

SPRING 2006

**TENTATIVE VERSION**  
**PHIL 270: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

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**I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:**

This course explores the philosophical dimensions of education. These include issues and questions in *epistemology* (what is knowledge? how fully does this define the goal of education?), *ethics* (what values if any should guide the process of educating a person? who has the right to determine the content of education?), and *metaphysics* (what is a human person? do we educate the whole person or just a part, e.g., the mind or soul?). We will also consider the *practical* and *political* ramifications of these positions, especially as they manifest themselves in our local community. The course includes a service-learning component that requires you to actively participate in an educational environment other than the college. Service activities should sharpen your understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of implementing different pedagogical philosophies.

• **Knowledge Objectives:** to understand ...

- different views of the nature, methods, and goals of education – & their relations to one another
- the philosophical issues that inform and/or underlie different pedagogical programs
- how we can use tools of philosophical analysis to address contemporary problems in education

• **Skills & Value Objectives:**

- to sharpen your ability to reflect critically on the nature of education by drawing on and critiquing your own experience
- to foster an appreciation for the real-life complexities that arise in educating people (especially in contexts of public education)
- to work with others, cooperatively and experimentally, in applying (and assessing) philosophical ideas to *concrete* problems
- to maximize your learning when serving, even when doing what seems like “busy” work

**II. COURSE OUTLINE:**

**A. Cultivating Values**

Plato's *Meno*, *Republic* (selections)

**B. Cultivating the Student**

Rousseau's *Emile*

**C. Democracy and Education**

Jane Addams (selections)

Dewey *Democracy and Education*

**D. Liberation Pedagogy**

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

bell hooks or Nel Noddings (TBA)

**E. Cultivating a Common Ground**

Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*

**F. Student Presentations**



### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

40% Exam & Final

20% Preparation/Participation (Discussion Participation, Prompt, Normal Class Work)

15% Service Learning Journal

25% Service Learning Project (Presentation & Paper)

**A. FIRST EXAM (20%) and FINAL (20%):** The primary reason for having exams is to test you on a range of issues, hence ensuring the breadth of your knowledge. Exams consist of objective questions as well as short answer and essay questions. There will be a take-home exam around the middle of the semester and a final (scheduled for Monday, May 1 at 5:30) consisting of a cumulative essay question that focuses on main themes of the course (including service experience).

**B. PREPARATION/PARTICIPATION:** Thoughtful preparation and participation help you play an active role in developing our course material as well as your own sustained position(s). The goal of these components is to promote *critical* reading and thinking skills that help you develop *sophisticated* philosophical *insight*. Your Preparation/Participation grade will be the *average* of items [1] & [2] below, with consideration given to [3].

[1] **Discussion Participation:** *Quality* participation is vital to learning and is expected throughout the semester. You should carefully **prepare** for class; this means actively reading (see “Reading Philosophy”) and reflecting on the day’s assignment (noting key definitions & arguments and formulating questions) *prior* to class. Such preparation will help you listen with understanding and participate in discussion with insight. Being prepared also means bringing the relevant materials to class.

**Discussion** participation involves (i) carefully listening to, questioning, and responding to the views of others, and also (ii) contributing your own views, questions, and reactions to the readings and class discussion. I take note of the “ripple effect” of your comments; i.e., I consider whether your comments help advance our discussion. The ripple effect occurs when your contribution responds to that of another student or when it elicits feedback from others. Your goal shouldn’t simply be to participate regularly (dominating class discussion is not good), but to be attentive to the comments raised in class (not just the professor’s) and to aim to develop insightful, sophisticated questions or comments that help us delve more deeply into our topics.

When assessing your discussion participation, I look at its *quality* and *pattern* over the course of the semester. Its *quality* is gauged in terms of its (i) **clarity**, (ii) **insight & sophistication**, and (iii) the **ripple effect**. In assessing the *pattern* of your work, I look at (i) **consistency**, (ii) **effort**, and (iii) **improvement** and **progress** (or regress) you have made in critically discussing materials throughout the semester. Minimal participation, low attendance, and disruptive or dominating classroom behavior result in a low participation grade.

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for material covered and assignments distributed or collected. Since I consider attendance a factor of participation, I don’t distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. (If you’re not present, you can’t contribute.) As noted above, failure to prepare &/or bring the appropriate texts counts as an absence.

If you have more than 3 absences (the equivalent of a week of classes), your prep/participation grade will drop 1/3 letter grade per additional day missed. Also, you are expected to contact me so we can discuss your attendance.

## [2] Student Prompt and Assessment:

(a) **The Prompt:** Each of you will prompt class discussion **once** during the semester. (A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class.) Your assignment is to prepare and write a prompt that *explores a key idea or issue* via one of the following:

- A significant **question** that arose from reading the day's assignment.
- An **objection** to an important point from the day's reading.
- An **interpretation** of a baffling or controversial passage from the day's reading.
- **Additional support** (an important consequence or additional argument) for an important point from the day's reading.
- A **critique** of a key idea or principle from the perspective of your teaching/service experience.

While you want to cite or briefly explain the relevant passage to give your contribution a context, prompts are *philosophical responses* to (and *not summaries* of) the readings. Your prompt should help us delve more deeply into whatever issue you are discussing.

### • Strengthen the Quality of your Prompt:

- Be sure to proofread your prompt. It should be *well-written*.
- Draw relevant *distinctions* that help clarify your issue or idea. Also, provide *examples* (from the readings, your experience, or your imagination) where appropriate to develop or illuminate your points.
- Maximize *insight* and *sophistication* by exploring *possible alternatives*. If you are working with an idea whose meaning isn't altogether clear, consider alternative definitions or interpretations. If you raise a question or objection, consider and assess different *possible answers*, noting which you find the most compelling and why.

\*\*\*NOTE: Sometimes students assume that if they respond to their own question, the prompt won't generate much discussion. That can occur and is why it **helps to sketch possible alternative responses**. Doing so lays out the conceptual landscape of the issue and, when done well, elicits intriguing class responses.

• **Problems to Avoid:** Prompts should grow out of your reading and preparation for class, and they should be thought of as integral parts of our work. They are not tangential or accidental, so please do not approach them in this way (either when you are giving your own prompt, or when you are listening to someone else's).

Weak prompts typically suffer from one of the following problems:

- *Superficial treatment of the material:* This often occurs when you pose a simple question/objection/etc. without explaining (or exploring) its significance (to you and/or to class issues). It may also arise if you state how you feel about an issue rather than explore it with insight and sophistication. To avoid these scenarios, refer to the previous section on "Strengthening the Quality of your Prompt." Superficial treatment may also arise because the student strings together quotes from the reading, expecting the passages to do all of the work. To avoid this, be deliberate in explicating the argument or idea in terms that render it clear to the class. Consider which points or premises need further explanation; key ideas may need to be defined or illustrated. Of central importance is making clear to the class why we should believe the conclusion (or position or idea).

- *Unfocused prompt:* This usually results when students bite off too much or raise lots of points without explaining their relation to one another. We cannot discuss every issue in our readings, and so you need to be judicious in selecting the material you will discuss in your prompt. (Aim for the most important points.) If you discuss two issues, be sure to explicitly show how their connected.

**(b) Follow-up Assessment of your Prompt:** Hopefully presenting and discussing your prompt will deepen your understanding of the issue and perhaps also of your interests and philosophical strengths.

Hence, after prompting, write an assessment of your prompt in which you:

- (i) Summarize class discussion of your prompt, noting the main comments and questions made in response to your prompt. Indicate clearly how you did (or now would) respond to these.
- (ii) Explore how your view has changed (or deepened) as a result of discussion and further study. (By “further study” I mean to include the following readings we do in your unit. This gives you the opportunity to consider your prompt in a larger context.) For instance, if you discussed the **significance** of the argument, have you changed your mind about this, especially in light of class discussion? If you provided an **objection**, explain whether you still believe it, considering whether it needs revision or amplification. You might also indicate whether this is a topic you believe you could or would want to pursue more fully, e.g., in a paper (your assessment does not commit you to writing a paper related to the prompt, though this is a possibility).

Your assessment is *due no later than* (you can hand it in sooner) *the 1<sup>st</sup> class meeting* after we complete the relevant Unit (A-E in the Course Outline above).

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**PROMPT GRADING FORM**

Symbol	Qualitative Description
E	Excellent: your work meets all requirements in an exemplary manner that demonstrates mastery of the material and/or relevant skills
G	Good: your work demonstrates strong command of the material and/or relevant skills
S	Solid: your work demonstrates a solid overall understanding of the material and/or competent skills (perhaps you correctly and clearly present all or most of the basic ideas, but you can also develop them more fully or with greater insight and sophistication)
N	Needs work: your work suffers from incompleteness, imprecision, or incorrectness (greater care is needed to complete, clarify, and/or develop your points or skills)

**I. PROMPT ON:** (Name of Reading)

- Prompt is **well-written** (clear, well-structured, uses proper grammar, etc.)

E      G      S      N

- Prompt clearly, correctly, and sufficiently introduces and explains/defines relevant **key ideas** (especially controversial ones) relevant to the prompt’s issue

E      G      S      N

- Prompt thoughtfully **explores** and **develops** the issue by attending to details from the readings, providing examples, drawing helpful distinctions, and offering relevant arguments where appropriate

E      G      S      N

- Prompt offers an **insightful** and **sophisticated** treatment of the issue, especially in considering and assessing relevant alternative answers, interpretations, objections, or support

E      G      S      N

**II. ASSESSMENT OF YOUR OWN PROMPT:**

- Assessment accurately reflects and responds to important issues raised in class discussion with detail:

E      G      S      N

- Assessment clearly demonstrates how your thinking about the issue has matured (showing intellectual growth):

E      G      S      N

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**(c) Additional stipulations:** The goal of this exercise is to give you an opportunity to test your reading and thinking skills. Asking questions is an art, as is developing answers, interpretations, and objections. You are welcome to talk with me or your classmates about your contribution, but the work you do must ultimately be your own. It must be formulated in your own words, reflect your own thinking, and demonstrate your own skills. Your prompt and assessment will be graded on (i) its **clarity** and **accuracy**, (ii) its **significance** and level of **insight/sophistication**, and (iii) its representation of **effort** and **intellectual growth**.

Prompts need to be carefully written, typed and no more than 1 (single spaced) page long. Deliver your prompt to me **no later than 4 p.m. the day before your prompt**; I'll make copies for everyone. Our goal as a class will be to respond to the day's contributions; they will thus provide the focus for our discussion.

If you need to reschedule your prompt, you may do so long as (1) there is an opening on the schedule, **and** (2) you discuss the matter with me at least *the day before* class. If you know you won't be able to present because of serious illness and have a friend who is willing to swap spots with you, you may so long as you notify me *before* the fact.

**[3] Periodic Homework, Quizzes, In-class Writing, or Group Work:** To facilitate class work, I will occasionally give *homework* (and possibly *quizzes*); there may be some *in-class writing* or *group work*. The chief goal here will be designed to (i) test your understanding of the reading, or (ii) help you formulate or crystallize your thinking on a relevant class issue. The chief criteria used in evaluating this work will be **clarity** and **accuracy**. I will comment on this work and assign a + (excellent work), √ (good work), – (problematic work), or 0 (no work). Use these exercises to test your understanding and recognize them as a source of feedback from me. At the end of the semester, I will consider the profile of your work in this area. If your final course grade is borderline, and you did good work on all of these exercises, your efforts here can push your grade up (e.g., from an 89% to a 90%).

Missed work in this category can be made up *only* when you have discussed the matter with me *prior* to the beginning of the class you miss. Each student is allowed *one* make-up, but make-up material must be completed by the beginning of the next class meeting.

If you are concerned about your performance in any of these areas, please don't hesitate to talk with me.

## C. SERVICE LEARNING

• **Description:** A *minimum* of 20 hours of service (throughout the semester) at a specific agency is *required to pass* this course. (You will be required to pledge the time you serve.) A preliminary concern of the course is to explore the relevance and significance philosophical theory has with respect to your service experience *and* vice versa. Consider, for instance, how acting in light of philosophical theories helps and/or hinders the process of educating people; similarly, consider how service experience corroborates or undermines the validity of different philosophical theories. You will develop a specific project as the semester progresses. The outcome will be a paper that synthesizes your service experience with key ideas from the philosophers we study.

### • Requirements:

**[1] A SERVICE JOURNAL** (15%) concerning your ongoing *reflections* and *explorations* of the theoretical and practical issues concerning education, especially in the context of your service. Journal entries are designed to promote **integration** of *service experience* with *course content*, using each to deepen your understanding of the other.

#### *Basics:*

- A **summary** that synthesizes service experience with the philosophical ideas we've studied before the middle of the semester (we'll discuss the due date in class). Criteria for assessing this include *clarity*, *accuracy*, and *insight* and *sophistication*. More details will be provided at the appropriate time.
- A minimum of 11 **entries**, with one entry per week, *typed*, double-spaced, with size 10 or 12 character. Each entry should be *no less than one* well-developed ¶ and *no more than 3* pp. Keep all entries in a *folder* containing only journal entries.
- Each entry should include: (1) Name; (2) Date; (3) Title of relevant reading material (if addressed).

- Some journal entries will address an assigned question (see Service Schedule for these). Otherwise, journal entries should be fashioned in light of the following *three domains*:
  1. **Narration or description** of what you did and what happened when you served (don't go overboard with this). This is where you should describe practical problems and solutions.
  2. **Self-reflection** of how your feelings, preconceptions, theoretical commitments, or goals affected (positively or negatively), directed (successfully or unsuccessfully), or were altered (for the better or for the worse) as a consequence of your service.
  3. **Analysis & Synthesis** using course ideas to explore your experience, reflecting on how the experience makes you appreciative or critical of course ideas. This demonstrates the highest level of critical engagement with both service experience (especially as represented by 1 & 2 above) & course content.

The goal is to regularly address as many of these three domains (in an organic manner) as possible, although in reality one may warrant greater attention on some occasions. Domain #3 represents the highest level of critical engagement of both service experience and course content. Failure to address it (or to address it well) on a regular basis will result in a low journal grade.

*Journal Evaluation:* Journals serve to provide an arena for the exploration of ideas and reactions without the constraints typical of essays and papers (typically, papers are focused on domain #3); they also provide an opportunity for guidance and feedback. Journals will be collected periodically. (NOTE: You need to keep up with these, entering your entries on a weekly basis and then having them ready to hand in. Failure to do so will result in a low journal grade.) I will make comments where appropriate, but I will not assign grades for *individual* entries. Rather, I will assign a midterm grade and a final grade at the end of the semester.

Journals will be assessed in light of (i) *clarity* and *accuracy* (concerning your narration of events and articulation of key ideas and their relations), and (ii) *thoughtfulness* (concerning the level of *insight* and *sophistication* of your ideas and explorations). Your *effort* and *growth* will also be considered in determining your final journal grade.

### SERVICE JOURNAL ASSESSMENT

**BASICS:**

- Pledged 20 hours of service:
- # of Entries (11 required):
- Responded to all assigned entry topics:

**JOURNAL CONTENT:**

- Entries appropriately & regularly **address the three domains**:  
 E      G      S      N
- Entries are **clear** and **accurate** (in reporting events or activities, and explaining ideas):  
 E      G      S      N
- Entries demonstrate **insight** and **sophistication** in addressing the 3 domains:  
 E      G      S      N

### [2] SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT: (Presentation & Paper 25%)

The semester will culminate in a paper and class presentation that integrates course material with your service experience. The presentation is organically related to your service and your journal.

*Basics:* You will submit a project proposal in late March and then develop the project into an approximately 10 page **paper**. You are expected to draw on readings and your service experience. The paper will be distributed to the class in advance of your presentation so that we can read it prior to class.

For your class **presentation**, you need to briefly summarize your project and then discuss it with the class. Following your presentation, you must **revise** the paper in light of class discussion. The presentation and original paper count 45%; the rewrite counts 55%.

*Project Evaluation:* The project will be assessed via the following general criteria:

- (i) **clarity, accuracy, and organization** in presenting (both the paper and the class presentation) the dynamics of your issue or problem. Use of clear definitions/explanations as well as examples (where appropriate) is important here;
- (ii) success in **developing** and **defending** your project. Your project should (a) **integrate** course content with service experience, (b) be **insightful** and **sophisticated** in dealing with the theoretical and practical dimensions of your project, and (c) thoughtfully address **concerns** and **objections** raised in class.

*\*\*\* A series of worksheets which offer more details and greater guidance will be provided later. \*\*\**

**Service Assistance:** Coping with logistics of service can be difficult. If problems arise, please discuss them with me as soon as possible.

## V. MISCELLANEOUS:

• **Grading Criteria:** See “Grading Criteria for Written Work” handout for specifics.

A	94 and up	B+	87-89	C+	77-79
A-	90-93	B	84-86	C	74-76
		B-	80-83	C-	70-73 etc.

• **Successful Classroom:** In our class everyone has a right to express a genuine observation, curiosity or criticism, but no one has a right to put one down. Respect towards all members of the class and to course content is the key. I work hard to generate a setting in which we can be honest and critical, but my efforts are futile without your individual contributions. Impediments to a successful classroom include tardiness, lethargy, excessive absences, and leaving the classroom before the end of the hour. We are biological creatures, but since we also have a certain mastery over our bodies, please take care of your biological needs before class.

• **Computer Component:** You are responsible for notes, assignments, etc. that I send out via e-mail. Occasionally I may leave documents (e.g., study questions, handouts, biographical sketches) in our folder on the Academic Server (at \\Fileserver1\acad\_dept\_pgm\Philosophy\Shade Patrick\Public\PHIL 270). Please let me know if you have problems accessing this folder or finding materials. I will announce new documents that need to be read; if you are absent, you are responsible for these. If you're unfamiliar with computer use, please check with the computer staff. They'll be happy to help you.

• **Education and Pop Culture:** We may view some films or episodes (outside of class) that relate to class discussion. Likely films include “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire;” likely episodes include those from “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.”

• **Honor Code:** The Honor Code stipulates that *all* the work you submit is to be your own. You are encouraged to discuss topics and assignments with your colleagues (unless otherwise stipulated), but the work you hand in must be your own, i.e., it must be formulated and written in your own words and style reflecting your own thoughtful treatment. If you have any questions about the Honor Code, please ask me.

*\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to revision (but don't worry; I'll discuss any changes with the class before I make them).\*\*\**

## CALENDAR

All readings are from our texts unless otherwise noted. “R” means “on reserve or handout.”

	1/11 Introduction	1/13 Plato’s <i>Meno</i> (up through the discussion with the boy, “Then, as we are agreed that a man should enquire ...”)
1/16 <b>MLK Day</b> (no class)	1/18 Plato’s <i>Meno</i> (to end)	1/20 • Plato’s <i>Republic</i> 363a-383c [pp. 38-59]; 401a-404e [pp. 77-81]
1/23 <i>Republic</i> 453e-466d [pp. 127-141]; 502d-511d [pp. 176-185]	1/25 <i>Republic</i> 514a-520d [pp. 186- 192]	1/27 <a href="#">Service discussion</a>
1/30 Jean Jacques Rousseau (biography) <i>Emile</i> Introduction pp. xxvi-xxxiv, Chapter 1 (pp. 5-47)	2/1 <i>Emile</i> Chapter 2a (pp. 48-97)	2/3 <i>Emile</i> Chapter 2b (pp. 97-152)
2/6 <i>Emile</i> Chapter 3 (pp. 153-205)	2/8 <i>Emile</i> Chapter 4 (pp. 206-239) [+ History (239-249), Faults & Fables (249-259), Religion (259-273), Learning the World (349-358), Beauty & Taste (360-370, 382-3)]	2/10 <i>Emile</i> Chapter 5 (pp. 383-393, 441-447 486-491)
2/13 <a href="#">Service discussion</a>	2/15 Jane Addams “Educational methods” (R)	2/17 John Dewey (biography) <i>Democracy and Education</i> (DE) Chapters 1-3
2/20 <i>DE</i> Chapters 4 & 6	2/22 <i>DE</i> Chapters 7-9	2/24 <i>DE</i> Chapters 10-12
2/27 <i>DE</i> Chapters 18 & 22 <i>Recommended: DE</i> Chpt 20	3/1 <i>DE</i> Chapter 24	3/3 <i>DE</i> Chpt 25-26
3/6 <b>SPRING BREAK</b>	3/8 <b>SPRING BREAK</b>	3/10 <b>SPRING BREAK</b>
3/13 Paulo Freire (biography) Preface & Chapter 1	3/15 Freire Chapter 2	3/17 <a href="#">Service discussion</a>
3/20 Freire Chapter 3	3/22 Freire Chapter 4 (read all or pp. 125-142 [top ¶], 147-150 [top ¶], 152-154 [1 <sup>st</sup> full ¶], 167 (all)-169, 171 ¶3-4, 172-183)	3/24 TBA (hooks or Noddings or guest speaker)
3/27 TBA (hooks or Noddings)	3/29 E.D. Hirsch (biography) Hirsch Preface & Chapter 1 (pp. xiii-xvii, 1-32)	3/31 Hirsch Chapter 2 (pp. 33-69)
4/3 Hirsch Chapters 3-4 (pp. 70-109)	4/5 Hirsch Chapter 5-6 (pp. 110-145)	4/7 Presentations 1-2
4/10 Presentations 3-4	4/12 Presentations 5-6	4/14 <b>EASTER BREAK</b>
4/17 Presentations 7-8	4/19 Presentations 9-10	4/21 Presentations 11-12
4/24 Presentations 13-14	4/26 Presentation 15	4/28 URCAS (no class)