

EDCP Lecture Series 2014-2015

International Perspectives on Curriculum and Pedagogy

hosted by William E. Doll, Jr., Donna Trueit, William Pinar

The power of negative thinking in and for teacher education

Dr. Anne Phelan, Professor, EDCP

January 9th | 12:30-2:00pm | Scarfe room 310

A light lunch will be served at noon outside **Scarfe 310** | The lecture commences at 12:30 pm

In an anxious world increasingly perceived in terms of risk management, strategies for mapping and articulating knowledge provide a bulwark against uncertainty. In teacher education, a consequence has been a drive for fullness in relation to knowledge about what teachers should know and be able to do, usually conceived in instrumental terms. Indeed, teacher education, like education more broadly, has been captured by a ‘discursive duopoly’ of *instrumentalism*, involving the pervasive view that the main purpose of education is to serve the needs of the economy, and *consensualism*, involving the valorization of agreement regarding this purpose. One way to understand this dynamic in teacher education is in terms of positivity and negativity, whereby the positive refers to social structures,

institutions and policies – best practice or teaching standards – that have become reified, while the negative is that which unsettles and disrupts the comfortable stance of the given order of things. Negativity, as a political practice that engages with the positive to reveal the historical and contingent nature of all knowledge, thus offers new conceptual resources, such as *dissensus* and *impotentiality*, for imagining alternative scenarios for teacher education beyond the confines of current policies.

Anne Phelan is a Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on the intellectual and political freedom of teachers and on the creation of teacher education programs and policies that support that end.

