of social interaction, and learning through problem solving, all grow out of, and are based on, pragmatist thinking. Our sessions will critically examine some of these ideas and their value in the field of education.

Pragmatism and Education - Readings

General Reading


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The Work of John Dewey
• Dewey, J. (1916) Democracy and Education, esp Ch 4 and 5 on growth
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• Dewey, J. (1938) Experience and Education
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Introductory work on Dewey

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Studies of Dewey's life and thought

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Work on Deweyan education themes
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• Garrison, J. (2010) Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching Charlotte: IAP Ch 4

• Hanson, D.T. (ed) (2006) John Dewey and our Educational Prospect
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**Block E - Postmodernism and Education**

**Ian Frowe**

One of the problems is working out what exactly the word 'postmodernism' refers to before considering its application or influence on education. What these two sessions attempt is first to understand what the term might mean and then analyse the implications, if any, that postmodernism has for education. Does it provide a powerful, new way of thinking about education or is the 'postmodern challenge' empty?

**Postmodernism and Education - Readings**

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• Lukes, S. (2003) Liberals and Cannibals, Verso, see Chs. 1, 2, 4 & 7.
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• Usher, R. & Edwards, R. (1996) Postmodernism and Education, Routledge, see esp. Chs., 1,

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