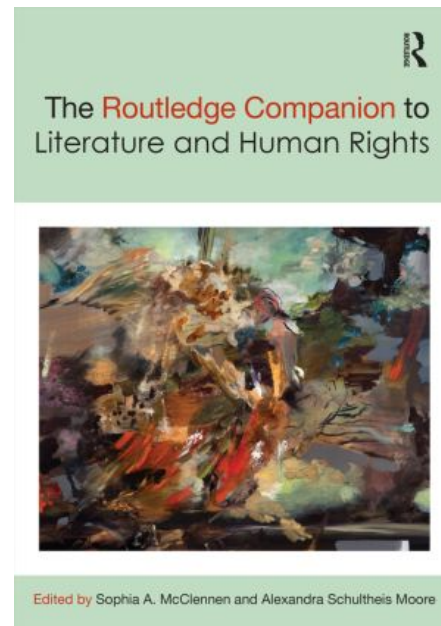
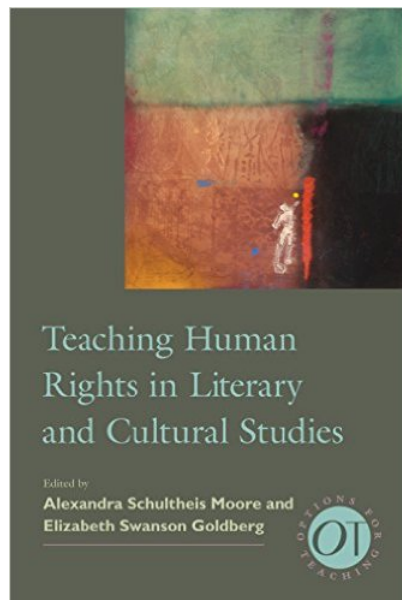


# RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

## News for Educational Workers

by Leonard Vogt



### Two New Anthologies on Teaching Human Rights and Literature

*Teaching Human Rights in Literary and Cultural Studies*, edited by Alexandra Schultheis Moore and Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, in the Approached to Teaching Series, published in October 2015 by the Modern Language Association.

*Teaching Human Rights in Literary and Cultural Studies* is a sourcebook of inventive approaches and good practices for teachers who want to make human rights the

focus of their courses. Writers give consideration to specific rights violations, for example, storytelling and *testimonio* in Latin America or poetry created in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide. Other essays deepen students' understanding of the stakes and artistic dimensions of human rights representations. The final section is on resources listing readings in history, criticism, theory, and literary and visual studies, and a chronology of human rights legal documents. Included in the list of contributors is Marjorie Agosin, Sophia A. McClennen, Greg A. Mullins, and Belinda Walzer.

*The Routledge Companion to Literature and Human Rights*, edited by Sophia A. McClennen and Alexandra

Schultheis Moore, in the Routledge Companion Series, published in 2016.

*The Routledge Companion to Literature and Human Rights* is a collection of 47 articles by writers, many of whom hold joint academic appointments in literature and another field such as Law, Anthropology, Life Narratives, International Affairs, or Science and Technology, and an important introduction by Sophia A. McClennen and Alexandra Schultheis Moore. Among the primary aims of this volume are 1) "to make the interdisciplinary field of human rights and literature and culture accessible to nonexperts by providing chapters that survey its core concepts, introduce major themes and issues, provide historical background, and outline a range of central contexts and literary works"; 2) "to expand the idea of human rights literature to include texts that have often been excluded from the literary such as legal texts, performances, visual culture, social media, and human rights reports"; and 3) "to denote human rights literature not as a set of texts, but as the outcome of a reading practice that focuses on the interplay of literary representation and juridical-political rights work."

The introduction discusses the historical linking of literature and human rights from Amnesty International winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 and President Jimmy Carter's focusing on human rights in his 1977 inaugural address to the UN setting up ad hoc criminal courts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s to try people convicted of violating human rights, followed by the attacks on September 11, 2001 that opened up a discussion both for the advancement and assault on human rights, an example being President George W. Bush speaking of defending the rights of Afghan women while ordering the destruction of the Afghan state.

The *Companion* is organized in four sections loosely following the journalistic questions of "who," "what," "where," "when," and "how." Part One focuses on Subjects or the "who" of human rights and "investigate[s] the circumstances of the person, the development of the concept of the rights-bearing person, and the messy question of who counts as a bearer of rights and by whom"; Part Two takes up the "what" and the "how" of human rights by examining the *forms* of human rights expression; Part Three includes the variable *contexts* of human rights advocacy, discourses, and violations, in other words focusing on the "where" and "when"; finally Part Four focuses on the *impacts* of human rights and literature, incorporating questions of intention (why) with those of influence and power.

Among the many authors included in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Human Rights* are Donna C. Stanton, Greg A. Mullins, Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, Peter Hitchcock, Joseph R. Slaughter, David Palumbo-Liu, Barbara Harlow, Ban Wang, Hanna Musiol, Arturo Arias, Luz Angelica Kirschner, Belinda Walzer, and Makau Mutua.

## Racism on Campus

Colleges are once again becoming civil rights battlegrounds. In November 2015, protests by mostly

African American students at the University of Missouri forced both the college president Tim Wolfe and the chancellor R. Bowen Loftin to resign. This effort was aided by the football players who vowed to boycott games and other team activities (DemocracyNow, November 10, 2015). The Legion of Black Collegians and a supporting alliance of students including members of the football team made a number of demands prior to Wolfe's resignation: comprehensive racial awareness and inclusion curriculum throughout all campus departments; an increase by the academic year 2017-2018 of black faculty and staff campus-wide to 10 %; a 10 year plan to increase retention rates for marginalized students; increased funding and resources for the Counseling Center for the purpose of hiring additional health professionals, particularly those of color; increased funding, resources, and personnel for the social justice centers on campus (portside.org, November 10, 2015).

Following the University of Missouri's example, students on more than 100 campuses rallied against institutional racism under the banner of #StudentBlackOut and #BlackOnCampus: Columbia University, Smith College, Ithaca College, University of Kansas, Yale University and Princeton University ("Black Students Storm the Ivory Tower," *In These Times*, January 2016).



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI LOGO

Faculty have been most supportive of their students' efforts to achieve greater campus racial equality. At Brandeis University, the African and Afro-American Studies faculty, along with other faculty, joined the student protest and held up signs saying, "We love you" and "We are listening" (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 19, 2015). Faculty at Princeton University wrote a letter in support of the students: "As Princeton faculty, we write in support of our students who have occupied the President's office and those supporting them across campus. . . . students of color, particularly black students, all too often find themselves on the margins of this University. . . . So,

they are voicing their frustration and have presented demands to the leadership of our community. They have done so with passion and intelligence and we support them (portside.org, December 2, 2015). The Princeton faculty also supported the students' objections to the racist legacy of Woodrow Wilson and his connection to Princeton (for a brief history of this legacy, see *The Nation*, December 14, 2015).

## Legacy of Arne Duncan

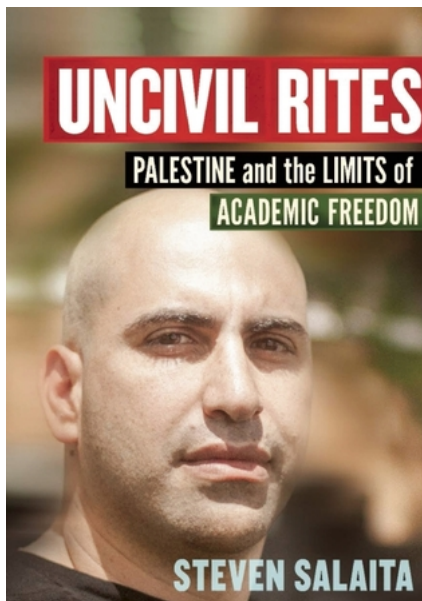
U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan resigned at the end of 2015 but left a legacy (educationopportunitynetwork.org) many educators are unhappy with:

- He made the public school system a money-making opportunity
- His market-based reform vision produced mass school closures and a proliferation of standardized testing
- Schools now spend considerably more hours and money drilling students in test preparation
- Under his watch, the gulf between what poor and rich school districts offer their students has not closed
- A push for charter schools that has ended in a scandal of wasted and unaccounted for money

## Charter Schools

The Center for Media and Democracy reports that over the past 20 years the federal government has given over \$3.3 billion to the charter school industry with virtually no accountability. Charter schools are now being called a "Black Box" because so much of this federal money is being seen as going into a "Black Hole." Millions of these federal grant dollars have gone to charter schools that were closed after brief periods or, in some cases, never opened at all. Yet, Arne Duncan continued to award money to charter schools, with more than 500 new charters opened during Duncan's last year as Secretary of Education in 2014-2015 (Education Opportunity Network).

*In These Times* (November 6, 2015) conducted a three month investigation of the all-charter school system in New Orleans 10 year after Hurricane Katrina and declared it a failure. The investigation interviewed residents, students, parents, and teachers, finding severe cracks in the charter school reform "success"



Adapted from his new book, *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom* (Haymarket), Steven Salaita, fired from a tenured position at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, writes in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 15, 2015) about his firing and the debate it sparked about academic freedom, the Israel-Palestine conflict, faculty governance, and the role of social media in university life.

At the Palestine Technical University in the West Bank, the Israeli occupying army has built a firing range on campus. In a six-week period of student demonstrations against the range, 350 Palestinian students have been injured by the Israeli army. injured by the Israeli army. ([www.middleeastmonitor.com](http://www.middleeastmonitor.com))

narrative.

## Student Protest

In November of 2015 the Million Student March swept over 120 college campuses, with the three demands of tuition-free public universities, a cancellation of student debt, and a \$15 an hour minimum wage for campus workers (portside.org, October 31 and November 13, 2015).

"The Right to Free College" (*In These Times*, January 2016) describes the history of free college and university education in the United States, the erosion of it in the 1970s and 1980s, and the international student protest against tuition increases in such countries as Canada and Chile.

In response to the 16 bullets that hit Laquan McDonald a year ago, students at the Urban Prep Charter Academy in Chicago yelled "Sixteen shots! Sixteen shots! Sixteen shots!" during a school visit by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, prompting the mayor to abruptly leave the assembly hall (DemocracyNow, December 17, 2015).

International student protest included Ethiopia and South Africa. During a crackdown on students in Ethiopia protesting a government plan to expand the campus and cause evictions of farmers, at least five students were killed, according to the government, but as many as 30 according to student organizers (DemocracyNow, December 15, 2015). Students across many campuses in South Africa rallied in October of 2015 against tuition increases. In response to these widening protests and thousands of students who streamed into Pretoria to protest both on campus and outside his office, President Jacob G. Zuma agreed to freeze tuition fees at South Africa's public universities (portside.org, October 24, 2015).

## Israel and Education

The Independent Jewish Voices of Canada announced that a group of students at the University of Waterloo submitted a petition with over 1000 signatures to the university's Federation of Students calling on them to hold a referendum asking the undergraduates to support severing ties with Israeli academic institutions which violate Palestinians' human rights (madmimi.com, December 5, 2015).

More than 500 anthropologists have publicly joined an academic boycott of Israel. Signatories oppose "the ongoing Israeli violations of Palestinian rights, including the Israeli military occupation of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem" and are boycotting "Israeli academic institutions that are complicit in these violations" (*Haaretz*, October 5, 2014).

## Policing Education

The November 2015 video showing the brutalization of a South Carolina high school student by a sheriff's deputy assigned to the school has brought up the question of why there are police officers in classrooms in the first place. The last 20 years has seen an explosive increase in the number of police stationed in schools. As of now, an estimated 17,000 officers are assigned to schools and 28% of all schools have assigned officers. To read the history and background of this most dramatic expansion of police power in the country, read "Policing Education" (*The Nation*, November 23/30, 2015).

## Corporate Education

The Washington D.C.-based Council of the Great City School recently conducted a comprehensive two-year study on the types, uses, and frequency of D.C.'s standardized tests (in 2014 in D.C., students sat for 6,750 tests, with the average American student taking approximately 112 tests between pre-K and twelve grade). The study found that the tests are redundant, "do not tell us everything that's important about a child" and are being used "for purposes for which they were not designed" (*Jacobin*, October 28, 2015).

A new report from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities exposed the massive underfunding that most states continue to inflict on public schools, the ways in which political leaders justify this underfunding, and the long lasting effects on poor, marginalized students (Education Opportunity Network, December 19, 2015).

Charles Koch gave \$90 million to influence higher education in the South. Western Carolina University in North Carolina recently approved an academic center funded by the Charles Koch Foundation, which funds "academic programs, professorships, scholarships, conferences, lecture series and economic centers" for the purpose of promoting the free-market Koch Brothers agenda (portside.org, December 5, 2015; [www.southerstudies.org](http://www.southerstudies.org), December 12, 2015).

## Resources

The Center for Study of Working Class Life is holding its "How Class Works—2016" Conference at State University of New York at Stony Brook from June 9-11, 2016. Some of the conference themes will be: the mosaic of class, race, and gender; class, power, and social structure; class, community, and the environment; class, public policy, and electoral politics; and class and culture. For more information on the conference, contact [michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu](mailto:michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu).

*Commie Camp* is a documentary about the legendary Camp Kinderland summer camp for children.

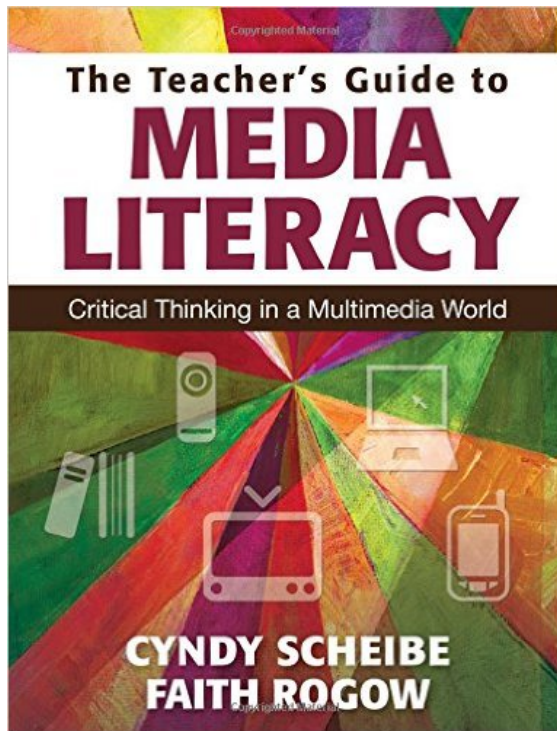


*Just Eat It: A Food Waste Story* (Bullfrog Films) shows how about 50% of America's food ends in the trash, and this in a nation where 1 in every 10 people does not have enough to eat.



*Freeway Flyer* is a film about college adjunct teachers and can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hsMUuEpx00>.

Project Look Sharp is offering new online resources for *The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy: Critical Thinking in a Multimedia World*. Seven complete lesson plans plus 139 lesson ideas use media literacy to teach in a wide range of curriculum areas. For more information, email [looksharp@ithaca.edu](mailto:looksharp@ithaca.edu).



## The People's Movement for Human Rights Learning

**PDHRE**, the People's Movement for Human Rights Learning, formerly The People's Decade for Human Rights Education, is an independent, international, non-profit organization promoting and providing learning about

human rights relevant to people's daily lives at all levels of society that leads to action. PDHRE was established in 1988 in an effort to respond to the unmet need for Human Rights Learning at the grassroots level. Since then, PDHRE has conducted and/or facilitated Human Rights Learning and training in communities in more than 60 countries, and produced a range of written and audio-visual pedagogical materials to support learning and dialogue for socio-economic transformation. PDHRE is convinced that imposed ignorance is a human rights violation and learning about human rights as a way of life is an imperative for meaningful human, social and economic development. There is no other way to break thought the vicious cycle of humiliation.

To achieve this vision, and mission PDHRE is facilitating the development of Human Rights Cities around the world where communities learn to use the holistic framework of human rights to re-imagine and reconstruct the lives of all women, men, youth and children—joining in societal development—belonging in community in dignity with others. [www.pdhre.org/](http://www.pdhre.org/)

*Is there a news item, call for papers, upcoming conference, resource, teaching tool, or other information related to progressive education that you would like to share with other Radical Teacher readers? Conference announcements and calls for papers should be at least six months ahead of date. Items, which will be used as found appropriate by Radical Teacher, cannot be returned. Send hard copy to Leonard Vogt, Department of English, LaGuardia Community College (CUNY), 31-10 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, New York 11101—or email items to [lvogt@nyc.rr.com](mailto:lvogt@nyc.rr.com).*



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