

Annual Conference 2010
of the
Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society
(OVPES)
Call for Proposals

The Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society (OVPES) invites proposals for the 2010 annual meeting to be held at the Bergamo Conference Center in Dayton, Ohio, Thursday through Saturday, September 23- September 25, 2010.

Conference Theme:

**The Politics of Enlightenment:
Philosophy of Education in the Age of Obama**

The 18th century Enlightenment inaugurated modernity along with its ideals and assumptions about the strong new roles that philosophy, reason, progress, and the scientific method were to play in human affairs. As an historical period, the Enlightenment's legacy has been increasingly contested by a wide spectrum of critics, including feminists, critical race theorists, ecologists, and by more than a few philosophers of education, for what they perceive to be the oppressive and totalitarian consequences of its reigning ideals and assumptions.

In a broader sense, if the motif of enlightenment is conceived as an ongoing project of self and social criticism, it could be said to extend as far back as Plato and include present-day iterations of the Buddhist concept of "mindfulness" or the feminist concept of "consciousness-raising." The association of the category of enlightenment with the subversive beauty of questioning seems to suggest an intimate nexus between what enlightenment is—however it may be conceptualized-- and our own teaching identities as philosophers of education. Explicitly or implicitly, many educators define their vocational identities in terms of the liberationist strand of Western educational theory, the idea that education ought to be concerned with the "enlightenment" of the individual and society. The passion for connecting to a vision of the good is as erotic and sublime as it is politically and ethically problematic. The tensions contained within this meaning narrative have generated some tricky moral predicaments: How should teachers understand their own power and authority as well as the limits to that power and authority in carrying out their aims? On what basis can a democratic political education justify a rigorous imposition of its own values? How to conceptualize the personal or social "change" one hopes to bring about?

These and other questions have assumed new currency since the election of Barack Obama as U.S. President in 2008, as he came to symbolize for many a hopeful kind of Freirean "revolutionary futurity." While Obama's neo-liberal discourse on education tends toward the economic and downplays the importance of the civic, his improbable ascendance also seems to signify the emergence of a more idealistic, creative and

experimental national culture in which education might regain its role as an instrument of democratization and human flourishing.

In this conference call, we ask you to develop papers that engage what might be called the politics of enlightenment broadly constructed. Given the apparent ripeness of this historical moment, we also invite papers to formulate topics as they relate to possible transformations or shifts occurring within the negotiation of the national identity—hence the subtheme, “Philosophy of Education in the Age of Obama.” For purposes of thematic clarification, it may be useful to think about prospective approaches for addressing the conference theme from one of the following three standpoints:

i) papers which are focused on the concept or motif of enlightenment as an educational aspiration and problem; explorations into its putative universal dimensions; explorations into the concept’s relationship to critical multiculturalism as a normative project of national, civic, or democratic identity transformation; explorations into the appearance/reality distinction as the binary optic anchoring enlightenment claims to know; explorations into theorizing alternative, post-enlightenment pedagogies;

ii) papers that treat aspects of the historical era of the Enlightenment which have special relevance for educators today, topics which could involve questions about the reproduction of the era itself—Are representations of the Enlightenment as a monolithic movement well-founded? What dimensions of the Enlightenment are most complicit in, or perhaps antagonistic to, subsequent patterns of racism, sexism, and genocide found in the West? How might the writings of an important figure or critic of the Enlightenment throw light on the task of conceptualizing the human impulse toward enlightenment, autonomy, freedom?

iii) papers that adopt a “personal essay” form of writing in order to tell a story which reflects upon enlightenment themes with greater cogency than academic forms of writing would permit; narratives about personal, political, professional *experiences* that can be located under the rubric of *transformational*. The tropes of irony, tragedy, satire, confession and critical self analysis are the coin of the realm in this genre of writing, as Phillip Lopate observes, “German philosopher Theodor Adorno saw rich, subversive possibilities in precisely the “anti-systematic” properties of the essay,” and further saw the essay as “an attractive way to open-up philosophical discourse.” Some exemplars of the personal essay include Michel de Montaigne, Walter Benjamin, Virginia Woolf, James Baldwin, Wendell Berry, and bell hooks, to name a few (see the Lopate reference below for more on the personal essay).

This call for papers, of course, can only begin to hint at the many possible creative and critical approaches which respondents might wish to develop in their essays; below we provide a partial list of sources which informed this introduction to the 2010 conference theme.

Select Bibliography

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- Deligiorgi, Katherina. *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2005.
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- Lopate, Phillip. *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.
- MacKinnon, Catherine. "Consciousness-Raising." *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 83-105.
- Plato, "The Parable of the Cave." *The Republic*, B. Jowett, trans. New York: Anchor Books, 1973.
- Schmidt, James, ed. *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Schott, Robin May. "The Gender of Enlightenment." (see Schmidt ref.) 471-487.

PRESENTATION FORMAT, DEADLINE AND NOTIFICATION:

Proposals for individual papers, panels, or symposia involving two or three speakers on a single topic are welcome. All proposals will be blind and peer reviewed. (See Proposal guidelines at end of this document.) As always, topics not related to the conference theme will be considered for acceptance.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: Submit your proposal via email with an attachment as a Word document. All proposals should be received on or before Monday, May 10, 2010. Submit to: Dr. Sheron-Fraser Burgess, Program Chair at: sfraserburge@bsu.edu. Proposals accepted for presentation at the conference will be notified by June 30, 2010. Full-length conference papers should be no longer than 15 double-spaced pages, following the Chicago Manual of Style. Papers meeting all the editorial requirements will be considered for publication in *Philosophical Studies in Education* the refereed journal of OVPES. (See manuscript requirements at www.ovpes.org)

CONFERENCE PROPSAL GUIDELINES:

Part 1 (submit in the body of your email message)

1. Title of your proposal.
2. Format of your presentation (i.e, paper session, panel or symposium)
3. Your name, title, institutional affiliation (should be the contact person)
4. Your address, phone, email, fax number.
5. The name(s) of other panel or symposium members, if applicable.
6. An abstract of up to 100 words.

Part 2 (in a Word document with all identifying information removed for “blind” review)

1. Title of your paper or panel or symposium.
2. Provide a brief summary of your topic in two pages, up to 500 words.
Provide a brief descriptive summary of how your topic will be developed and/or its line of argument. Explain the significance of your topic. List several major references upon which you will draw in developing the topic in order to “place” the scholarly conversation.
3. Provide two or three terms of reference for your papers. This will guide the program committee in grouping presentations.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

1. The proposal should be sent as an attachment in Microsoft WORD document format.
2. The subject of your message should read “OVPES-2010 Proposal.”
3. If any special formatting, presentation, or special characters are essential to the proposal, please submit a paper copy.
4. The Program Committee reserves the right to request you to resubmit electronic proposals, to submit them in the body of an email message or to submit a paper copy within a reasonable time frame in case of any technical problems with the electronic submission.
5. Receipt of email submissions will be notified via email.

All submissions and inquiries should be directed to Dr. Sheron Fraser-Burgess (sfraserburge@bsu.edu)

