Course Outline

The school as an institution serves as a prism through which the hopes and aims of human societies are projected – as parents, educators, and political leaders attempt to conserve or transform the values and skills passed onto the next generation. Canadians historically have expressed high hopes for the schools’ ability to remedy a variety of societal ills. This ranges from the claim that schools can narrow learning gaps, hurry assimilation, correct kids’ sexual and moral behaviour, or adjust how parents raise their children. We look to schools to strengthen our particular local community or to advance common aims, from advancing economic growth to making life more civil. We expect schools to nurture the personal good of individuals and the public good of the society of which those individuals are part. That ‘good’ is spelt out in terms of the knowledge and understanding, the practical capabilities and skills, the moral seriousness and dispositions, the active participation in the wider community and the sense of achievement which are thought to be worthwhile. There will never be universal agreement on exactly what is worthwhile, but that is why educational policy and practice should constantly be subject to open ethical deliberation.

What factors distinguish a “good” from a “bad” education? Is there a “core set” of criteria? In order to address these and related questions we will examine basic metaphysical, epistemological, moral, and political issues from classic and contemporary perspectives. We will also examine why do we have schools in the first place? What is the purpose of schooling and teaching? If we don’t know what the mission and goals of school are, it’s not possible to even know if we get there. The course will emphasize both the theoretical and practical. Through reading, analyzing, and discussing a variety of different pedagogical perspectives we will seek to understand the purpose of schooling and teaching and what it means to be an educated person.

Course objectives

1. To apply historical and contemporary perspectives to understand what educational aims and purposes should schools seek to achieve?
2. To make sense what it means to be an “educated” person?
3. To grasp the broader economic, societal and governmental forces that attempt to frame the aims and purposes of education and schools.
4. To examine policy debates about the aims of education that have impact on the lives of students, families, and teachers

Course Structure and Expectations

The course is structured as a seminar – text to text; readers to readers; writers to writers. Students are expected to maintain constant and punctual attendance, be prepared for high levels of class discussion and participation, and written work that is both analytic and reflective in nature. Thus, the course is designed for substantial student participation. In addition to using a variety of resources to provide a basis for common knowledge, students will work in groups to explore the issues that are raised.

Course grades will be based on the assignments listed below. Criteria for each assignment will be discussed in class. Strong work is indicated by careful analysis of texts, scholarly rather than informal treatment of issues, and substantial participation in class discussions. Prompt and regular attendance is required. Please proof read prior to handing in written work. If you anticipate any difficulty in meeting assigned due dates it is important that you contact me.
Texts and Readings
   Wiley-Blackwell (October 7, 2011)
   You may buy the textbook from The UBC Bookstore.

We will also be using articles from various sources for information. These articles will be distributed on January 14. There will be a small photocopying charge for the articles. Readings are listed on the dates they are to be read. Please be prepared to discuss readings in small and large groups.

Description of Assignments
Students are expected to complete the following assignments:
1. Class participation
2. Peer (group) presentation and a summary paper
3. A final paper

2. Engaged Participation
   Thoughtful engagement with the course materials in each session is expected, which includes attendance, respectful participation in the discourse and active listening. We will strive for a learning community where each voice is valued and contributes to the discussion. You should be informed, challenging, sincere, thoughtful and probing with a view to generating healthy discussions and advancing of new ideas. Quality of talk will be assessed, not quantity. Among others, consider the following strategies:
   a) Read the assigned texts and refer to them in large group and small group discussions.
   b) Listen carefully to other students when they speak.
   c) Ask questions when you do not understand what is being said.
   d) Extend and deepen a line of thought or conversation.

2. Presentations and summary paper of key ideas, concepts and questions:
   Starting on January 25, class members in groups of three will rotate the responsibility of being the discussion facilitators for selected articles. You are encouraged to use ideas from additional texts in ways to illuminate the reflections being developed. Please bring copies of your summary paper to distribute to everyone in class. Everyone please be sure to complete the readings.

3. Final paper
   The purpose of the final paper is to integrate your learning in a meaningful way. Your particular interests, research, or work context should guide the final paper. Toward that end two options are presented below (please pick one):

Final Paper Options:

a.) An analysis and discussion of specific challenges that you think education and schools are facing. This option examines a specific challenge, or set of challenges to the aims and purpose of education and schools in the context of shifting societal expectations, shifting policy expectations, changed decision making paradigms, or unique political pressures. For example, challenges or sets of challenges might be changing funding metrics, revised decision making processes, influence of legislated education reform, or the influence of publics or constituents. Identify the challenge(s), discuss the implications, and present a framework that could be used to address the challenge(s).

b.) Review of the literature on aims education and personal statement of the aims education
   This option has two parts. **First**, do a substantive review – roughly 8 – 10 articles/perspectives – of the literature on the aims of education. Reviews could take a variety of forms, including annotated bibliographies, summary tables, thematic grouping, or sequential presentation. **Second**, develop a personal statement about the aims of education. Your statement should include a discussion of the theoretical or philosophical perspectives that guided your thinking about the aims of education.

Grades and weights

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation and summary paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Session Outline
Please note that required readings may be added or deleted to those listed as the term transpires. I will aim to avoid unnecessary or untimely substitutions; however, the course is expected to evolve according to students’ interest, background and emerging learning.

January 14
• Introductions
• Syllabus review
• Aims of education and the purpose of schools– a personal reflection
• The mandate and policy framework of the BC public school system.

January 28
1. Barrow R., Was Peters nearly right about education? Reading R. S. Peters Today...,6 - 23
3. Laverty M., Learning our concepts. Reading R. S. Peters..., 24 - 37

February 11
10. A. N. Whitehead, The aims of education and other essays , Chapter 1, Macmillan, 1929, 1 – 10
11. M. Katz, R.S. Peters’ Normative conception of education and educational aims. Reading R.S. Peters..., 94 - 105
12. M. Hess and J. Johnson, Teacher perceptions of administrative support for democratic practice: implications for leadership and policy. Academic Leadership, 2011, Vol. 9, Iss. 2
16. Paul Carr, Educating for democracy: with or without social justice. Teacher Education Quarterly, Fall 2008
17. C. Marin, The good, the worthwhile, and the obligatory: Practical reason and moral universalities in R. S. Peters' Conception of Education. R. S. Peters..., 138 - 155

February 25
25. Cuypers S., Autonomy in R. S. Peters' educational theory. Reading R. S. Peters Today..., 185 – 204
27. Williams K., Vision and elusiveness in philosophy of education: R. S. Peters on the legacy of Michael Oakeshott. Reading R. S. Peters Today..., 219 -

March 31
27. Giroux H. A., Lessons to be learned from Paulo Freire as education is being taken over by the mega rich. Viewpoint, Iss. 79, 2011
28. Revisiting personal reflections (January 14) on the aims of education and purpose of schools

● Final paper due