

Syllabus
PHIL 3011 (3 Cr.)
Philosophy of Education
Fall 2022

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips
Office: 108F General Classrooms
Student Hours: T: 11:00a-1:00p, W&F: 9:00a-10:30p & also by appointment.

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Class Meets:
MWF: 1:00-1:50p in SC 225

COURSE DESCRIPTION: By now most of us probably have a lot of thoughts about education. After all, we've been learning for most of our lives, whether in formal settings or through less conventional means. Perhaps because everyone has had such broad access to educational contexts, pretty much everyone has something to say about education, and on a wide variety of subjects: the purpose of education, the value of education, the role of government in education, the curricular decisions, the proper methods of education, and so many more. In this course we will take a step back and consider three main questions within the philosophy of education. First, what *is* education? Second, what should education aim to accomplish? Third, how should we approach the practice of educating (while keeping in mind answers to our previous questions).

When we turn to our final question, we will focus on the *philosophical* aspects of practice. While contemporary teacher-education programs can likely provide us with plenty of examples for consideration, with parameters that exist in our corner of the world, and so on, this course is first and foremost a *philosophy* class. As such, we will be primarily concerned with the theoretical underpinnings of education. Accordingly, we will not necessarily worry about how things *are*, but how they *could* and *should* be. As such, this course is at once theoretical, aspirational, and normative in nature.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Critical Thinking: The successful student will begin to be able to differentiate between good and bad reasons for holding philosophical beliefs and will be able to seek out and identify the assumptions that lie at the basis of philosophical positions.
- Inquiry and Analysis: The successful student will begin to be able to break complex philosophical problems into their components, and will be able to identify the consequences and implications of philosophical positions.
- Writing: The successful student will be able to express some abstract and complex philosophical ideas in clear, precise, and logical prose.
- Reading Comprehension: The successful student will be able to analyze and interpret abstract and difficult philosophical writing.

TEXTS: *Intellectual Virtues and Education: Essays in Applied Epistemology*, ed. Jason Baehr. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-09869-5 **(IVE)**

All other readings will be made available through Canvas.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

This list of readings is tentative. Specific reading assignments will be given on a day-to-day basis.

Week 1: Introduction to Philosophy, Education, and (un)Grading

Jack Schneider & Ethan Hutt: "[Making the Grade: a History of the A-F Marking Scheme](#)" (Canvas)

Alfie Kohn: "[The Case Against Grades](#)" (linked on Canvas)

Jesse Stommel: "[How to Ungrade](#)" (linked on Canvas)

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Weeks 2-7: The Nature and Aims of Education

Kirk Fitzpatrick: “The Third Era of Education” (Canvas)

Lani Watson: “[The Epistemology of Education](#)” (Canvas)

Plato: from the *Republic* (Canvas)

Aristotle: from *Politics* (Canvas)

John Dewey: from *Democracy and Education* (Canvas)

James Baldwin: “[A Talk to Teachers](#)” (Canvas)

Hannah Arendt: from *Between Past and Future* (Canvas)

Paolo Friere: from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Canvas)

Michel Croce & Duncan Pritchard: “Education as the Social Cultivation of Intellectual Virtue” (Canvas)

Ryan Bevan: “Expanding Rationality: The Relation Between Epistemic Virtue and Critical Thinking” (Canvas)

****Recommended:** Peter Facione: “Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Education Assessment and Instruction” (Canvas)

[Mid-Term Exam and Self-Reflection]

Weeks 8-13: The Philosophical Practice of Education: Epistemology, Learning, and Virtue

John Turri: “[Virtue Epistemology](#)” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (linked on Canvas)

Jason Baehr: “Introduction: Applying Virtue Epistemology to Education” (IVE 1-15)

NOTE: After having read the synopsis of the papers in the introduction, I will ask you to work with me to select the most interesting chapters (I found almost all of them exceptional). I want to read chapters that interest *YOU*.

[Final Exam due Tues. Dec. 13th]

[Final Reflections and closing meeting during finals week]

ASSIGNMENTS, EVALUATION:

“Extrinsic motivation, which includes a desire to get better grades, is not only different from, but often undermines, intrinsic motivation, a desire to learn for its own sake” – Alfie Kohn (1999), *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A’s, praise, and other bribes*. Rev. ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Let’s Talk Motivation: In recent years I have become increasingly unhappy with grades as a measure of anything at all. I often tell my students that it’s probably easy to get an A in my class – you can relatively easily “hack” my grading system and figure out the “formula” for writing a paper for me. Once you figure it out, getting an A on papers in my classes is easy. But I don’t want you to get an A by “hacking the system.” I want you to push yourself to learn new things because you found something you’re excited about and wanted to try to go beyond what’s comfortable and familiar. I’ve long thought that an A- or a B+ that was the result of taking risks was worth more than a safe, but well-written A paper.

In short, grading is not a good measure of learning, and the focus on grades distracts from the real goal of education. If you’re aiming for a specific grade, you’re not aiming to get the most out of your educational opportunities.

Evaluation: Here’s what we will do. I will ask you to fill out a brief survey to help us both better understand where your strengths are and where you can improve with regard to various intellectual virtues.

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I will then ask you to write a self-evaluation considering the following questions:

- (a) What are your reasons for taking this class?
- (b) What do you hope to get out of this class?
- (c) Where and how do you think you can improve on your academic work?
- (d) What do you think I hope you'll take away from the class?
- (e) Which of the listed virtues do you consider to be the most important? Why?
- (f) On which of them do you want to focus this semester?

You and I will meet one-on-one at the start of the semester to establish concrete goals for the class.

I will ask you to do a mid-semester check-in reflection paper just after your mid-term exam.

We will meet up again at the end of the semester to discuss what progress have you made with regard to our goals.

The idea is that we will **collaboratively** come to a determination about what sort of progress you've made, where you think you can continue to improve (and how to best do so). As such, I will not provide you with numerical or letter grades on individual assignments. I will provide my standard level of *qualitative* feedback on your work (discursive comments regarding clarity, precision, critical engagement, etc.), but the gradebook will only note whether you turned the assignment in.

You are responsible for working with me to determine your final grade in this class. We will come to an agreement based on formal self-assessments, the collected feedback you received from me over the course of the semester, and a final discussion. *I reserve the right to adjust the final grade, but I will not do so without telling you first.*

Assignments:

- **Introductory Self-Reflection Paper** (Due **Sept 4, 11:59p**).
- **Introductory Goal-Setting Meeting.** [Sign up for a 15 minute meeting \(zoom or office\) here](#) where we will discuss your goals, motivations, etc.
- **Midterm exam** (Due **Oct 14**).
- **Mid-point Reflection Paper** (Due **Oct 19**).
- **Term Paper Proposal** (Due **Nov 1**). I would like to see a proposal of between ½ page and 1 page of your term paper. It can be rough, but I'd like to see an approximate thesis, and a direction for research – you don't need to have done the research yet, but find some contemporary work on your topic and give me a few pieces you intend to use for your paper. If you feel uncomfortable trying to find sources, or don't know where to look, I'm more than happy to help. We can address this in our introductory meeting, during our mid-semester meeting, and/or during student hours.
- **Term Paper** Your term paper will be roughly 3000 words, and can discuss any topic in the *Philosophy* of education.
- **Final Exam** (Due **Tuesday Dec 13**)
- **Final Meeting** (During finals week). We will meet to discuss your progress toward your goals over the semester, and determine your final grade. I will post the Calendly link as we get closer.
- **Participation.** Philosophy is best done in open, careful dialogue with one another. I know not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of their peers, but I want to encourage you to genuinely engage one another regarding the ideas in the class. There are a number of ways one can be an active participant in the course. Whether that is asking questions in class, organizing discussion

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boards, setting up study groups, visiting during student hours, or something else you come up with, I'd like to see you really engage with both the material and one another.

REQUIRED POLICY STATEMENTS:

Plagiarism or academic fraud. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter. Please familiarize yourself with Southern Utah University's *Student Handbook*, which you can find online at <https://www.suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP633Academic.pdf>. I will follow the regulations described in this document for dealing with cheating, plagiarism, etc. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism or academic fraud after reading through the student handbook, please do not hesitate to ask me for further clarification. That said, **I trust you.**

Disabilities: I warmly welcome any of you who have disabilities. Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids must contact the Office for Students with Disabilities. The Office for Students with Disabilities determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of these services and aids. Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with federal, state, and University guidelines. For Southern Utah University's full policy, see: <http://suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP119Disability.pdf>.

SUU Pride Alliance: Pride Alliance is a network comprised of students, staff, and faculty dedicated to creating safe spaces for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer individuals and Allies (LGBTQA) on the campus of Southern Utah University (SUU). As an ally, please know that I am committed to seeing that everyone is afforded the dignity and respect they deserve regardless of their identity. <http://www.suu.edu/allies/>

Emergency Management: In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the mySUU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://suu.edu/emergency>.

HEOA Compliance: The sharing of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, except as provided under U.S. copyright law, is prohibited by law.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this syllabus, other than the grading, late assignments, makeup work, and attendance policies are subject to change with advance notice, as I deem appropriate.