

# *Philosophy of Education*

Education 260

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Office Hours: Mondays & Thursdays 2:30-4:00 and by appointment.

## **Course Purpose - Opening Glimpses**

*"... you will need a vision that is truly your own—one that is deep and tenacious and that lies close to the core of who you believe yourself to be, what you value in life, and where you see yourself going..." Jon Kabat-Zinn*

*"We move mountains by first moving ourselves, and the way we educate makes all the difference in the world. The choice is ours. We make the difference. It is we who decide to live, or not to live, our visions. We are the creators of the world and realities we live in. We are the ones who must choose the path of our learning." Gregory Cajete*

Why study philosophies of learning and life?

in the process of struggling to question, explore, analyze, understand, compose, express, enliven and enact an inspirational vision, deeply significant and surprising things can happen.....

we learn and teach together because although the process requires each of us to be intensely and personally engaged, we cannot compose and enact such visions alone or at a distance.....

this is our task, to help each other to envision and to live what really matters.....

## **Course Process**

Throughout the semester we will use a *social* approach to inquiry—an approach based on well-grounded assumptions that deep learning is *relational*, *exploratory*, and *responsible*.

*Social inquiry is relational.* Learning is not only cumulative, but also connective. It is deepened by through relationships that integrate cognitive, emotional, intuitive, aesthetic, ethical, and kinesthetic ways of knowing. It is extended by creating connections that cross boundaries. It is best accomplished through interpersonal relationships that are engaging and egalitarian. In such relationships the roles and responsibilities of ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’ are continually exchanged.

*Social inquiry is exploratory.* Deep learning occurs in response to the discovery of new, often surprising conceptual patterns that provide a sense of possibility and direction, even in the face of complexity and uncertainty. Educational interactions are conversational. Knowledge is advanced through open, non-judgmental questioning and response. The goal is to sustain, complicate, and extend shared consideration rather than to move as quickly as possible toward closure. Curiosity, risk-taking, and experimentation are always in play.

*Social inquiry is responsible.* To learn for one's own sake, to derive personal meaning and develop skill in self-expression, is necessary but not sufficient. Our knowledge is challenged and enriched as we strive to understand, and then to respond with respect and creativity to the needs and contributions of others. We are transformed as we work to connect our learning with broader civic aspirations and principled social action.

Two attributes of social inquiry are important to note here. First, because effective learning requires active participation and cooperative exchange, *regular attendance is essential*. Second, because deep learning is both radically social and highly personal, *self- and social reflection* and *self- and peer evaluation* play fundamental roles in this teaching/learning process.

## Course Components

### Conversational Reading

Reading is fundamentally a social act. It carries a strong potential not only to affect the course of our personal lives, but also to enhance the quality of our collective experience. Although most often perceived and experienced as an individual learning process, we will emphasize reading as part of an on-going conversation with others.

There are two types of reading for this course:

1) 'Framework' readings provide an overview of broad philosophic systems relevant to education. Included are: *Philosophical and Ideological Perspectives on Education*, by Gerald Gutek, and *The Holistic Curriculum*, by John P. Miller.

2) 'Interpretive' readings are selected to reflect a wide range of contemporary and historical voices and viewpoints on significant educational issues. These are collected in *Philosophical Documents in Education*, edited by R. Reed and T. Johnson, and *The Sacred Tree*, J. Bopp, M. Bopp, Brown & Lane. A selection of supporting readings is provided. Students are strongly encouraged to seek out and to share additional readings of this type.

For each type, you are encouraged to begin by attending to aspects of your personal knowledge, values, feelings, and experiences most strongly affected by the texts. Through *on-line (Course Forum)* and *student led (Peer Teaching)* class conversations, you will also have opportunities to acknowledge and constructively respond to issues that resonate most strongly with others.

## Reflective Exams

Drawing from the conversational reading activities engaged in relation to the primary course texts, you will complete two essay exams. These will provide opportunities for you to clarify, organize, and express your developing understanding and interpretation of three broad philosophic perspectives (Essentialism, Progressivism, Holism) that shape current educational discourse, theory, policy, and practice.

## Social Inquiry

Drawing from personal preference, experience, and creativity, from interactions with course colleagues, and from course materials and activities, small groups will develop increasingly sophisticated representations of each of the three focal philosophic perspectives. **Design projects** will include both a *descriptive summary* and a *creative enactment* reflecting key concepts, values, and practices associated with the perspective under consideration. You will also collaborate in planning and conducting a **peer teaching** session, and will participate in varied approaches to **peer review**.

## Philosophic Compositions

We will use this assignment to challenge and support each other's efforts to articulate a coherent and compelling philosophy of education, and to reflect on its implications for current educational theory and practice. Compositions should include four elements: **(I)** a statement of philosophic vision, **(II)** consideration of potential implications and applications relevant to the challenges confronting contemporary educational systems, and **(III)** a symbolic representation—poetic, literary, visual, musical, and/or other creative representation that reinforces themes central to the composition. As part of this process you will also interview at least two individuals whose philosophic perspectives are likely to be different from your own. A reflective statement comparing/contrasting your philosophic priorities with those of your interviewees will be submitted as the fourth element **(IV)** of your composition.

## Evaluation

This course is structured to encourage all students to demonstrate a high quality of performance. Self, peer, and faculty evaluation are incorporated. Late assignments will not be evaluated unless arrangements are made with the instructor or peer reviewers in advance. Final grades are assigned upon completion of *all course components* and based upon the following guidelines:

<b>Social Inquiry</b>		<b>40%</b>
Course Forum	10%	
Peer Teaching	5%	
Design Projects	25%	
<b>Reflective Exams</b>		<b>30%</b>
<b>Philosophic Composition</b>		<b>30%</b>

## Course Overview

### *Introduction*

*Gutek: Chapters 1, 9, 15*

**Week One**      **1/24**  
Introductions  
Conceptual Framework  
Course Forum/Peer Teaching

### *Essentialist Perspectives on Education*

*Framework Readings:*

Gutek Chapters on Idealism and Perennialism, Realism and Philosophical Analysis,  
Conservatism and Essentialism.

*Interpretive Readings:*

Readings by Socrates & Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Locke (I)

**Week Two**      **1/31**  
Essentialist Perspectives

**Week Three**      **2/7**  
Essentialist Design Projects  
Peer Teaching Session I (2/9)\_\_\_\_\_

**Week Four**      **2/14**  
Essentialist Design Projects

### *Progressive Perspectives on Education*

*Framework Readings:*

Gutek Chapters on Existentialism and Postmodernism; Pragmatism and Progressivism;  
Critical Theory and Liberation Pedagogy.

*Interpretive Readings:*

Readings by Rousseau, James, Dewey, Rorty      (II)  
Noddings, Martin, Eagan, Lipman      (III)  
Counts, Greene, Freire, West      (IV)

**Week Five**      **2/21**  
Progressive Perspectives: Humanism  
Peer Teaching Session II (2/23)\_\_\_\_\_

**Week Six**            **2/28**

*Reflective Exam I (2/28)*

Peer Teaching Session III (3/2)\_\_\_\_\_

**Week Seven**        **3/7**

Progressive Perspectives: Liberationism

Progressive Design Projects

Peer Teaching Session IV (3/9)\_\_\_\_\_

*Spring Break 3/11-19*

**Week Eight**        **3/21**

Progressive Design Projects

Philosophic Compositions: Preliminary Philosophic Principles

### *Holistic Perspectives on Education*

*Framework Readings:*

Miller: Focal chapters including Introduction, 1-6, 9

*Interpretive Readings:*

*The Sacred Tree*, Bopp et al. (V)

**Week Nine**            **3/28**

Progressive Design Projects

Holistic Perspectives

Philosophic Compositions – Conceptual Mapping

**Week Ten**            **4/4**

*Philosophic Composition: Draft Parts I & II Due (4/6)*

**Week Eleven**        **4/11**

Philosophic Compositions: Individual Conferences & Peer review

*Reflective Exam II (4/13)*

**Week Twelve**        **4/18**

Holistic Design Projects

Peer Teaching Session V (4/20)\_\_\_\_\_

**Week Thirteen**    **4/25**

Holistic Design Projects

### *Course Completion*

**Week Fourteen**    **5/2** *Philosophic Composition Due*

**Finals Week**        **5/8** *Self & Course Evaluations Due*