

EDUC. 435-4 EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND THEORY CRITICISM

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INTERSESSION 1981

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Suzanne DeCastell

Tuesday & Friday, 12:30 - 4:20

LOCATION: Campus

The central concerns of this course will be (1) the nature of educational theory, and (2) the relation between educational theory and practice. Works in philosophy, psychology, and sociology which have had a significant impact on educational theorizing will be read and discussed. The critique of educational theories will be approached from the perspectives of both philosophical analysis and sociological theory, with particular attention being paid to the presuppositions of the theories examined, about the nature of the child, society and knowledge.

The intended outcome of the course is that students will be able to formulate and defend criteria for educational theories, develop a coherent view of the relation between theory and practice in education, and will have acquired, as a result of their investigations into the major educational theories of the past, the conceptual and methodological tools to critically evaluate currently emerging educational theories.

OUTLINE:

1. The Nature of Educational Theory

- (1) What is "theory"? What is "educational" theory"?
- (2) The theory-practice nexus

2. The Major Theories

- (1) Education as knowledge of the good: Plato
- (2) Education and human nature: Rousseau
- (3) Progressive education for "growth": Dewey
- (4) Liberal educational theory: Hirst, Peters, et al.

3. Empirical Contributions to Educational Practice

- (1) Conditioning and learning: Skinner
- (2) The Importance of Psychoanalytic theory for education: Freud
- (3) Learning and Cognitive Development: Piaget

4. Sociological Perspectives on Educational Practice

- (1) Education as Socialization: Durkheim
- (2) Education as Social Reproduction: Marxist Critiques: Althusser
- (3) Educational Theory and Social Change: Young et al.

5. Return to Practice

Theory and Practice in Richmond: The Micro Society School and/or  
Freire: Education for Critical Consciousness

Students will be asked to read extensively and to attend seminars consistently. Each session will involve a lecture by the instructor, a student-presented expository paper, and short critical paper, to be followed by discussion. Each student will be asked to prepare for the group, one short expository paper, and one short critical paper. A full length critical essay is to be submitted in the last week of the term. There will be no examination for this course.