

Call for Papers

Centennial of John Dewey's *Democracy & Education* (1916)

Submissions are due by August 1, 2016. Please send all submissions and direct any inquiries to guest editor, Cristina Groeger, at groeger@fas.harvard.edu.

The increase of social inequality over the last several decades has spawned numerous comparisons to the late nineteenth-century Gilded Age. With it, too, has come a new wave of debates over the role of education in reducing or perpetuating that inequality, and its role in shaping a substantively democratic society. Given the centrality of these topics in contemporary debates, it is an opportune moment to look back to a book on these themes: John Dewey's *Democracy & Education*. Published 100 years ago in 1916, the book was written after Dewey had been radicalized by the Pullman strike in 1894 and had turned in earnest to the problems and challenges of a political and industrial democracy. He became part of a milieu of settlement social workers for whom education offered a potential path forward, and opened his own Laboratory School in 1896. For Dewey, “education” encompassed the process of both individual and social transformation, and became foundational for his project of social reform. The occasion of this text's centennial anniversary provides an exciting opportunity to reexamine the ways this book attempted to address the challenges of democracy in his time, and, in a Deweyan spirit, think through its possible uses in our own time.

The editors of the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (Robert Johnston and Ben Johnson) are putting together a special issue dedicated to exploring these different thematic veins of Dewey's legacy, each using *Democracy & Education* as a jumping off point. We welcome contributions of short essays of 3,000-8,000 words on any aspect of *Democracy & Education*, or one the following suggested themes:

1. Democratic Theory

Democracy & Education lays out a vision of decentralized social democracy that begins in miniature in the classroom. The question of political structure and organization drove some of the defining debates of the progressive era, and are still fundamental to debates over the structure of the American educational system. What was the significance of Dewey's vision of democracy in his time? And how does Dewey's version of “democracy” stand up, one hundred years later?

2. Social and Economic Reform

For Dewey, education would spark transformation not only in the political sphere, but in the world of work. His theory of vocational education aspired to working conditions in which individuals would take part in shaping their own world. In retrospect, education as

the means of fundamental economic transformation has fallen far short of these aspirations. What does Dewey's vision of vocational education have to offer us today? Can the relationship between education and work be reimagined, and, even, changed?

3. Academia & the Public Sphere

Dewey's strain of socially and politically reformist pragmatism had a profound impact on a broad swath of the emerging social sciences in the early 20th century. However, by the mid twentieth century, they had been marginalized in many academic disciplines. Does Dewey offer a viable vision for the role of academics and intellectuals in public life today?

4. Pedagogy

To this day, unlike most nineteenth-century tracts, Dewey's "Democracy & Education" is still widely read by the audience to which it was originally addressed: educators. Today, of course, the context in which his pedagogical ideas are applied have changed dramatically. How do educators still draw upon this text? What were, and are, the limits to his educational philosophy?

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