

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, TEACHERS  
COLLEGE SYLLABI, NO. 9. DEMOCRACY  
AND NATIONALISM IN EDUCATION;  
SYLLABUS AND READINGS FOR A COURSE  
IN HISTORY OF EDUCATION FROM THE  
FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT TIME**

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**EDWARD H. REISNER**

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*Teachers College Syllabi, No. 9*



**Teachers College  
Columbia University**

## Democracy and Nationalism in Education

Syllabus and Readings for a Course in History  
of Education from the French Revolution  
to the Present Time

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## INTRODUCTION

The growth of nations has been the conspicuous political feature of modern times, and the problems of the relation of education to this development have become obvious during the nineteenth century.

The earliest stage of political development occurred with the fixing of tribal groups in a definite habitat. The earliest form of this was the city state with its environing dependencies. These early states looked upon all other groups as hostile and unworthy of existence, except as they became subordinated. This incorporation was usually accomplished by force, which process tended to destroy the distinctive cultural features of the minor groups. In other words, the groups expanding by military power led by dynastic ability and ambition looked upon political organization as all-inclusive. With the Roman Empire this tendency became substantially a reality. With the Christianization of the Roman Empire the ecclesiastical ideal and pretention paralleled the political one and both became coterminous with civilization. This belief in the universal scope of political organization constituted in form the world's political theory long after the actual conditions were changed. The Holy Roman Empire which expressed this theory in the early modern period was only destroyed by Napoleon in 1804. The chief force in rendering this organization a mere form was that of growing nationalism.

From very early days certain groups, especially the English, had grown up in isolation. Over these the Holy Roman Empire had possessed only the most nebulous authority. From the twelfth to the sixteenth century both the English and the French groups, and to a less extent the German and Italian, through internal conflict, developed a local consciousness which more and more gave a distinctive character to each group. The original tribal groups which had entered into the composition of these dawning national groups were marked by distinct racial characteristics. Through internal conflicts, through migration, through conquest and the merging of conqueror and conquered, in time

these developing national groups came to represent the accomplished amalgamation of many tribal or racial strains. In fact, the strongest of these early nationalities, the English and French, represented the fusion of most diverse elements.

Thus early became distinct the three great factors determining modern nationalities, namely, blood relationship or race, habitat or geographical environment, and culture. Culture in this sense means common ideals, common traditions, habits and aspirations. A number of other specific characteristics are often urged as essential to nationality, such as common language, common religion, common laws, but there is no one characteristic except that of a common culture which may be posited but what exceptions may be found. The one most commonly given, that of race, cannot be accepted, for every European nation represents a great mixture, and the United States has become the greatest mixture of all. Nor, on the other hand, can such great admixture of racial groups be made an essential, for there are illustrations of the opposite as in the case of Japan. A compact habitat is a usual characteristic, but there are exceptions as in the case of Greece, now struggling for national realization, or that of the British Empire. It cannot be maintained that common language is an essential, for there is the case of Switzerland with its three languages. Common religion, for a period believed to be essential, was responsible for the many wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but strong national states have developed in spite of internal differences of religious belief. Common laws cannot be held as essential for federal states are based on the recognition of a diversity of laws.

Modern history since the fifteenth century has been essentially the story of the struggle for national realization. This long struggle has brought a growing recognition that a common culture, that composite of common habits, ideals and purposes, is the one essential characteristic of nationality. Most modern wars, especially of Europe, have been caused by the violation of this principle. This was particularly true during the nineteenth century because most international settlements, particularly those made by the Congress of Vienna in 1816 and by the Congress of Berlin in 1878, resulted in gross violations of that principle, in favor of other principles usually based on arbitrary force. In a very true sense, then, the great war is but a readjustment of



the evils produced by the imperfect and unjust settlements made at the close of the Napoleonic struggle.

From the late eighteenth century the element of common culture has become the dominating one in the conception of nationality. This has resulted in the recognition of two fundamental and correlated truths: First, common culture is a trait which transcends social, religious, and economic distinctions, and its recognition transfers the seat of national existence from dynasties or bureaucratic legal institutions supported by military force to the masses of the people. Second, the discovery was made that common culture was an artificial product and could be manufactured. The process of this manufacture is by education. From one point of view then the nineteenth century is the period of national development, working towards the democratic interpretation of the problem of nationality and using education as a means. XX

The first people consciously to apply this method of education to the determination of nationality was the German. Beginning near the middle of the eighteenth century, or even earlier, with special groups, and after 1809 very definitely for the whole group, this people before the Napoleonic wars organized into more than one hundred independent nations has gradually amalgamated into one. The limitation to this development of a German nation as we see it now is that the Germans retained along with this democratic conception of nationality the old dynastic and predatory one. The latter has now been eliminated, in part at least, and it remains to be seen what the former may accomplish.

Other European nations, more favorably situated in regard to other factors in nationality, or relying more upon the older interpretations of national strength, recognized more tardily the importance of education as a means of developing national unity and power. Even the United States has depended more on geographical environment, racial selection, political institutions and common language than upon consciously developed cultural unity. While in the early national period the importance of education to the successful workings and perpetuation of free institutions was commonly recognized, yet a wholly individualistic interpretation of education was practised. ||

Practically all modern nations are now awake to the fact that education is the most potent means in the development of the ||

essentials of nationality. Education is the means by which peoples of retarded cultures may be brought rapidly to the common level. Education is the means by which small or weak nations may become so strong through their cultural strength and achievements that their place in the political world may be made secure. Education is the means by which nations, strong in the strength of the past, may go through the perilous transition to the modern world, as has Japan and as will Russia. Education is the only means by which the world can be "made safe" for the national type of organization.

Thus the history of nationality during the nineteenth century is closely bound up with the problems of education. And, on the other hand, the education of the present may find an interpretation of all of its problems, whether of purpose, of subject-matter, of organization, or even of method in terms of nationality.

The purpose of this course is to trace the practice of leading modern nations in the use of education as a factor in developing nationality.

PAUL MONROE

# DEMOCRACY AND NATIONALISM IN EDUCATION

## SYLLABUS AND READINGS FOR A COURSE IN HISTORY OF EDUCATION FROM THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT TIME

By EDWARD H. REISNER, Ph.D.

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### I. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: ITS EDUCATIONAL PROMISE AND ACHIEVEMENT

The French Revolution (*a*) destroyed the old régime of absolute monarchy and class privilege, (*b*) announced a liberal program of democracy, (*c*) achieved much less than universal democracy, namely, middle-class participation in political life, and (*d*) consolidated national feeling in France and brought out the principle of a citizen army. In the field of education the period of the Revolution is responsible for setting forth the conception of national democratic education in such true and liberal lines that the nineteenth century realized almost entirely the radical prophecies of the late eighteenth. Owing to the power of historical forces and current political and economic instability, the educational achievement of the Revolution was much less than its promise.

1. Political and economic inequality and injustice of the period immediately preceding the Revolution.

REFERENCES: Brief accounts are to be had in the following: West,<sup>1</sup> *Modern History*, 303-323; Robinson,<sup>1</sup> *History of Western Europe*, 537-557; Robinson and Beard,<sup>1</sup> *The Development of Western Europe*, I, 203-223. More extended accounts may be found in Hayes,<sup>1</sup> *A Political and Social History of Modern Europe*, I, 395-426, 449-461; Mathews,<sup>1</sup> *The French Revolution*, 1-110; *The Cambridge Modern History*, VIII, 1-144; Lowell, *The Eve of the French Revolution*.

2. THE ESTATES GENERAL AND THE NATIONAL OR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, May 5, 1789-September 14, 1791.

(*a*) The National Assembly abolished the old system of absolute monarchy, economic restriction and class privilege and

<sup>1</sup> All later references to this work are indicated only by the name of the author.