

Educational Philosophy Guidelines

I. Overview of the Assignment

The purpose of the Educational Philosophy paper is to formulate your philosophy of education based on your reflection on the readings and class discussions, as well as your own experience. While your philosophy should be unique and not a reformulation of an educational philosophy covered in class, you should rely on class readings and discussions to help you think critically about your own philosophy as well as to formulate criticisms. *Please note this is not a research paper. The use of texts other than those assigned in the syllabus or any kind of secondary sources is not permitted.*

An Educational Philosophy paper must satisfy the following three requirements:

1. Present and defend a position on education as it *should be*, formulated in terms of **three principles**.
2. Consider and respond to possible **counterarguments** for each educational philosophy principle.
3. Relate each principle to the views of at least **three authors** from the course syllabus.

II. Suggested Outline

I. Introduction Paragraph: Here you present the main ideas that will be discussed in the paper. Make sure to include your three key principles of education and the three key authors to be discussed. Make sure your principles are consistent with your overall view on the *general purpose(s)* of education.

II. Body Paragraphs: Here is where you expand upon and support your main ideas. This is the suggested order in which to present your ideas:

- A) Philosophical Principle #1
- B) Counterargument & Response for Principle #1
- C) Connection of Principle #1 to Author #1
- D... (Repeat the above for Principle #2 and Principle #3)

III. Conclusion Paragraph: Here, you summarize your arguments and discuss implications for society or education, hopes for the future, recommendations for teachers, and so on.

III. The Three Requirements in Detail

(1) Basic Principles of your Philosophy of Education

Whether you are aware of it or not, and even whether you are planning to be a teacher or not, you already have certain beliefs about what education should be. These principles should be consistent with your view of the major purposes of education. Identify three of those beliefs and explore each one both analytically and with examples. Each belief or principle should be summarized in one sentence. These three sentences go in the introduction paragraph and in the topic sentences of the corresponding body paragraphs.

Your principles should cover **three different areas** or topics of controversy in philosophy of education. The following are possible areas to explore (adapted from *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Spring 2009 Edition*, Edward N. Zalta, Ed.):

- (i) Should education primarily serve to transmit knowledge or to foster critical thinking?
- (ii) What curriculum and methods would best achieve the desired results?
- (iii) How is learning possible and what does it mean to have learned something? How much of this is based on capacities and personalities present at birth and how much can be changed? How flexible are human beings?
- (iv) Which should be given priority – education for personal development, citizenship, or employment?
Liberal education or vocational education?
- (v) How is education different from enculturation? How is it different from indoctrination?
- (vi) What should be the relation between education and maintenance of class structure in society? Should different classes or cultural groups be given different education programs?
- (vii) Do the rights and beliefs of children, parents, and socio-cultural or ethnic groups conflict, and if so who should be dominant?
- (viii) Should all children have a right to state-provided education? If so, should this education respect the beliefs and customs of all groups?

Advice:

- ☐ Keep your principles at a philosophical level, meaning general and abstract enough so that can be applied to many different concrete experiences.
 - Example of a belief that would be too specific: “*I believe teaching how to use the Internet is important.*” [Why is it important? How does it connect to your views on the purpose of education, etc.?)
- ☐ Choose principles that you can imagine someone possibly disagreeing with. If the principle seems obvious and you cannot imagine anyone disagreeing with it, then revise your principle.

(2) Counterarguments and responses

For each of the principles of your educational philosophy you present, formulate a possible criticism in the form of a counterargument and response. Present each counterargument as convincingly as you can and then respond to it, defending your principle. Place each criticism right after the corresponding principle has been presented.

(3) Discussion of three authors from the syllabus

As you develop your philosophy of education, make sure to relate each principle to one author from the syllabus. The purpose of using these thinkers is to strengthen and clarify your position, as well as to show your understanding of each author’s view. This is not meant to be a summary of each author’s work. Only refer to and explain the views of each of the three authors where it is appropriate given your philosophy of education and the point that you are making. For each of the three chosen authors, provide just **one key quote** and page reference to the author’s work. For Plato, Rousseau, and Dewey, quote from their original reading, not Noddings. The discussions of the three authors go in the body paragraphs, as appropriate. Each author should clearly connect to one of your principles or criticisms.

IV. General Advice

- ☐ Stick to your outline.
- ☐ Within each section/paragraph, stay focused on the topic.
- ☐ Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence (what am I doing in this paragraph?), followed by supporting arguments, evidence, and detail.
- ☐ Although each topic or principle is discussed in a separate section, think about the overall organization and cohesion of the paper (i.e., perhaps the more general idea about the function of education should precede the more specific argument about curriculum).
- ☐ Keep track of your sources and page numbers: Who said what and where?
- ☐ Properly cite the ideas and findings of others. Although you are writing in your voice, you will also be presenting the work of others. To avoid plagiarism, be sure to properly credit other authors’ arguments and findings. Unless you are quoting, be sure to paraphrase. This means expressing an original idea in your own words, not replacing a few words in a paragraph. When quoting directly, include page number(s).
- ☐ Reread your paper before handing it in. Check for clarity, grammar, and spelling.

V. Format Requirements

The paper length and format is 4-6 double-spaced, typed pages with a 12-pt Times New Roman font and 1” margins. Include a separate title page (not included in the 4-6 pages) with your name, date, course, and title of your paper. Papers submitted to Blackboard after the beginning of class on the due date will be late and marked down. Papers will not be accepted by email.

Oral Presentation Guidelines

Students will present a 5-8-minute oral presentation on their personal philosophy of education. Briefly present and support your three principles of education, including how they relate to the ideas presented by the authors in our syllabus. Finally, consider how your principles relate to this semester’s contemporary topic: Charter Schools. Based on your three principles, and supported with reasoning and evidence, do you think the development of charter schools will improve education in the United States? The oral presentation counts for 5% of your final grade.

Educational Philosophy Grading Rubric

Your final paper will be evaluated on the basis of five components, consisting of the three requirements for your paper as well as general structure and format. Each component is worth 1-9 points, for a total of 20 points or 20% of your final grade for the course. Submitting a draft is worth 5 points, or 5% of your final grade for the course.

Components of Evaluation and key criteria for each component	Rating and comments
COMPOSITION, STRUCTURE AND WRITING STYLE (3 pts) - Follows clear essay structure - Very few/ no grammar and spelling errors - Follows format requirements - Submitted on time	
INTRODUCTION (1 pt) Good introduction paragraph which contains preview of paper	
PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES (9 pts) - Clearly formulated - Covers at least three distinct areas - Avoidance of vague terms or clarification of those terms - Supported with further reasoning and explanation - Illustrated with examples, issues, or teaching practices, as appropriate	
CRITICISMS AND RESPONSES (3 points) - Includes one counterargument for each principle - Presents each counterargument thoughtfully and persuasively - Responds to each counterargument thoughtfully and persuasively	
USE OF AUTHORS (4 points) - Strong connection of author to personal educational philosophy - Good understanding of each author's view - Does not exceed one quote per author - Clear explanation of chosen quote for each author	

Basic Grading Rubric

Grade	Range	
A	18-20	Exceptional work in all of the components
B	16-17	Excellent work in 4 evaluation components/work adding up to equivalent
C	14-15	Good work in 3 components/work adding up to equivalent
D	12-13	Adequate work in 3 evaluation components/work adding up to equivalent
F	0-11	Does not adequately fulfill assignment