



SEMINAR SERIES 2017-2018

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY

UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY
IN A TURBULENT NEO-LIBERALIST WORLD

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

CRITICAL DIALOGUES SEMINAR SERIES

Co-sponsored by the **Michael Cromer Memorial Fund**

"You Can't Say That: Teachers and Controversial Issues in American Schools"

Jonathan Zimmerman | Professor, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Guest Host | Peter Seixas

▶ **January 26** | Scarfe 310 | 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

In 2003, during a fifth-grade current-events lesson about the United States' newly begun war in Iraq, a student asked Indiana teacher Deborah Mayer if she had ever attended an anti-war protest. Mayer told the class that she had driven by such a protest a few days earlier, and had honked her horn in support. Her school board declined to renew Mayer's contract, noting that she had deviated from the board's approved curriculum. And four years later, a federal appeals court upheld the board's decision on similar grounds.

Across the country, Mayer's defenders decried the apparent assault on her "academic freedom." But K-12 teachers in America have never enjoyed such freedom in a manner that university academicians would recognize. During wartime especially, school boards and courts have discouraged or blocked teachers from engaging their students in an open, critical dialogue about controversial ethical and political issues. Zimmerman's talk will explore these restrictions, the fate of the teachers who broached them, and the implications of this history for contemporary democracy.

Jonathan Zimmerman is a professor of education and history at the University of Pennsylvania. A former Peace Corps volunteer and high school teacher, Zimmerman is the author of *The Case for Contention: Teaching Controversial Issues in American Schools* and six other books. Zimmerman is also a frequent contributor to the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and other popular newspapers and magazines. Before coming to Penn in 2016 Zimmerman taught for 20 years at New York University, where he received NYU's Distinguished Teaching Award in 2008.

* Light refreshments will be served at 12:00 p.m. | Lecture will commence at 12:30 p.m.

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