

EDU A203 and GOV 1033: Educational Justice

Spring 2017

Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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Course Description

Educators and educational policy makers regularly face challenging ethical decisions. For example, what should be done about a student with diagnosed emotional issues who frequently disrupts class, but who benefits from being mainstreamed? Should teachers resist grade inflation even if it helps their students in the college and labor market? Is it just to expand a charter school that achieves outstanding academic outcomes at the cost of high attrition rates? When school closure or teacher evaluation policies disproportionately impact low-income communities of color, is that in itself evidence of an injustice that must be addressed? These kinds of questions are often addressed as technocratic challenges of leadership, legal compliance, or accountability. This course, by contrast, addresses the ethical dimensions of educational practice and policy, with justice as our primary focus. We will engage with philosophical, theoretical, and empirical readings from a wide variety of disciplines. We will also grapple with case studies of dilemmas of educational justice from classrooms, schools, districts, and organizations at both the K-12 and higher education levels in the United States. Many of these case studies also have close analogues abroad. Our goals will be to deepen our own understandings of educational justice, to engage with others about complex ethical judgments across multiple lines of difference, and to learn how to enhance educators' and policymakers' capacities to make ethical decisions under challenging conditions.

This course is intended for masters and doctoral students from all concentrations and programs at HGSE, as well as graduate students in the Government department. Cross-registrants from other schools and departments also welcomed; undergraduates permitted upon application to instructor.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify, analyze, and evaluate ethical dilemmas in K-12 and higher education policy and practice;
2. Connect normative concepts and principles to questions of educational policy and practice;
3. Engage with diverse others to discuss complex ethical judgments across multiple lines of difference;
4. Draw upon discussion protocols, heuristics, key concepts, and other resources to enhance educators' and policymakers' capacities to make ethical decisions under challenging conditions.

Course Expectations and Assignments

Class participation/contribution: We expect you to attend class each day, complete your readings and assignments on time, listen actively, participate thoughtfully in discussions and other activities, ask questions when you have them, and collaborate with your peers and the teaching team to co-construct focused, analytic class discussions in a collaborative and inclusive framework. We will discuss what these goals mean and how to achieve them in our first class session; we will also reflect upon our class culture and collective practices at various points throughout the semester. If the teaching team has concerns about your participation, we will let you know as soon as possible; likewise, if you have any questions or worries, please contact your TF.

Daily readings: You are expected to read all assigned texts before coming to class. Read “actively” – i.e., highlight the text, take notes, write marginal comments and flag important passages with sticky notes, talk with others about the material, ask questions, draw connections, etc. in order to comprehend and process the readings before class begins. A few years ago, some doctoral students and I created an on-line [Analytic Reading and Writing Tutorial](#) to explain and model high-leverage techniques for reading analytically and keeping track of ideas. We encourage you to make use of this tutorial over the course of the semester.

Brief weekly feedback, due by Saturday at noon: We ask that you let us know what you're thinking about after class once per week. Our expectation is that you will write only a couple of lines, although you're welcome to write more if you wish. You may mention: a question that's on your mind; an issue you want to probe more deeply yourself, or that you wished we had probed more deeply in class; an idea you're excited about; a frustration you had; something you're confused about; a suggestion; what you wish you had thought of and said in class; something someone said that offended or disturbed you; etc. Your responses will be ungraded, but extremely helpful as we try to keep track of and stay responsive to what you and your classmates are thinking and learning. You will receive a prompt via e-mail each week.

Case commentary, due Sunday, Feb. 26, 5 pm. You are responsible for writing a 1200-1500 word commentary (essentially, a short analytic paper) about one of the cases we discuss in Unit I. This formative assignment is designed to help you meet the first and second learning goals for

this course. By writing a commentary, you will have the opportunity to think more deeply about the concepts, principles, and/or readings we have discussed by putting them in conversation with a case. We will also be able to assess and give you formative feedback on your writing. The rubric that we will use to evaluate your writing is posted on the “Assignments” tab of the Canvas site. Please read it carefully and use it to guide your planning and writing. We will also have read many other case commentaries that you can use as models. Again, you may find the on-line [Analytic Reading and Writing Tutorial](#) helpful in guiding your work.

Lead and analyze a case discussion, due Monday, April 10, 5 pm: This assignment is designed to help you meet the third and fourth learning goals for this course. There are two steps to this assignment. First, with a partner, lead a small group discussion of an existing case related to dilemmas of educational justice. The case discussion group should consist of 3-6 people who are not enrolled in this course. Ideally, discussion group members will be in a field or role relevant to your work (e.g. teachers, district policy makers, philosophers, parents, etc.), although this is not a requirement. You and your partner will need to plan ahead of time how to share leading the discussion as well as taking detailed notes as the conversation proceeds or (ideally) audio-recording and then transcribing the conversation. Second, drawing on the transcribed conversation, you will each write a 1500-1800 word paper analyzing the case discussion. More specific guidance, including a rubric and a model case discussion analysis, will be posted on the Canvas site by mid-February.

Normative case study and analytic note, due Friday, May 5, 5 pm: This assignment is designed to help you consolidate your mastery of the first two learning goals, and create resources to enable learning goals three and four. For this project, you will research and write up a new normative case study of a dilemma of educational justice or ethics. The case study itself should be 1000-2000 words long. You will accompany the case study with a 1500-2000 word paper that analyzes the issues at stake in the case study and discusses who would benefit from using the case study and why. This is a scaffolded project, with numerous interim deadlines and in-class case development workshops:

- Feb. 14, 5 pm: Send 1-3 page memo about the normative case(s) you are thinking about developing to your assigned small group
- Feb. 16, in class: Case writing workshop
- March 8, 11:59 pm: Normative case study rough draft due to teaching team
- March 26, 5 pm: Send revised draft case and cover memo to your small group
- March 31, in class: Case writing workshop
- April 20, in class: Final case study workshop (instructions for prior distribution of cases TBA)

*Instructions for how to submit assignments will be posted on the “Assignments” tab of the Canvas site. All assignments should be submitted electronically as .doc or .docx files. Please do **not** upload .pdf, .txt, or Pages files.*

Grading

You may take this course pass/fail or for a grade. In either case, you are expected to master all course goals, as demonstrated by consistent in-class preparation and participation, satisfactory completion of each assignment, and success on your final project. Grades will generally be

calculated as follows, although the teaching team notes that grading is a highly inexact social practice (as we will discuss in Unit IV); we thus reserve the right to alter percentages as a means of recognizing growth or for other reasons in the student's interest:

Participation	15%
Case commentary	20%
Case discussion analysis	25%
Normative case study	40%

Course Readings

Most articles are available online via Hollis+ or the provided link. If there is no indication, please use Hollis+ (<http://hollis.harvard.edu>) to find the reading. Other texts are marked as follows:

[RT] = Required text. *Available for purchase at the Harvard Coop. Also on reserve at Gutman Library.*

[iPa©] = Electronic course pack on A203 Canvas site

[Canvas] = Available on course Canvas website via "Classes" link

Required Texts: These are available for purchase at the Harvard Coop. Note that *Dilemmas of Educational Ethics* may be cheaper if purchased directly from Harvard Education Press (at 8 Story Street, just off Brattle). The books will also be held on reserve at the 2nd floor circulation desk in Gutman Library.

Levinson, Meira and Jacob Fay, editors. *Dilemmas of Educational Ethics: Cases and Commentaries*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2016.

Kennedy, Randall. *For Discrimination: Race, Affirmative Action, and the Law*. New York: Vintage, 2015.

Lareau, Annette. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. [Note that this book is available via Hollis for free online (see [link](#)) but it's also a terrific book for those who like hard copies.]

Miller, David. *Political Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. [This book is available via Hollis for free online (see [link](#)) but it's also small and cheap, so those of you who prefer reading from a hard copy might want simply to buy it.]

Outline of Syllabus

I. JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Introduction

Justice

Ethics of Pandering

Equality

Families

Schools

Systems

Consolidation and Case Study Workshop

II. CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Injustice

School to Prison Pipeline

Aims of Democratic Education

Teaching Controversial Issues

Student Walkouts

Safe and Brave Spaces

III. DIVERSITY, RECOGNITION, AND MERIT

Counterpublics

Recognition

Vouchers for Religious Schools 1 and 2

Affirmative Action 1 and 2

Student Demographics and Selective Public High School Admissions

Grade Inflation

School Closure

Case Study Workshop

Wrap-up

I. EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Tuesday, January 24 Introduction [Promotion/retention case]

What is a dilemma of educational ethics? How and why do various ethical values and principles, including various conceptions of justice and equity, arise and intersect within a particular problem of educational policy and practice?

Levinson, Meira and Jacob Fay, editors. *Dilemmas of Educational Ethics: Cases and Commentaries*. Harvard Education Press, 2016: Introduction and Adahuaris case from Ch. 1 (pp. 1-13). [RT, henceforth abbreviated *DEE*]

Thursday, January 26 Justice

What does justice mean? How does Ada's case illuminate different ways of understanding justice? How are these different conceptions of justice related to one another?

Miller, David. *Political Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2003: Chs. 1 and 5. [link](#)

DEE, Ch. 1 commentaries

Tuesday, January 31 Ethics of Pandering [BPS school assignment case]

Where should we look for educational justice: in interpersonal relationships, institutional design, systems, or overall social and political structures? When injustice and inequality permeate one level, how can and should educational justice and equality be pursued at another level? How do our judgments about BPS' school choice policy influence or reflect our answers to these questions?

DEE, Ch. 5

Thursday, February 2 Equality

How are different conceptions of equality related to one another, to the concept of equity, and to different conceptions of justice? How does John Rawls address this question through his "difference principle"?

Swift, Part 3, "Equality," pp. 91-132. [iPa©]

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Belknap Press of Harvard, 1971: 60-67. [iPa©]

Tuesday, February 7 Family [Lareau case studies]

What rights or even responsibilities do families have in passing benefits on to their own children? To what extent, if at all, can (practically) and should (ethically) families be prevented from advantaging their own children? How, if at all, should schools try to mitigate sources of inequality from beyond school?

Brighthouse, Harry and Adam Swift. *Family Values: Ethics of Parent-Child Relationships*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014: 23-45. [iPa©]

Lareau, Annette. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011: Chs. 1, 3, and 4. [[link](#) or RT]

Recommended but not required: Levinson, Meira. *Inequities Beyond School*. E-lecture, 2014. [link](#)

Thursday, February 9

SNOW DAY

Tuesday, February 14 Schools [Kate case]

How should teachers and schools balance diverse students' needs? What principles and practices should guide decisions to allocate school resources?

Shores, Kenneth, and Susanna Loeb. "Distributive decisions in education: Goals, trade-offs, and feasibility constraints." *Theory and Research in Education* 14, no. 1 (2016): 107-124. [link](#)

DEE, Ch. 2.

Thursday, Feb. 16 Systems [Charter/APR case] + Case study workshop

First hour: Whom should schools serve? How can systems meet diverse students' needs in light of schools' differing choices about whom to serve and how?

DEE, Ch. 6.

Second hour: Case writing workshop

UNIT II. CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION
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Tuesday, February 21 Injustice [Jorge marijuana case]

What is injustice? How does it relate to justice, on the one hand, and misfortune, on the other? What are educators' and policy makers' ethical and civic responsibilities in responding to injustice, and how should they respond to potential conflicts among these responsibilities?

Shklar, Judith. *The Faces of Injustice*. Yale University Press, 1991: 1-19. [iPa©]

Levinson, Meira. "Moral Injury and the Ethics of Educational Injustice." *Harvard Educational Review* 85, no. 2 (2015): 203-228.

Thursday, February 23 School to Prison Pipeline [Cell phone case]

How do educational injustice and other forms of social injustice intersect? What principles and practices should guide educators and policy makers in responding to multiple sources and forms of injustice? What roles, if any, should educators play in trying to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline?

DEE, Ch. 3.

Fabelo, Tony et al. *Breaking Schools Rules: A Statewide Study on How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*. Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011: ix-xii, 1-14. [[Link](#)]

Guest participants: Students from the MET School, Providence, RI

Tuesday, February 28 Aims of Democratic Education

What are the goals of democratic education? How are democracy and education linked?

Gutmann, Amy. *Democratic Education*. Princeton University Press, 1999: 19-47. [iPa©]

Dewey, John. *The School and Society*. University of Chicago Press, 1907: Ch.1, 3-28. [iPa©]

Thursday, March 2 Teaching Controversial Issues

How and why should teachers help students engage with controversial issues in school? What principles and practices can guide educators in determining what counts as legitimately controversial and worth classroom time, on the one hand, versus being either too hot to handle or best treated as settled and non-controversial, on the other?

Hess, Diana. *Controversy in the Classroom*. Routledge: Chs. 4 and 7, 53-76, 113-129. [iPa©]

Teaching Controversial Issues Case [Canvas]

Tuesday, March 7 Student Speech

What restrictions *can* and *should* be placed on student speech in public schools? Why, and under what circumstances? How should teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members balance practical, political, legal, and ethical considerations surrounding student speech, including student walkouts from public schools?

Chemerinsky, Erwin. "Students Do Leave Their First Amendment Rights at the Schoolhouse Gates: What's Left of Tinker?" *Drake Law Review* 48, no. 3 (2000): 527-546. [[link](#)]

Student Walkout Case [Canvas]

Thursday, March 9 Safe and Brave Spaces

What makes something a safe space, a brave space, or neither? Should educators and schools (including colleges and universities) strive to establish safe or brave spaces for all

students? Why or why not? How do student demographics, political context, or grade level (including K-12 versus higher education) affect our answers?

Arao, Brian and Kristi Clemens. *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*. Stylus Publishing, 2013: Ch. 8, “From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice”: 135-150. [link](#)

de Novais, J. “Teaching and Learning Race in Brave Community.” Unpublished Paper. [Canvas]

UNIT III. DIVERSITY, RECOGNITION, AND MERIT

Tuesday, March 21 Counterpublics [Bari and Bethany cases]

What is a counterpublic space? How should schools serve as effective counterpublic spaces, if at all, in contrast or complement to their roles as democratic public spaces? How do different schools’ racial, ethnic, or religious affiliations affect our answers?

Mill, John Stuart. “Education and the Limits of State Authority.” In *Philosophy of Education*, edited by Randall Curren (156-158). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. [iPa©]

Wilson, Terri. “Contesting the Public School: Reconsidering Charter Schools as Counterpublics,” *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(4) (2016): 919-952. [link](#)

Peshkin, Alan. *God’s Choice*. University of Chicago Press, 1988: pp. 1-11, 54-61, 114-118. [iPa© and possibly Canvas class page] **NOTE NEW PAGES**

Thursday, March 23 Recognition, Diversity, and Identity

What is the value of recognition of diverse identities and communities? What challenges and opportunities does it offer? How does recognition relate to educational justice?

Taylor, Charles. “The Politics of Recognition.” Princeton University Press, 1992: 25-73. [link](#)

Fraser, Nancy. *Redistribution or Recognition?* Verso, 2003: 27-30. [iPa©]

Tuesday, March 28 Vouchers for Religious Schools

How should public schools accommodate religious diversity, if at all? What are the legal, normative, and empirical arguments for and against vouchers as a means both to recognize religious diversity and achieve civic/democratic ends?

Salomone, Rosemary C. *Visions of Schooling: Conscience, Community, and Common Education*. Yale University Press, 2000: Ch. 5, 105-141. [link](#)

Dwyer, James G. *Vouchers Within Reason*. Cornell University Press, 2001: Ch. 6, 148-168. [iPa©]

Levinson, Meira and Sanford Levinson. “‘Getting Religion:’ Religion, Community, and Diversity in Public and Private Schools.” In Alan Wolfe (ed.), *School Choice: The Moral Debate*. Princeton University Press, 2004: 104-125. [available online via Hollis—just search for the book]

Thursday, March 30 Case Study Workshop

Tuesday and Thursday, April 4 and 6 Affirmative Action

What justifications have been offered for affirmative action? What are the legal, normative, empirical, and social status of such justifications?

Read for Tuesday:

Kennedy, Randall. *For Discrimination: Race, Affirmative Action, and the Law*. Vintage, 2015: Introduction (3-21), Ch. 2 (78-146) and Ch. 4 (182-239). [RT]

Read for Thursday:

Warikoo, Natasha. *The Diversity Bargain: And Other Dilemmas of Race, Admissions, and Meritocracy at Elite Universities*. Chicago University Press, 2016: Chs. 1 and 4. [iPa©]

Fullinwider, Robert and Judith Lichtenberg. *Leveling the Playing Field: Justice, Politics, and College Admissions*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2004: 39-59. [iPa©]

Tuesday, April 11 Student Demographics and Selective Public High School Admissions [Stuyvesant case]

What are the ethics of admission to selective public schools such as Stuyvesant? Do Stuyvesant’s demographics demonstrate an underlying injustice? Why or why not? What should be done as a result, if anything?

Hune, Shirley. “Demographics and Diversity of Asian American College Students.” *New Directions for Student Services* 97 (2002): 11-20. doi: [10.1002/ss.35](https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.35)

Stuyvesant case materials [Canvas]

Thursday, April 13 Grade Inflation

How do grading practices both reflect and challenge ideals of merit and accountability in education? How do grades both recognize and misrecognize students? What would ethical grading practices look like?

Revisit from Week 1:

Miller, David. “Justice,” In *Political Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

DEE, Ch. 4.

Levinson, Meira. *No Citizen Left Behind*. Harvard University Press, 2012: 260-275. [link](#)

Tuesday, April 18 School Closure

What values are at stake in disputes over school closure, and how do diverse stakeholders understand these values differently? What principles and practices should guide decisions to close struggling schools--or to keep them open?

Ewing, Eve. "Phantoms Playing Double Dutch: Why the Fight for Dyett is Bigger than One Chicago School Closing." *Seven Scribes*. (August 26, 2015). [link](#)

Fay, Jacob. "School Closure and Abnormal Justice," Qualifying Paper, Harvard University, 2015. [Canvas]

Stewart, Chris. "How to save a school without saving the kids," *Citizen Stewart Blog*, January 2, 2015. [link](#)

Thursday, April 20 Case Study workshops

Tuesday, April 25 Wrap-Up

What knowledge and skills have we gained about identifying, analyzing, and addressing dilemmas of educational justice? What questions and challenges remain? What next steps should we take?