

***Schooling and Disability: Philosophical Perspectives on a Contemporary Policy Debate***

Application for the 2018 Summer Fellowship at the National Humanities Center,

Supported by the Center for Humanities and the Public Sphere

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Abstract: (250 words)

Since the Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act (EAHCA) was passed in 1975, American public schools have been required to provide for all students a “free and appropriate education” and to identify and quantify—and accommodate in the least restrictive environment—student “disability.” While the EAHCA was decidedly prescriptive in its dispersal of federal funds, it remained virtually silent on what has become the defining and most deeply contested issue surrounding schooling and disability: how disabled children should be identified and diagnosed. Consequently, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers are left with a difficult set of questions: What is disability? Who defines it? How do schools address it? Who benefits—and who suffers—from these diagnoses and accommodations? These questions force us to examine the basic assumptions and purposes behind the contested terrain of schooling and disability in American public education.

In a manuscript jointly-authored with a historian of education from Vanderbilt, I tackle these difficult questions. The book is to be part of The University of Chicago Press’s *History and Philosophy of Education* series, which is aimed at students, practitioners, policymakers, and scholars alike. The major philosophical components of the manuscript include three chapters, addressing the vexed issue of what disability is, what justice demands for students with disabilities, and exploring the anatomy of a concept that drives debate about disability and education: inclusion. I aim to finish a chapter entitled “The Value of Inclusion” during the period of the NHC fellowship, the last of the philosophical chapters to be completed.

## Project Narrative and Work-Plan (996 words)

I respectfully apply for a fellowship at the National Humanities Center to support the completion of a manuscript tentatively titled *Schooling and Disability: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives on a Contemporary Policy Debate*. The manuscript is jointly authored by me and educational historian Dr. Catherine Gavin Loss (Vanderbilt), and is to be part of the *History and Philosophy of Education* series with the University of Chicago Press. Dr. Loss is responsible for writing a historical framework, I am writing three chapters of philosophical analysis, and we are jointly writing a concluding policy chapter. My three chapters include: What is Disability?; Educational Justice for Students with Disabilities; The Value of Inclusion. I expect the first two chapters to be completed by the end of Spring 2018, and to complete the third during the period of the fellowship. Below, I briefly describe my philosophical chapters and the significance of this project for the humanities.

A central issue in this debate concerns the nature of disability, and how it is distinct from other social categories that are relevant to education (e.g. race and gender). In “What is Disability?” I argue that, for the purpose of normatively investigating ‘special education’, a conception of disability must illuminate the *theoretical* relevance of disability to the aims of education as well as the *practical* purpose of orienting norms and policy toward educational justice. It must, for example, illuminate who counts as disabled, what entitlements attach to disability status, and how students with disabilities should be treated in the classroom, all in a way that advances justice. Thus, I argue that a conception of disability must recognize the interplay of natural and social forces in causing disability (it is best understood as a *biopsychosocial* concept), and emphasize that disability is often a matter of being different from a norm, rather than being, in an absolute sense, subnormal. In “Educational Justice”, I turn to argue that justice demands all students be exposed to a range of experiences that contribute to their flourishing as children and as the adults they will become. Educational justice requires understanding the emotional, physical, and intellectual capacities of students as it relates to their flourishing, as well as the ways in which educational interventions can modify the broader cultural environment to enhance students’ lives. The last philosophical chapter, which I expect to complete during the fellowship, addresses the implications of these arguments for understanding an idea that drives much of the ‘special education’ debate: inclusion.

The significance of this book project for the humanities is two-fold. First, the interdisciplinary collaboration between history and philosophy is unique, and I believe enhances the scholarship that can be produced on this topic. In our volume for example, Dr. Loss’s research regarding how the Disability Rights Movement arose in the civil rights era is revealing of how and why definitions of disability are encoded in current policy documents. Her historical analysis has prompted me to philosophically interrogate the so-called ‘minority model’ of disability, as well as question whether the democratic purposes of education (which often undergird rhetoric surrounding ‘special education’ debates) address educational justice for students with disabilities. I believe this type of collaboration will make our finished project compelling, relevant, and accessible, and reveal how history and philosophy offer significant tools for thinking about an important issue in American society.

Second, the ethical dimensions of current issues in ‘special education’—such as full inclusion, diagnostic “gray zones”, and the impact of the accountability movement on students with disabilities—cannot be fully analyzed without first determining the fundamental purposes and values behind educational provision. My philosophical discussion helps map the constellation of values surrounding education across students with heterogeneous capabilities and within our current context. In doing so, I draw on literatures that are often not in conversation with each other: those in the domain of philosophy of education, political and social philosophy, the philosophy of children, and disability studies. I believe the final product will be a genuinely new take on thinking about disability from the perspective of our goals regarding children’s education.

This fellowship would provide me the time I need to finish writing. Funding from the Center for Ethics & Education for Summer 2018 will enable me to pay for daytime hours of childcare to write (about 8:30-2pm), but being in residence elsewhere would allow for several extra hours per day for me to complete the project. Secondly, the residency provides an opportunity for feedback from scholars from other disciplines. The press series in which the book will appear is designed to be accessible to a wide audience, and the manuscript is thus expected to be presented in a concise and engaging format. Informally discussing the book with scholars in residence would provide valuable information on how others approach the subject matter and also what might make the subject matter come alive and hold interest.

### **Work-Plan**

#### Week One: What Does it Mean *To Belong*?

Develop the argument that the *social location* of inclusion is essential to interpreting its value. I expect to argue that different conceptions of inclusion are appropriate for its different social locations (e.g. encoded in social policy vs. in the classroom).

#### Week Two: Inclusion in Policy, Practice, and Debate

Disambiguate three ideas of inclusion that are often conflated: *mainstreaming* (students must prove they are capable of reaching ‘normal’ levels of participation/learning in order to be included in general education), *inclusion* (students have a moral right to be with their nondisabled peers) and *full inclusion* (all students always belong in a general education classroom). I want to connect these concepts to the foundational arguments developed in week one, and plan to raise criticisms of mainstreaming and full inclusion from the perspective of the flourishing aim.

#### Weeks Three and Four: Framing & Polishing

Frame and polish the arguments developed in weeks one and two, with an eye to making the material lively and accessible to a wide audience. This will involve connecting the arguments to personal stories, court cases, current debates, etc.

## JAIME LYNN AHLBERG

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### ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, University of Florida (9/2010-Present)

### AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Social and Political Philosophy, Ethical Theory

### AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

Bioethics, Philosophy of Education, Feminist Philosophy

### EDUCATION

Ph.D. Philosophy	2010	University of Wisconsin—Madison
M.A. Philosophy	2007	University of Wisconsin—Madison
B.A. Philosophy (Honors)	2002	Montana State University—Bozeman

### PUBLICATIONS

#### EDITED BOOKS

1. *Procreation, Parenthood, and Educational Rights: Ethical and Philosophical Perspectives*, co-edited with Dr. Michael Cholbi (California State Polytechnic University), (New York: Routledge, 2017).

#### ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

6. “Children of Choice and Educational Responsibility” in *Procreation, Parenthood, and Educational Rights: Ethical and Philosophical Issues* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 53-72.
5. “Nonideal Politicians or Nonideal Circumstances? Rethinking Dirty Hands” in *Ethics in Politics: The Rights and Obligations of Individual Political Agents* ed. Emily Crookston, David Killoren, and Jon Trerise (New York: Routledge, 2017), 57-74.
4. “Educational Justice in the Inclusive Classroom” in *Dilemmas in Educational Ethics: Cases and Commentaries* ed. Meira Levinson and Jacob Fay (Boston, Mass: Harvard Education Press, 2016), 49-53.
3. “Educational Justice for Students with Cognitive Disabilities” *Social Philosophy & Policy* vol. 31, iss. 1 (Fall 2014), 150-175.  
Also appears in *Education: Ideals and Practices*, ed. David Schmidtz. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 150-175.
2. “Education: Not a Real Utopian Design” with Harry Brighouse, *Politics & Society* Vol. 42 iss. 1 (March 2014), 51-72.

1. “An Argument Against Cloning” with Harry Brighouse *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* vol. 40, no. 4 (December 2010), 539-566.

#### ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRIES

1. “The Priority of the Right over the Good”, *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, ed. Jon Mandle and David Reidy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015), 648-650.

#### BOOK REVIEWS

4. *Living Well Now and in the Future: Why Sustainability Matters* by Randall Curren and Ellen Metzger in *Theory and Research in Education* (forthcoming)
3. *Beyond Equality in the American Classroom* by Eric Shyman in *Educational Theory* vol. 65 iss. 3 (June 2015), 351-357.
2. *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* by Martha Nussbaum, *Journal of Moral Philosophy* in *Journal of Moral Philosophy* vol. 10, no. 4 (2013), 552-554.
1. *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance* by John S. Dryzek, *Notre Dame Philosophical Review* (12/22/2011)

#### WORKS IN PROGRESS

2. *Schooling and Disability: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives on a Current Policy Debate*, a book project with Dr. Catherine Loss (Vanderbilt)
1. “Is Talent Natural or Social? Implications for Educational Justice”, preparing for a special issue of *Educational Philosophy and Theory*

#### AWARDS

##### SELECTED GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

5. Principle Investigator for a Research Grant supporting the book project *Schooling and Disability: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives on a Current Policy Debate*
  - Funded by The Center for Ethics & Education, Summer 2018
  - Award Total \$31,131**
4. Humanities Scholarship Enhancement Fund
  - The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, December 2017. Support for travel to collaborate with co-author on manuscript *Schooling and Disability*, Spring 2018.
  - Award Total \$2,314**
3. Principle Investigator for a conference series entitled “From Procreative Rights to Parental Responsibilities”, with Michael Cholbi (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona).
  - Funded by the Spencer Foundation (2014-2017)
  - Grant Total \$54,450**
2. Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship
  - Awarded for 2009-2010 Academic Year
  - Award Total \$20,000**

1. Singer Dissertation Scholarship
  - Philosophy Department, University of Wisconsin, Summer 2008
  - Award Total \$1,500**

#### HONORS AND RECOGNITIONS

2. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Term Professorship Award, University of Florida (2016-2019)
1. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Teacher of the Year Award, University of Florida (2016-2017)

#### TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

##### TALKS (\*=INVITED)

25. \*Panel Participant, Author Meets Critics on Melinda Hall's *The Bioethics of Enhancement: Transhumanism, Disability, and Biopolitics*
  - Florida Philosophical Association, November 2017
24. Panel Participant, Author Meets Critics on Randall Curren and Ellen Metzger's *Living Well Now and In the Future: Why Sustainability Matters* (MIT Press, 2017)
  - Philosophy of Education Society, Seattle, March 18 2017
23. "Principles and Judgment: Case-based Reasoning in Philosophy of Education", panel participant on "For Example...Reflections on the Use of Case Studies in Philosophy of Education" with Jacob Fey, Sigal Ben-Porath, Bryan Warnick, Jennifer Morton, and Ben Bindewald
  - Philosophy of Education Society, Toronto, March 19 2016
22. \*Commentary on Ann Cudd's "What's Wrong with Inequality in Access to Higher Education?"
  - A Conference in Honor of Professor Dan Hausman, University of Wisconsin, May 2015
21. \*"Sectoral Justice in Ideal and Nonideal Theory"
  - Symposium Keynote Address, University of Rochester, April 2015
20. \*"Nonideal Politicians or Nonideal Circumstances: Rethinking Dirty Hands"
  - Keynote Address for Northeast Florida Philosophy Conference, University of North Florida, March 2015
19. "Children of Choice and Educational Responsibility"
  - UF, "From Procreative Ethics to Parental Rights" February 2015
  - Florida Philosophical Association, November 2014
18. "Flourishing Amidst Dilemmas of Difference"
  - American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia PA, April 2014
17. Panel Participant, "Rights, Redistribution, and Recognition in Three Domains of Educational Justice", with Matt Ferkany, Sarah Hannan, and Paula McAvoy
  - Philosophy of Education Society, Albuquerque NM, March 2014
16. "On the Causal Origins of Special Educational Need"
  - American Philosophical Association, Chicago IL, March 2014
15. "Educational Justice for the Cognitively Disabled"

- \*“Education: Ideals and Practices” conference, sponsored by the Liberty Fund, Park City, Utah, August 2013
  - American Educational Research Association, San Francisco CA, April 2013
  - American Philosophical Association, Atlanta GA, December 2012
  - Florida Philosophical Association, November 2012
14. \*“Educational Justice and Disability”
    - Speaker for Spencer Foundation’s Philosophy of Education Summer Institute, Chicago IL, July 2013
  13. \*Discussant for “Equality of Opportunity and Education: Competing Values in Theory and Practice” (Commentary on the works of Derrick Darby, Jennifer Morton, Hugh Lazenby)
    - American Educational Research Association, San Francisco CA, April 2013
  12. Panel Participant, “Good Social Science Makes for Better Philosophy of Education: An Interdisciplinary Provocation”
    - Philosophy of Education Society, Portland OR, March 2013
  11. Commentaries for Association for Philosophy of Education, on Mike Tiboris’s “Undermatching and Personal Autonomy” and Harry Brighouse’s “Educational Goods and How to Distribute Them”
    - American Philosophical Association, New Orleans LA, February 2013
  10. \*“Seeing Justice, Seeking Justice”
    - Christian Study Center of Gainesville FL, September 2012
  9. “Real Utopias in Education”, with Harry Brighouse
    - American Sociological Association, Denver CO, August 2012
  8. “Disability in Nozick’s Utopia”
    - Florida Philosophical Association, November 2011
    - \*Florida State University, December 2011
  7. \*Commentary on Lionel McPherson’s “Righting Historical Injustice in Higher Education”
    - Spencer Foundation conference, “Achieving the Aims of Higher Education: Problems of Morality and Justice”, Northwestern University, October 2011
  6. “On the Practical Value of Ideal Theory”
    - University of North Carolina, Greensboro NC, February 2010
    - Illinois State University, Normal IL, February 2010
    - Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh PA, January 2010
  5. Commentary on Jonathan F. Garthoff, “The First Virtue and the Realistic Utopia”
    - American Philosophical Association, Chicago IL, February 2010
  4. “Educational Adequacy, Educational Equality, and Ideal Theory”
    - Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Oxford University, April 2009
  3. “Ideal and Nonideal Theory”
    - Guest Lecture, Rural Sociology Department Seminar, UW Madison, November 2008
  2. \*“On the Value of Ideal Theory”
    - The Institute of Education, University of London, June 2008
  1. “An Argument Against Cloning”
    - The Ethics of Bearing and Rearing Children, Society for Applied Philosophy Conference, University of Cape Town, May 2008

## PARTICIPATION IN WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

8. Invited (with honorarium) to participate in the UF Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere seminar *Humanities and the Sunshine State*.
  - UF, June 2017: Led students in a discussion about “Sustainability Ethics and the Importance of Water”
  - UF, June 2015: Led students in a discussion about “Diversity and Ethics”
7. Invited (with funded travel) to workshop/conferences on the *History & Philosophy of Education*, University of Chicago Press series.
  - University of Rochester, April 2015
  - NYU, March 2014
  - NYU, February 2013
6. Invited (with funded travel and honorarium) as a participant in the conference, “Education, Liberty, and the State: The Evolution of American Public Education”
  - The Liberty Fund, Scottsdale Arizona, January 2014
5. Invited (with funded travel and honorarium) as a faculty speaker and mentor for Spencer Foundation’s “Philosophy Camp”, Chicago IL, Summer 2013 and Winter 2014
4. Invited (with funded travel) as a participant in the conference, “Virtue (Moral and Epistemic): Can we be Taught to Act and Believe Wisely?”
  - Stanford University, October 2012
3. Invited (with funded travel and honorarium) as a discussant in a Spencer Foundation conference on the purposes and justifications of the Pell Grant program.
  - Spencer Foundation (Chicago, IL), April 2012.
2. Scholarship to attend Justice & Educational Distribution conference at Stanford University
  - School of Education, Stanford University, September 2008
1. Invitation to Attend “Applied Philosophy as Common Ground” Conference
  - Society for Applied Philosophy, Princeton University, October 2007



## Support & Funding Received for this Project

1. Funded travel to workshops with other philosophers and historians part of the *History & Philosophy of Education* series with the University of Chicago Press.

In a series of three separate workshops, the series co-editors (Jon Zimmerman and Randall Curren) gathered authors to discuss the University of Chicago's goals for the series, introduce authors to each other, and to solicit feedback from the group on draft work.

2. The Center for Ethics & Education, Research Grant

The Center awarded me **\$31,131** for (1) 2018 summer salary replacement and (2) travel to collaborate with my co-author during the summer of 2018. These funds will support my participation in the residency program in two ways. First, they will cover travel expenses to and from North Carolina, as well as any additional expenses incurred while in residency there. Second, they will enable me to pay for daily childcare during the period of the residency.

Information about the Center for Ethics & Education, affiliated with the University of Illinois, Chicago and the University of Wisconsin, can be found here:  
<http://ethicsandeducation.wceruw.org/>

3. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences UF, Humanities Scholarship Enhancement Fund

CLAS awarded me **\$2,314** for the purposes of travel to collaborate with my co-author at Vanderbilt, in Nashville TN during the spring of 2018. Travel is expected April, 2018.