PHIL 156 CBL: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
Georgetown University
Spring 2010 Syllabus
Monday/Wednesday, 10:15-11:30
Walsh 390

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I. COURSE OVERVIEW
In this course, you will be introduced to perennial, philosophical questions about the nature, purposes, content, control, and methods of education and schooling. These questions include:
- What is it to be an educated person?
- What should the social functions of education be?
- What should children learn and who should have the authority to make this decision?
- Do we have obligations to provide equal education to all children?
- How does education impact self-identify and how should we respond to this?
- How should we respond to segregation and separatism in education?
- What does it mean ‘to know’ something?

You will also be introduced to ongoing debates about specific policies and practices of schooling. Policies and practices to be examined include:
- No Child Left Behind
- Ability grouping and tracking
- Homeschooling
- School funding
- School vouchers

Many of the issues we will discuss this semester apply to or arise out of the local D.C. context. You will be expected to familiarize yourself with some elements of this context through readings as well as direct experiences in off-campus settings.

You will also study your own and your classmates’ beliefs about education and schooling. Much of the course will be conducted through discussion and small- and whole-group activities.

II. COURSE GOALS
The goals of the course are to develop your ability to:
- understand the wide range of responses that have been given to perennial philosophical questions in a variety of historical and contemporary readings in philosophy of education;
- formulate, articulate, and justify your own responses to these questions;
- understand selected debates about education policy and practice and how these debates can be seen as attempts to answer the perennial philosophical questions;
- reflect on your own personal beliefs and experiences relative to education and
schooling:
• critically interrogate the beliefs and positions expressed by your classmates and me;
• articulate the challenges faced by the local school system, relate these challenges to the larger educational context, and draw out philosophical dimensions of these challenges.

III. READINGS
Readings will be available through two means:
   Our course Blackboard site under the heading “Course Documents.”
   Through a Course Reader (more details provided in class).
Supplemental readings may be assigned and some readings may be dropped as the semester unfolds.

NOTE: It is very important that you obtain copies of all readings and bring them to class on the day they are due to have been read. For any day you do not bring the readings to class, you may lose participation credit.

IV. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS
You are expected to familiarize yourself with the contents of this syllabus, including all instructions about assignments and readings.

Because much of this class will consist of discussion of course readings, it is essential that you read all readings carefully and come to class prepared to discuss those readings and your reaction to them with me and your peers. It is expected that you will attempt to express your ideas as clearly as possible, support any position that you take with philosophical argument, and treat your classmates with civility, even when you disagree with their positions. Reasoned disagreement is expected and desired. I will occasionally call on students in class; it is expected that your responses will be thoughtful and display knowledge of the readings.

The course assignments are intended to prompt you to engage in close and careful reading of the texts, prepare you for class, and support your learning from the texts. Your written work should be clearly, carefully, and concisely written and should reflect an understanding of ideas presented in the readings and class lecture. You will be expected to support any position that you take in your written work with philosophical argument. More will be said about what this means during the semester.

You are expected to be engaged in thinking about the issues and to demonstrate this engagement on a regular basis. This engagement can and should be expressed through your participation in class-related activities.

I encourage you to discuss course readings and assignments with one another in and out of the classroom. However, all work turned in for a grade should be your own. If you make use of the ideas of others within your written work, those ideas should be appropriately acknowledged.

V. COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING
This course is designated a community-based learning (CBL) course and upon successful completion of this course, your transcript from the university will include a statement indicating that you have participated in community based learning. The CBL nature of this course requires that you make a significant investment in and with the community throughout
the semester. In terms of hours, this means that you will need to devote at least 10 hours during the semester engaged in work related to the direct experience related to the community, as well as 4-5 hours participating in a community tour. This time commitment and the work associated with it were taken into account when the course assignments were developed.

Community-based learned is required for all students in this course It is not an optional field-based add-on that has been tacked on to traditional classroom based instruction. It is integral to the way we will engage in the processes of teaching and learning throughout the semester. You will be expected to integrate theoretical and abstract knowledge that is gained through readings and discussion, with practical knowledge gained through your and others’ experiences. It is appropriate and expected that you will draw upon not only theoretical and abstract knowledge when you engage in discussion and writing for this course, but also your personal experiences and observations about the world. Similarly, when you engage in community-based activities for this class, it is expected that you will draw upon your theoretical and abstract knowledge, as well as what you have learned through prior experiences and observations of the world. It is this integration that creates the kind of understanding and skills that are needed to guide action in the world, and helping you to develop your competency with this kind of integration is a key goal of this course.

The community-based components of the course will bring you into contact with the individuals and groups that make up the communities in the D.C. area; it is here that you will see how the theoretical and abstract issues raised by the readings play out in the lives of real people who have real feelings, hopes, families, and views of their own. The reverse is also true.

Typically, courses don’t bring you into contact with people outside the classroom as you carry out your assignments. So: some reminders: keep in mind that in your interactions, you may be seen as a representative of all Georgetown students and the Georgetown University community as a whole. Please behave responsibly toward the people you encounter. Treat them, their culture, and their environment with respect, honor agreements that you enter into, and act with integrity at all times. If you encounter a problematic situation related in any way to the course (regardless of its cause or nature), you should come to me so we can discuss it.

Please note: To receive credit for any community-based learning hours, the activity must be approved in advance by the professor.

I will distribute more information about guidelines for participating in community-based experiences.

VI. THE ENGELHARD PROJECT

Georgetown is one of seven colleges chosen as a demonstration site for the Engelhard Project. This project examines the effects of linking the content of college courses with student civic engagement and mental health issues. Our course has been selected as one of the courses on campus that will illustrate these connections through innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Our class will approach mental health issues from the perspective of education. We’ll have a special unit and a guest speaker. You’ll be asked to complete a short writing assignment relevant to the unit, and at the end of the semester you will be asked to fill out a short survey about your experiences in the Engelhard Project. You may also be invited to participate in a student focus group in the future as a follow up.
VII. THE DOYLE INITIATIVE

I have been selected to be a Doyle Faculty Fellow for the 2009-2010 academic year. The Doyle Fellowship Program supports and challenges Georgetown faculty who seek to foster active student engagement with difference and the diversity of human experience. Fellows implement transformational pedagogies that push students to reflect critically on the ethical and social responsibilities of global citizenship; to recognize the intellectual and personal challenges often implicit in cultural misunderstandings; to engage in debate and disagreement with respect; and to build empathy and open-mindedness. Through innovative and inclusive teaching approaches, participating faculty integrate on-going discussions of diversity and inclusion with the intellectual themes of their courses.

This is the first year of the fellowship program, and our course and your experiences within it will be of interest to future fellows in the program as they consider ways to engage students around issues of difference within their own courses.

As part of the initiative, you will be asked to complete an end-of-course survey and a one-page reflection about your experiences relevant to the program.

VIII. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

While the course assignments help me assess your learning in the course, their primary purpose is to help you develop your reasoning and writing skills, promote your understanding and careful reading of course texts, and prepare you for class discussion.

COURSE WEBLOG (Blog) (45%)
Throughout the semester you will be expected to make contributions to the PHIL 156 Course Blog.

Throughout the semester, I will generate entries in the blog to solicit responses from you and your classmates. Entries will vary in content. Entries will:

- a) Raise questions directly related to issues raised in specific course readings;
- b) Present short, provocative opinion or news pieces relevant to course themes and ask for your response;
- c) Point you to a particular web site and ask you to review and respond to specific material;
- d) Ask you to reflect in writing on your own personal experiences (past and present) and opinions related to education, schooling, and life in general.

Overall, your responsibility with respect to the course blog will be to serve as an informed, reasonable, self-reflective, responsive, and respectful contributor this online intellectual community. Think of the blog and its pages as an online seminar room where we meet to begin and to continue discussions related to the course.

You are expected to make at the absolute minimum the equivalent of one substantive post per week. By "substantive" and "per week", I mean that each week in which you assigned entries, you should demonstrate at least once, the following things:
a) knowledge and understanding of the *readings* relevant to that and/or the previous weeks;
b) the ability to *present and support with reasoned arguments* your own position or perspective on an issue that is being discussed in a given week on the blog;

c) knowledge, understanding, and reasoned *responsiveness* to ideas and arguments presented by your peers and the professor in their posts to the course blog;

d) self-reflection; that is, reflection and evaluation of your own relevant life knowledge and experiences; and,

e) originality, insight, creativity, etc. That is, a contribution that is some way moves the online discussion forward rather than merely repeating the obvious by restating what someone else in the class or reading has already said, or just saying something that everyone in the class already knows.

f) meaningful connections to ideas and arguments presented by others who have responded to the same thread. The blog is a conversation and your entries should demonstrate responsiveness in the same way that your contributions to a conversation would.

If you can do that in two sentences in a given week, you will have satisfied the minimum requirements for posting (roughly, a 'B'). However, you will likely need to write more than that to do so, something like one to three paragraphs a week at minimum. If you wish your evaluation for the course to reflect that you did more than the minimum in the course, (B+ and above) you will need to contribute longer and/or more frequent posts with substantive content.

You are expected to be courteous and respectful of others (including non-members of our class) in all of your posts, and to refrain from personal attacks and the use of inflammatory language. You are strongly encouraged to engage in reasoned disagreement with me, one another, and the course readings.

You are responsible for ensuring that all blog entries are submitted on time. If you experience technological difficulties that make posting by a given deadline impossible, you are still responsible for turning in the entry/ies by the deadline, unless you receive permission to do otherwise. In such cases, you can e-mail a copy to me or hand in a hard copy. **Late entries will not be accepted without instructor permission given prior to the due date.** Late entries defeat the purpose of the blog—which is to collectively reflect on issues raised by our class discussions and/or the readings assigned at a particular point in the semester.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION (25% of course grade)**

Classroom participation is essential to your own learning and the learning of the instructor and your classmates in this course. It is expected that you will attend all classes and take advantage of opportunities to engage in the activity of the class, whether it be a mock school board meeting, a small group jigsaw, or a whole group discussion. Be aware, however, that quantity of participation is not equivalent to quality of participation. Quality contributions reflect knowledge of the course material, critical analysis of your own beliefs and the views expressed by others, an effort to engage in dialogue with others in the class, and an awareness of the purpose of the particular activity in which the class is engaged. Quality class participation contributes to the learning of the student who participates, the other students, and the instructor. Thus, a long, rambling soliloquy by someone who has not done the readings is not quality participation. A few carefully chosen and informed words may be.
You will have numerous opportunities to participate in small-group and whole-class activities and discussions throughout the semester. In some cases you will be expected to take on and perform a particular role or to argue a particular position. You may be randomly chosen to answer a question about the readings and will be expected to give an informed and thoughtful response. You will be assessed according to the overall quality of the contributions you make to class discussion. Note that attendance is important for this part of your grade: if you aren’t present, you aren’t contributing to class discussion.

You will occasionally be given short assignments related to class activities. These assignments will either be in response to a specific in-class activity/discussion or will prepare you for upcoming in-class activities/discussions.

COMMUNITY BASED ACTIVITIES (30% of course grade)
[Please see the section on Community-Based Learning that appears previously in this syllabus for additional information.] More information will be presented related to these activities in class as well.

1. Community Tour & Community Tour Written Reflection (10%)
   A. Tour (1 approximately 4-hour activity)
   Each semester the Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching and Service offers social-justice oriented guided tours of D.C. You are required to participate in one of these tours unless you can show that you have already done so for another class. I will distribute a flyer with more information about the tours and the reservations. Dates/times of tours are noted on the course schedule.

   B. Written Reflection (1 3-page paper)
   You will also be responsible for writing a no-longer-than 3-page reflection paper on your experiences from the community tour. This paper will be due on the second class period after you take the tour.

2. Other Education-Associated Community-Based Activities (20%)
   A. Activities (3 activities, at least 10 hours total)
   Over the semester, you are expected to engage in at least 12 hours of community-based learning activities that have been approved by the professor. The Community Tours do not count toward your total hours.

   You must get approval prior to engaging in the activity or you risk not being able to include the hours for that activity in your count. These hours should not include transportation time to/from community sites, unless otherwise approved.

   I will provide assistance throughout the semester to help you identify possible activities and means of transportation. I will discuss appropriate kinds of activities as well to give you an idea of what kinds of activities are eligible toward your hours.

   Please note: You must participate in at least three different kinds of community-based activity so that you have a chance to experience multiple community contexts and activities. For instance, you might shadow a friend for an afterschool tutoring activity, interview someone who works in a school, attend an off-campus forum on education, volunteer to mentor homeless children, work with special needs youth in a sport-related activity, tutor an adult in
math, conduct a short survey of a particular group of people in the community on an issue, etc. 
*Unless otherwise approved, all activities should take place in the off-campus metro D.C. area.*

**B. Small Group Leadership Activity on Community Based Activities (2)**

Periodically throughout the semester, we will spend a class period divided into small groups in which we will discuss community-based experiences. Over the semester, each student will be required to lead small group discussion **two times**. More details will be given on the nature of this activity.

There will be **three** class periods distributed across the semester for this activity. You must present at **two** of them, which means you will need make sure that you complete your community activities in time to be ready for the designated activity discussion days. Again, there will only be three class periods devoted to this work—and no outside-of-class make ups for this group activity are possible, given that it is a group process, so be sure to plan ahead so that you can time your community activities appropriately.

**C. Community Reflection Pieces (2 3-page papers)**

You will also be responsible for writing **two** short reflections, each no more than the equivalent of three typed pages in length. More guidance on content will be given in class.

These papers should correspond to the activities on which you lead discussion. Writing these reflections is excellent preparation for the group leadership activity so I recommend you do it as you prepare for that activity; to give you time to make revisions, add reactions to your experiences during the leadership activity, and to do final edits, **these papers will be due no later than one week after you have participated in the small group activity.**

**Important note:** Be sure to schedule your work appropriately. On some weeks, you may have blog entries due on the same day that you are leading a group discussion or are scheduled to turn in your community reflection piece.

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**VIII. OTHER STUFF**

**Absences**

You are expected to attend all classes. Given that class participation is an important part of this course and can't be made up, you should make every effort to miss as few classes as possible, regardless of the reason for the absence. Excessive absences will lower your course grade significantly and, in accordance with the Georgetown Undergraduate Bulletin, students absent from more than 15 percent of the classes in a course . . . may fail the course. Things do come up and it is sometimes necessary to miss a class. This is not a problem. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for getting information from your classmates about missed assignments and class activities. However, if you anticipate that you will miss more than a few (say, two) classes over the semester, you should be willing to suffer the consequences, *or* to discuss how we might respond to the situation.

**Plagiarism and Other Honor Violations**

You are expected to be familiar and to act in accordance with the Georgetown Honor System. Under the Georgetown Honor System, Plagiarism, in any of its forms, and whether intentional or unintentional, violates standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another. For
examples of appropriate and inappropriate acknowledgement of the work of others, information about the sanctions associated with plagiarism, and other academic honor-related offenses, see http://www.georgetown.edu/honor/

Technology Policy
Please show respect to your classmates and me by refraining from using your cell phone, music device, or computer for non-PHIL 156 course-related purposes. If I observe you engaged in this kind of behavior during our class time, you will receive a zero for participation on that day.

IX. SCHEDULE, READINGS, ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES
Readings will be available through Blackboard and a Course Reader.

NOTE: Be sure to bring a copy of the readings to class on the day each is due to have been read. If you do not bring readings to a class, you will receive a zero for participation on that day.

If you miss a class, changes in the readings and assignments may have been announced so be sure to double-check with a classmate.

WEEK 1
Jan. 13
Class topics: Introductions
Informal reasoning and meta-cognition
What is it to be educated?

WEEK 2
Jan. 18
NO CLASS: MLK DAY
Community Tour #1 (12-4)

Jan. 20
Class Topics: Class norms of discussion
Conceptual analysis and possible uses
What is it to be educated?

Jan. 24
Community Tour #2 (1-5)

WEEK 3
Jan. 25
Class topics: What is it to be educated?
Kinds of intelligence
Reading due: Tompkins, selections from A Life in School (Preface and The Cloister of the Heart
Guest: Prof. Carol Day

Jan. 27
BLOG WEEK 2 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT
Class topics: Validity and soundness of arguments
The purposes of education
Reading due: Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, selection from Young, Gifted, and Black

Jan. 29
Community Tour #3 (10-2)*
Jan. 30  Community Tour #4 (1-5)

WEEK 4  
Feb. 1  
Class topics:  The purposes of education  
            Descriptive vs. normative relativism  
Reading due:  Reagan, selection from Non-Western Educational Traditions

Feb. 3  BLOG WEEK 3 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT  
Class topics:  The purposes of education  
            The naturalistic fallacy  
Readings due:  Goodlad, Selection from What Schools Are For

Feb. 6  Community Tour #5 (1-5)

WEEK 5  
Feb. 8  
Class topics:  The purposes of education  
            More fallacies...  
Reading due:  Goodlad, Selection from What Schools Are For

Feb. 10  BLOG WEEK 4 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT  
Class topic:  ACTIVITY DISCUSSION #1  
Readings due:  None

WEEK 6  
Feb. 15  NO CLASS: PRESIDENTS DAY

Feb. 17  
Class topic:  The institution of school  
            More fallacies...  

WEEK 7  
Feb. 22  BLOG WEEK 5 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT  
Class topic:  The institution of school  
Readings:  Goffman, selection from Asylums

Feb. 24  
Class topics:  The institution of school  
Readings:  Anyon, “The Hidden Curriculum of Work”  
Selections on the American Dream

WEEK 8  
March 1  BLOG WEEK 6 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT  
Class topic:  The institution of school  

March 3  
Class topic:  Equality  
Readings:  Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, selection from “Equality” entry  
Jefferson, Selection from Notes on the State of Virginia
**WEEK 9**
March 8: NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

March 10: NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

**WEEK 10**
March 15: BLOG WEEK 7 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT
Class topic: Equality
Reading due: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Equality” entry (cont’d)
Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools, selection from “Separate and Unequal”
Kozol, excerpts from Savage Inequalities

March 17: ACTIVITY DISCUSSION #2
Readings due: none

**WEEK 11**
March 22: BLOG WEEK 8 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT
Class topics: What is knowing? What’s worth knowing? How do we know if we know? More fallacies…
Readings: Strike, “Knowing and Learning”
Kozol, selection from The Shame of the Nation

March 24: Who should control education?
How schooling is controlled in the U.S.
Reading: Amy Gutmann, selections from Democratic Education

**WEEK 12**
March 29: BLOG WEEK 9 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT
Class topic: Who should control education?
More fallacies…
Readings due: Reich, “Testing the Boundaries of Parental Control Over Education”

March 31: Who should control children’s learning?
Possible visitors: homeschoolers

**WEEK 13**
April 5: NO CLASS: EASTER BREAK

April 7: BLOG WEEK 10 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT
Activity discussion #3
Readings due: none

**WEEK 14**
April 12: Who should control children’s learning?
Correlation vs. causation
Readings due: Brighouse, “School Choice and Educational Equality”

April 14: BLOG WEEK 11 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT
Class topic: Individual and group identity and rights
Film
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<th>April 19:</th>
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<td>Readings due:</td>
<td>James Baldwin, “A Talk to Teachers”</td>
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<td>Charles Taylor, selection</td>
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<td>Readings:</td>
<td>Individual and group identity and rights</td>
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<td>U.S. Supreme Court, Brown vs. the Board of Education</td>
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<td>Viadero, “A School of Their Own”</td>
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<th>April 21</th>
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<td>Class topic:</td>
<td><em>BLOG WEEK 12 ENDS AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT</em></td>
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<td>Readings:</td>
<td>The nature of youth and youth rights</td>
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<td>Walker, Brooks, and Wrightsman, selection from <em>Children’s Rights in the United States</em></td>
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<th>WEEK 16</th>
<th>April 26:</th>
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<td>Class topics:</td>
<td>The nature of youth and youth rights</td>
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<td>Possible visitors: youth rights</td>
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<td>Readings due:</td>
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<th>WEEK 17</th>
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*Final Doyle Assignment* (writing exercise and survey) DUE AT MIDNIGHT TONIGHT