

PHIL 441.001 Philosophy of Education
Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45pm
Dr. Carolyn Thomas

Here at the university, education meets us at every turn. Most of us are long experienced and familiar with education's elements—its teachers and students, questions, materials, methods, results—such that we may feel we have a handle on what education is, what we're doing here, why and how. Yet, as student, you're spending, and have spent, considerable lifetime 'in' education. What *is* it that you've been 'in' and doing? What *is* education? What is education for? And what should education—teaching, learning, and its matters—be?

We rarely pause to examine deeply, slowly, these questions and their matters. This course will so pause and examine *philosophically* the most fundamental matters of education: What is education? What should be education? What is, and should be, teaching? What is, and should be, learning? What makes for a good learner? What makes for a good teacher? What should be learned and by whom?

Guiding our study will be these fundamental questions, but we will likely also consider more particular questions often at issue in discussion of contemporary educational policy and practice, questions such as: Should education's purpose be to produce workers, or enable informed citizen-rulers, or foster individual salvation? Should education frame societal unanimity or cultivate individual mind and creativity? Should education cultivate cosmopolitan or national sensibilities? Should education provoke thinking or compliance? How is inclusivity best reached in education? Is good education efficient—i.e. distributing information to as many as possible in the shortest possible time—or is good education unhurried, contemplative?

We will read closely a range of philosophical thinkers, ancient to modern, who have written thoughtful and thought-provoking accounts of what's involved in shaping human minds. Readings will likely include texts from Plato, Confucius, Aristotle, Montaigne, Kant, Nietzsche, DuBois, Dewey, Whitehead, Woolf, Heidegger, Arendt, Weil, Derrida, Deloria. The majority of our course texts will be provided as PDFs on Canvas.

Our approach will be philosophical in inquiry, and while not specifically informing of specific practical classroom strategies or techniques, our inquiry and reflection will realize practical particulars for those so inclined. There will be opportunity to consider and discuss practical particulars, including opportunity (but not requirement) for you to find and formulate your philosophy of education.

Course requirements include mandatory class attendance and participation, thoughtful reading of assigned texts, occasional reading quizzes, brief response papers (1-2pp.), one or two short essays (4-6pp.), and a final paper (8-10pp.). Students taking the course for graduate credit will be encouraged to write a longer final paper.

Prerequisite: one Philosophy course 200-level or above, or permission of the instructor. Students pursuing degrees in all areas of study are welcome.