

Appendix D

*Writing Assignments
in Philosophy of Education*

Assignment #1 - What is the Purpose of Education? (Plato [1997], pp. 54–77 in Cahn)

Please evaluate Plato's approach to education in a typed letter to a classmate. At the close of your letter, ask your classmate a question concerning any portion of Plato's text about which you are not clear. In order to help your letter partner, please explain the source of your confusion and the exact part of Plato's text that is in question. We will exchange letters at the beginning of the period, and you will have a chance to answer your letter partner's question and get an answer to your question.

Assignment #2 - What are the purpose, content, and psychology of education? (Locke [1693/1997], pp. 144–16 in Cahn)

Please choose *either* side of the debate below, and defend your position with a brief typed justification.

1. John Locke's approach to students and education is extremely harsh and traditional.
2. John Locke's approach to students and education is enlightened and progressive.

Assignment #3 - What are the politics of education? (Freire [1970/1997a], pp. 460–470 in Cahn)

Please type a short essay summarizing Freire’s main points as you understand them. That is, explain what you learned about Freire’s educational principles by reading this section. Conclude your essay with a question you would be willing, as discussion leader, to help the class explore.

Assignment #4 - What is the proper relation of student and curriculum? (Dewey [1902/1997a], pp. 274–288 in Cahn)

Dewey divides educators into two groups: those who emphasize subject matter and those who emphasize student growth. Please type a letter to a classmate responding to the following two questions. We will exchange letters at the start of the period, so you can respond to your partner’s letter.

1. Which of these emphases has been dominant in your education?
2. How does Dewey suggest we reconcile these different approaches?

Assignment #5 - What sort of education is appropriate for democracy? (Dewey [1916/1997b], pp. 288–309 in Cahn)

After reading this selection from Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*, please type a question which you would be willing to share with a small group of classmates. Each group will then select its best question to be circulated to another group for a collective answer.

Assignment #6 - What characterizes a good educational experience? (Dewey [1938/1997c], pp. 325–343 in Cahn)

Please pick one paragraph from this Dewey selection, a paragraph which stands out for you, one you agree with, disagree with, or just

plain cannot figure out. Please then type a brief summary of your response to this paragraph.

Assignment #7 - Is America democratic? (Baldwin [1963/1988], pp. 3–12; Mura [1988], pp. 135–153; and Reed [1988] pp. 156–160)

James Baldwin suggests that America is a racist country, one founded on lies that mask the systematic oppression of minorities for the sake of the majority's economic and political advantage. David Mura says that until Whites accept their collective guilt over the oppression of Native Americans, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans, they will never understand themselves or others (see especially, pp. 144–153).

1. How does Mura support his position?
2. Do you agree with Mura that there is such a thing as “White privilege” in America? Have you either been a victim or beneficiary of such privilege? Explain.

Assignment #8 - Which theory is most fruitful to apply when analyzing the classroom? (Sleeter and Grant [1988], pp. 144–160 in Weis)

When you think about your own successes and failures, how much do you attribute them to your own skill and determination (or lack thereof) and how much to your race, class, gender, and ethnic background? Please type a short essay in response to this question.

Assignment #9 - What characterizes a good student? (Holland and Eisenhart, pp. 266–301 in Weis)

After reading about the three categories of college student which Holland and Eisenhart [1988] use as analytic tools in their study, indicate in which category you would place yourself and why. Also, has college forced you to change your self-image, your “worker identity” (to borrow Holland's and Eisenhart's phrase)? Explain.

Assignment #10 - What constitutes a good teacher? (Hansen, *The Call To Teach*, pp. 67–90)

After reading Hansen's [1995] account of three teachers and their classrooms—Ms. Payton, Mr. Peters, and Mr. James—please write your own analysis of these instructors' teaching using any categories you find appropriate.

Assignment #11 - What does it mean to treat students equally? (Delpit, *Other People's Children*, pp. 105–134 and pp. 167–183)

After typing a paragraph about Delpit's [1995] suggestions for improving minority education in America, please conclude with a question about Delpit's views which you would be willing, as discussion leader, to help our class explore.

Assignment #12 - How do we achieve equal educational opportunities? (Oakes [1985], *Keeping Track*, Chaps. 1, 2, and 10)

Please type out the best defense you can for the side of the following debate which you most favor:

1. Tracking in all of its forms can and should be abolished.
2. We need some form of tracking in our schools if not the present one.