Course Title: What is Education For?

Course Description:

This course in the philosophy of education will explore the question: What should the aims of education be? Children generally spend a minimum of 12 years in school, an endeavor that is begun at a young age and that extends well into adulthood. Education is seen as being critical to one's ability to lead a successful and happy life, so much so that it is frequently framed as a right. Debates over the content, curriculum, and practices of education invoke impassioned responses from educators, parents, and children alike--evidenced currently by the controversy over the use and banning of particular books and curricula in schools. These debates are routinely challenged in the legal system, and many times have escalated to the point of being heard by the Supreme Court. With such extreme importance placed on education, what is it that education is actually supposed to do? This course will explore some of the many answers that have been provided to that question--from the writings of the Ancient Greeks to contemporary scholarship in the field. The course will provide an overview of educational aims and purposes such as social mobility, citizenship, the pursuit of truth or knowledge, character development, justice, control and repression, and more.

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

A background in philosophy is not required for this course.