The semester after he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, the poet Joseph Brodsky was teaching a class on Russian poetry to a group of juniors and seniors. They were reading a poem by Osip Mandelstam that made reference to Ovid. When Mr. Brodsky asked how many had read Ovid, not a single hand went up. Mr. Brodsky said, "You've been cheated."

Course description

"Essaying Education" (ENG-265) surveys the pre-21st century philosophy of education through the genre of the essay. To 'essay' means to 'try,' to 'attempt.' We will attend to the rhetoric and style of thinkers attempting to argue about how we learn. Figures will be drawn from the classical era (Plato, Quintilian, Cicero), medieval Europe (Augustine, Aquinas), the humanist Renaissance (Erasmus, Elyot, Montaigne, Bacon, Comenius), the Enlightenment (Locke, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft), American pragmatism (Emerson, James, Dewey, Dubois, Washington), and more recent critiques (Jacotot, Freire, Arendt, Gatto, Ravitch, Sahlberg). We will also watch selected documentary films (e.g. To Be and To Have; At Berkeley). Particular attention will be devoted to the rhetoric of the essay, itself a mode of speculation. In kind, students will essay their own educational philosophy as part of a scholarly final research project. Topics will inevitably include pedagogy, ignorance, failure, knowledge, equity, and the artes liberales, or "crafts of freedom."

The topic is particularly timely, since in Fall 2014 Rhodes hosts two important symposia on the liberal arts, one sponsored by the Project for the Study of Liberal Democracy (September 25–27), and another sponsored by a grant from the Teagle Foundation (October 25–27). Students will attend and report on selected lectures from both events.

Required Texts

For ease of reference, the following editions are required:

- Meno and Phaedo, Plato (Cambridge, 2011)
- Education: Ends and Means (UPA, 1997)
- Some Thoughts Concerning Education (Hackett 1996)
- Emile (Basic, 1979)
- Vindication of the Rights of Woman (Hackett 2013)
- Experience and Education (Simon & Schuster 1997)
- Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters (Yale 2014)

Additional course materials will be distributed throughout the semester.
Have the texts read before our discussions each session. Ideally, you will read them once over the weekend, and then re-read them during the week—good reading always entails re-reading. Read aloud; read slowly; take notes. You should plan on at least four hours of preparation for every hour of class. If it becomes clear that not all of the class is keeping up with the reading, quizzes will be given. Bring the assigned reading to each class, heavily annotated with your comments.

You will often be encouraged to refer to the Oxford English Dictionary: http://dictionary.oed.com/

Schedule—subject to revision, per student interest and instructor’s discretion

Introduction
Week 1 (Aug. 28) 'education,' 'essay,' 'end' — "To Be and to Have"

Classical Greece and Rome
Week 2 (Sept. 2) Plato, Meno
Week 3 (Sept. 9) Cicero, Quintilian

Medieval
Week 4 (Sept. 16) Augustine, Aquinas

Renaissance Humanism
Week 5 (Sept. 23) Erasmus, Elyot
Week 6 (Sept. 30) Montaigne
Week 7 (Oct. 7) Bacon
Week 8 (Oct. 14) Comenius, Hartlib, Milton

Interlude on the liberal arts
Week 9 (Oct. 23) Roth; ROTH LECTURE (6pm, BCLC) [Berkeley film (?)]
Week 10 (Oct. 28) Locke

Questions of Travels
Week 11 (Nov. 4) Rousseau
Week 12 (Nov. 11) Wollstonecraft

American Pragmatism
Week 13 (Nov. 18) Emerson, James
Week 14 (Nov. 25) Dewey
Week 15 (Dec. 2) Washington, Dubois

Recent Critiques
Week 16 (Dec. 9) Jacotot, Freire, Arendt, Gatto, Ravitch, Sahlberg, others

FINAL SCHOLARLY ESSAYS DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 15
Essaying Education

Requirements
Engagement (30%) is mandatory, broadly conceived to include active participation (listening and responding to your peers as well as the professor), consistent preparation of course readings, enthusiasm for assignments, collaboration with your peers, and respect for the course — a mature level of decorum when engaging with the professor, writing fellow, or peers. Frequent quizzes will be one way to evaluate your consistent preparation. An absence is an absence is an absence, no matter the excuse (doctor-confirmed illness, personal matters, extracurriculars)—four (4) of them = two (2) full weeks! = grounds for failure in the course.

Weekly essays (30%), marked throughout the term in order to give you a rough idea of your progress in the course. A “check,” “check-minus,” or “check-plus” will indicate a general, non-binding evaluation. Due every Sunday via email by 8pm.

Contextual presentation (10%) – pairs of students will help introduce us to the intellectual background of education within each particular era. To do so, they will consult with Professor Newstok, survey a range of pertinent scholarship, produce a concisely and intelligently formatted handout, and share their context with the entire seminar.

Recent critique presentation (10%) – for the final week of class, all students will survey a different educational philosopher who critiques contemporary education, again producing a shrewd handout to share with their peers. (December 9)

Final Essay (20%), retrospectively drawing from the long history we’ve surveyed in this course, with scholarly sources and argumentation. (December 15)

Preparation: Expect to prepare four hours outside of class for every hour inside class. Have the assignments read before our discussions each week; ideally, you will read assignments once over the weekend, and then re-read them during the week; good reading always entails re-reading.

Drafts: Writing drafts will invariably improve your final papers. Make an appointment with the Rhodes College Writing Center at least once.

Weekly Essays: These are due by 5pm every Sunday.

Deadlines: Deadlines are firm; I do not accept late work or grant extensions. Late work causes problems for both students and teachers, particularly in a workshop; it frequently results in inferior writing and evaluation. Expect to submit an essay every Sunday night.

Email: I expect you to check your email regularly (at least once per day), as I will often detail or revise assignments in between classes. I am happy to receive queries by email regarding your writing, but I may not be able to reply immediately—and it’s generally preferable to discuss writing in person.
**Grading:** ‘C’ (70–79%) represents *satisfactory* work; a ‘B’ (80–86%) represents *good* work; a ‘B+’ (87–89%) represents *very good* work; an ‘A-’ (90–93%) represents *excellent* work; and the infrequent ‘A’ (94% and above) represents *extraordinary* achievement. This holds true for your overall engagement, your short essays, your critical surveys, and your final projects.

**Policies:** As always, please observe Rhodes guidelines regarding the *Honor Code*. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and an Honor Code violation (including plagiarism) will be *grounds for failure in the course*.

**Decorum:** Respect the integrity of the course: please turn off *cell phones* and remove *hats* before entering the classroom. *Eating in class* and *leaving to go to the bathroom* are both disruptive to our conversations; please plan accordingly so that you won’t have to do either. Treat *email exchanges* with one another and with the professor as formally composed correspondence.

**Format:** Please follow these simple guidelines to make grading papers more uniform:

- put your *last name on each page* in the top right corner, followed by the *page number*
- use *Garamond, Times, or Optima 12-point font*
- *single-space* the text of your essay (to save paper)
- *staple* all pages together
- *margins* should be an inch on top, bottom, and sides
- put the following information, single-spaced, in the *top left corner of the page*:

  Your Name  
  ENG/ENG 265: Essaying Education  
  Professor Newstok  
  Month Day, Year

- your *tantalizing title* follows this heading, centered on the next line

**Weekly writing—guidelines**
These are concise, one-page, single-spaced (around 500 words) compositions designed to familiarize you with a number of different *kinds* of approaches to analyzing essays — from examining very minute details to considering larger issues across multiple texts. As the semester progresses, you will be able to incorporate the ‘tools’ from earlier essays into your increasingly nuanced compositions. They are also intended to give you some expertise on a particular topic for discussion that week, and serve as preparation for our seminar; it is often only through writing that we come to recognize what we have to say. *Hard copies are due via email every Sunday by 8pm to newstoks@rhodes.edu*
Loose rubric for considering philosophical essays on education

What is education?

What is its end (purpose/telos/goal)?

Where does it take place? (locations)

What kind of community (polis) does it presuppose?

What is the relationship between the school and the wider community?

Who pays for it? (state? individuals? philanthropists?)

What is a teacher?

What is a student? (how old?)

What is the role of a family?

What can be taught? what cannot be taught?

What motivates a student to learn?

How is educational progress judged?

What is knowledge?

What is the presumption about human nature (and/or 'soul') — fallen/corrupt? innocent? blank slate (tabula rasa)?

What is the medium? (language; presence; materials; other infrastructures)

What kind of relationship to the past is presumed?

What (if anything) should all students know in common?

Do all students need/deserve to follow the same education?

What is the role of mathematics in an educational theory? rhetoric? music?

Does moral education coincide with civic education? should it?

What role does making or doing ('craft?') have in the curriculum?

What is the relationship between body and mind? How ought discipline apply to both?

What is the role of habit? memory? recitation?
EDUCATION—Etymology is always revealing. "education" derives from e-ducare: to bring out, draw forth and from e-ducere: to lead out. Its double etymology suggests both drawing something out of a learner; and leading the learner out to a new place. Erudire typically suggests taking someone or something out of a rude or crude condition. Our "doctrine" and "indoctrinate" come from docere, to teach; and of course disciplina covers both senses of the English "discipline." "Instruction" comes from in-struere: "to build into." Hence the German Bildung to shape, form, cultivate. The German erziehen gives: to bring up or train. The verb "to school" derives from the Greek schole: discuss at leisure, and scholion, a commentary, interpretation. The French use "formation" as well as "education." Greek has the general term trope: rearing, and paideia which refers to the bringing up of young children, both surprisingly limited.—Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "The Ruling History of Education," in Philosophers on Education (Routledge, 1998): 11.

ESSAY—essai—"a trial, an attempt" (Patridge). From this meaning comes English "to essay" in the sense of "to make a trial or an attempt," as in Emerson's statement "I also will essay to be." The word also comes into English via Norman French assaier as "to essay," meaning to try or test, as in testing the quality of a mineral ore.

German has two words for essay: Abhandlung, a "dealing with" something, and Aufsatz, a "setting forth." . . . So far as I can learn, the first use of essay to refer to a literary composition was for the title of the most famous collection of such compositions ever published—Montaigne's Essais. If you look for the first English use of the term in this sense in the OED, you may be surprised at what you find. Instead of a majestic series of entries marching forward from the Middle Ages, you encounter this bald statement: "Essay. A composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of a subject; originally implying want of finish . . . but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style though limited in range. The use in this sense is apparently taken from Montaigne, whose essais were first published in 1580."

In other words Montaigne invented the term, and the English got it directly from him. Another surprise. The first English use of the term was on the title page of the Essays Francis Bacon published in 1597. The second was on the title page of John Florio's translation of—you guessed it—Montaigne's Essays, or Morall, Politike, and Militarie Discourses (1603) . . . the essay did not appear ab ovo. Montaigne's principal guide and mentor in the art of the essay was Plutarch, whose Moralia consists of short compositions on topics of general interest . . . Another writer much admired by Montaigne and more so by Bacon is Seneca, whose unfailingly uplifting letters often come close to being essays. . . . in spite of these and other precedents, the essay is something new [in contrast to dispositio, "the literary equivalent of the foregone conclusion."]—O. B. Hardison, Jr., "Binding Proteus: An Essay on the Essay," The Sewanee Review 96.4 (Fall, 1988), 612-13.

END(S)—telos/purpose/goal/destination/completion/termination (Wittgenstein's ladder)
"End" is «τέλος» (telos, neuter noun), from the ancient «τέλος» (telos, neuter noun), lit. fulfilment, conclusion. PIE base *tel-, to weigh, lift, probably due to the weighing of the correct amount of gold/goods one had to pay as a financial charge or other levy in order to meet the requirements or expectations of the State (from «τέλος», the ancient Greek unit of value and mass «τάλαντον», talent derives). This amphibology of «τέλος» has survived in Modern Greek: «Τέλος» describes both the fulfilment, conclusion and the rate, tax (e.g. stamp duty is τέλος χαρτοσήμου-telos xarto'simu in Greek).
André Bazin, reviewing Chris Marker’s *Letter from Siberia* (1957), claimed “a given image doesn’t refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said.” Thus the very thing which makes Letter “extraordinary”, in Bazin’s estimation, is also what makes it not-cinema. Looking for a term to describe it, Bazin hit upon a prophetic turn of phrase, writing that Marker’s film is, “to borrow Jean Vigo’s formulation of *À propos de Nice* (‘a documentary point of view’), an essay documented by film. The important word is ‘essay’, understood in the same sense that it has in literature – an essay at once historical and political, written by a poet as well.”

the ruminative, digressive and playful qualities we associate with the essay film. . . that free play of the mind, the Montaigne-inspired meanderings of individual intelligence . . .

"The secret history of the essay film"

http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/19816/1/the-secret-history-of-the-essay-film

“Essay films are arguably the most innovative and popular form of filmmaking since the 1990s,” wrote Timothy Corrigan in his notable 2011 book, *The Essay Film*. . . . essay films have been around since the dawn of cinema: they emerged not long after the Lumière brothers recorded the first ever motion pictures of Lyonnaise factory workers in 1894, yet their definition is still ambiguous.

Geoff Andrew, a senior programmer at the BFI who helped curate last year’s landmark essay film season, explained, “they are sort of documentaries, sort of non-fiction films.” The issue is that some filmmakers try to provide an objective point of view when it is just not possible. “There’s always somebody manipulating footage and manipulating reality to present some sort of message.” Andrew continued, “So, in a way, all documentaries are essay films.”

1940 - Hans Richter’s *The Film Essay*

The term “essay film” was originally coined by German artist Hans Richter, who wrote in his 1940 paper, *The Film Essay*: “The film essay enables the filmmaker to make the ‘invisible’ world of thoughts and ideas visible on the screen... The essay film produces complex thought – reflections that are not necessarily bound to reality, but can also be contradictory, irrational, and fantastic.” So while World War II was blazing away, a new cinema was born.
"igniting a fire"

http://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/03/28/mind-fire/

“On Listening” in Moralia by the Greek-born philosopher Plutarch who lived between 50 and 120 AD (trans. Robin Waterfield, 1992):

For the correct analogy for the mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting — no more — and then it motivates one towards originality and instills the desire for truth. Suppose someone were to go and ask his neighbours for fire and find a substantial blaze there, and just stay there continually warming himself: that is no different from someone who goes to someone else to get some of his rationality, and fails to realize that he ought to ignite his innate flame, his own intellect, …

Ralph Cudworth (invoking Plutarch) in his True Intellectual System (1678):

“all human teaching is … not the filling of the soul as a vessel, merely by pouring into it from without, but the kindling of it from within”

Cudworth was one of the leaders of the Cambridge Platonists; the claim is intended to depend upon the Platonic account of learning (e.g. in the Meno).

In 1968 a version of the saying was ascribed to Plutarch in the book “Vision and Image: A Way of Seeing” by James Johnson Sweeney. This instance placed “education” into the quote, and it used the word “pail” instead of “vessel”. Interestingly, the Plutarch quotation was immediately adjacent to a quote credited to W. B. Yeats. One important mechanism for generating misattributions is based on the misreading of neighboring quotations. A reader sometimes inadvertently transfers the ascription of one quote to a contiguous quote:

William Butler Yeats has expressed the heart of this viewpoint in his statement, “Culture does not consist in acquiring opinions but in getting rid of them” and Plutarch in “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

In 1987 the “Barnes & Noble Book of Quotations” included an aphorism that exactly matched the instance above, but the words were credited to Yeats instead of Plutarch. This reassignment fits the pattern of misattribution just described:

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.—William Butler Yeats