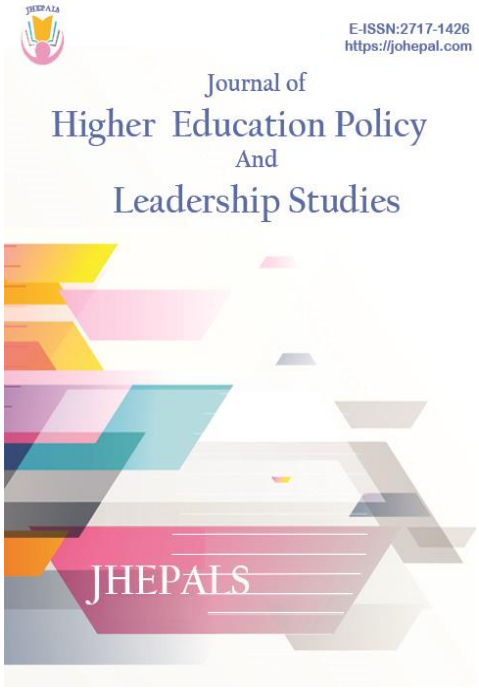
Journal of
Higher Education Policy
and
Leadership Studies

JHEPALS (E-ISSN: 2717-1426)

https://johepal.com




# Pedagogy as Resistance in Dark Times: An Interview with Prof. Henry A. Giroux

**Henry A. Giroux**

*McMaster University Professor for Scholarship in the Public Interest,*
*The Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy,*
*Department of English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University, CANADA*

Email: girouxh@mcmaster.ca ; henry.giroux@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1637-9142

| Interview Questions Submitted | Interview Responses Received | Published Online |
|---|---|---|
| **2025/04/13** | **2025/07/16** | **2025/09/30** |

Cite interview as:

Giroux, H. A. (2025). Pedagogy as resistance in dark times: Interview with Prof. Henry A. Giroux. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies*, *6*(3), 193-200.
https://dx.doi.org/10.61882/johepal.6.3.193

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

# Pedagogy as Resistance in Dark Times: An Interview with Prof. Henry A. Giroux

Journal of Higher Education Policy And Leadership Studies (JHEPALS)

E-ISSN: 2717-1426
Volume: 6 Issue: 3
pp. 193-200
DOI:
10.61882/johepal.6.3.193

**Henry A. Giroux** *



An internationally renowned writer and cultural critic, Professor Henry Giroux has authored, or co-authored over 80 books, written several hundred scholarly articles, delivered more than 250 public lectures, been a regular contributor to print, television, and radio news media outlets, and is one of the most cited Canadian academics working in any area of Humanities research. In 2002, he was named as one of the top fifty 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 the same year, he delivered the prestigious Herbert Spencer Lecture at Oxford University. In 2007, he was named by the Toronto Star as one of the "12 Canadians Changing the Way We Think." He has received honorary doctorates from Memorial University in Canada, Chapman University in California, and the University of the West of Scotland, among others. He is on the editorial and advisory boards of numerous national and international scholarly journals, and he has served as the editor or co-editor of four scholarly book series. He co-edited a series on education and cultural studies with Paulo Freire for a decade. He is on the Board of Directors for Truthout and is an Associate Editor for LA Progressive. His books have been translated into many languages and his work has appeared in the New York Times and many other prominent news media. He is interviewed regularly on a number of media.

https://experts.mcmaster.ca/display/girouxh

https://www.henryagiroux.com/

**Keywords:** Memory, Courage; Resistance; Pedagogy; Justice; Imagination; Critical Thought; Public Good; Fascist Threat

*Corresponding author's email: girouxh@mcmaster.ca ; henry.giroux@gmail.com

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

***Interview***

Interviews with globally recognized scholars within the realm of HE policy and leadership give us a novel and new chance to learn from wealth of knowledge and expertise which, in most cases, are from years of enormous and continuous research.

JHEPALS has the honor and privilege to publish an exclusive interview with Prof. Henry A. Giroux as the *Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest* & *The Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy*. Throughout his life, Henry Giroux has sought to develop a critical theory of education, emphasizing crucial intersections between the role of education in schools and universities with that of culture and public life. His vision of critical pedagogy advocates for the need to make pedagogy central to politics itself, and to help create the conditions necessary for the development of a formative culture that provides the foundation for developing critical citizens and a meaningful and substantive democracy.

We are sure that Prof. Henry A. Giroux's insightful, illuminating and critical responses will be of interest to a broad audience of international researchers, students, policymakers, and leaders in Higher Education.

Question #1

What are the bitter, toxic, and baffling truths that led to the critical challenges in the expected performance from universities and higher education institutes?

Answer:

Neoliberalism's Dominance: Higher education has been deeply affected by neoliberalism, which commodifies education and reduces it to a market-driven enterprise, ultimately undermining its core mission of fostering critical thought and social justice. It too often wages a war on critical thinking, argues that the only relations that matter are commercial, and undermines education as a public good and as a pedagogical project for educating students to be critical and engaged citizens. It spells the death of civic education and a collective politics of justice and solidarity.

Corporate Influence: Universities have become more akin to corporations, where the pursuit of profit, in the form of tuition fees and research funding, often outweighs the institution's duty to intellectual growth, inclusivity, and critical engagement. In addition, area studies such as the liberal arts and humanities that do not directly relate to job training are increasingly underfunded and in some cases removed from the curriculum in higher education. The corporatization of the university has undermined it as a public good and reshaped governance so as to remove any notion of shared power from students and faculty. The billionaire class as redefined education as training and waged a war on critical thinking and tenure and free speech for faculty.

Attacks on Critical Thinking: Universities, especially in the U.S., are increasingly hostile to critical pedagogical practices, with significant pressure from state actors and corporate interests to conform to an ideology that stifles dissent and critical engagement. School in

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

the U.S. are increasingly being pressured to adjust to the captive ideology of an authoritarian state which wants to turn them into indoctrination centers for White Christian nationalism. Books are censored, history is whitewashed, some ideas are banned, faculty are fired for addressing social issues, and schools are increasingly turned into laboratories of indoctrination. Under the second Trump presidency, it has succumbed to the influence of billionaires who have been instrumental in squelching dissent, especially of young people fighting for Palestinian freedom, increasing becoming laboratories of indoctrination. The latter is especially among universities in states such as Florida, which are controlled by Republican Party politicians.

Underfunding and Privatization: Public universities are underfunded, and their operations are increasingly privatized, resulting in higher tuition costs, greater debt for students, and diminishing access for underprivileged groups. They are being hollowed out because they are public institutions and in some cases are failing for that reason. Today's universities are not just battling neoliberal commodification—they are facing a broader cultural crisis. Capitalism, under its neoliberal form, has exacerbated social inequality, commodified all aspects of life, and eroded the very social fabric that once bound people together. Education, like culture itself, has become a commodity, a reflection of a society fragmented, alienated, and vulnerable to authoritarian ideologies. The market, rather than the people, dictates values, which results in a deep crisis of meaning, trust, and a culture of cruelty. Universities are increasingly becoming accomplices in this crisis, as critical thought is systematically undermined by corporate and state interests. One glaring example can be found in the Trump based-extremists who run the White House. They want to destroy public institutions including schools precisely because they are public and not private. Building on this, today's universities are increasingly sites of ideological cleansing. Trump's campaign to dismantle the Department of Education, criminalize DEI programs, and deport dissenting students is not only authoritarian but reminiscent of past fascist regimes that reengineered education to serve racial purity, blind obedience, and militarized nationalism. We are witnessing a war on critical consciousness itself.

## Question #2

What is your critical analysis of the chaos and confusion between reality and delusion in the current status of Higher Education worldwide? What are the reasons behind your analysis for such chaos and confusion?

## Answer:

Disconnect Between Purpose and Practice: Higher education institutions are in a state of cognitive dissonance: on the one hand, they claim to serve the public good, but on the other, they are often driven by profit motives and political agendas. And in some cases feed the military-industrial-academic complex which is committed to the war machine that feeds international conflict. One striking example is the recent bombing of Iran—an unmistakable violation of international law—that lays bare the dissonance between higher education's proclaimed mission and its actual practices. Once envisioned as democratic public goods,

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

universities have surrendered that role, becoming little more than corporate appendages and obedient servants of the billionaire class.

Standardization and Marketization: Education is increasingly being shaped by a global market model, where rankings, metrics, and standardized tests dominate over meaningful educational experiences. This leads to the "delusion" of academic success being equated with corporate outcomes rather than genuine intellectual and personal development. This instrument ideology is perfectly suited to viewing education as a training ground for workers for the global marketplace.

The Political Economy of Education: Governments often wield higher education as a tool for both maintaining neoliberal agendas and transforming higher education into ideological propaganda centers for white Christian nationalism, rather than fostering independent thinking. This is reflected in the rise of student debt, the privatization of public institutions, policies that privilege economic utility over democratic engagement, and increasing right-wing attacks on higher education, especially by the Trump regime. Of course, we also see this in other countries such as Hungary, India, and Argentina. .

Lack of Institutional Resistance: Many universities have failed to defend their academic integrity and autonomy against political pressures. This contributes to confusion about the purpose of higher education in the contemporary moment. The dissonance between the stated mission of higher education and its market-driven practices creates a crisis of meaning. We are living in a time when culture in America is dominated by an attack on truth, solidarity, political rights, justice, and equality. This ideological battle extends into higher education, where the values of democracy are under siege, and universities are being re-engineered to serve authoritarian purposes. The normalization of lies, the attack on public institutions, and the growing alliance between educational institutions and corporate power reflect a broader crisis of truth and trust. This chaos is not merely a symptom of educational failure; it is part of a much larger ideological and cultural collapse where the market, rather than the people, dictates values. The collapse of civic literacy has created fertile ground for conspiracy and delusion. Under the Trump regime, ignorance is not accidental—it is weaponized. Lies parade as truth, and education is redefined as indoctrination. Universities are losing their mission as democratic public spheres, becoming zones of surveillance and ideological control. It should be noted that there has been a refusal on the part of many students against the role of universities in supporting Israel genocidal war in Gaza. They have made clear that universities have become complicit in producing weapons that feed the massive killing of women and children in Gaza and the West Bank.

## Question #3

What are the current political approaches to Higher Education Systems worldwide which you think might not be further adopted and also have lost excessively their effectiveness and efficiency in Higher Education? Further, what are the policies which are taken for granted over the years and now must be considered in Higher Education?

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

Answer:

The Neoliberal Agenda: The notion that higher education should function solely as a workforce training ground has eroded the broader societal role of education. This market-driven approach has been proven ineffective in creating the inclusive, equitable systems necessary for the social good. It has led to rising tuition fees, student debt, and a focus on vocational outcomes rather than critical, transformative education.

Internationalization as Market Expansion: The push to "globalize" universities—often seen as a means to attract international students—has commodified education, making it a business and increasing inequality, as access to education becomes increasingly restricted.

Policy Overreliance on Rankings: The obsession with university rankings has led to a focus on metrics over meaningful education. Universities are being encouraged to focus on short-term financial goals rather than long-term educational and social goals.

Rethinking Education as a Public Good: Policies that focus on education as a public, rather than a private, good need to be revived. The move away from public funding and towards privatization must be critically examined and reversed. The rise of authoritarian politics has revealed the limits of neoliberal policies. The Trump presidency isn't just about political policies. it is about shaping a culture of cruelty and white nationalism. In this environment, universities are being transformed into instruments of state power rather than sites of critical engagement. The growing politicization of higher education and the erosion of democratic norms within universities signal a broader shift toward authoritarianism. This is not just about policy—it's about a cultural pivot, where education itself is redefined as an act of compliance and conformity rather than resistance and imagination. Universities must reclaim their role as incubators of democratic values, not tools for preserving the status quo of a crumbling empire. In the age of fascist politics, policy failures take a darker turn. Trump's punitive targeting of elite universities, defunding of public education, and censorship of 'divisive concepts' are not merely ineffective—they are part of a broader strategy of ideological warfare. The policies we must now adopt must defend universities as democratic commons and bulwarks against authoritarianism.

Question #4

What does Critical Pedagogy entail within the realm of current authoritarianism? How could Critical Pedagogy shape schooling in neglected and disadvantaged nations and unprivileged countries?

Answer:

Opposition to Authoritarianism: Critical Pedagogy offers a counterforce to the authoritarianism we see today, particularly under regimes that seek to suppress free thought. It encourages active questioning of power structures and the recognition of the importance of autonomy, democracy, and social justice in education. It is a crucial political project and practice in both understanding the current moment of historical crisis over democracy and the institutions that are crucial to support it. It raises fundamental questions

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

about the relationship between knowledge and power, and the role that education should play in a democracy. In doing so it fosters a culture of questioning and opens up the space of critical translation, critical reflection, and bridges the gap between learning and every day life.

Empowerment through Education: In underprivileged and neglected nations, Critical Pedagogy can offer a means of resistance by focusing on liberating education, which empowers students to critically engage with their social conditions and become active agents in changing them. It not only provides a language of critique, it also provides a language of imaged futures—one that fights back against the tyranny of social atomization, shattering forms of inequality, systemic racism, and the death of the public good.

Cultural Relevance: Critical Pedagogy stresses the need for culturally relevant education that resonates with the lived experiences of marginalized communities. It provides a means of resisting the imposition of dominant, often Western, educational norms that alienate students from their own histories and realities. It speaks powerfully to the need for a de-colonizing pedagogy and for the end of those practices that colonize the mind.

Practical Application: In such settings, it emphasizes participatory learning processes, democratic decision-making in classrooms, and the integration of community struggles into educational practices to make learning a tool of empowerment. It also integrates student histories and experiences into the pedagogical process while at the same time being attentive to matters of context and meaning. Critical Pedagogy must be more than a tool for academic liberation; it must be an insurgent force against the culture of authoritarianism. As I have noted throughout my work, education and culture have become commodities, leaving society fractured and vulnerable to authoritarian ideologies. In the face of this, Critical Pedagogy offers a pathway to cultural resistance, focusing not just on academic knowledge but on the formation of public consciousness. In the context of authoritarianism, Critical Pedagogy must challenge not just the political economy of education but the ideological forces that shape society. Educators must help students see through the commodification of knowledge and instead foster solidarity, justice, and civic engagement in the face of rising authoritarianism. Critical pedagogy is now a frontline defense against fascism. It must reclaim education not just as critique but as moral reckoning and political resistance. Like students protesting genocide in Gaza or educators forming sanctuary classrooms, pedagogy must summon the courage to remember, resist, and reimagine. Teaching is no longer neutral, it is insurgent.

## Question #5

What are the main differences and similarities between your perception of Critical Pedagogy and Paulo Freire's understanding of CP?

## Answer:

Similarities: Both share a foundational commitment to education as a tool for liberation. Like Freire, I believe that education must be transformative, critically engage with the social

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

context, and emphasize the importance of dialogue between students and teachers. We both view knowledge as something to be co-constructed, not imposed from above.

Differences: While Freire's focus was largely on the development of literacy and education in the context of poverty and underdevelopment, my work emphasizes the intersection of education with neoliberalism, fascism, and the role of culture in shaping political subjectivities. My work extends Freire's ideas into the analysis of contemporary authoritarianism and the role of education in resisting it. Freire's focus on education as a tool for liberation remains crucial today. Yet, in the face of contemporary authoritarianism, education cannot be just about the individual. We are in the middle of a cultural crisis where "education, culture, and even identity have become commodities"—this demands that we view Critical Pedagogy not just as a method for individual liberation but as a collective cultural project. Freire's work laid the foundation, but today's fight is against a deeply entrenched system of cultural and ideological control that extends beyond the classroom and into every facet of society. In this sense, my work extends Freire's ideas to include not just educational reform but a broader cultural battle against authoritarian values. Freire's insight that education is never neutral resonates more urgently today. My work extends his legacy by confronting the ways fascism now manipulates culture, erases historical memory, and weaponizes ignorance. I view pedagogy as an emancipatory struggle against the politics of disposability, and the university as one of the last spaces where the future can still be imagined differently.

Beyond the Classroom: I see Critical Pedagogy as more than just a classroom practice. It must extend into the broader social, cultural, and political spheres to challenge systemic oppression, neoliberalism, and authoritarian regimes. It is especially important in developing a theoretical and political project in which critical pedagogy is crucial in both enabling and defending critical citizenship by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to learn how to govern rather than be governed.

## Question #6

In the context of commodification of education and within the discourse of neo-liberalism, how can higher education leadership deal with educational inequalities and injustices in academia?

## Answer:

Resisting Marketization: Educational leaders must resist the commodification of education and push back against the pressures to turn students into mere consumers and universities into profit-making institutions. Education cannot succumb to the instrumentalization of knowledge and social relations. Education is about more than and should not be confused with training. It has a higher purpose and calling. Education at its best is a project designed to both defend and enable democracy on a global scale.

Redistributing Resources: To address inequalities, higher education leadership must prioritize equitable access to education by redistributing resources, ensuring that

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

underrepresented groups have the support they need to succeed. Put bluntly, education is a right not merely and opportunity and should be free.

Curriculum Reform: Leaders must advocate for curricula that prioritize critical thinking, social justice, and the cultivation of democratic values over vocational training designed to fit students into predefined roles in a capitalist economy. Curriculum must encourage the search for truth, deepen historical consciousness, produce knowledge that enables people to be informed citizens, and bridges what is learned in the classroom to real social issues and problems.

Engaging with Local Communities: Universities should forge deeper connections with local communities and work to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that educational practices are not abstract but are rooted in real-world issues of justice, inequality, and liberation. Educational leaders today must confront not only the market-driven forces of neoliberalism but also the broader cultural and ideological shifts that are reshaping society. It is important to note that the market, rather than the people, dictates values, and in this environment, universities must resist the commodification of education and prioritize the cultivation of critical thought. Universities must reassert their role as democratic commons, where the forces of culture, knowledge, and solidarity can counter the rise of authoritarianism. Leaders must advocate for curriculum reforms that challenge the commodification of knowledge and address the systemic inequalities that pervade higher education. Leadership must go beyond managerial reforms and confront the political architecture of oppression. We need to cultivate a culture of civic courage, historical literacy, and moral witnessing. Education must be reclaimed as a public good, not a marketplace of careerism, and leaders must treat universities as democratic counter-spaces against the fascist drift.

[ Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-06 ]

[ DOI: 10.61882/johepal.6.3.193 ]

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) which allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.