COURSE SYLLABUS

Division: Theoretical and Behavioral Foundations
Program Area: Educational History and Philosophy
Course Number: EHP 9600
Course Title: Philosophy of Education
Section Number: 001(#20181)
Term/Year: Fall 2014
Course Location: 048 EDUC
Day: Monday Time: 4:30-7:15
Course Credits: 3 credit Hours
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To know what we want in education, we must know what we want in general, we must derive our theory of education from our philosophy of life.
--T.S. Eliot

Education, then, beyond all other devises of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machine...[I]t prevents being poor.
--Horace Mann

The schools as presently constituted serve the interests of a society content to define education as a means of indoctrination and a way of teaching people to know their place. We have one set of schools for the children of the elite, another for the children less fortunately born....Serious reform of the public schools would beg too many questions about racial prejudices and the class system, the division of the nation's spoils.
--Lewis Lapham

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purposes of this course are: (1) to examine the historical development and practice of major philosophies of American education, from 1800 to the present; (2) to critically assess the meaning of equal educational opportunity, especially in terms of WHAT KIND of educational results should be equalized and TO WHAT DEGREE, using public policy as the arena of educational reform; and (3) to evaluate the efficacy of transformative leadership as an alternative approach that promotes academic achievement AND creates learning environments that are socially just and inclusive.

The assigned readings and personal reflections will help you to amplify your own educational philosophy as a guide to becoming an effective teacher and an active citizen, well-informed to evaluate contemporary educational issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. The course focuses on educational philosophy. Should the fundamental purpose of education be vocational—to make a living, or liberal arts—the art of living? Each person holds some sort of educational philosophy, which, as the above epigram by T.S. Eliot suggests, usually reflects an underlying personal philosophy or set of values and attitudes. We derive our values and attitudes, in turn, from the agents of socialization. The major socializing forces that mold our values are family, school, church, peers, and the media.

   Clearly, the educational system exerts enormous influence in both (1) molding the social and political values of each new generation of students, and (2) channeling the country's youth into a finely graded occupational system. In short, schools play a major role in determining what people think and what they do, the nature of their jobs and the quality of their life.

2. A basic organizing principle for this course is the ongoing conflict between private goals (individual liberty) and public goals (social control and sorting) for education. Private citizens view education and the concomitant development of their intellectual skills as a conduit for
achieving liberty, self-reliance, and upward mobility. The above Horace Mann epigram expresses this approach to life which may be viewed as a liberal or progressive philosophy, with the goal of liberating individuals to achieve their maximum human potential.

However, government--state legislatures and local school boards--determine the actual practice of public education. Government may be controlled by business elites who possess a distinctly different agenda for education than does the citizenry. Preferring an educational system that produces docile and obedient workers, corporate leaders may view schooling as a process to maintain and legitimize the status quo of the social order. This perspective, expressed in the above epigram by Lapham, may be viewed as a traditional or conservative philosophy.

American public schools remain, the phrase of historian David Nasaw, "contested" institutions, with citizens and the corporate sector attempting to influence educational policy. This philosophical and political struggle determines whether education promotes EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY through democratic empowerment of individuals or, instead, REPRODUCES EXISTING SOCIAL CLASS DIVISIONS.

3. In order to understand the contemporary political struggle for control of America's educational institutions, we will study the historical development of U.S. public schools, from the colonial period to the present-day. This history will show that the current battles reflect similar past conflicts.

Take the example of today's so-called "culture wars" about Eurocentric education versus multiculturalism. The nineteenth-century development of public schools was intended to ensure the domination of Anglo-American values which were being challenged by German and Irish immigration and subsequently by Native-Americans, and African-Americans. Similarly, in the twentieth century, the culture wars have been characterized by the Americanization program in the early part of the century, the civil rights movements in mid-century, and multiculturalism and the bilingual education versus English Language Only battles of today.

In studying educational pedagogy, we will discover a series of struggles between TRADITIONISTS like Noah Webster, Joseph Lancaster, William James, G. Stanley Hall, Edward Thorndike, B.F. Skinner, E.D. Hirsch, on the one hand, and their PROGRESSIVE counterparts, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel, John Dewey, Jean Piaget, A.S. Neil, John Rawls, Amy Guttmann, and Paulo Freire.

These philosophical differences are played out in today's public policy debates between supporters of the ascendant CONSERVATIVE agenda--accountability, high-stakes testing, standardized curriculum aligned to tests, and "choice" such as charter schools and vouchers--versus the PROGRESSIVE dissenters who favor whole language, authentic assessment, multiculturalism, bilingual education, individualized instruction, and transformative leadership.

4. We will examine the current educational system in the U.S., focusing on whether it provides equal educational opportunity or reproduces existing social and economic inequalities. As a result of this study, students will better able to formulate their own informed
educational philosophies as a guide to assessing the current wave or educational "reform."

REQUIRED READING:

The three required textbooks for the course are:


CLASS POLICY:

Attendance Policy: Attendance at all classes is expected. Attendance includes punctuality, arriving at the start of class.

Assignments: Course requirements must be submitted on the date stipulated in this syllabus. Late submissions will result in a grade deduction.

Standards for Written Assignment Papers must be double-spaced and be typewritten or computer-printed.

Class Participation: I encourage an open class in which students actively participate in dialogue.

Reading Assignments: Students are responsible for completing all reading assignments. Obviously, you will benefit a great deal more from lectures, as well as contribute more positively to class discussions, by reading assignments in advance of the appropriate class meeting.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism includes copying material (any more than 5 consecutive words) from outside texts or presenting outside information as if it were your own by not crediting authors through citations. It can be deliberate or unintentional. If you're in doubt about the use of a source, cite it. Students caught plagiarizing information from other sources will receive a failing grade in the course. University policy states that students can be subject to multiple sanctions, from reprimand to expulsion as a consequence of academic dishonesty. To enforce this policy, all outside references must be submitted with assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The criteria for your final grade are:
ASSIGNMENT ONE

Students will write a paper analyzing David Nasaw's book, Schooled to Order.

A. The paper is due on Monday, March 9, 2015.

B. The paper should be 6 pages or about 1,500 words in length.

C. The paper should contain the following three elements:

1. An examination of the major themes of the book. One approach is to view the three historical periods covered in the book that correspond to the common (elementary) school, high school, and public college development. Another framework might be Joel Spring’s political, social, and economic functions of schools: to maintain political stability, reduce tensions caused by economic inequality, and sort out students by social class for future occupations, respectively.

2. A critique or critical analysis of the book. This is an essential part of your assignment. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Schooled to Order? You might consider whether Nasaw’s conclusions are exaggerated or valid and whether he presents sufficient evidence? Is the book’s writing style effective or manipulative?

3. BRIEFLY discuss your own formal education relates to the “hidden agenda” set up to be the school curriculum.

ASSIGNMENT TWO

Students will write a paper covering the two books, Understanding Equal Educational Opportunity by Kenneth Howe, and Transformative Leadership in Education by Carolyn Shields.

A. The paper is due on Monday, April 27, 2015.

B. The paper should be 6 pages or about 1,500 words in length.

C. To develop his “participatory educational ideal” form of equal educational opportunity, Howe relies on the philosopher John Rawls’s “difference principal”—“always distribute it so as to most improve the situation of the least advantaged.” (p. 26). Later, Howe paraphrases Rawls to assert: “Fair equality of educational opportunity requires going beyond formal equality of opportunity and intervening in order to mitigate contingencies that disadvantage individuals through no fault of their own, such as being born with a handicap or into poverty.”
In this paper, examine BOTH the THEORY of (Howe) and the PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS of equal educational opportunity in the form of transformative school leadership (Shields).

1. Assess Howe’s model of participatory educational ideal as a theoretical tool in American schooling. Is it utopian, realistic, or someplace in between? How successful is Howe in applying this concept to the various issue domains of gender, multiculturalism, segregation, testing, and school choice? How might the model be applied to other contemporary educational issues?

2. Critically assess Shields model of transformative school leadership in terms of how it measures up to Howe’s participatory educational ideal. How successful are Shields’ vignettes and stories in promoting social justice and democratic schooling?

3. Which approach is more effective in promoting equal educational opportunity in today’s conservative political climate: educational public policy or transformative school leadership? Explain.

**ASSIGNMENT THREE**

The Howe book consists of 7 chapters and the Shields book also covers 7 chapters. Conveniently, there are 14 students enrolled in the class. Each student will select one of these 14 chapters and lead our class discussion on the material.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Contrasting Interpretations of American Education: Traditionalists versus Revisionists


   Bernie Sanders, "Nation Can't Let Middle Class Fall " Detroit Free Press, September 10, 2003, p. 13A.

   Robert B. Reich, “How to End the Great Recession," The New York Times, September 2,