AUTUMN TERM 2016

All meetings run from 5.30-7.15 pm, unless otherwise indicated. Sessions are followed by a drink and further discussion in the Students’ Union for those who wish to attend. All are welcome.

5 October: Sheila Webb (UCL Institute of Education)
*Interpreting Kant in education: dissolving dualisms and embodying mind in the world*

Immanuel Kant is frequently blamed for many ills in education. Read as a dualist with detached, abstract conceptions of mind and knowledge, Kant is seen as overly intellectualist and formalist. However, this Kant found in contemporary educational literature, differs from the Kant found in contemporary Kantian scholarship. This seminar presentation will suggest that deep-seated assumptions from the analytic tradition have shaped the way Kant is typically understood, obscuring the value of his philosophy. It argues that Kant’s practical agent can be seen as connected, embedded and sensitive to context. This makes available rich conceptual resources for thinking through educational issues.

12 October: Kevin Williams
*The impact of socio-cultural differences on shared educational values a case-study*

2016 marks the tenth anniversary of the death John McGahern (born 1934), the widely acclaimed Irish author There is a shared temper of mind and many common strands in in the work of McGahern and that of the English philosopher, Michael Oakeshott (1900-1990). Despite the very different cultural environments in which they grew up and wrote, both writers exhibit a similar commitment to education as initiation into the pleasures of the mind, although they differ in their responses to the social context in which education takes place. This paper examines the commonalities and differences in their visions of education.

19 October: Alexis Gibbs (Winchester University)
*Towards a pedagogy of the act: rights, responsibility, and answerability*

This paper explores Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of “answerability” in relation to an ethics of teaching. I look first at how the capabilities approach to education prepares a rights0based ground for fair provision, but reduces the moral dimension of teaching to the (re)distribution of freedoms. I then consider Sharon Todd’s Levinasian counter to capability cosmopolitanism, expressed in terms of responsibility. The third part draws on Bakhtin’s extended essay, *Towards a Philosophy of the Act*, to show the importance of
taking both these positions into account when thinking about actual, answerable action in the classroom.

26 October: Steven Cranfield (University of Westminster)

F.R. Leavis and Pedagogy: the ‘Critical Exchange’

Seldom can a ‘philosophy’ of pedagogy have been encapsulated in so few and such simple words as: ‘This is so, isn’t it?’, ‘Yes, but—.’ The schematic conception of the critical judgment or exchange, as expressed in this dialogic paradigm by the English educator and critic F. R. Leavis (1895-1978), has proved remarkably fertile as an idea. It has also prompted criticisms that it is theoretically ungrounded and unrealisable. This presentation will take a sustained look at the heart of Leavisian critical practice and explore its relevance to contemporary higher education.

2 November: Ian Ground (Hertfordshire, Newcastle, the British Wittgenstein Society)

Minding Animals

Philosophical and scientific inquiry into the nature of mind has generally proceeded as if we humans were the only minded species. We have sought to uncover the nature of our own minds and left only as an afterthought the question of what other kinds of mind there might be. Accounts of a range of concepts—including understanding, meaning and learning—have been structured accordingly. This talk argues in support of the "animal turn" in philosophy. Wittgensteinian thought offers a better fit with the empirical discoveries regarding non-human understanding and learning than the default positions of our philosophical tradition.

9 November: Tim Ingold (University of Aberdeen)

Education in the Minor Key

There is a major and a minor sense of education. In the major sense it delivers the foundational knowledge that enables every generation to take a stand; in the minor sense it pulls us out of certainty, out of our defensive standpoints. What if, in thinking about education, we were to commence in the minor key? How might this challenge the ways we think about study and the school, teaching-and-research, and the freedom it both depends upon and exemplifies? I contend that only an education that admits of minor variations can afford a freedom that is both real and sustainable.

16 November: Book launch: “Philosophy and Theory in Educational Research: Writing in the Margin” – with the editors, Amanda Fulford (Leeds Trinity University) and Naomi Hodgson (Liverpool Hope University), and responses from Doret de Ruyter, Richard Smith, and Claire Skea
*Writing in the Margin* focuses on practices of reading and writing as constitutive of research in educational philosophy. It discusses the role of philosophy in current educational research literature, illustrates possibilities of reading and writing in educational philosophy through 11 contributions from international scholars in the field, and indicates ways in which philosophical research might proceed in education. The book will be discussed by its two co-authors/co-editors, a contributor to the book, an academic who has used the book in her teaching, and a doctoral student who has used the book in the process of her research.

23 November: David T. Hansen (Teachers College, Columbia University)
*Bearing Witness to Teaching and Teachers*

This presentation draws upon a recently completed, two-year long philosophical and field-based inquiry that included sixteen highly regarded teachers from eight state-funded schools in a large, culturally diverse US metropolis. The endeavour encompassed extensive classroom visits, whole-group discussions, and individual interviews. A key question guiding the study was: What does it mean to be a person in the role of teacher? To approach this question necessitated adopting an ethical and epistemic orientation best described as bearing witness. In the presentation, I will elucidate this orientation and illustrate its enactment with vignettes drawn from the intensive fieldwork I undertook.

30 November: John Marshall (UCL Institute of Education)
*What’s Wrong with the School Curriculum Today?*

Looking at the principal elements of knowledge or culture that schools are expected to address, one can ask whether, in view of the challenges created by massive social change and upheaval in recent years, a rather different perspective on the main forms of human experience and learning is now needed—a perspective that brings out some more underlying dimensions of human existence and reflects those areas of our functioning that are really crucial to our growth and development (including character development) as human beings. The curriculum implications of this are explored.

7 December: to be confirmed

14 December: Renato Huarte Cuéllar (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)
*Martin Buber's Philosophy of Education Revisited in the 21st Century*

How can we understand Martin Buber’s approach to education? The Jewish-Austrian-born thinker made education not only the subject of his Dialogue philosophy, but an important part of his life in Germany and, after 1938, in Palestine. How can we approach Buber’s idea of experience in education? How is education implied in Human Dialogue between persons, cultures, religions? The Buberian answers to these questions seem to still be important in the 21st Century.