

HON 2219, Section 1 Great Works 1: Why Be Educated?

DATES AND TIMES

TTh 1:00-2:30, BMC 100

ABOUT

This course is required for all honors students

Ever since Socrates' dictum, "The unexamined life is not worth living," those of us in higher education have assumed that education is an intrinsic good. Being educated is generally held to be, if not a moral imperative, morally preferable to being uneducated. But why?

Is it true that education an intrinsic good, or is it to be valued only in the context of some other good, such as the need for an informed electorate? Is an educated person a more moral or virtuous person than an uneducated person? Are the liberally educated somehow better people than the technically educated? Are those who grapple with the 'enduring questions' better equipped to adapt to the complexities of modern life than those with a technical, vocational education?

In this class, we'll address these questions through direct experience with some of the 'great works' of the western intellectual tradition. By the end of the semester, it is our hope that you better understand the academic environment, its reason for being, and the rights and responsibilities of a scholar.

DESCRIPTION

Representative masterworks of European culture from ancient times through the Renaissance. McDaniel Plan: Textural Analysis



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STRUCTURE

This class is the 'core' liberal arts course for the Honors Program that focuses on close reading of core texts. As such, it demands that you take a high degree of responsibility for your own education. There is a great deal of reading, which must be approached with diligence and deliberation.

Close Reading is an intellectual discipline that pays utmost attention to the text itself. When doing a 'close' reading, the text itself is the subject matter--not what you feel about it, or what experiences in your life it reflects on, or what it says about the author's intentions, or the cultural values at the time--all that will come later with different traditions of 'reading'. In 'close' reading, the goal is to analyze just what is on the page, gaps and all. How those gaps are filled in by various interpretations may be of interest, but we need to understand where those gaps lie before we can do that. If you're coming from the sciences, it might be instructive to think about the text like your dataset: different scientists may well interpret the same dataset differently, and there is always a gap between the interpretation and the data itself. But at some point, someone has to sit down and look carefully at the data itself. It's difficult, time consuming work, which is usually done by a graduate student. That's what we're going to do here. The text is our dataset. For the next 15 weeks, we're going to focus solely on what it contains, so that later, we can see if it supports one or more interpretation.

The class is designed to be intellectually overwhelming. For the next 15 weeks, you should live, eat and breathe the Western Intellectual tradition. If, for example, you find that you have enough time to play 'AngryBirds' for 8 hours a day, you are doing it wrong.

Here's a rough outline of the course:

Blogs Every student will be required to keep a **blog**, updated with weekly writing assignments, each of which is related to the research on college curricula described previously. If you are worried about privacy online, we can set you up with a 'handle' to obscure your identity.

These blogs will be merged into a single 'class blog' which allows comments, discussions, sharing of sources, and so on. These assignments will go beyond personal 'reflection' assignments and ask you to apply theoretical viewpoints to materials they find in your everyday life. A list of these assignments is attached to the end of the calendar.

For grading blog activity, I roughly follow Chris Long's rubric, which is available here:

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/cpl2/blogs/cplportfolio/Blogging%20Scoring%20Rubric.pdf>

Application Additionally, you will apply what you have learned in the course to classifying, analyzing and critiquing selected curricula from American colleges and universities. During the last 1/3 of the course, you will work together to categorize curricula according to the values implicit in their construction. The results of these efforts will be disseminated through the course blog, and wikis those discussions might spawn.

Activities Late in the semester, Greg Alles in Religious Studies has offered us an opportunity to link via video conference software, such as Skype, with the Adivasi Academy in Tejgadh, Gujarat (<http://www.adivasiacademy.org.in/>). The Adivasi Academy runs a boarding school, primarily for children of nomadic people, as well as many educational programs in the surrounding community, where nonliteracy and lack of formal education are high. Our access to the Academy provides us with the opportunity to interact directly with people who are engaged with the question of the value of formal education and of what that should consist. This activity provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on the implications of Gandhi's views for education.

Traditional Assignments You will be required to write two short papers that will be primarily expository in nature. A longer, final paper will extend the views of one or more of the radical primary and secondary educational theorists we cover to higher education. These papers will be presented to the rest of the class and made available to the larger community via the course blog.

Honor Code

As members of the McDaniel college community, I expect that we are all committed to upholding and abiding by our honor system. That means that I will do everything I can to make possibly ambiguous assignments clear and that you are obligated to report any violations. I require that all written work be submitted with the signed honor pledge "I have neither given or received unauthorized aid on this piece of work, nor have I knowingly tolerated any violation of the Honor Code". I will not grade any assignment without such a signature.

Finally, when in doubt, ask. There will be cases, if not in this class, then in others, where the line between citation and plagiarism is vague. And there will be cases in which the line between helping a friend and doing their work will be crossed. Your best bet in finding the line is to ask me. If you ask beforehand, you have nothing to worry about. If you wait until after, it might be too late.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop critical reading skills through direct experience with long-form primary texts that are recognized as foundational pillars of the Western Intellectual tradition.
- To develop an understanding of the tradition of liberal education.
- To develop an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of a scholar in both the academy and the culture.
- To develop a sense of confidence and competency in relation to understanding difficult texts, presenting material and engaging in discussion.
- To develop competency with the basic theoretical perspectives of the 'great thinkers' who have grappled with the question of "Why be educated?"
- To apply an understanding of the theoretical viewpoints to understanding existing curricula.
- To develop an ability to extend basic theories of primary and secondary education to higher education.
- And most importantly: to question everything.

MATERIALS

Note: these books, other than the first, are out of copyright and freely available online. The translations may vary, but I'm happy to supply links in class.

- Crawford, M. *Shop Class as Soul Craft* Penguin ISBN: 9780143117469 \$9.14
- Plato, *Republic* Hackett 9780872201361 \$9.22
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 0879753781 \$13.98
- Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* 978-0231096300 \$28.18
- Rousseau, J-J *Emile or On Education* Prometheus Books 978-1595478405 \$18.99
- DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk* Dover 9780486280417 \$2.50
- Gandhi, M. *'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings* Cambridge 9780521146029 \$27.95

* prices from Amazon.com, they may vary.

REQUIREMENTS

The college believes that "liberally educated men and women think and act critically, creatively and humanely." I expect nothing less. Whether it be in the classroom, in written assignments, and in your preparation for class, I expect you to think and act critically, creatively and humanely.

Assignments / Activities: See the 'Structure' section above for specifics activities and assignments for the course. This section contains the 'general' requirements for all courses:

Attendance: Given the active nature of the course, regular attendance is mandatory. Attendance and participation are a major part of your overall grade (10-15%) and every absence counts. If you must miss a class, please inform me before the class begins so I can restructure the session if necessary. A quick email is sufficient. If you miss more three times, it will begin impact your grade significantly.

Classroom conduct: The readings and/or assignments noted on the calendar below must be completed **before** the class begins. These are the readings we will be discussing in class, so if you haven't read the material, you won't have anything to add to the discussion.

Information Technology: I do use blackboard occasionally. There is a copy of this syllabus available, and I will be updating assignments over the course of the semester. In case of conflict or confusion regarding due dates or scheduled readings, between the website and this document, the website always takes precedence.

Special Accommodation: If you are in need of special accommodation, please see me at least 48 hours before the event for which you would need accommodation. I can be very flexible if approached in a timely manner. Making changes after the fact is difficult if not impossible.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Papers: There will be three papers, the first two of which will be shorter and expository in nature. In the final paper, you will apply what you've learned to analyze various higher educational programs.

All papers are evaluated with respect to clarity, precision and sophistication of the argument / thesis presented. Oral presentations are evaluated with respect to many of the same criteria, but for the most part can be tailored to exposition, rather than criticism or analysis.

| ASSIGNMENT | VALUE |
|------------------------------|--|
| Blog | 15% (See Blogging rubric) |
| Blog work | 15% |
| Paper 1 - Expository | 20% |
| Paper 2 - Analysis | 20% |
| Final Paper - Application | 30% |
| Attendance and Participation | 15% |

Assignments are subject to change according to the flow of the class. In particular, I may replace a paper with a midterm, or a paper with a presentation, or vice versa. Ratios will, however, remain more or less the same: a majority of your grade depends on your papers.

CALENDAR

| WEEK | INTRODUCTION |
|------|--------------|
| 1 | |

8/30 Introduction to the course and the topic
 9/1 Crawford / Blog 1

WEEK

ANCIENT VIEWS

2

9/6 No class - labor day
 9/8 Plato: [Apology](#) (at classics.mit.edu) and Republic Bk 1 / Blog 2

WEEK

EDUCATE TO LEAD

3

9/13 Plato - Republic Books 2-4 / Blog 3
 9/15 Plato - Republic Books 5-7

WEEK

EDUCATION AS VIRTUE

4

9/20 Aristotle Books 1&2 / Blog 4
 9/22 Aristotle Books 3-5

WEEK

EDUCATION AS VIRTUE

5

9/27 Aristotle Books 6&7 (Chs. 1-11) / Blog 5
 9/29 Aristotle Books 8&9

WEEK

EDUCATION AS VIRTUE

6

10/4 Aristotle: end of Book 7, Book 10 / Blog 6
 10/6 Augustine *The Teacher*

WEEK

MEDIEVALISTS: READING, REFORMULATION AND CLASSIFICATION

7

10/11 Hugh of Saint Victor, Preface, Bk 1&2 / Blog 7
 10/13 Hugh of Saint Victor, Bk 3-6

WEEK

FALL BREAK

8

10/18 Fall Break
 10/20 At Conference

WEEK

TOPIC

9

10/25 Locke - [Some Thoughts Concerning Education](#)
 10/27 Huxley - [A Liberal Education and Where to Find it](#), Mill - [On Liberty](#) / Blog 8

WEEK

ROUSSEAU

10

11/1 Rousseau - Emile Bk 1&2 / Blog 9
 11/3 Rousseau - Emile Bk 3&4

WEEK

RESPONSES - WOMEN

11

11/8 Rousseau - Emile Bk 5 (Sophy)
 11/10 [Wollstonecraft](#) Vindication of the Rights of Women (Preface, Intro, Ch1, 4, 5.1, 6-7, 9-10) also [at Early modern texts](#) if you can't adapt to the 's' 'f' thing.
 Perkins-Gilman, [Women and Economics, Ch 1-6](#) / **Blog 10**

WEEK

RESPONSES - THE DISPOSSESSED

12

11/15 [MacCauley, TB 'Minute'](#), [Lubbock - On the Imperial Policy of Great Britain](#) & Tagore "[The Parrot's Training](#)"

11/17 Gandhi - Hind Swarj

WEEK

THE REFORMERS AND THE RADICALS

13

11/22 Du Bois / Blog 11

11/24 No Class: Thanksgiving

WEEK

THE REFORMERS AND THE RADICALS

14

11/29 Dewey, Hutchins / Blog 12 (particular college assigned in class)

12/1 Illich (Intro, Ch 1-3 & 6-7)

WEEK

THE REFORMERS AND THE RADICALS

15

12/6 Freire (Ch 1-3) / Blog 14

12/8 Nussbaum (Ch 1-3) / Lang

Blog entries

The following are designed to help you apply the theoretical works we're reading to real-life situations. All entries should be posted to your blog. Entries should be about 250 words in length, and demonstrate a proficiency with the text, if it is required.

Blog entries should be posted by 9AM Monday of each week, so I'll have a chance to read them before class on Tuesday. The SOLE exceptions to this rule are in the first week, and the due dates are shown below.

Become familiar with your colleagues blogs, leave comments, and point out concerns. You will probably come to realize pretty quickly that much of what you learn in college you learn from your peers, not from your professors. Start a good habit of debating about intellectual matters early, and you'll do fine.

You should plan on writing at least 1 blog entry a week, and commenting on at least 2 posts from your colleagues each week.

- Blog Entry 1: (due 9/1) Why are you in college? Note that I'm not asking here 'why are you at McDaniel?' - I'm asking 'Why are you in college AT ALL? Did you ever seriously consider NOT going to college? Are you here because a college degree is necessary for your intended career? When did you decide on that career? Have you ever seriously considered having a different career / lifestyle?
- Blog Entry 2: (due 9/8) Socrates' claims that the citizens of Athens find him so annoying because he forces them to analyze their previously held beliefs, which can be unpleasant. Go out and find a friend who is supremely confident in their opinions. Question those opinions Socratically - get them to give you a definition and then present them with examples that push the definition in various ways. Post a blog entry on your experiences, and your friends' reactions.
- Blog Entry 3: (due 9/13) Consider the myth of the metals and the accompanying 'Royal Lie' in connection with Plato's argument that the best leaders are the best educated. Notice that Plato holds that education should be directed at livelihood - and requires significant censorship and control. What do you think of this? Are there ideas that are so dangerous and corrupting that we should not expose students to them? How, if at all, does the myth of the metals inform American education and society? The standard way of phrasing the 'American dream' is something like 'work hard, don't make trouble, and your children will have a chance to succeed.' Is this comparable to the Platonic 'royal lie'? Is our system of education and politics one that ensures those best equipped to rule actually rule, or does it simply perpetuate inherited privilege? Should a college or university set as its objective cultivating the next generation of leaders?
- Blog Entry 4: (due 9/20) What is the big picture here - what is happiness (success), what is virtue? How does doing good make one a good person? How does one ensure that one is doing the virtuous thing? Is this intuitive - is your ultimate goal in gaining an education happiness? Or is it something else? Is there always a middle point between two extremes of character traits? Who is Milo the Wrestler?
- Blog Entry 5: (due 9/27) Reflect on your own educational at McDaniel thus far: are we cultivating virtue (as a community, not just your classes)? Do we cultivate practical wisdom? How? If we're not, what can be corrected to help cultivate practical wisdom? If you participated in (or participate in) a sport - does intercollegiate athletics reward virtue or vice? Does dorm life / the honors program / the service requirement / etc. cultivate virtue? Ought an educational institution strive to cultivate practical wisdom -

and #30, should it only focus on the rational part, or should it focus on the other bits as well (i.e. 'Change lives')?

- Blog Entry 6: (due 10/4) Post the first paragraph of your paper. It should include a thesis as well as a general overview of how you will argue for that thesis. Make sure you give feedback to your peers, as well as welcoming feedback from your peers!
- Blog Entry 7 (due 10/11) Hugh - The preface begins with some sharp words for the ignorant, for example: "Not knowing springs from weakness, but contempt for knowledge springs from a wicked will". What do we say about people who choose ignorance? Fundamentalists are one breed, but much of the contemporary anti-intellectualism in America is another. Are those who choose not to understand what can be understood morally inept or evil? What is the moral obligation to learn?
- Blog Entry 8 (due 10/27) Locke & Mill - The beginning of the era of liberalism was concerned largely with the notion of 'liberty.' What is the concept of liberty in Mill, and how much liberty ought to be allowed in a college environment -- esp. knowing what you know now about cultivating virtue, practical wisdom, etc.? Did your highschool (and before) encourage or discourage liberty? How, if at all, were these social policies reflected in the intellectual environment? Does the attitude of a school to the social structure of its student body influence / reflect / determine the attitude with respect to intellectual engagement?
- Blog Entry 9 (due 11/1) Rousseau - How much of Rousseau's *Emile* is reasoned deduction and how much speculative conjecture? To put it another way: what claims does he make that could be empirically / scientifically tested? How might we separate the kernels of wisdom from the speculative developmental psychology?
- Blog Entry 10 (due **11/10**) Rousseau / Wollstonecraft - In many ways, Wollstonecraft's book is directly targeted at Rousseau's 'Sophie,' insofar as she argues that girls should be educated as 'humans,' not as 'women.' Is this dichotomy necessary? In your experience, is being 'girly' or 'womanly' still associated with being uneducated, or uneducable? Be specific, drawing examples to support your case from popular culture, literature, or your own experience.
- Blog Entry 11 (due 11/22) Throughout the *Souls*, DuBois seems to believe that genuine freedom requires education, yet "The Story of John" ends with a tragedy which seems to relate directly back to John's becoming educated. How has your world-view changed since being in college? Do you begin to feel the distance between you and your high school life?
- Blog Entry 12 (due 11/29) Dewey: Research the curriculum of one of the following 'progressive' institutions and analyze and critique it: Antioch, Evergreen, Brown, Colorado College, Deep Springs College, Sarah Lawrence. What is the mission of the college? Is the curriculum consistent with that mission? What theoretical position is assumed in the design of the curriculum? Is there justification available? OR: Hutchins: Now research the curriculum of one of the following 'traditional' institutions and analyze and critique it: St. John's (Annapolis & Santa Fe), St. Mary's College of California, Columbia's core program, Rhodes ('Search for Values' program), St Olaf's 'Great Conversation' program. [Also: Assumption, Benedictine, Pepperdine, St. Bonaventure, Shimer and University of Dallas] What is the mission of the college? Is the curriculum consistent with that mission? What theoretical position is assumed in the design of the curriculum? Is there justification available?
- Blog Entry 14 (due 12/6) Paper 3 Prep: Look carefully at McDaniel's 'First Principles.' Re-read the catalog. Review the admissions materials online. What are we doing? What are we doing well? What would you like to see improved?