

## CRITICAL EDUCATION & POWER : ROUSSEAU, GRAMSCI & FREIRE

This course will provide participants with an in-depth study of three figures who have contributed in no small measure to the debate on critical approaches to education, emphasising the relationship between education and power. It will be taught by three internationally published authors and scholars who will each focus on areas of their own expertise, in their case work about the ideas concerning education and power expressed, over a range of writings by Jean Jacques Rousseau, Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire. In short, participants are encouraged to engage with work spanning the best part of different centuries from the enlightenment period to late modernity.

The course will start with an examination and discussion around the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778). Rousseau is frequently, and with justification, described as an anti-Enlightenment Enlightenment thinker. The description captures the contradictions in his thought on practically everything, not the least on politics and education. Although his work on education that stands out and is most usually connected with his name is his classic *Emile*, understanding his view on politics and education begins with his first Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts with which he began his polemic with his fellow ‘philosophes’ of the period. Later on he followed with his politically famous ‘Discourse on Inequality’ which is a tract on justice and where he writes about the state of nature from which ‘man’ is supposed to have developed, and, in his third discourse on Political Economy, we find his more conservative views on public education and citizenship, which are taken up later again in his work on a constitution for Poland. His radical work on citizenship education, which begins with his preface to the second discourse, is developed in *On the Social Contract*. Meanwhile, *Julie: the New Heloise* can be read as a book about the education of and in the family, also regarded as a political unit. These notes suggest a connection between education and citizenship in Rousseau that lie far beyond *Emile*.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) stands out as one of the most complex political theorists to emerge from the Left, and from Marxism, during the first part of the 20th century. This section of the seminar provides a holistic exposition and appraisal of Gramsci’s writings that are of relevance to education in neoliberal times. Instead of simply applying Gramsci’s theories to issues in education, it is argued, drawing on a recently published book on the matter (Mayo, 2015), that education constitutes the leitmotif of his entire oeuvre. It lies at the heart of his conceptualization of the ancient Greek term ‘Hegemony’. This segment of the seminar starts off with an exposition of Gramsci’s conceptualisation of power in the context of Hegemony. This leads to a discussion around the role which education plays in this regard, with due consideration attached to the notion of the State, a construct viewed, from a Gramscian perspective, in its various formats. The importance which Gramsci attaches to language and culture, in addition to political economy, in the context of consolidating or challenging hegemonic relations, is underlined. Due importance is also attached to the strong political agency of different types of

intellectuals in this struggle. We would, time permitting, move into a discussion around content within the different forms of educational provision and learning about which Gramsci has written and in which he was engaged as activist. It is here that connections between Gramsci's ideas and Rousseau's influence, as manifest in Italy during the former's time, will be drawn.

The third major figure, whose work will be discussed, is the Brazilian Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Freire's work connects with the ideas of the two previous figures in many ways not least in the context of citizenship education in which people are encouraged to exercise their 'right to govern,' serving therefore as social actors rather than simply passive consumers and producers. While a holistic exposition of Freire's ideas will be provided, as with Rousseau and Gramsci, the major focus in this segment will be on classic texts such as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (original title: *Pedagogia do Oprimido*) and his more recent *Teachers as Cultural Workers. Letters to those who dare teach* (original title: *Professora Sim, Tia Não* – literally translated as Teacher yet, Aunt No) and *Pedagogy of Freedom* (original title: *Pedagogia da Autonomia* – literally translated as Pedagogy of Autonomy). If and when possible more systematic connections with Gramsci and the larger field of 'critical pedagogy', which Freire inspired, will be forged. Writings by the School of Barbiana and Lorenzo Milani will be referred to by way of comparison. One of the most cited and iconic figures in the contemporary education literature, Freire produced work, including these books, which becomes all the more relevant in an age when, in view of the intensification of globalization, and the mobility of capital, education is often equated exclusively with the development of 'human resources'. This is a feature of some of the dominant policy documents in education. Like Rousseau and Gramsci, Freire is a key point of reference for any pedagogical discussion centering on the notion of education as part of the struggle for social justice and critical citizenship. All three provide grist for the mill when confronting some of the more atomising aspects of contemporary Neoliberal policies including educational ones.

Carmel Borg, Peter Mayo, Kenneth Wain

### **Texts to Consult**

On Reserve

Apple, M. W, Gandin, L. A & Au, W (eds.) (2009) *Routledge International Handbook on Critical Education*, New York City (NY) & London: Routledge.

Bhattacharya, A (2011) *Paulo Freire: Rousseau of the Twentieth Century*, Rotterdam, Boston & Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Borg, C, Cardona, M & Caruana S (2013), *Social Class, Language and Power. 'Letter to a Teacher': Lorenzo Milani and the School of Barbiana*, Rotterdam, Boston & Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Darder, A (2014) *Freire and Education* (Routledge Key ideas in Education), New York City (NY) & London: Routledge.

Darder, A, Mayo, P & Paraskeva, J (eds.) (2015), *International Critical Pedagogy Reader*, New York City (NY) & London: Routledge.

Freire, P (2005) *Teachers as Cultural Workers. Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* (expanded paperback edition), Boulder Co: Westview Press.

Kupfer, A (ed.) (2015) *Power and Education. Contexts of Oppression and Mobility*, Basingstoke (UK) & New York City (NY): Palgrave-Macmillan

Mayo, P (2015) *Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism. Insights from Gramsci*, New York City (NY) and London: Routledge.

Rousseau, J-J (1979) *Emile: Or On Education*, Montreal: Basic Books.

Rousseau, J-J (2003) *On the Social Contract*, Mineola (NY): Dover Publications.

Wain, K (2014) *Between Truth and Freedom: Rousseau and Our Contemporary Political and Educational Culture*, London and New York City (NY): Routledge.

### **Set Texts**

Freire, P (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition), New York City & London: Continuum.

Freire, P (2013) *Pedagogy of Freedom. Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* (Kindle Edition), Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Mayo, P (1999) *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education. Possibilities for Transformative Action*, London & New York City (NY): Zed Books.

[http://www.amazon.com/Gramsci-Freire-Adult-Education-Transformative/dp/1856496147/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1452615951&sr=1-1&keywords=gramsci%2C+freire+and+adult+education](http://www.amazon.com/Gramsci-Freire-Adult-Education-Transformative/dp/1856496147/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1452615951&sr=1-1&keywords=gramsci%2C+freire+and+adult+education)

Wain, K (2011) *On Rousseau: An Introduction to His Radical Thinking on Education and Politics*, Rotterdam, Boston and Taipei: Sense Publishers.

<http://www.amazon.com/On-Rousseau-Introduction-Thinking-Education/dp/9460913849>

**NB a more complete reading list on each of the three authors will be provided nearer to the commencement of the course.**

## Biodata

**Carmel Borg** is Associate Professor (University of Malta) and Editor of the *Malta Review of Educational Research* (journal) and of the *Education Research Monograph Series*. He is the co-author of *Learning and Social Difference: Challenges for Public Education and Critical Pedagogy* (Paradigm, 2006, Routledge, 2015), *Public Intellectuals, Radical Democracy and Social Movements – A Book of Interviews* (Peter Lang Publishers, 2007), *Social Class, Language and Power. 'Letter to a Teacher'.* *Lorenzo Milani and the School of Barbiana* (Sense Publishers, 2013), translated into seven languages, *Lorenzo Milani, l-Edukazzjoni u l-Gustizzja Socjali* (Media Centre, 2008). He is also co-editor of *Gramsci and Education* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), *Understanding Children and Youth at Risk: Narratives of Hope* (Agenda, 2006), *Shooting Society: Documenting Contemporary Life in Malta* (Midsea Books, 2012), *Lorenzo Milani's Culture of Peace: Essays on Religion, Education, and Democratic Life* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), *Mediterranean Studies in Comparative Education* (Malta: Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Studies, 2009), and editor of *Lorenzo Milani: Bejn Ilbieraħ u Llum* (Malta: Horizons Publications, 2010) and *L-Edukazzjoni hija Politika – Kitbiet Paulo Freire (Education is Politics: Freire Reader)* (Malta: Horizons Publications, 2013).

**Peter Mayo** is Professor (University of Malta), teaches in sociology of education, adult education and sociology in general. His 20 books include *Politics of Indignation* (Zero Books 2012), *Learning with Adults* (co-authored, Sense, 2012), *Echoes from Freire for a critically engaged pedagogy* (Bloomsbury, 2013), *Lorenzo Milani, the School of Barbiana and the Struggle for Social Justice* (co-authored, Peter Lang, 2014) and *Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism. Insights from Gramsci* (Routledge, 2015). His *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education* (Zed Books, 1999) was published in eight different languages. He edits book series for Sense, Palgrave-Macmillan and Bloomsbury Academic and co-edits, *Postcolonial Directions in Education* (journal). His over 100 papers appeared either as chapters in books or as articles in journals such as *Critical Sociology*, *Capital & Class*, *Socialism and Democracy*, *Critica Marxista*, *International Gramsci Journal*, *Comparative Education*, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies*, *Journal of Holy Land & Palestinian Studies* and *Das Argument*. He has contributed op. eds. to *Truthout* and *Counterpunch*. He has been Visiting Professor at the Universities of Alberta (twice), Cyprus, Bogazici, British Columbia and Gdansk.

**Kenneth Wain** is a Professor (University of Malta) and philosopher. He teaches philosophy of education, ethics, and political philosophy with the faculties of Arts and Education at the University of Malta. He has published on these subjects in several internationally reviewed journals and written chapters in books, focusing especially on the work of Rousseau, Alasdair MacIntyre, Richard Rorty, and Michel Foucault. In 2015 he published *Between Truth and Freedom: Rousseau and Our Contemporary Political and Educational Culture* with Routledge (London, NY) after having published a more introductory book on Rousseau, *On Rousseau: An Introduction to his Radical Thinking on Education and Politics* (2011) in Sense Publishers' (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

series of Key Critical Thinkers in Education. In between these two books he co-authored *Democracy without Confession* (Allied Publishers) with John Baldacchino in 2013, and a collection of unpublished papers, *Does it Matter Who Speaks? Postmodern Papers* (Malta University Press) in 2014. His earlier major works were *Philosophy of Lifelong Education* with Croom Helm (London) in 1987, and *The Learning Society in a Postmodern World*, which was published by Peter Lang (NY et al.) in 2004.