

PRAXIS MEET

April 22, 2009

Marist Praxis Project for Public/Global Citizenship

Public Praxis website: Marist Homepage; Search: Public Praxis; click on Public Praxis

Annual Marist Praxis Project for Public Citizenship Forum, PRAXIVIST MEET, April 30, 5-6:15p, in PAR

In Brief

Mar Peter-Raoul

Welcome/framing remarks

examples of praxis pedagogy - American academe, globally, across the curriculum
open conversation

What is *praxis pedagogy*?

Characteristically, praxis pedagogy brings together a vision of democratic citizenship, course work that conscientizes, that is, makes students aware of our complex, contradictory world and how it works, pragmatic public work, sense of agency, and practicing strategic skills. It also integrates with course and public work research, analysis, critical reflection, consideration of moral and existential values, and public scholarship.

David Tracey:

[Praxis is]...the critical relationship between theory and practice whereby each is dialectically influenced and transformed by the other.

Maxine Greene:

It is...important to find a way of developing a *praxis* of educational consequences that opens the spaces necessary for the remaking of a democratic community.

Perspectives on praxis:

Dr. Bruce Luske – holistic, socio-spiritual praxis

Dr. Joseph Zeppetello – discovering praxis pedagogy

Four further qualities essential to praxis pedagogy:

- reciprocal relationships
- acting in solidarity
- inspiration
- humanizing the world

A central conversation among those engaged in praxis/citizenship work is approach – how does one meet those suffering hardship on their own turf. What is one's attitude toward those with whom one works? And the philosophical question: is theorist Paulo Freire right when he finds the vocation of human beings is to humanize the world – to make it better, more just, more human? One of the students this semester in the Public Praxis course expresses these themes in an entry in her reflective journal: Samantha Tobia

Paulo Freire:

Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization....Authentic liberation – the process of liberation...is a praxis: the action and reflection upon [the] world in order to transform it.

The spirit of praxis - innovative, pragmatic, and visionary in American academe, abroad, and across the curriculum

American academic examples of public work:

- Trinity College in Hartford, CT
- Center for Wrongful Convictions
- Rural Studio
- Defiance College
- Princeton University

Indigenous examples of praxis/public work abroad:

- Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara
- Kodaikanal Christian College, Tamil Nadu, India

Praxis across the curriculum and/or in a CORE:

- New Orleans
- SEAMS
- University of California at Monterey Bay (intentionally multicultural)
- Goucher College
- Augsburg University (www.augsburg.edu/global)

Aspirations of public citizenship/ praxis pedagogy/civic engagement

The ultimate aspiration for educating for civic purposes is two-fold: one, to educate and equip students for active public/global citizenship; two, for academe, in some measure, through ethical and responsible use of its enormous resources, to commit itself to the greater good for the neighborhood in which it resides, the larger world, and to bring students into this process. The process toward educating for engaged citizenship and social transformation include several key categories:

- Integrating public work with academic work, ideally across academic disciplines.
- Forging partnerships with the community.
- Institutionalizing civic engagement, involving all departments of the college/university, an intention often stated in institutions/ Mission/Vision statements.
- Internationalizing public citizenship, educating for *global* citizenship.
- Producing public scholarship.
- Establishing reciprocal, egalitarian relationships with those with whom one works, and with host communities abroad.
- Educating for engaged leadership, leadership “with a moral center.”
- Opening wide access to higher education.
- Recovering the spiritual/ethical/moral dimension of education, and acting on academic conscience.

Quotable Thoughts

Benjamin R. Barber:

The first aim and mission of any institution of education has to be to forge responsible, thoughtful, critical, competent citizens.

Gar Alperovitz and Ted Howard:

The goal is to train new generations of scholars and practitioners who seek to connect democratic values and theory with practice and advocacy in communities at home and abroad.

Harold Pinter:

I believe that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to find the real truth of our lives and our society is a crucial obligation which devolves upon us all, and is, in fact, mandatory.

Elie Wiesel:

What unites all of us as human beings is the aspiration to make the world better, more compassionate, with less conflict, less hate and hardship, and with more tolerance and understanding.

Jeffrey Sachs:

I have...come to understand through my scientific research and on-the-ground advisory work the awesome power in our generation's hands to end the massive suffering of the extreme poor, and thereby to make our lives safer in the process....Around the world, people are opening...to these marvelous possibilities. School children, college students, retired professionals, actors and actresses, corporations...all entering the fray.

Stephen Glazer:

Rather than learning to nurture and preserve spirit, we learn to manipulate the world: to earn, store, and protect wealth. Rather than learning to be sensitive – understand and attend to the needs of others – we learn to want, rationalize, and do for ourselves. With the rise of a kind of 'economic individualism' as our basic sense of identity, has come the centralization of wealth and power, the loss of the commons, and the ravishing of the planet. The fact is, within our schools and culture, identity is being imposed: not spiritual identity but material identity.

Michael J. Sandel:

If colleges and universities are to be something more than places that provide basic training for the world of work and consumption, they have to concern themselves with the larger moral and civic purposes....The purpose of higher education is not just to train students to enter the labor market....It is to shape citizens who can participate effectively in democratic life. That means that colleges and universities have to engage moral and civic questions as institutions, beyond the classroom (Arenson, *NYT*: 6-10-2001).

Marc Ellis:

To me it seems that the fundamental question of our lives, and perhaps of our century, is not the discovery of new knowledge or the development of new technology, but whether or not we can commit ourselves as persons and as a society to love and serve each other. Can we, amidst the ideologies and perplexities of our age, rediscover the human face and soul?

Jean-Paul Sartre

Silence is support of the existing order.

Selected Resources

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www.thebelovedcommunity.org, click on Our Projects