

EDCP Lecture Series 2013-2014

Ethical Engagements with Alterity hosted by William E. Doll, Jr. | Donna Trueit | William Pinar



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Arendt's Political Ethics and the Question of Totalitarianism

Hannah Spector, Pennsylvania State University

March 14th | 12:30-2:00pm | Scarfe 1107

Note: A light lunch will be served at noon in [Scarfe 1223](#)
The lecture commences at 12:30 pm in [Scarfe 1107](#)

This paper considers the ways in which Hannah Arendt's writings on totalitarianism acts as a warning sign for current political and miseducational circumstances in the United States. Because the term totalitarianism has been used imprudently (largely in the mass media) to express repressive conditions in so-called models of democracy, this paper seeks to both clarify and raise questions concerning its meaning as a form of nation-state sanctioned power and/or economic-technological force. This analysis draws largely from Arendt's definition of totalitarianism expressed as an antipolitical phenomenon characterized by terror-ruled ideological indoctrination which

destroys both the public realm and private identities. I contend that analyses of twentieth century totalitarianism are significant to today's unprecedented questions and circumstances germinating in and having significance beyond the United States. I also describe the difficulty of action under extreme conditions. In the last analysis, I deliberate on the site of education as a totalitarian coercion.

Hannah Spector is an Assistant Professor of Education at Pennsylvania State University, Capital College. She teaches courses in curriculum foundations and social and cultural factors in education. Drawing largely from the writings of Hannah Arendt, her primary research interest involves the interplay between politics, ethics, and education.



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