

EDUC 4023 - Course Syllabus

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Introduction

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The Teacher and Philosophy

"Why," you may wonder, "should I even study philosophy of education, much less be expected to learn to philosophise about educational matters?" You may further question, "What use is philosophy? My concerns are far more immediate and definitely more practical!"

Many questions about the "practical side" of teaching are in part philosophical, although you may not find this immediately evident. The teacher-philosopher is interested in both theoretical and practical matters. The teachers' responsibilities go beyond those of an educational technician who is trained in a narrow set of competencies. The present-day teacher needs to be prepared to deal effectively with a wide variety of questions, problems, issues and situations.

Quite often the role of the teacher is narrowly defined:

NARROW VIEW

Instructing
Disciplining
Surviving

The teacher, as an educator, is concerned with considerably more than dealing with autocratic administrators, disrespectful students, neurotic parents, and crumbling facilities. If the teacher were only involved in these affairs, someone might argue that teacher education programmes should be limited to the study of educational methodology, human relations, and martial arts.

Most of the activities of a teacher centre around the complexities of decision-making. Thus a much broader picture of the teacher's role is needed:

A BROAD VIEW	
Ideological Decisions	Structural Decisions
Personnel Decisions	Curriculum Decisions
Procedural Decisions	Political Decisions

The teacher does not really have a choice about philosophising. The only choice is whether the teacher will philosophise consciously and in an informed manner. The act of teaching itself is a choice to interfere in the life of another person, presumably for that person's benefit. The task of showing why any subject should be taught is a philosophical one. The teacher who cannot present persuasive arguments for a curriculum being offered will be left to the influences of political pressure, colleague preferences or student desires. An educator is concerned with the reasons for teaching a subject, the reasons for a particular behaviour, or the reasons behind a competence. The teacher may be interested in little more than passing on information and skills.

When analysing the reasons behind decision-making, the teacher-philosopher becomes concerned with what should or should not be. An educator who is concerned with the reasons for teaching a subject may ask: Should physical education remain a compulsory part of the public school curriculum? Of what value is physical education to the contemporary Canadian student?

Conventional discussions of what should or should not be usually distinguish between two kinds of values: (1) intrinsic values, or those things which are valuable for their own sakes and (2) instrumental values, or those things which are worthwhile only as a means to something else. In the first case, physical education would be of value because extended participation in its activities would give you a feeling of well-being, which we may define as being fit or healthy. In the second case, physical education may make you live longer.

The teacher, so it would seem, is interested in the instrumental value of philosophy of education. The teacher knows, that philosophising is not useful in the same sense that a piece of audio-visual equipment is. The VCR may be useful, but not nearly as useful as the aims of the teacher. The VCR is valued by the teacher because it enables him or her to reach an intrinsically valuable aim.

The teacher may see that philosophising is useful or of instrumental value from one perspective. If it can be taken as a basic principle of philosophy that "the unexamined life is not worth living," then philosophising can also be seen as a means to living a worthwhile life and subsequently of intrinsic value to all.

Instructor

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I was born and brought up in the Montreal area where I completed my undergraduate work in history and education at Concordia and McGill Universities respectively. I received a M.Ed. at Acadia in educational administration and a Ph.D. in administration from the University of Alberta.

I have spent most of my life either as a student or a teacher. I have been a teacher and school administrator in Alberta, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. After teaching in a large urban secondary school in Montreal, for 3 years I taught upper elementary subjects in a two room schoolhouse in a small Inuit settlement in Arctic Quebec. My wife and I then moved to Wolfville in 1979 where our son was born in 1983. For many years I taught senior and junior high English and Social Studies in rural Nova Scotia and later went into administration there. I've taught educational administration courses at both the U. of A. and Acadia for the past 15 years. I have also had experience as a local school board member in Kings County.

My personal interests include golf, films, reading, walking, and cooking. I also enjoy the challenge of solving a difficult crossword puzzle. Although education and educational administration have been my life's work, a secret ambition of mine has always been to write the perfect mystery novel.

Textbooks and Resource Material

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Required Text

Barrow, Robin & Woods, Ronald. (1988). *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*. London: Routledge.

Supplementary Texts

* Please note that the following two texts are suggested for supplementary reading for those students who require additional background and support.

Gulek, G. L. (1988). *Philosophy and Ideological Perspectives on Education*.

Ozmon, H. & Carver, S. (1990). *Philosophical Foundations of Education*.

Assignments

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Each lesson has a corresponding assignment with specific references to what is expected. No more than 1 lesson should be submitted at any one time.

The assignments are delivered to the instructor via assignment drop-boxes. They may be e-mailed as attachments under some circumstances. Please remember to put your name, student number, course number, and assignment number on the assignment and keep a copy in the event the original is lost.

If you are using mail service, please include stamped, self-addressed envelopes for the return of your assignments. (Note: the distance education fee does not cover this cost.) If you are emailing assignments, the files must be readable by Excel 2003 or Word 2003.

The last assignment should be received at least 4 weeks prior to the date you wish to write the exam. This will allow adequate processing time for the request, and for setting the exam.

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Assignments (12)	100%
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Student Handbook

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You are responsible for becoming familiar with the contents of the Student Handbook. It contains important information about scheduling examinations (if applicable), applying for extensions, withdrawing from your course, ordering books, and computer and library services available to you. If you have questions about the policies outlined in the [handbook](#), contact:

Open Acadia (formerly Distance Education)
38 Crowell Drive (Willett House)
Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6
Phone: 902-585-1434 or 1-800-565-6568
Fax: 902-585-1068
Email: continuing.education@acadiau.ca
Web: <http://openacadia.ca>

Academic Integrity

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Academic integrity demands responsible use of the work of other scholars. It is compromised by such practices as plagiarism and cheating. Cheating is the copying or the use of unauthorized aids or the intentional falsification or invention of information in any academic exercise or the presentation of a single work in more than one course without the permission of the instructors involved.

- Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas or words of another as one's own. While it may be argued that few ideas are original, instructors expect students to acknowledge the sources of ideas and expressions that they use in essays. To represent them as self-created is dishonest and academically reprehensible.
- One may quote or paraphrase other writers if they have stated an idea strikingly, as evidence to support one's arguments or conclusions, or as a point against which to argue, but such borrowing should be used sparingly and always indicated in a footnote. The aim of scholarship is to develop one's own ideas and research and only by trying to develop one's own thoughts and arguments will one mature academically.
- To provide adequate documentation is not only an indication of academic honesty, but also a courtesy enabling the instructor to consult sources with ease. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism.
- Furthermore, a student who knowingly helps another to commit an act of academic dishonesty is equally guilty. A student who is uncertain whether or not a course of action might constitute plagiarism or cheating should seek in advance the advice of the instructor involved. Penalties are levied in relation to the degree of infraction of academic honesty. They range from requiring the student to re-do the piece of work, through failure on that piece of work, to failure in the course, and to dismissal from the university.

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