Introduction to Intellectual History

~ A History of Conceptions of Study, Reading and Teaching ~

3rd-Year Elective
Prof. Sorana Corneanu
Tuesdays, 2-4 pm

This year's course will address historical conceptions of education associated with the idea of fulfilling the human potential. We will discuss texts devoted to study, reading and teaching that made an impact on European and American thought from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries, and will place them in their intellectual and cultural contexts. We will do so with a twofold aim: to understand the historical transformations of the ideas we will look at, and to reflect on our contemporary attitudes to the same issues.

Our texts include late Renaissance writings on study, reading and education (Michel de Montaigne and Francis Bacon); early modern and Enlightenment accounts of practices for the "improvement of the mind" and of the idea of "liberal education" (John Locke, Isaac Watts, George Turnbull, Thomas Reid); Victorian interventions in the debate around the teaching of "literature and science" (Thomas Huxley and Matthew Arnold); twentieth-century reflections on teaching in general (John Dewey and Bertrand Russell); and contemporary approaches to education and revisionary perspectives on liberal education (Baehr, Farnham and Tarmolinsky).

Format: short lectures followed by guided discussion.

Requirements: a genuine interest in the theme of this course; a tested capacity for steady engagement with study and reflection; a taste for perusing historical materials; the ability to attend at least 50% of the meetings.

Evaluation: end-of-term written examination.

Bibliography

Selections from: Michel de Montaigne, "On educating children" (1580); Francis Bacon, "Of Studies" (1625) and *The Advancement of Learning* (1605); John Locke, "Of Study" (1677) and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706); Isaac Watts, *The Improvement of the Mind* (1743); George Turnbull, *Observations upon Liberal education* (1742); Thomas Reid, *Lectures on the Culture of the Mind* (1765); Thomas Huxley, "Science and Culture" (1880); Matthew Arnold, "Literature and Science" (1882); Bertrand Russell, "The Functions of a Teacher" (1940); John Dewey, *How We Think* (1933); Jason Baehr (ed.), *Intellectual Virtues and Education: Essays in Applied Virtue Epistemology* (Routledge, 2016); Nicolas H. Farnham and Adam Tarmolinsky (eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

Further readings

David Carr (ed.), *Education, Knowledge and Truth: Beyond the Postmodern Impasse* (Routledge, 1998); Randall Curren (ed.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education* (Blackwell, 2003); Tanya Fitzgerald (ed.), *Handbook of Historical Studies in Education* (Springer, 2020).