Doug Peers: Thanks, Jasmine. I'd like to welcome everybody here to the first in what I'm hoping will be an annual event, as we celebrate true interdisciplinary engaged scholarship, where we bring together students from across the campus, tackling the kinds of questions that universities really ought to be addressing. And I look forward over the next couple of years to exploring other themes. You'll be hearing more about those in due course.

Doug Peers: Today, however, I want to turn over things as quickly as possible to the people who actually made this possible. We have our guest speaker, and we have the students themselves. Again, I'm encouraging everybody here to join us in meeting with the students and learning what they've discovered on the topic of global populism and democratic futures.

Doug Peers: But first of all, before doing anything else I'd like to acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territories of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations, and includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

Doug Peers: Though my great pleasure to introduce Eve Beauchamp, who is the Director of the Jarislowsky Foundation, and she will introduce today's keynote speaker. Eve?

Eve Beauchamp: Thank you, Bonjour. It is with great pleasure that we introduce to you the 2018 Jarislowsky Fellow, Dr. Henry Giroux. In addition to selecting the readings with Doctor Habib, he led 90-minute sessions on a weekly basis for the first half of the course, thus providing valuable mentorship to the students in the Global Engagement Seminar. His expertise and activism have been a great source of inspirations for the students' projects, which you will be able to engage with later this afternoon.

Eve Beauchamp: Dr. Giroux currently also the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department and the Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar Professorship in Critical Pedagogy. His research and activism focuses on new critical pedagogy, democratic theory, public education, communication theory, social theory, and the politics of higher education.

Eve Beauchamp: He has published more than 400 scholarly articles, and most recent books include Youth in Revolt: Reclaiming a Democratic Future, America's Educational Deficit in the War on Youth, Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education, The Violence of Organized Forgetting, Nature's Thinking in the Age of the New Authoritarianism, America's Addiction to Terrorism, America at War with Itself, and his latest, The Public in Peril: Trump and the Menace of American Authoritarianism.

Eve Beauchamp: In 2002, he was named as one of the top 50 educational thinkers of the modern period in *Fifty Modern Thinkers on Education: From Piaget to the Present* as part of Routledge’s Key Guides Publication Series In 2007, he was named by the *Toronto Star* as one of the “12 Canadians Changing the Way We Think.”

Eve Beauchamp: The mission of the Jarislowsky Foundation is to promote and enhance excellence, and we want the Canadian universities to be able to attract the best professors. This is best for the students. Another thing we feel is very important is for students to get the best mentorship, and I think Dr. Giroux is the first Jarislowsky Fellow. It's [French 00:05:34], from what I gather from everyone. So, Dr. Giroux.

Henry Giroux: First, I just want to say thank you for coming. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to be part of this project. I want to say thanks to the students, who are just wonderful. I saw some of them earlier. We have been dealing in virtual space. To think that we actually have bodies, that we're able to talk to each other and see each other is wonderful. I want to thank Jasmine. I want to think Benny for the help that you gave for the course. And I want to say that there's something about bringing students together from different disciplines to be able to speak to each other in ways that suggest that they're not fearful of crossing borders. That's really exhilarating, and it seems to me is on the cutting edge of what it means to be thinking in the 21st century, at a time when everything sort of bleeds into each other. So I'm grateful for having had the opportunity to do that.

Henry Giroux: I'm going to talk today about somebody who's really in the news: Donald Trump. I'm going to talk basically about the U.S., because I think there's something going on in the United States that we all need to be aware of. That is, what we're seeing is the rise of a kind of authoritarianism that's home-baked, but in many ways is not unrelated to the rise of fascism across the globe, or what some people call the rise of illiberal democracies. I think this is particularly important, because it seems to me that one of the ways in which we can fight this, and one of the ways in which we can understand the conditions for its emergence is recognizing something that Dewey said a long time, and that is, without informed citizenships, without an informed public, you don't have a democracy.

Henry Giroux: Education, in this sense, actually becomes central to politics. It's not simply about schooling. It's about something else, about the shaping of consciousness, about the production of narratives. It's about the struggle over agency. It's about what it means in some way to invest in a world in which you can imagine a future is very different than the present. With that said, let me begin.

Henry Giroux: As authoritarianism gains in strength in the United States under the administration of Donald Trump, words that speak to the truth and hold power accountable are in retreat, as lies become normalized and the relationship between truth and the citizen is treated either with disdain or simply ignored. In the current political administration, an ever deepening ignorance and blind loyalty are what defines community. Rather than being ashamed of this plunge into the fog of misrepresentation and illiteracy, the Trump administration parades it as a mark of pride, and uses it as a weapon to argue that those who rely on arguments and evidence are critically suspects, and apostles of fake news.

Henry Giroux: Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" translates not only into "Make America White Again," but also points to the need to normalize ignorance. Pressed into the service of violence, language in this administration is vomited out in waves of hate, racism, insults, and cruelty. As a result, language is used increasingly by Trump and his allies to erode and undermine the possibility of reason, informed judgment, and what it means to be ethically and politically responsible in the face of the unimaginable and the unspeakable, whether we're talking about the plundering of the earth by major corporations, the government assault on undocumented workers, the attacks on women's reproductive rights, or a telling silence on the part of the government with respect to the increase in the ranks of neo-Nazis, members of the Ku Klux Klan, and the alt-right, all of whom applaud the Trump administration's turn to nativism, apocalyptic populism, and white nationalism.

Henry Giroux: Trump's brand of authoritarianism has emerged at a time when there is an ever abundance of information coupled with the rise of a new digital and visual media whose cognitive models reinforce the assumption that reality be echoed, rather than interrogated and critically comprehended. Reality TV and celebrity culture are the new modes of popular education and mass communication, which when coupled with a society addicted to speed, overstimulation, and unchecked self-interest, create a powerful mode of pedagogy that not only blurs the line between reality and entertainment, fact and fiction, but also between good and evil.

Henry Giroux: The power of language is now measured against its ability to move crowds, vanquish thought, and flee into a Twittering cacophony of one-liners and promotional announcement. Words can't wait for thoughts. As such, the relationship between literacy and agency is undermined. This is not only a formula for the death of those public spheres that make democracy possible. It's also a condition for the growth of authoritarianism. [Hanna Horan 00:11:12] was right in insisting that the loss of historical memory and the rise of thoughtlessness is fundamental to the politics of demagogues and totalitarian societies.

Henry Giroux: The democratization of information has given way to the democratization of disinformation as disimagination machines proliferate and corporate-controlled cultural apparatuses colonize the media and political landscapes. One consequence is that historical memory is not only vanishing in a culture of our media's sensationalism in a post-truth era. It's also being rewritten in school textbooks so as to eliminate dangerous memories and align the past with narratives that reinforce anti-democratic ideologies and social relations.

Henry Giroux: You know all the story, particularly in the United States, where there's an enormous amount of censorship going on increasingly, particularly around the history of minority groups. In Arizona, they banned, for instance, a whole range of courses, arguing that these courses basically promote racism because people are studying oppositional histories. In Florida, when Jeb Bush was the governor, they actually passed a law claiming that history, that social studies teachers could not teach interpretation in teaching history. They had to just teach the facts. Poor Jeb, obviously a victim of the same pedagogy.

Henry Giroux: In the current historical moment, memory has no place in the dark cave of civic depravity, a space where freedom in the service of justice is abandoned in an educational ecosystem where nothing is true, and the basis for criticizing power collapses under the spectacle of presidential bomb throwing-like tweets, endless spectacles of diversion, and high-level stretches of newspeak blather. At a time when political extremists and warmongers have moved from the margins of politics to the center of power, a culture of fear and cruelty becomes the essence of politics, reinforced by the denigration and erasure of any viable notion of morality and personal and social responsibility.

Henry Giroux: As notions of social justice and political visions fall prey to the celebration of unchecked self-interest, greed is elevated to national virtue, along with a survival of the fittest ethos. In the age of fake news, everything that matters withers, and institutions and public spheres that were meant to address crucial social issues and problems begin to vanish.

Henry Giroux: This is especially dangerous at a time in which education has become central to politics, especially in a digital age in which there's an overabundance of information and a proliferation of media-based platforms. In the age of Trump, education has lost its alleged role in cultivating a critical citizenry capable of participating in and shaping a democratic society.

Henry Giroux: Lost also is an educational vision that takes people beyond the world of common sense, functions as a form of provocation, teaches them to be creative, exposes individuals to a variety of great traditions, and creates the pedagogical conditions for individuals to expand the range of human possibilities. Under the influence of corporate power and a growing authoritarianism in the United States, education in multiple informal and formal platforms operates increasingly in the service of lies, racism, unadulterated market values, and a full-fledged assault on critical consciousness and public values. Under such circumstances, democracy is cast as the enemy of freedom, and politics turns dark.

Henry Giroux: These anti-democratic tendencies are evident in ways in which neo-liberalism, since the 1980s, has reshaped formal education at all levels into a site of training, inundating market values, and imposing commercial relations as a template for governing all of social life. Every idea, value, social relation, institution, and form of knowledge runs the risk of being economized, turned either into a commodity, a brand, or a source of profits.

Henry Giroux: Increasingly aligned with market politics, public and higher education are mostly primed for teaching business principles and corporate values, while university administrators are prized as CEOs or bureaucrats in what I call an audit culture. In addition, students are viewed as clients and customers, while faculty are treated like servile workers.

Henry Giroux: Education in the United States is especially under assault with the appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education, one of the most hated cabinet ministers in history, actually, whose mind is completely unburdened by a complicated thought. DeVos hates all things public and believes that beyond privatizing education, her role, quote, "is to advance God's kingdom to the school system." You can't make this up.

Henry Giroux: Under the Trump administration, the role of education is a tool of management, conformity, and repression, and has been intensified and is legitimated at the highest levels of government, operating in the service of a strictly instrumental rationality that erodes the boundaries between economic and politics. Education is promoted to enable a culture of racial exclusion and further a politics of repression. In doing so, it accelerates a modern day pandemic of fear, anxiety, anger, and despair.

Henry Giroux: I mean, think about all the dreamers, 800,000 kids, now many of them adults, who all of a sudden find themselves in the country they've lived in all their lives, who are being told that at any day, ICE, the immigration police can show up, basically rip them from their families, and send them off to a land that they don't know. It's beyond cruel, actually.

Henry Giroux: At the level of higher education, it seems to me that students are not only inundated with competitive privatized and market-driven values, they're also punished by those values in the form of exorbitant tuition rates, astronomical debts owed to banks and other financial institutions, and in too many cases, of course, lack of meaningful employment once they graduate. Moreover, as the ranks of faculty are reduced to part-time positions, they're subjected to low wages, loss of control over the conditions of their labor, loss of benefits, and anxious about addressing social issues critically in their classrooms for fear of losing jobs.

Henry Giroux: There's often this question of how faculty don't stand up enough. In the United States, 70% of all faculty are on temporary positions. It seems to me that to imagine that you could say something in your classroom that at any day would mean all of a sudden you wouldn't have a contract ... You've lost your job. You've lost your benefits. You lost your wages. It's chilling.

Henry Giroux: In the broader society, the educational force of the [inaudible 00:19:03] culture functions to a range of cultural apparatuses, extending from the mainstream and conservative media to digital and online platforms that largely operate in the service of a corporate-controlled media sphere that has become, as Mort Rosenblum calls, a cesspool of misleading babble. In addition, Trump has managed to shape the cultural landscape in ways that have unleashed what I term as a poisonous public pedagogy of sensationalism, easy consumption, bigotry, fear, and distraction, all the while Trump fills the Twitter world with an ongoing bombast of emotional drivel.

Henry Giroux: Domestic terrorism, defined in part as acts designed by the state to intimidate or coerce a population, now operates unapologetically at the highest levels of power as Trump rails against undocumented immigrants, advises police officers to "rough up" people they're arresting, and relentlessly cultivates fear and contempt among white citizens against immigrants, indigenous people of color, who are placed on the other side of the law.

Henry Giroux: In addition, Trump undermines the rule of law by attacking the courts and other legal institutions if they don't pander to his policies. Moreover, his notion of and implementation of law and order is highly selective, depending upon who is the perpetrator of the alleged crime, or who is considered a friend or enemy. If it's undocumented, or, (quote) "illegals," or anyone else in his target audience of criminals, Trump argues they should be roughed up by the police and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. But if it's a friend, such as Rob Porter, a former White House senior aide charged with abuse by both of his ex-wives, such accusations are simply dismissed by Trump. And I won't even talk about Sheriff Arpaio from Arizona. If you know about him and what he did, forcing inmates to wear pink underwear, giving them peanut butter sandwiches every day, and making them sleep in tents ... You probably know that of course Trump just pardoned him, because he was now being investigated by the Justice Department.

Henry Giroux: Trump has ushered in a world of tyranny, misery, and oppression, with his endless lies, spectacles, impetuous outbursts, insults, corruption, hucksters, and ethical bankruptcy. The Washington Post recently reported that at the end of one year, they counted 2,000 lies. I forget how many it was a minute. Kind of breaking a record for lying. Lying has like, wow ... become fashionable in the Trump administration. Can I lie 10 times in one day? Who's going to lie more?

Henry Giroux: Without some allegiance to evidence-based arguments, informed judgments, and reason, politics and the public spheres that supported democracy are empty of any substantive meaning, and feed an anti-democratic populist revolt that favors authoritarianism over democracy. Every economic policy, [inaudible 00:22:15] and the rage of white nationalism are now braided together in a kind of racialized [inaudible 00:22:23] of logic, where the implicit promise promises to whites to make America white again.

Henry Giroux: Americans live in [inaudible 00:22:34] times, a time in which the fight for justice has given way at the highest echelons of power to the legitimation of injustice. How else to explain Trump's claim that there were very fine people on both sides, when referring to the deadly violence perpetrated in Charlottesville, Virginia by white nationalist neo-Nazis and members of the Ku Klux Klan on one hand, and those contesting such hatred on the other? Trump's suggestion that there was a moral equivalency between neo-Nazis and those protesting their hate-filled ideology is another example of Trump's backing, if not endorsement, of the ideology of white supremacy and white nationalism.

Henry Giroux: Trump's endless tweet storms advocating various registers of apocalyptic populism is also testimony to Pierre Bourdieu's insistence that the most important forms of domination are not only economic, but also intellectual and pedagogical, and lie on the side of belief and persuasion. In this instance, the pedagogical call to think, inspire, and energize, has been replaced by a discourse in pedagogical practices designed to misdirect rage, get in the ethical imagination, and encourage the collective fog of unchecked nihilism, racial purity, and a kind of depoliticizing privatism.

Henry Giroux: Trump's pedagogy is largely fashioned through his use of social media, his support by conservative television outlets such as Fox News and the Sinclair Broadcast Group, along with the aggressive support of extreme talk radio, all of which function as thinly-veiled propaganda and disimagination machines. Trumps unrelenting pedagogical shocks to the body politics and civic culture have done more than lower the bar of civic discourse in the ruse of governing. They normalize the unimaginable.

Henry Giroux: I think it's fair to argue that a nightmarish vision of an impending American-style authoritarianism is no longer the product of dystopian fiction found in the work of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Margaret Atwood, Ray Bradbury, and others. Under the regime of Trump, the language of newspeak has been normalized, functions through multiple platforms, and has morphed into a giant poisonous machinery of propaganda, violence, bigotry, hatred, and the celebration of war.

Henry Giroux: The latter is clearly visible in Trump's language and politics, which in its various forms has a low threshold for demonization, deportation, imprisonment, and savage hardships, especially for Muslims, undocumented immigrants, and African Americans. As Trump's White House works hard to eliminate expressions of discontent, resistance, and popular democratic struggle, the criminogenic machinery of power is on full display in the wider culture. Unapologetic forms of bigotry and racism in the growing tactics of a police state undermine the democratic mission of educational institutions in an age of increasing tyranny.

Henry Giroux: Under such circumstances, the modern loss of faith in the merging of education and democracy needs to be reclaimed. That will only happen if the long legacy of struggle over education is once again brought to life as part of a more comprehensive understanding of education being central to politics itself. Such a task is particularly urgent as the United States descends into the abyss of authoritarianism under Trump. What forces have allowed education to be undermined as a democratic public sphere capable of producing the formative culture and critical citizens that could have prevented such a catastrophe from happening in an alleged democracy? We get a glimpse of the failure of civic literacy, education, and public values in the willingness and success of the Trump administration to empty language of any meaning, a practice that constitutes a flight from historical memory, ethics, justice, and social responsibility.

Henry Giroux: What we are now witnessing is not simply a political project, but a reworking of the very meaning of education both as an institution and as a cultural force. As ignorance becomes one of the primary organizing principles of American society, all traces of critical thought migrate to the margins of culture. For instance, 2/3 of the American public believe that creationism should be taught in schools. 20% believe that an alien life form has abducted a friend or family members of theirs [inaudible 00:27:51]. I mean, wow. "Have you seen your friend? Yeah, they got abducted last week in front of Shoppers World." A majority of Republicans in congress believe that climate change is a hoax. And 51% of Republicans believe that Barack Obama was born in Kenya. This stuff is, again, hard to make up. It makes the U.S. the object of ridicule, and in many ways, the laughingstock of the globe.

Henry Giroux: Politicians endlessly lie, knowing that the public is addicted to exultation, emotional outbursts, and sensationalism, all of which mimics the crassness of a culture in crisis. Image selling now entails lying or principle, making it easier for politics to dissolve into entertainment, pathology, and a unique brand of criminality. Any assertion of expertise or professional knowledge is increasingly viewed with skepticism, even disdain, as people turn to self-help therapies, internet drivel, and the manufactured [inaudible 00:29:01] produced in celebrity culture.

Henry Giroux: Education has defaulted on its willingness to create critical citizens for the functioning of a democratic public sphere. In the more generalist sense, education is now viewed either as a form of mass entertainment, training, or a line to market values and dominated by the imperatives of commercial exchange. Defunded and corporatized, many institutions of higher education have been all too willing to make the culture of business the business of education, and the transformation as corrupted their mission. As I mentioned earlier, many colleges and universities have been McDonaldized, as knowledge is increasingly viewed as a commodity, resulting in a curriculum that resembles a fast food menu. In addition, faculty is subjected increasingly to a Walmart model of labor relations, designed, as my friend Noam Chomsky points out, to reduce labor costs, and to increase labor servility. Students, again, fare no better, and are now relegated to the status of customers and clients.

Henry Giroux: On a larger scale, the educational force of the wider culture has been transformed into a spectacle of violence, trivialized entertainment, entertainment, and a tool for legitimating ignorance, not always, but certainly that's the way the intensification seems to be moving. As education becomes central to the political project [inaudible 00:30:28] politics itself, it removes democratic values and compassion for the other from the ideology, policies, and institutions that now control American society. Across the United States the landscape and the mission of education is changing so as to adopt with greater intensity the mission of business schools. This was made clear by Pat McCrory, the former governor of North Carolina, who argued in a barely veiled warning to faculty that higher education needed to adopt a brand that fits (quote) "the ever-changing competitive environment of the 21st century, while producing subjects employers need."

Henry Giroux: Other threats to higher education come from conservative think tanks, far right-wing groups, and right-wing pundits who are monitoring faculty syllabi, calling for universities that teach simply the great books model of humanities, and urging legislators in administrations to eliminate tenure and academic institutes that address major social issues such as poverty, voter registration. In some places alt-right and neo-Nazi groups are issuing death threats against faculty who speak out against racism and volatile social issues. Many of these policies are either reminiscent of the tactics used by fascist groups in Nazi Germany and Chile under Pinochet, or mimic a script right out of the Ayn Rand neo-liberal playbook.

Henry Giroux: One example of the latter is on full display in the comments of John Allison, the former president of the Cato Institute, who once insisted that the only educational programs that should be funded are those that retake the university of statist, collectivist ideas in order to align them with an ideology that educates students about the virtues of capitalism, which, as he puts without irony, "are clearly in our shareholders' long-term interest." [inaudible 00:32:34] Thank you, John. I've been looking for that quote for a long time.

Henry Giroux: The attack on the democratic mission of education is not new to the United States, but I believe that what has developed in the age of Trump is an accelerated attack on all public spheres, especially those whose function is to create what we might call an informed and critical citizenry. Under Trump and the Trump regime, there's been an intensity and acceleration of this kind of attack. Public servants are held in contempt, and the notion of the common good is viewed as incompatible with the needs of finance capital. As the social welfare state is dismantled, and the punishing state expands while the state is reduced to serving the interests of the financial and banking elite, language itself is commodified, as words such as "love," "trust," "freedom," "responsibility," and "choice" have been deformed by a market logic that narrows their meaning either to a commercial relationship or to a reductive getting ahead.

Henry Giroux: Do you remember the scene recently in the news when Trump was meeting with a group of students who had been part of the shooting in Parkland, Florida, and somebody had put a series of notes on a piece of paper that sounded as if they were drawn up by somebody in kindergarten? Like, "Are you feeling angry? What is your emotions like?" It sort of in some way captures the inability, even at the crudest level, to imagine the language of empathy, at the crudest level, to step outside of a kind of commodified, commercialized, demonized, objectivized language and be able to relate to somebody's experience in a way that you can actually inhabit that experience in order to understand it, in a way that could jolt your consciousness so that you could step outside of the sphere of common sense, that allows you once again not to operate simply from a circle of certainty or a circle of indifference. That's not Trump.

Henry Giroux: Instead of loving the courage, compassion, and desiring a more just society, we embrace a society saturated in commercial relations, confined to the principles of market fundamentalism. Freedom now means removing oneself from a sense of social responsibility so that one can retreat into the privatized orbits of self-indulgence and unbridled self-interest. It's too easy in the age of Trump to forget Martin Luther King Jr.'s insistence that freedom cannot be reduced to the freedom from outside interference, but it must be viewed as the freedom to intervene in the world in order to embrace the principle that, to quote him, "that an injustice anywhere is a threat to injustice everywhere," and that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must always be demanded by the oppressed.

Henry Giroux: Democracy is now plagued by the acceleration of a more toxic form of illiteracy, one that is more than the absence of learning, ideas, or knowledge. On the contrary, it's a willful practice, and its goal is used to actively depoliticize people and make them complicit with the forces that impose misery and suffering upon their lives. What are we to make of Trump's bold claim that he loves the poorly educated? What are we to make of Trump's praise of Alex Jones, a conspiracy trafficker who runs the website Infowars and believes that September 11th was an inside job, and that the massacre of children at Sandy Hook was fake? Why was there no populist revolt by his supporters for his endorsement of failed Alabama senate candidate Roy Moore, who had eight allegations of child molestation, and assault, and inappropriate sexual behavior waged against him? How will you explain the silence, if not support, of Trump or Trump's followers in the face of a right-wing press that spreads insane conspiracy theories such as the reprehensible claim that David Hogg, a student and journalist at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School is a crisis actor rather than a witness to a mass shooting where 14 students and three staff people who were killed?

Henry Giroux: The Republican party and the United States is now led by ideological extremists. In fact, the face of that extremism was on full display recently when Arthur Jones, a Holocaust denier and formal leader of the American Nazi Party won the Republican nomination for the third congressional district seat in Illinois. The drumbeat of fascism is no longer a mere echo of the past.

Henry Giroux: What happens to a democracy when the president of the United States labels the critical media outlets as enemies of the people, and derides the search for truth by endlessly tweeting misrepresentations? What happens when the American public forgets that the last time the critical media was termed as a threat and enemy of the United States, it was a charge made by hardcore racial segregationists during the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s? What happens to a democracy when individuals and groups are demonized on the basis of their religion? What happens to a society when critical thinking and facts become objects of contempt, and a disdain in favor of raw emotion, or undermined by an appeal to what [inaudible 00:39:01] counselor to the president, Kelly Conway, calls alternative facts? What happens when a social order treats millions of illegal immigrants as disposable, political terrorists, and criminals? What happens is that democracy withers and dies, both as an ideal and as a reality.

Henry Giroux: One of the challenges facing the current generation of educators, students, and others, is the need to address the question of what education should accomplish in a society at an historical moment, when it's slipping into the dark night of authoritarianism. What work do educators have to do to create the economic, political, and ethical conditions necessary to endow young people and the general public with the capacities to think, question, doubt, imagine the unimaginable, and defend education as a central for inspiring and energizing the citizens necessary for the existence of a robust and substantive democracy? In a world in which there is an increasing abandonment of egalitarian and democratic impulses, what will it take to educate young people and the broader polity to challenge authority and to hold power accountable?

Henry Giroux: This is a particularly important issue at a time when higher education in the United States and other countries are being defunded, and students are being punished with higher tuition hikes and crippling financial debts while being subjected to oppressive educational reforms pushed by right-wing billionaires and hedge fund managers. Given the crisis of education, agency, and memory that haunts the current historical conjuncture, educators need a new language for addressing the changing context and issues facing a world in which there is unprecedented convergence of resources, financial, political, cultural, economic, scientific, military, and technological, increasingly used to promote, it seems to me, what we might call new and more expansive and oppressive forms of domination. Such a language needs to be self-reflective and directive without being dogmatic, and needs to recognize that pedagogy is always political, because it always presupposes a vision of the future, legitimizes specific forms of knowledge, values, and social relationships, and in doing so, produces particular forms of agency.

Henry Giroux: There's a difference between education, it seems to me, that's politicized, which actually imposes an agenda on students, that doesn't allow students to be able to narrate themselves, that refuses dialogue, that basically is critical of the very notion of what it means to be self-reflective in an education that's political, an education that teaches students about power, an education that helps them recognize that to be voiceless is to be powerless, an education that is linked to the practice of freedom and justice, an education that in its most profound way inspires, energizes, undoes what we call common sense, and allows us to think in ways that we ordinarily wouldn't do when we first came to that class or that theater or watched that program. Education should be provocative. It should move you. It should inspire you. It should energize you. It should make you different in a way that allows you to be more self-reflective about the capacities you have as an agent to change the world. That's what education should do.

Henry Giroux: At the heart of such a practice is the need to ask: What is the role of education in its various forms in a democracy? What does it mean for teachers to become public intellectuals? What does it mean to break down the jargon without giving up the theoretical rigor? What does it mean to be able to write in a way that's rigorous and accessible at the same time? What does it mean to be able to work in a specialism, but to recognize that that specialism is not all there is? What does it mean for educators to be able to defend their own labor, their own work experience at a time when the university is under massive assault by the right wing? If we can't even defend the conditions of our labor as intellectuals, nevermind whether we're political, nevermind whether we want to justify the university as a democratic public sphere or as simply a conveyor line, a workstation for the corporation ... "You can't justify what you do. Then maybe you don't deserve your job."

Henry Giroux: Why is it the right is always right there with all kinds of assumptions about what the university should do? It seems to me that in this need to sort of rethink the language of education, there's a need to rethink the role of, to say the very least, to rethink the role of intellectuals, to rethink what they can do, and what they can do to once again gain control over the conditions of their own labor. They can't do that without students. They can't do that without aligning with a larger social movement. They can't do it without a politics that is not fragmented. They can't do it without a politics that's comprehensive while at the same time recognizing and legitimating an extension of oppressive identities that give us a fuller understanding of what domination looks like. It's not one or the other. You can't be stuck in a silo or stuck in a totality without bringing them together.

Henry Giroux: The real challenge, it seems to me ... I'm from an older generation. I was born just after Lincoln died. But the intellectuals that I grew up with, people like Stan Hieronymus, Herbert Marcuse, these are people who thought in terms of totalities. These were people who didn't deal and stay in isolated issues. You couldn't talk about education without talking about the role of corporations. You couldn't talk about people being poor without in some way flipping the script and saying, "Hey, look, this is not just a privatized issue."

Henry Giroux: The greatest threat that neo-liberalism produces in the United States and elsewhere is to lead people to believe that they cannot translate private issues into public considerations. It's the individualization of the social that's become a poison, because it depoliticizes people. It leads people to believe that these problems that they're facing are their problems alone. They're responsible. "If you're homeless, it's because you wanted to be. You like the scenery." "If it's poor, it's because you love junk food." "If you basically are uneducated, it's because you just really revel in being ignorant." How many times do we have to hear this to actually understand that it's not just simply a way of insulting people, it's a way of depoliticizing them.

Henry Giroux: What happens when the private becomes all there is? What happens when the only realm in which we can relate to each other is by elevating the notion of self-interest to the highest possible ideal? What happens when we don't have a language for democracy or community or social relations anymore? What takes its place? What happens when the wall becomes the center of public life? What happens when politicians no longer respond to the public good in and are completely bought off by the lobbyists? There was a study that came out I believe out of Princeton five or six years ago. They looked at all the policies in the U.S. that had gone on for the last 35 years. 95% of them had nothing to do whatsoever with the interests of most people in the United States. 95%. All bought and sold by the lobbyists.

Henry Giroux: I think I want to end with a couple of things. I want to quote the great Czech dissident, Václav Havel, who once said that politics follows culture. What he was trying to say was that politics is inextricably connected to how individual and social consciousness is shaped. Experiences are narrated, investments are organized, so as to speak convincingly to people's needs, anxieties, and hopes, and that in this mix of power, culture, and everyday life, there's an imposition of new demands that make for those of us who want to breathe life and hope back into the future.

Henry Giroux: In relation to breathing life back into the future, I don't see how one could end a talk without in some way talking about the young people who came out of the Parkland massacre, who were able to seize a notion of consciousness that adults had given up on for the last 50 years it seems, who were all of a sudden able in the face of unimaginable violence not only speak with courage, not only speak the truth to power, so to speak, but also be able to organize collectively in a way in which they produced what in fact was a demonstration that has all the seeds of a possible movement in which young people in 800 cities across the globe mobilized and for the first time silenced the NRA. The NRA, an institution that has blood on its hands because it prioritizes gun violence and the selling of guns over children's lives. It doesn't get worse than that. It doesn't get worse than that kind of morality.

Henry Giroux: It seems to me that I want to end by saying that we may live in the shadow of the authoritarian state, but the future is still open, and the recognition that education is a civil issue, civil rights issue is still alive. Once again, democracy should be a way of thinking about education, one that thrives on connecting equity to excellence, learning to ethics, and agency to the imperatives of social responsibility and the public good. Under the Trump administration, critical modes of education are under siege, and the discourses or hate, racism, and greed are in full bloom. Democracy is on life support. But rather than being a rationale for cynicism, it should create moral and political outrage, a new understanding of politics and a struggle for the educational social formations needed to allow democracy to breathe once again.

Henry Giroux: I want to end with the words of my late friend, the great historian Howard Zinn, who stated, "The lesson is that you must not despair, that if you are right and persist, things will change." Or to put it another way, learn how to make the unimaginable imaginable. Learn how to think otherwise in order to act otherwise. Thank you.

Jasmin Habib: Thank you, Henry. Henry's agreed to take a few questions. We have a few minutes before he will be spending time with our students, so if you have any questions ...

Henry Giroux: Yes?

Audience: You alluded to ... over the past however many decades ... to the new liberal transformation of what education means, and it's really ironic you say that in this city, because Waterloo essentially funnels engineers, mathematicians, software engineers ... technical experts into industry. I am someone who is two weeks away from finishing my undergrad, so within my peers and my cohort I see this heavy level of disillusionment with education essentially. You said that education should be the undoing of common sense, but it seems like here there's more of this kind of sense that we come here to learn what common sense is, and these common senses are usually market values. So how do we, as people who are on the cusp of finishing our education, going to reconcile ourselves with what our education has been, and how do we engage with the public in that sense?

Henry Giroux: I think that's such a terrific question, so brave. Good for you. [crosstalk 00:51:58] Good for you. I think there are a couple of issues. I don't think education is just about what you learn. I also think it's about what you need to unlearn. I think one of the things that we need to take away from the educations that we often get, it's not just simply a dismissal of what we've learned, but how we can use what we've learned in a way that actually undo the conditions that promoted the kind of stuff that you're talking about, the kind of learning that might be rote, that's not linked to ethical and social considerations, on that doesn't imagine a future in which the skills that you have and what you've learned can be used to promote what we might say is some element of the common good.

Henry Giroux: The other side of this is we have to be careful. I often find myself with students and others ... and it's not something I didn't do today, but I think that there's a script that somehow sometimes suggests that power [inaudible 00:52:49] on the side of domination, and it's not. Power is also on the side of justice. It's on the side of resistance. It's on the side of inquiry. It's on the side of self-reflection. The institutions in which we find ourselves are never simply dominated by, are never simply citadels of uncensured power. There's also spaces in those institutions where enormously important things go on. They may not be the dominant moments, but they're there. So we have to see these institutions as sites of struggle, and not just simply write them off.

Henry Giroux: I have students who are right to say, "Higher education is like a prison." Well, where does that leave us? I mean, those of us who work in these institutions, are we the inmates or the guards? I'm not quite sure that those analogies are helpful, because I don't think they capture the complexity, or they capture the goodwill, or they capture the radical intentions of many people who work in these institutions and have to bear the weight of that stuff, but are not invisible to it, nor are they compliant with it.

Audience: I have a question here.

Henry Giroux: Yeah.

Audience: I agree with all [inaudible 00:54:01] ... The ideal democracy is to be much more participatory.

Henry Giroux: Is much more what?

Audience: [inaudible 00:54:08] to be more participatory, and this goes back to the kind of culture we were witnessing [inaudible 00:54:12] and so on, the student uprisings [inaudible 00:54:16].

Henry Giroux: Speak up. I can't hear you.

Audience: [inaudible 00:54:20] students movement and counterculture movement. But also, I think it needs to be based on new values that please both critics and [inaudible 00:54:35].

Henry Giroux: That do what?

Audience: That please both critics of capitalism and capitalism itself. Now one example, for example ... One example would be to take the accounting system and the externalities, and make them more a form of [inaudible 00:54:55] ... and this would be a gradual process [inaudible 00:54:57] of the value system of accounting, and that way, there would be a greater knowledge of the effects of economic activities. But right now, there's all sorts of corporations that are successful, but they're having a lot of horrendous effects on society that are unaccounted for. I think that those who want to be involved in the totality of things, especially improving capitalism, needs to take views or thoughts like that more into consideration-

Henry Giroux: I don't think there's any issue ... [inaudible 00:55:36] educating capitalists, corporations, [inaudible 00:55:40] of which ... to the kind of poisonous consequences that they implement when they divorce economic activity from social costs. That's a given. I think it needs to be addressed. I think you're right.

Henry Giroux: As far as democracy being participatory, I have no argument with that. I've been writing about that for 30 years. I do think we need to make a distinction between the call for radical politics and reformist politics. I, for one, want to appear on the side of radical politics, because I don't believe that capitalism and democracy are the same thing. That doesn't mean that I don't want to educate people about what that means. Now they want to engage in discussions about what it means. But I for one, I find this stage of capitalism so poisonous, so overwhelmingly destructive-

Audience: So reinvent it.

Henry Giroux: This is not an argument for reinventing capitalism. It's an argument for reinventing democratic socialism. Sorry, that's a very different argument. I'm not interested in reinventing capitalism. I'm interested in socialism. I'm interested in a system that in some fundamental way addresses the basic needs of people as being more important than the profits and the self-interest of a particular 1%. Yes?

Audience: Thank you for sharing your outrage. I have a question. This has emerged from some today around the post-truth, fake news issue, which is the argument that in some ways the kind of postmodern, post-structural, French theorists kind of [inaudible 00:57:13] '60s, that that sort of shift that we went through in that intellectualism has in some way laid the groundwork for this unabashed form of post-truth era. I wonder what your thoughts are-

Henry Giroux: My thoughts are that Trump was reading Derrida in the '60s, and as a result of that he ended up being a fascist. I think it's an empty argument. I don't think the deconstructionists or the postmodernists were really saying that everything was relatively stupid. I think what they were saying was that, "Look, critique matters, and we have to be serious about it." I think that there are always distortions of any theoretical movement, and I think in some cases some people, particularly journalists, saw it as a kind of massively bad ... act of bad faith in relativism. I never read it that way. I never thought it was political enough, and this is the American version. But certainly Derrida and Foucault and a whole range of theorists [inaudible 00:58:14], to say that they were not political, to say that they did not have a project, to say that they were not interested in critiquing the interests of justice is just nonsense. I mean, it's nonsense.

Henry Giroux: I think this has to be ... to give you a more specific and simple answer ... This is the alt-right sort of Rush Limbaugh version of intellectual pursuits. We all [inaudible 00:58:36] relativism. We all read the gibberish. They're ensconced in jargon. And intellectuals are really pinheads who have no understanding of the world. That's part of that domain. That's how I read that argument.

Henry Giroux: Yes?

Audience: I couldn't agree with you more on everything you said, but I wonder how do you avoid the temptation of demonizing the alt-right? Won't we need to reach out?

Henry Giroux: I think it's a terrific question. Let me see if I can make a distinction. I don't think we should shame any person. I think shaming doesn't work. I think we need to engage in dialogue with people about what they believe in and try to figure out how it can be addressed. What I think we can demonize are ideologies that are exclusively on the side of hate, and I think that's different. I think there are lots of people in the ... No, I can't say this [inaudible 00:59:35].

Henry Giroux: I'm sure there are young people fascinated by this appeal to masculinity, hyper-masculinity, fascinated by the appeal to community that they feel they lost, people who somehow believe that their rage has been so misdirected that they see in the alt-right a way to build a community that preserves the only thing they have left, which is a sense of white and masculine identity. I think those people are absolutely worth talking to. No question. That's an educational political project.

Henry Giroux: I'm sorry if I've not said enough about that, but I really think that there's a lot of shaming out there on the part of the left, you know, the basket of deplorables and all this crap. That doesn't go anywhere. It doesn't help us in any way, because it puts us in the worst of binaries. "We're on the side of the angels and you're on the side of the devils." I think that once you inhabit those binaries, you inhabit a kind of fundamentalism that cuts across ideologies, left and right.

Jasmin Habib: There's two questions, Henry, right here, and one in back.

Henry Giroux: Yes.

Audience: You talked earlier, mentioned how [inaudible 01:00:51] the sum of a struggle between kind of the past [inaudible 01:00:57]. I see the species of the educator and the-

Henry Giroux: The species?

Audience: [inaudible 01:01:05], but then the Genus of the university institution and the capitalists [inaudible 01:01:12] into that institution as making it really impossible to work, or very low gain through those [inaudible 01:01:21] forces that are [inaudible 01:01:23]-

Henry Giroux: You know, look-

Audience: So, so-

Henry Giroux: Sorry.

Audience: My question is, since the axes of political things like capitalist, socialist are just transforming so quickly and are just not even applicable for the [inaudible 01:01:36], and at the same time-

Henry Giroux: Come on. Come on. Come on. I'm not going to live 50 years, you are! I'm not worried [inaudible 01:01:45]

Audience: [inaudible 01:01:46] the technology, what do we do as students to actually influence those institutions to think differently about what they're trying to maximize?

Henry Giroux: No, no, it's a fabulous ... I mean, to talk about the past in the way that I have is not to suggest you lock yourself into a past in a way that suggests it's a kind of religion. It's to ask yourself: What is it about historical memory that's relevant, and then expand the possibilities in your sense of agency with others?

Audience: [inaudible 01:02:14]

Henry Giroux: With others that won't allow you to reproduce the future as the present? That's the key. But I think the most serious part of that question for me is, the future of democracy and social justice is in the hands of [inaudible 01:02:32]. Your generation has to address this in a way that my generation has failed to do. I think that we're seeing models of it emerge not just in the Black Lives Matter movement among Black youth, but among the Parkland students, among the students who are organizing in multiple ways and on very specific issues.

Henry Giroux: The great challenge is to collectivize, to organize, to mobilize, and to cross borders. This has to be an international movement. Remember, something distinctive is happening in the world today that's unlike the 19th century, and that is power is separated from politics. Power is global, politics is local, meaning that the decisions that get things done, I mean on a global level, what needs to be done ... The questions about what needs to be done are made at the level of the nation state. So you have a completely different understanding of politics in terms of how [inaudible 01:03:32] on a completely different map to how politics is emerging. So if we can't cross borders, if we can't work internationally, if we can't learn from other groups, if we can't create pressure that basically is global and not just national, we're done. It's over.

Henry Giroux: The problems that we're facing, whether we're talking about the possibility of nuclear war, or we're talking about global plundering ... Viruses won't carry passports. Cape Town is running out of water. You think that's far away, that that's not a problem that we need to think about here? That problem is going to affect massive migrations in many parts of the world. These are interrelated problems. That's why the [inaudible 01:04:19] is so important. Notice the emphasis on "global." So the great challenge for your generation is to mobilize, organize, talk to other students, be agents, be as political as you can in the best sense, don't be orthodox, and join with other movements across the globe.

Jasmin Habib: One last question.

Henry Giroux: Yes?

Jasmin Habib: In the corner.

Audience: [inaudible 01:04:41] with the numbers you mentioned about 95% of [inaudible 01:04:44] running for congress in the last 30 years not having any connection with society. It seems like that social issues and the government are not connected. I'm just wondering if there's any movement in the U.S. that is addressing this, social movements.

Henry Giroux: Bernie Sanders addresses it. The Occupy movement attempted at some level to address it. I think that Black youth are attempting it. Because what these groups are now doing, what they're making clear is you can't talk about these social political issues without talking about inequality. You can't do it. Economic power translates into political power. We know that.

Henry Giroux: Look. Think about it. Six people in the world own as much as half the world. Look it up. You have computers. Look it up. In the United States, 400 families own as much as half the wealth in the United States. I'm mean, this is unacceptable because ... Think about the Koch brothers. They make a million dollars, if I remember correctly, on their dividends an hour. More than I make. A million dollars an hour. What do you do with that money? You pump it into right-wing causes. You buy off politicians. You create propaganda campaigns that say that fossil fuels are really clean. You invent words like "clean coal." Thank you.

Jasmin Habib: Thank you, Henry, and thank you for all of the time that you've spent with our students throughout the term. For those of you who have just come in, Henry's part of the Global Engagement Program, and all of our students are sitting over there, all of the students have now some projects that they've developed throughout the term. There are exhibits that are now in play and being exhibited in the school, and there's also going to be a panel discussion at 3:00 called #feminism, which we encourage you all to participate in.

Jasmin Habib: We could not have asked for a better fellow to begin the inaugural program for Global Engagement. I can't imagine having a better partner to work with in the classroom, and outside of the classroom, he helped me to develop a set of readings, and he was always there for our students. The first half of the class was done virtually, but you would never have known it. You've now been introduced to Henry. For those of you who didn't know him before, he is larger than life. He came screaming through the screening for us every single week.

Jasmin Habib: The students engaged with him every single week. The questions were fabulous, as he will [inaudible 01:07:35] share with you. But I think for the students it was also a wonderful opportunity, and now all of you have had an opportunity to get a sense of what happened every week for six weeks with Henry. So thank you very much for your time. Thank you for coming in today to spend some time with us. And thanks, all of you, for coming out for the lunch lecture, and please join us for the exhibits through the afternoon. Thanks very much.