**Course name:** 'What is education?'

**Tutor:** Malcolm Macqueen

**Dates:** 5 weeks, once a week starting October 1st 2019

**Time:** 7pm-9.30pm

**Venue:** DIY Space for London, 96-108 Ormside St, London SE15 1TF

**Course 'Riot'\* page**: “What is education?”

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\*'Riot' is a free communication and learning platform used by Free University London to make course materials available online to students, and to allow students to contact each other and the tutor. It is available as a free app and as a website online. In order to access Free University London's Riot page, enter your email address and subscribe to Free University London on our website (freeuniversitylondon.org).

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will explore important themes in understanding what education is. Questions we will consider will include: What does it mean to learn something? What does the process of learning teach us about the kind of beings we are? What role does education have in society? What have previous thinkers got wrong about education?

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We will look at the work of some key historical thinkers in philosophy and education studies who have tried to understand what education is, including Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, Freire, and Noddings. We will then look at some examples of existing alternative education, including Montessori, Steiner, and Summerhill schools. Given our discussions about the important questions surrounding education, we will ask what these alternatives get right and what they miss.

No previous experience of philosophy, teaching, or schooling is required. There will be short readings made available every week, and, while these are recommended, they are not required in order to attend class.

**STRUCTURE**

**Week 1: Introduction**

This week we will introduce the plan for the course, and begin by looking at the Ancient Greek philosopher Plato as a way of asking some questions about education which have occupied educational theorists for thousands of years. For example, we will be discussing questions such as: What should our education system be for? Who should study what and when? Should education be a merit-based system? What does it mean to learn something? What is knowledge? Plato asked and answered all of these questions, and his answers have been debated ever since. We will be using Plato's ideas as a springboard for looking at important aspects of education for the rest of the course.

Primary reading: Nel Noddings: 'Chapter 1: Philosophy of Education before the Twentieth-Century' (PDF available uploaded online)

Secondary reading: see 'Materials' section below.

**Week 2: Are students 'blank slates'?**

This week, we will look at a popular idea in education theory, that students (and people in general) are born as 'blank slates', and that education is the task of filling out these blank slates with whatever knowledge and skills we think are proper. We will look at three philosophers this week: Avicenna (Ibn Sina), John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The first half of the class will ask the questions: What kind of beings are we? Why is this important for thinking about education? The second half of the class will look at the question of whether we *really* are born as blank slates, and if not, what kind of beings are we? And why is *this* important for what education should be?

Primary reading:

(1) Avicenna: <https://muslimheritage.com/ibn-sina-on-education/>

(2) Locke: [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/#LimiHumaUnde](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/" \l "LimiHumaUnde)

(3) Rousseau: <http://infed.org/mobi/jean-jacques-rousseau-on-nature-wholeness-and-education/>

Secondary reading: see 'Materials' section below.

**Week 3: Learning by doing**

This week looks at the 'Pragmatist' school of philosophy, and in particular, the ideas of John Dewey. Dewey was a philosopher most well known for his ideas on education, and has been hugely influential in the twentieth-century. We will look at what Dewey means by 'Pragmatism' and why this philosophical model matters for how we think about, and do, education. In the second half of the class, we will look at the work of feminist philosopher Nel Noddings, who was influenced by Dewey. In this half of the class, we will ask the questions: How do men and women learn and think differently, and why? Do differences in the ways men and women think matter for education? What can we learn from the work of feminist education theorists about what education should look like?

Primary reading:

(1) Dewey: Sections 2, 3, and 5 from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey/>

(2) Noddings: 'Caring in education' (<http://www.uvm.edu/~rgriffin/NoddingsCaring.pdf>)

Secondary reading: see 'Materials' section below.

**Week 4: Education for social change**

This week's class looks at the idea that education should be directed towards changing society for the better. This way of thinking is sometimes called 'critical pedagogy', and we will be looking at two of the most influential critical pedagogy theorists: Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci. Freire was well-known for his activism and his teaching programmes in Brazil, aimed at empowering poor Brazilians in various ways through education. Gramsci was an Italian Marxist thinker and politician who viewed education as the key for empowering workers to bring about positive social change. We will ask the questions: what is wrong with society, such that education can help us to fix those problems? Who should be being educated, and by who? What does a 'critical pedagogy' classroom and course look like?

Primary reading:

(1) Freire: chapter 1 of Pedagogy of the Oppressed (<http://web.msu.ac.zw/elearning/material/1335344125freire_pedagogy_of_the_oppresed.pdf>) - if you want to read on, please do. The whole book is brilliant.

(2) Gramsci: chapter 1, sections 1 & 2 ('The Intellectuals' and 'On Education') from Prison Notebooks (<http://abahlali.org/files/gramsci.pdf>)

Secondary reading: see 'Materials' section below.

**Week 5: Conclusion: existing alternative educations**

Our final week will look at some examples of existing alternative education provision, including Montessori, Steiner, and Summerhill schools. In light of the questions we have asked and any conclusions we have come to over the course of the previous four classes, we will look critically at these examples, and ask what they do well, what they miss, and what philosophies can be seen in these examples. We will discuss the following questions: what aspects of the philosophies we have discussed can be seen in the practices of these alternative education projects? What works well, and what is questionable, about these projects? Does the fact that these projects are small-scale and (mostly) privately funded affect their success? What is, or should be, the role of alternative education?

Primary reading:

(1) Steiner: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kpel5f3-3PM>[19.22 mins]

(2) Montessorri: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NGRpzQ9vCE>[5.31 mins]

(3) Summerhill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE20ylESsY4>[7.47 mins]

**MATERIALS**

**Week 1**

* Book 7 of Plato's *The Republic* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.8.vii.html>)
* Books 2-3 of Plato's *The Laws* ((<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/laws.html>)
* Noddings' 'Philosophy of Education Before the Twentieth Century' book chapter (PDF uploaded online)
* Hicks on the Philosophy of Education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml95d6kJ4kc&list=PL4D15CEFD8356A3D3>
* short introductory video to Plato: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDiyQub6vpw>
* The Republic audiobook: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqGsg01ycpk>
* 8-bit Philosophy, Plato's cave: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lVDaSgyi3xE&list=PLghL9V9QTN0jLWtG3E8tSAHOD4UHw0QDF>
* Lecture on Introduction to Plato (1 hour): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCEoJvNYQIo>
* 3 short Stephen Hicks videos on Plato's educational ideas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tHXo7Ams-w&list=PLA6CF74CEEC4EFF61&index=8>
* 6 short Stephen Hicks videos on Plato's philosophy in general, and why it's 'Idealism': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFDVAzTEJSw&index=1&list=PLA6CF74CEEC4EFF61>
* Summary of Plato on education by a student (watch on 0.75 speed on YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTahUfHxDBQ>
* A (longish) summary of Plato's views on education in The Republic: <https://www.scu.edu/character/resources/education-in-platos-republic/>

**Week 2**

* Ibn Sina (Avicenna): <https://muslimheritage.com/ibn-sina-on-education/> (particularly sections 3 and 4)
* Locke: ‘Essay Concerning Human Understanding’ (<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1690book2.pdf>, start at the beginning and see how far you get, the most important ideas are in book 1, section 1), and ‘Some Thoughts Concerning Education’ (<http://www.sophia-project.org/uploads/1/3/9/5/13955288/locke_education.pdf>)
* Introductory audio to Avicenna: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex96G7pR3Tw>
* 'In Our Time' on Avicenna: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhF6NePV69w>
* SEP article on Locke, sections 2 and 3 ([https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/#LimiHumaUnde](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/" \l "LimiHumaUnde))
* 12mins lecture on Locke: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4I237vgkgw>
* Hicks' Introduction to Locke on education (6 clips): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSIyg-Y7uCw&index=1&list=PLF898FD87FE6887CE>
* '3 minute philosophy' on Locke: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-buzVjYQvY>
* Rousseau:
* The Social Contract  (<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/rousseau1762.pdf> - as much of Books 1 and 2 as possible. The most important stuff begins with the first sentence. I'd read as much as Book 1 as you can, and only read Book 2 if you have particular interest in the General Will)
* Émile  (<http://brittlebooks.library.illinois.edu/brittlebooks_open/books2009-08/rousje0001emile/rousje0001emile.pdf> - The book runs from the child at 0 to adulthood , so start from 'Book First' and read the General Remarks, and then you can skim read the rest of the Books, paying attention to the headings, they describe what each section contains. I'd look for the headings (i.e. "Avoid taking too many precautions") and read a paragraph of two of any sections that particularly interest you)
* Introduction to Rousseau: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvjrE5nc4xs>
* '8-bit Philosophy' on Rousseau: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttu8va9_x1g>
* Very short introductory documentary about Rousseau: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueuqBT35wN4>
* 2 introductions to Rousseau on education: <http://infed.org/mobi/jean-jacques-rousseau-on-nature-wholeness-and-education/> and <https://educationalroots.weebly.com/jean-jacques-rousseau.html>

**Week 3**

* Dewey: the essay 'The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology' (uploaded online), and (only if you have time), chapter 1 of Experience and Nature (available here: <https://archive.org/stream/experienceandnat029343mbp/experienceandnat029343mbp_djvu.txt>)
* Noddings: 'Identifying and responding to needs in education' (uploaded online), and 'Caring in education' (uploaded online, and also available here: <http://www.uvm.edu/~rgriffin/NoddingsCaring.pdf>)
* Section 2.1 of this article on feminist ethics: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-ethics/>
* Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy entry on Dewey (sections 2, 3, and 5): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey/>
* podcasts on Dewey (<https://partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/11/16/ep127-1-dewey/>) & Pragmatism (<https://philosophybites.com/2010/02/robert-talisse-on-pragmatism.html>)
* article on Noddings' work: <http://infed.org/mobi/nel-noddings-the-ethics-of-care-and-education/>
* academic review of Noddings' work: <http://pe-med.sakura.ne.jp/main/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/6-6ONOTANI.pdf>
* Radio 4's 'In Our Time' episode on Pragmatism: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9f5>
* introductions to Dewey: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Dewey>, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1955.tb01126.x>
* newspaper article, 'Pragmatism: A philosophy that’s as sensible as it is unpopular': <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/pragmatism-a-philosophy-that-s-as-sensible-as-it-is-unpopular-1.3260684>
* video lecture on Dewey, pragmatism, & education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1mTImTMgq8>
* video lecture on Dewey (with reference to the history of philosophy): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7knMB7YPVH4>
* video talk on Dewey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQMYQeEmgZE>
* video introduction to Dewey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGjSMqwlP3E>
* Hicks video lecture introductions (x3) to Dewey/Pragmatism & education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_dhS83XRyQ>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1sOdzbnKEc&list=PLTSH-odCm2xlOviGOEhKrTvT9yHp4hL-y&index=2>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GQzwtCnt-c&index=3&list=PLTSH-odCm2xlOviGOEhKrTvT9yHp4hL-y>
* written introductions to Pragmatism in general: <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/pragmatism-an-introduction/>, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/pragmati/>, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism/>
* introduction to Feminist Pragmatism: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/femapproach-pragmatism/>
* academic article by Noddings, 'Dewey’s philosophy of education: a critique from the perspective of care theory' (available uploaded online)
* academic article by Connerty, 'Three Theories of Development: A Comparison of Dewey, Kohlberg, and Noddings' Models of Moral Growth' (available uploaded online)

**Week 4**

* Freire: chapter 1 of Pedagogy of the Oppressed  (<http://web.msu.ac.zw/elearning/material/1335344125freire_pedagogy_of_the_oppresed.pdf>) - if you want to read on, please do. The whole book is brilliant.
* Gramsci: chapter 1, sections 1 & 2 ('The Intellectuals' and 'On Education') from Prison Notebooks (<http://abahlali.org/files/gramsci.pdf>)
* video introduction to Gramsci and the idea of hegemony: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LI_2-qsovo>
* written article on Freire, 'Paulo Freire: dialogue, praxis and education': <http://infed.org/mobi/paulo-freire-dialogue-praxis-and-education/>
* BBC documentary about Gramsci: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51DhvS9abyI>
* video 'Hegemony: 10 minute philosophy': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js8E6C3ZnJ0&list=PLk2yOWFzD4u-bl8y4KbhdUCeEhMGLDoXL>
* Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy entry on Freire:  <https://www.iep.utm.edu/freire/>
* BBC Radio 4 talk on Gramsci: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x85sd3tIxtc&index=3&list=PLk2yOWFzD4u-bl8y4KbhdUCeEhMGLDoXL>
* written entry on Freire (section 4.5: Liberation Pedagogy):  [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/civic-education/#LibePeda](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/civic-education/" \l "LibePeda)
* academic paper, Giroux, 'Radical Pedagogy and the politics of student voice' (PDF uploaded online)
* short video Introductions to Pedagogy of the Oppressed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NR9Uy4nTZHk> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4UL-IXAAHE>
* book, Coben, Radical Heroes: Gramsci, Freire and the Politics of Adult Education (available (mostly) here: [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Pd1EAQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=coben+freire+gramsci&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwisuuPj173eAhWtzYUKHURMBVcQ6AEIKjAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Pd1EAQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=coben+freire+gramsci&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwisuuPj173eAhWtzYUKHURMBVcQ6AEIKjAA" \l "v=onepage&q&f=false))
* book, Mayo, Gramsci, Freire, and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative action (available (mostly) here: [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=i7n7ydt-HVUC&pg=PA22&dq=coben+freire+gramsci&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwisuuPj173eAhWtzYUKHURMBVcQ6AEINTAC#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=i7n7ydt-HVUC&pg=PA22&dq=coben+freire+gramsci&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwisuuPj173eAhWtzYUKHURMBVcQ6AEINTAC" \l "v=onepage&q&f=false))
* 2 academic reviews/summaries of Mayo and Coben's excellent books. The authors basically summarise what the books say (PDFs uploaded online) (by Lange and Schugurensky)

**Week 5**

Steiner Schools:

* BBC Investigation into first State-funded Steiner school: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpOXitdxzk4>
* What is a Steiner school?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kpel5f3-3PM>
* 'Steiner schools should adopt modern reading methods': <https://theconversation.com/steiner-schools-should-adopt-modern-reading-methods-30298>

Montesorri Schools:

* Montessori vs Conventional schools: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NGRpzQ9vCE>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NGRpzQ9vCE&t=153s>
* sections on Dewey and Kilpatrick: <http://www.montessorianswers.com/montessori-and-dewey.html>
* a longer defence of Montessori, via the criticisms of Dewey and Kilpatrick: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1284&context=eandc>
* Maria Montessori, The Montessori Method (book) (PDF uploaded online)
* "Montessori education: a review of the evidence base": <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41539-017-0012-7>

Summerhill School:

* Introductions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERQKi9fBRnw>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE20ylESsY4>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxngqMavda0> (longer, 1h30)
* "It was [the principal], not I, who made the obvious analogy. "It's hard to talk about Summerhill," she said, "without making it sound like a religion." 2013 Guardian article: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/may/27/summerhill-school-head-profile>
* article 'The Summerhill Way: a critique of A.A. Neill's notion of freedom' (uploaded online)