

Course Title: Ethics and Education

Course Description:

Many view education as an inherently ethical pursuit. We are, after all, transmitting knowledge and communicating values, in many cases to children, that may or may not be aligned with the ideologies and values of their families. Furthermore, many decisions about education policy and practice involve ethical tradeoffs, or promoting the interests of some over the interests of others. In the classroom, teachers are constantly faced with decisions around such competing interests, and are often in positions where they need to make quick decisions that are heavily value laden.

This course will examine education as a project of ethical development and formation, and will also consider and unpack practical ethical dilemmas faced in education. We will consider theories around what it means to develop ethical virtues and how such development takes place, starting with the ancient Greeks and moving toward contemporary work. We will also think about what is meant by character/virtue development in K-12 schools, including if such aims are legitimate goals for schools to pursue. Finally, much of the class will be devoted to a growing practice in Educational Ethics of the use of normative ethical case studies. We will use various case studies to explore and talk through dilemmas in education like: Should college tuition be free?; Inviting controversial speakers to campus; Justice and zero tolerance policies in K-12 schools; School choice and private education, and more.

Tentatively, assessments will include participation, several shorter written assignments, and a medium length term paper.

A background in philosophy or ethics is not required for this course.