

**PESGB London Branch  
And  
UCL Centre for Philosophy of Education**

Research Seminar Programme  
**SUMMER TERM 2023**

*All meetings run on Wednesdays. They will take place either f2f in a room at UCL IOE or on Zoom, not in hybrid form. Please see the details for each meeting below.*

**26 April Alison Brady (UCL IOE) with responses from Aine Mahon (UCD) and Alexis Gibbs (Winchester University) Room W3.05**  
***Book Launch - Being a Teacher: In Conversation with Jean-Paul Sartre***

This book re-conceptualizes teaching through an engagement with Jean-Paul Sartre's early existentialist thought. Against the grain of teacher accountability, it turns to the demanding account of being human in Sartre's thought, on the basis of which an alternative account of teaching can be developed. It builds upon Sartre's key concepts related to the self, freedom, bad faith, and the Other, such that they might open up original ways of thinking about the practices of teaching. Indeed, given the everyday complexities that characterize teaching, as well as the vulnerabilities and uncertainty that it so often involves, this book ultimately aims to create a space in which to reimagine forms of accounting that move from technicist ways of thinking to existential sensitivity in relation to one's practice as a teacher. Alison will briefly talk through the main ideas in the book and what it aims to achieve, followed by responses from Áine Mahon (University College Dublin) and Alexis Gibbs (University of Winchester).

**Alison M. Brady** is a Lecturer at the IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society. She has been teaching on a range of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes there since 2015, specializing in the field of philosophy of education.

**3 May John Gray (UCL) Room W3.05**  
***Representation and erasure in pedagogical materials - the strange case of queer absence***

In this talk I focus mainly, but not exclusively, on Anglo-American English Language Teaching (ELT) materials and the ways in which they represent a heteronormative world in which non-normative ways of being are ruthlessly erased. I explore some of the main reasons for this erasure, paying particular attention to the concepts of 'reproductive futurism', 'hyper-reactionary neoliberalism', 'post-fascism' and the commercial logic of ELT edu-business. I conclude by arguing that many of these elements can be found in other educational settings and are increasingly congruent with the rhizomatic spread of a dangerous new politics of the right.

**John Gray** is professor of Applied Linguistics and Education at the IOE. His research interests include the impact of neoliberal ideology in second

language teaching and teacher education as well as issues of gender and sexuality in language teaching and beyond. Publications include a special issue of *Gender and Language* (2018) on intersectionality, language and queer lives, co-edited with Melanie Cooke and 'Narratives of queer migration' (2020) in *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality*, co-written with Mike Baynham.

**10 May Rebecca Mace (UCL)**

**Room W3.05**

***Selfie-Knowledge and Grammable Moments***

Visually dominated social media have changed the way people interact with the world. This paper considers how self-image is used on social media to articulate and communicate. Exploring self-knowledge in online visual self-(re)presentation, it examines the interaction between traditionally presumed binaries: self/other, subject/object, real/ideal, and mind/body. The focus is upon body images as stories, representing not only individual ideals but also cultural value frameworks. It seeks out the grey areas and permeable boundaries social media offers, noting that image has become an aesthetic of aspiration, as much as looks are an articulation of friendship, and a tool to self-knowing.

**Rebecca Mace** has nearly two decades of teaching experience, working in a range of state, independent, day, boarding, single sexed, and mixed schools. She has a keen interest in technology – especially the application of EdTech. Following a year as part-time Research Associate at the University of Oxford Internet Institute Digital Ethics Lab, she decided to undertake full-time doctoral study at University College London, Institute of Education. Her research considers the ways a culture dominated by social media is impacting upon the concept of self.

**17 May Christopher Higgins**

**Online only, via Zoom**

***Learning Here and Now: Aesthetic-Educational Happenings at Black Mountain College***

Compared to the founding of the Chicago Lab School, John Dewey's involvement in the experimental Black Mountain College is seldom discussed. Yet Black Mountain embodied two of Dewey's central claims: (1) that education is "the continuous reconstruction of experience"; and (2) that aesthetic experience is educative (and vice versa). To make sense of either idea requires thinking them together, and this is exactly what revisiting BMC affords. Taking a seat with John Cage and Merce Cunningham at what is now thought of as the first happening, we join a community in search of what Dewey called "[t]he moving present."

**Chris Higgins** is Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of Formative Education in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, where he directs the program in Transformative Educational Studies and co-directs the Formative Leadership Education Project. Higgins has written on dialogue and the teacher-student relationship, ignorance and open-mindedness, imagination and aesthetic education, liberal learning and vocational formation, and education as a public good. He is the author of a

number of articles and two books: *The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) and *Undeclared: A Philosophy of Formative Higher Education* (MIT, in press).

**24 May Steinar Bøyum (University of Bergen) Room W3.05**  
***Is education transformative?***

It is sometimes said that education is transformative, but what this means is often unclear. L.A. Paul has recently provided a more precise account. In her book «Transformative Experience», she argues that major life-events challenge traditional decision-making models because they involve transformative experiences, in the face of which it seems impossible to combine rationality and authenticity. One of her examples is that of choosing a career. In subsequent work, Paul further expands on this idea and claim that higher education is a transformative experience. The purpose of this talk is to critically evaluate Paul's thesis on the transformative nature of higher education.

**Steinar Bøyum** is Head of Department at the Department of Philosophy, University of Bergen, Norway. He also holds a position as professor II at the Centre for the Study of Professions, Oslo Metropolitan University. Prior to joining the philosophy department he was a professor of education at the University of Bergen. He works now mainly in the moral and political philosophy of education, but also has a background in Wittgenstein studies.

**31 May John Vorhaus Room W3.05**  
***Relating to severely disabled people as equals***

People whose intellectual disabilities are severe present a challenge to the belief in human equality: severely disabled people are thought not to have the capacities that equality demands. One way to think about equality is to consider how people relate to each other as equals, an idea I explore here as this applies to severely disabled people in relations of care. I aim to show that the ideal of relational equality applies to caring relationships involving this group of people: most severely disabled people are the relational equals of their carers, carers who also have reason to treat them as relational equals during periods when any such treatment is unilateral.

**John Vorhaus** is professor of moral and educational philosophy at the IOE and an affiliate member of the UCL philosophy department. He works in the areas of ethics, applied ethics and philosophy of disability.

**7 June Nicholas Stock (Independent Researcher) Room W3.05**  
***Does the teacher enjoy? Thinking through educational enjoyment with Lacan***

Philosophical questions about teachers often ask what teachers are for, or perhaps, how they can improve. But amidst teacher recruitment shortfall, waves of teacher strikes, a disillusioned workforce, and a rising sense of authoritarianism, we might wonder whether the teacher can *enjoy* "being" a teacher. Did they ever, and what sorts of enjoyment are to be found?

Drawing on Lacanian theory, this talk will explore the structure of education that teachers find themselves amidst, consider the teacher as a subject in this structure, and pose questions concerning educational enjoyment, or *jouissance*.

**Nick Stock** holds a doctorate in Philosophy of Education from the University of Birmingham, UK. He is an independent researcher, currently exploring Lacanian psychoanalysis as an approach to unravelling the desires of teachers. He has other interests in poststructuralist philosophy and radical political theory. He is also an English teacher in a Sixth Form College. He tweets @89stock

**14 June Maria Balaska (Hertfordshire University and Åbo Akademi University) Room W3.05**

***Wonder: What we can learn from it?***

The mood of wonder has been famously associated with the origin of philosophy, but what is the precise nature of that link? In this talk I draw a distinction between two forms of wonder, the wonder that takes as an object some unusual entity, and what I call “objectless wonder”, wonder that is directed to everything and nothing in particular. Whereas the first form of wonder lies behind science and epistemic achievements, the second form of wonder lies behind the activity of philosophy. I draw on and bring together themes from Plato, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein.

**Maria Balaska** is a research fellow at the University of Hertfordshire and at Åbo Akademi University. Previously she was Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Hertfordshire. She is currently finishing a book on Anxiety and Wonder that draws on Heidegger's and Kierkegaard's work. Her previous publications include the monograph 'Wittgenstein and Lacan at the Limit: meaning and astonishment' and the edited collection 'Cora Diamond on Ethics'.

**21 June Renato Huarte Cuéllar (UNAM) Online only, via Zoom**  
***Education' as a word: philosophical approaches***

'Education' is a word. Like all words, it implies a relationship with objects, ideas, etc. Analyzing the implications of naming any phenomenon 'education' implies philosophical standpoints. This session considers Émile Benveniste and his discussion with Jacques Derrida, to understand the philosophical implications of words and their naming of reality. Beyond 'education', are there other words that we can translate as education? Can *paideia* (Gk.) or *hinuch* (Hebrew) be translated as 'education'? Barbara Cassin has used the term 'untranslatables' - words that need to be translated over and over. Examples from different philosophical traditions and languages will be provided.

**Renato Huarte Cuéllar** holds a BA in Philosophy and Pedagogy, an MA in Philosophy of Science, and a PhD in Philosophy from Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM). He has been professor in the area of Theory, Philosophy and History of Education and Pedagogy since 2005. He is responsible of the Research Group in Philosophy of Education at the

School of Philosophy and Literature at UNAM. Together with several colleagues in 2010 he founded the Latin American Association of Philosophy of Education (ALFE). He has been a Board Member of ALFE since 2010 and its President since 2015.

**28 June Elizabeth O'Brien (Dublin City University) Room C3.15**

*"Are you our teacher?": the voice of the school student during initial teacher education*

This paper opens an exploration into how student voice might be recognised and described in an everyday sense as initiative, and as ordinarily significant to the student teacher during initial teacher education. Drawing on the writing of Stanley Cavell on the figure of the friend, it suggests that the voice of the school student is a neglected factor in the education of educators. It holds that programmes of initial teacher education should support student teachers in becoming capable of engaging with student voice in a non-extractive, non-consultative, everyday, interested sense as a facet of the complexity of life in school.

**Elizabeth O'Brien** is a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher based at Dublin City University. She holds a PhD in Education from University College Dublin. Elizabeth co-founded the Philosophy of Education Reading Network [www.philofed.com](http://www.philofed.com) and her monograph *The Educator and The Ordinary: A Philosophical Approach to Initial Teacher Education* will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2023.