

Fall 2020

Socialists of Caltech Discussion Group

Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire

Text: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire ([PDF](#) and [EPUB](#))

Submit discussion questions/comments [here!](#)

When: Tuesdays from 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Where: [zoom](#), password: freire

See [Glossary](#)

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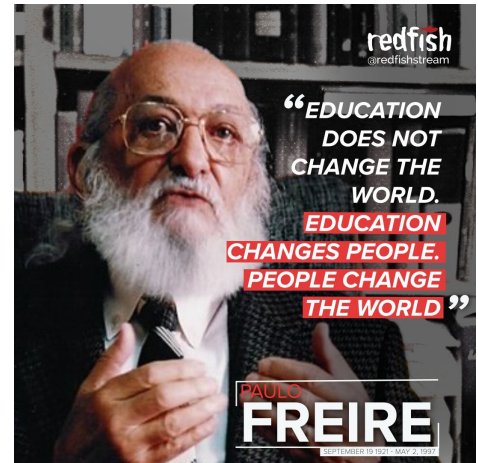
From [Redfish:](#)

"Paulo Freire was born in Recife, Brazil, in 1921. He worked briefly as a lawyer but soon turned to education, specifically to developing literacy programs for the Brazilian peasantry, which was widely disenfranchised due to a literacy requirement. When the reform government of João Goulart was ousted by a CIA-supported military coup in 1964, Freire, considered an "international subversive" trying to turn Brazil into a "Bolshevik country," was immediately arrested and imprisoned for seventy days. Before he could be imprisoned again, or worse, he began a sixteen-year, self-imposed exile.

Freire, who became a professor of history and philosophy of education at the University of Recife in Brazil, experienced and learned from the plight of poverty and hunger during the Great Depression of 1929. This experience imbued in him a deep concern for the poor, which influenced his views on education.

Paulo Freire is widely considered the grandfather and one of the major contributors to Critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a teaching method that aims to help in challenging and actively struggling against any form of social oppression and the related customs and beliefs. Critical pedagogy wants to question society in its understanding of the role that education has. From this point of view, social critique is necessary if one does not want an upbringing and education that contributes to the reproduction of inequality. According to the critical pedagogy, education is inherently political, and any kind of pedagogy should be aware of this fact. A social and educational vision of justice and equality should be the basis for any kind of education. The liberation from oppression and human suffering should be an important dimension in education. Education should promote both emancipatory change as well as the cultivation of the intellect. As he once said: "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

Freire is best known for his book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" in which he described how people have been untaught or have never learned to think critically about their oppression. Most people accept their situation as inevitable and as belonging to life itself. Only when they become aware of their situation and are able to assign meaning to it (called a process of "conscientization"), the step can be made toward changing the situation, making education, as Nelson Mandela would say, into a weapon which can be used to change the world."



Date	Assigned Reading
<u>November 24, 2020</u>	<p><i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed:</i> Introduction to the Anniversary Edition Foreword by Richard Schull Preface <u>Paulo Freire and Popular Struggle in South Africa – Hampton Institute</u></p>
<u>December 1, 2020</u>	<p><i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed:</i> Chapter 1 The justification for a pedagogy of the oppressed The contradiction between the oppressors and the oppressed, and how it is overcome Oppression and the oppressors Liberation: not a gift, not a self-achievement, but a mutual process.</p> <p>Supplement: <u>Capturing the Gramscian Project in Critical Pedagogy: Towards a Philosophy of Praxis in Education</u></p>
<u>December 8, 2020</u>	<p><i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed:</i> Chapter 2 The “banking” concept of education as an instrument of suppression--its presuppositions--a critique The problem-posing concept of education as an instrument for liberation--its presuppositions The “banking” concept and the teacher-student contradiction The problem-posing concept and the superseding of the teacher-student contradiction Education: a mutual process, world-mediated People as uncompleted beings, conscious of their incompleteness, and their attempt to be more fully human</p> <p>Supplement: <u>The Revolutionary Legacy of Walter Rodney’s ‘Groundings’: On Walter Rodney’s concept and practice of ‘Grounding’ as Critical Pedagogy</u> and <u>Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci</u></p>
<u>December 15, 2020</u>	<p><i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed:</i> Chapter 3 Dialogics--the essence of education as the practice of freedom Dialogics and Dialogue Dialogue and the search for program content The human-world relationship, “generative themes,” and the program content of education as the practice of freedom The investigation of “generative themes” and its methodology The awakening of critical consciousness through the investigation of “generative themes” The various stages of the investigation</p>
<u>December 22, 2020</u> and <u>January 5, 2020</u>	<p><i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed:</i> Chapter 4 Antialogics and dialogics as matrices of opposing theories of cultural action: the former as an instrument of oppression and the latter as an instrument of liberation The theory of antialogical action and its characteristics: conquest, divide, and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion The theory of dialogical action and its characteristics: cooperation, unity, organization, and cultural synthesis</p>

Discussion Questions:

Introduction, Foreword, Preface, and Introductory Article

1. In the Introduction, what is Donaldo Macedo's critique of notions of "clarity" in academia? What is Macedo's critique of ideas about jargon?
2. In the Foreword, how does Richard Schaul describe the "culture of silence?" (p. 30)
3. In the Preface, how does Freire distinguish between the sectarian and the radical? What is the role of history in this distinction?
4. From the article, what is the "banking model of education?"
5. From the article, what was the role of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in South African liberation struggles?
6. A question for everyone, but specifically for those of us who have worked in oppressed communities and/or in a language justice context: Did you feel any resonance with anything you read today? Was there anything that challenged your experience or made you rethink an experience you have had?

Chapter 1

1. According to Freire, what is the task of the oppressed and why is it fraught with obstacles?
2. What is the "fear of freedom?"
3. Elaborate on the oppressor-oppressed dialectic and the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. What is the relationship between oppressor, oppressed, violence, and liberation? What, if anything, changes if a group of oppressed people acts as an oppressor for another group of people? What of those who face multiple oppressions?
4. What is the pedagogy of the oppressed? How does Freire differentiate between propaganda and educational programs?

Chapter 2

1. What is the 'banking model' of education? What is the relationship between the banking model and oppression?
2. What does Freire mean by 'problem-posing' education? How does problem-posing education relate to Freire's ontology?
3. What does Freire have to say about political education programs? In what ways does he

differentiate between pre-and-post-revolutionary political education programs?

4. From the article about Walter Rodney, compare Rodney's pedagogy to that of Freire.

Chapter 3

1. What does Freire say about the importance of naming the world? What is at stake in the process of naming? Who has the right to name?
2. How does Freire relate love, revolutionary activity, and dialogical pedagogy?
3. What is a thematic universe? What is a generative theme? And what are coded situations? How are they related?
4. Comment on the examples Freire gives about dialogical education in action.

Chapter 4

1. How does Freire respond to the assertion that revolutionary pedagogy can only take place after a revolution? How does he respond to the charge that revolutionary pedagogy is idealist?
2. What is the role of elites in Freire's pedagogy?
3. Describe conquest, divide and rule strategy, manipulation, and cultural invasion with respect to anti-dialogical action. What do these terms mean, how do they function, and how do they interrelate?
4. Now, describe cooperation, unity for liberation, organization, and cultural synthesis with respect to dialogical action. What do these terms mean, how do they function, how do they and interrelate?

Glossary and Translations:

Word: Definition

Page 52 (translation): One must, to use the words of Marx, explain to the masses their own action, not only to ensure the continuation of the revolutionary experiments of the proletariat, but also to consciously activate the later development of these experiences.

Chapter 2, Footnote 8 translation: Consciousness and the world are given in a single stroke: by nature outside of consciousness, the world is, by nature, relative to it.

