About Percy Hughes

Percy Hughes was an influential figure in Lehigh's transition from a technical institution with strong religious roots to a modern, secular, multidisciplinary university with a commitment to social justice. His career at Lehigh spanned 35 years (1907-1942) and sowed the seeds for many major developments that took place during and beyond his lifetime. His most direct legacy was dividing the Department of Philosophy, Education, and Psychology into separate departments; the Department of Education eventually became the College of Education. He is also notable for advocating coeducation at Lehigh and for hiring the first female professor to teach at Lehigh. Indirectly, his impact can be observed in myriad ways, from the emphasis on student mentorship to the celebration of students' critical inquiry and scholarship to programs for improving the quality of teaching at Lehigh.

In his personal scholarship, Hughes' early career focused on psychology. His later publications turned to his true love, philosophy. (Upon dividing the departments, he became chair of the Philosophy Department and the university hired a new faculty member to chair the Education Department.) While he held strong ideas about curriculum and instruction, his publications in education appear to be limited to essays on sports.

Hughes is probably best understood as a spirit of the Progressive Era: passionate, intelligent, committed to service, and convinced that individuals can improve social systems and thereby benefit all of society.

More detailed information about Hughes is presented below in excerpts from two Lehigh-affiliated sources.

Biographical information from the Special Collections page at
http://www.lehigh.edu/library/speccoll/percy_hughes.html

> Percy Hughes (1872-1952) was born in Peshawar, British India to Anglican missionary parents. He then was taken to London, England at the age of three where he went to Christ's Hospital School, known as the Blue Coat School and in 1888 with his family came to New York City where his father became an Episcopal clergyman. In New York City, he worked as a clerk and attended Teachers College at Columbia University. He left Columbia University to complete his senior year at Alfred College and to accompany his sister who was already in there. After earning his A.B. from Alfred College, the President of the college asked him to teach a course in Philosophy there. He then went back to Columbia University, studied under John Dewey and earned his MA and Ph.D. there. From then on, Hughes and John Dewey became lifelong friends.
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> In 1907, Hughes came to Lehigh University as an assistant professor of Philosophy, Education and Psychology. In 1909 he became full professor. From 1909 to 1942 to his retirement, Hughes periodically was in charge of education – both extension and summer session courses – and taught psychology and philosophy, and became the Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology and Education and then the Clara H. Stewardson Professor of Philosophy. He published numerous works on Philosophy, Psychology, Education and Sports education, and was involved in extracurricular activities and sport, especially soccer. Hughes played an instrumental

role in shaping the College of Education: first as a department, then a School, and finally, since 1985, one of the University's four Colleges.

From Brehm & Silova, 2010 (http://www.willbrehm.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Brehm-Silova_Hughes_Essay.pdf), initiatives that Hughes championed while at Lehigh

Reforming Curriculum

Percy Hughes came to Lehigh at first witnessing and observing, trying to understand the culture and practices at Lehigh. What he witnessed was a school dominated by lectures, absent regular faculty office hours, and an overall feeling that students must adapt to a professor's teaching method or else teach himself the material. Hughes, armed with notions of child-centered learning, wanted to reform this culture by building a new community around scholarship and intellectual curiosity not stymied by faculty but embraced through student-professor collaboration.

Hughes' eagerness to reform curriculum at Lehigh became evident in faculty meetings. Once he voiced his opinion, debate typically broke out. It is common to read in the faculty minutes comments like "great debate ensued" after Hughes had made a suggestion. His proposals were, in fact, paradigm shifting for many of the established disciplines and norms at Lehigh. In 1924, for example, Hughes together with Professors Hall and Luch, criticized the new metallurgy curriculum for its "lack of sufficient cultural subjects" (faculty minutes, 5 May 1924). He even challenged lectures as the preferred style of teaching. In his first register announcement, Hughes stated how his classes would function differently: "all courses, he said, in this department are conducted through recitation, and require a term paper prepared in collaboration with the instructor" (Hughes, n.d.). He then added how his teaching style differed from other courses as "a departure from the former method of lecturing, with its trend towards sermonizing, in favor of a method that requires students to express and defend their own opinions and to face new problems with the use of their own resources."

Hughes' curricula critiques did not only center on the sciences and engineering disciplines. He criticized the humanities as well. "It seems axiomatic that in the English department, at least, and in modern languages the written exercises should not only be returned marked, but also be again returned by the student to the instructor, corrected by him." Adding, "Here seems to be a point where insistence upon something thoroughly done is more important than two or three things not quite done" (archive box, 111.01.09).

Hughes' critical inquiry of pedagogy in all fields upset the status quo at the University. This left Hughes at times with few friends and rarely voted onto various academic committees. In 1938, after many years unelected to the Faculty Education Club—the standing faculty committee he formed as the only faculty member then trained in education—he was asked to rejoin the committee. The first topic of discussion for the November meeting, to the dislike of many who voted him off the committee years past

but in typical *Hughesian* fashion, was entitled "improving the engineering curriculum." This moment is representative of Hughes's time at Lehigh: he never stopped asking how education can be improved for all students—regardless of the opinions of administrators or other faculty members.

Proposing co-education

Co-education became one of Percy Hughes' most important initiatives throughout his tenure at Lehigh University. Historically, calls for co-education in American were heard as early as the pre-Civil War years. Oberlin College first admitted women in 1837, and at the 1856 Women's Rights Convention, Lucy Stone stated the demand women would make for the next century:

> Our demand that Harvard and Yale colleges should admit women, though not yet yielded, only waits for a little more time. And while they wait, numerous petty 'female colleges' have sprung into being, indicative of the justice of our claim that a college education should be granted to women. Not one of these female colleges . . . meets the demands of the age, and so will eventually perish (Cited in Rosenberg, 1988).

These "female colleges" did not perish, however, and economics and tradition became the two largest hurdles preventing nation-wide co-education. If a school was financially sound with only male education, then there existed a lack of economic incentive to admit women. Many schools which suffered economic troubles, particularly in the South after the Civil War, admitted women much earlier than schools with little or no financial issues, mainly private, northern schools. Additionally, if a school had traditions and legacies of male education like that of Harvard and Yale (and Lehigh), then it became even harder to heed the call for co-education. As result, female attendance in college only equaled that of men's enrollment in the 1980s.

Despite this troubling history of co-education, there were individuals who worked tirelessly to fight the status quo at private schools in the North—the exact schools isolated from the pressure to support co-education by having both tradition and economic privilege. Hughes was one individual who fought for equity despite the hurdles. He learned the value of co-education from his suffrage-fighting mother in the late 1800s and from the historical legacies of Christ's Hospital, which opened a co-educational school in 1552. [3] Hughes, nonetheless, issued a resolution in 1918 for Lehigh to become coeducational, almost 60 years before the University widely adopted the practice. After consulting John Dewey on the matter, Hughes received a reply from him that emphasized how women actually improve the standards of male education (dated 11 February 1918). Hughes' proposal for co-education at Lehigh University, however, was denied outright.

Hughes did not stop there. He brought Dr. Clara Harrison Town to teach psychology during summer sessions, becoming the first woman to teach on campus, and created extension courses and summer sessions where women were allowed to enroll. By

September of 1918, a resolution from President Drinker, inspired by Hughes, reached the faculty: "that the degrees of M.A. and M.S. be granted to women on the same conditions as in the case of men, provided that no permission be thereby extended to women to attend undergraduate courses in the University other than extension courses." It was a compromise most likely to appease Hughes' persistence.

But for Hughes that was not enough. In 1925, the committee for Summer Sessions, which Hughes headed, recommended a teacher training program for both men and women. "That to further the success of such a program a certificate be issuable to both men and women students, for two years work" (faculty minutes, 23 February 1925). This proposal, eventually approved, was a way to give proper training to teachers in the local community, who were typically unwed women.

Undergraduate co-education was, however, Hughes' cause célèbre. He did not rest until such a call was heard. Contrary to popular belief, co-education did not begin at Lehigh in 1972. It was, rather, first experienced at Lehigh when, on May 6, 1929, Lehigh adopted two new rules for women: (1) women were now "admitted as graduate students on the same terms as men" and (2) "women admitted to summer sessions either as graduate or undergraduates" (faculty minutes; emphasis added). For the first time in Lehigh's history, women were admitted as undergraduates, even if only during summer sessions and still under the 1918 rules that declared the education of women "should largely be limited to the late afternoon, and to Saturdays, so that the general character of campus life shall not be affected by this innovation" (faculty minutes, 4 February 1918).

Abolishing compulsory chapel

Hughes did not support Lehigh's tradition of mandatory chapel exercises. These daily 15-minute services originally were ritualistically Christian in nature but by 1931 expressed a moral or ethical charge to the boys before 8 a.m. classes. In an October 10, 1904 letter, President Drown wrote that compulsory chapel "brings the whole body of students together and therefore promotes 'college spirit.'"

But Hughes understood that although Lehigh was founded by Episcopalians, having many reverends as professors (e.g. Stevens, Howe, Rulison) and presidents (e.g. The Rev. Dr. John M. Leavitt was professor of Psychology and Christian Evidences while president of the university from 1875-1879), it was a university designed to respond to the ever changing society by blending the "practical and professional duties of the time" (Asa Packer cited in Blake, 1925) with that of a "sane and philosophic grasp of what society needs" (Blake, 1925, 68). It is for this reason that Hughes believed that by 1907, the university was ready to shift from a religious era to a philosophic period. He explained that the period from 1907 to 1930 could be called “the philosophic period,” because "the religious, psychological and educational studies that formed parts of the University curricula, as well as those of distinctly philosophic import, all were throughout inspired and directed by the ancient philosophic dictum that an individual cannot live worthily unless he submit his life to reasoned, independent examination" (Hughes, n.d., p. 1-2). For Hughes, the philosophic period required a shift away from "the prevailing method of instruction [,] the lecture, often imbued with the spirit of a

> sermon" to that of seminar. Compulsory chapel became the symbol of the religious era of the university, and Hughes was determined to respond to society by moving Lehigh fully into the philosophic period.
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> Hughes, although a very pious man, did not fully believe in religious exercises on college grounds. In 1923 he proposed a motion to change the word "chapel" to "assembly"—to instill a non-denominational element to the exercises—but was denied by a vote. Similar to his efforts for co-education, Hughes did not let one vote stop his efforts. In 1925 Hughes began to fight compulsory chapel more outwardly, but failed when, in 1929, he lost his seat on the committee on chapel. By 1930, the Brown and White was editorializing to abolish compulsory chapel as part of its proposed "Brown and White Platform." This four-point plan, appearing in the February 11, 1930 edition, proposed the "abolition of compulsory Chapel" second only to the "elimination of corrupt political practices" on campus. After reading the "Brown and White Platform," President Richards asked the faculty to oppose such an action (faculty minutes, 3 March 1930).

No action on compulsory chapel was taken until 1931—well into the fourth stage of the history of philosophy, psychology, and education at Lehigh, which Hughes viewed "as an era of increased emphasis upon specialized techniques, in religion and morals, in philosophy proper, in psychology, and in educational economy" (Hughes, n.d., 2)—when the services switched from ritualistic to moral and ethical, the non-denominational element Hughes proposed eight years earlier. In addition to the new rules, students had the option of enrolling in two semesters worth of moral and religious philosophy, a new department headed by Professor Beardslee, as an alternative to the two-year compulsory chapel. [4] This plan lasted until 1937 when compulsory chapel turned into a freshman colloquium, a one-year course equivalent to the teachings in the chapel. By 1940, the administration reduced this colloquium to one semester, at which point the slow abolition of compulsory chapel was finally achieved more than 15 years after Hughes proposed the name change from "Chapel" to "Assembly." [5]