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Sarah Stitzlein, Assistant Professor of Education, travels to Canada

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Sarah Stitzlein

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Professor Sarah Stitzlein traveled to Montreal, Canada, in March to present a paper at the annual Philosophy of Education Society Conference.



Sarah Stitzlein while in Montreal.

Despite a steady cold wind and a snow shower, I welcomed spring in Montreal, Canada, while attending the Philosophy of Education Society (PES) Conference. PES, the primary association for my field of educational philosophy, has historically been focused on issues of American education. In recent years, the society has made an overt effort to engage with scholars abroad to expand American views on good education, to learn about innovative educational techniques elsewhere, and to initiate conversations about growing interest in global education initiatives. Hosting the conference in Montreal was indicative of the society's efforts to expand American theorizing on education. Participants worked alongside Canadian and other international representatives to consider topics like Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture Program and Cosmopolitan Accents in Philosophy and Education.

My research has two aspects (theories of democratic education and explorations in social justice along lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality) united by philosophical work in the concept of political agency. At the conference, I presented some of my most recent work on the democratic virtue of political dissent. I described how American teachers are currently struggling to express their frustrations over high-stakes testing movements and how their experiences also limit the development of dissent within students. I offered suggestions for civics pedagogy that traced their roots to founding American principles and the efforts of contemporary dissidents. I was joined by scholars who described how dissent is cultivated within public schools across America and abroad. Conversations with colleagues sparked ideas for a symposium related to my research in a major journal in my field. I also chaired a panel on recent movements to determine controversial educational policies through voter ballot initiatives. This panel investigated examples like ballots overturning affirmative-action in education to consider potential hazards in the balance between democracy and justice.

Finally, I was proud to work alongside my colleagues to chart a new future for PES. Our society has historically been composed of mostly white men. In an effort to expand the perspectives included in our organization and to encourage scholarship in issues of social justice in schools, a small group of us met to form a new Committee on the Status of Race and Ethnicity in PES. I am hopeful that this group can help make our organization more inclusive and more creative.

In between conference sessions, I enjoyed polishing my French in local cafes and exploring the old port part of town. I especially enjoyed visiting the grand basilicas of Saint Patrick and Notre-Dame. I am thankful for the support of the Center for International Education.



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