

The President and Program Chair of the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society (OVPES) invite proposals that broadly interpret the theme— **educational loss and hope** — for its annual meeting to be held at the Seasons Lodge in Nashville, Indiana, Thursday through Saturday, September 17-19, 2026. We welcome proposals that make connections between philosophy and education, both related and unrelated to the conference theme. OVPES remains a site for experimental thinking with educational and philosophical ideas in a collegial and friendly environment.

In a 1983 article in *Diacritics*, Jacques Derrida asked, “Today, how can we not talk about the university?”¹ a question that could have been asked with identical urgency every day subsequent to his own asking of it. Today, we ask it again, but broaden our query to education as a whole. Educators today must confront a foundation-shaking uncertainty: What persists *as* education when the structures that sustain it crumble? The problematic of educational crisis is old, but the theme of this conference asks us to reflect on the specific tensions between what we have already lost and whether that loss is irretrievable; what we still stand to lose and how it might be defended (if indeed it is worth defending at all); and what avenues for hope may remain available.

As educators and philosophers (to say nothing of citizens or humans) in 2026, we are all intimately familiar, if often in unarticulated ways, with what climate activist Derrick Jensen once called “landscapes of loss.”² We sit daily in meetings being presented with financial and enrollment figures justifying budgetary freezes, departmental shutterings, class-size increases, withdrawal of travel funds, and more. We walk through the increasingly empty spaces of learning and living that for many of us played a formative role in our love of education itself, the once physical and corporeal presence of our students reduced to names on a black background and voices echoing in sparsely filled classrooms. We watch as legislators at all levels of government constrict our autonomy as pedagogues and researchers in ways it would risk belaboring to rehearse here. In light of this litany of loss, many of us, it seems, have lost something else too, namely, our love of our careers and fields. Some 70% of newly minted PhDs now leave higher education for other endeavors,³ and over one-third of academic Provosts reported higher than average turnover rates in 2024.⁴ These shared experiences and field-wide realities are philosophical provocations, asking us whether or to what degree education is identical to, or parasitic on, its organized institutional forms, whether its unique goods can survive the alteration or destruction of those forms, and how these losses may open possibilities of renewal.

We have lost much, and yet many of us remain, perhaps believing, as Gilbert Ryle articulated in *The Concept of Mind*, that “the University is not another collateral institution, some ulterior counterpart to the colleges, laboratories and offices which he has seen. The University is just the way in which all that he has already seen is organized. When they are seen and when their coordination is understood, the University has been seen.”⁵ The power of the idea of education remains as well, perhaps better for being liberated from certain institutional, material,

and political constraints. Educational hope may not appear as a grand reformatory vision, or even steadfast resistance to the forces arrayed against education itself, but may be as quotidian as budget meetings and lonely strolls: the class, even if relocated to a Zoom room, that becomes a community; the question or shared experience that renders unstable previously settled views; the late night moment of insight scribbled down hastily for proper formulation in the morning. It may be the mere shared commitment to continue acting together under conditions that seem to scream at us to stop. As Beckett concludes *The Unnamable*, “I can’t go on, I’ll go on.”⁶

We invite submissions that reflect on these and related questions, both new and perennial. In addition to the various unanswered questions peppered throughout the above, one might consider loss and hope in connection with:

- What is lost when students and teachers offload educational labor to artificial intelligence, or technology in general;
- Discourses of “learning loss” post-COVID, and what this peculiar phrase implies;
- Burnout, vocation, professional demands, and the ethics of staying and leaving one’s career;
- Historical moments of reclamation or reconstruction after crisis, within or without institutions of education;
- Philosophical or artistic accounts of despair and/or endurance;
- The possibility that we ought to affirmatively reject hope, and pivot to what some have called a “post-institutional” view of education;
- The possibility that the President and Program Chair of this organization are overreacting in some way, and should look on the bright side.

As always, the theme itself and these provocations are merely suggestions, and proposals on any and all topics in and around philosophy of education are welcomed and encouraged.

AUTHOR SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

PRESENTATION FORMAT, DEADLINE, AND NOTIFICATION. Proposals for individual papers, alternative sessions, and panels or symposia involving multiple speakers on a single topic are welcomed. All proposals will be peer-reviewed by at least two members of the program committee. The deadline for submissions is **May 15, 2026**, and authors will be notified of decisions by July 15, 2026.

SESSION FORMATS

Paper Session: A paper session consists of 3-4 presenters who are each allocated 15-20 minutes to share their scholarly paper, followed by a short Q&A period. 75 minutes total.

Panel Session: A panel session consists of 3-4 individuals who present papers on a specific topic or theme organized by the presenters. Panels dedicate 15-20 minutes for

each presenter to share their scholarly paper, followed by a short Q&A period. 75 minutes.

Alternative Session: Alternative sessions deviate from traditional academic presentation formats (paper and panel) to foster different types of engagement and learning. These sessions may include interactive workshops, collaborative problem-solving activities, facilitated discussions, creative demonstrations, or experiential exercises. 75 minutes.

Flash Talks: Flash talks are a dynamic way for any member of the OVPES community to share ideas – without needing to prepare a full, session-ready manuscript. These short presentations should offer a concise and compelling argument with a clear introduction, central point, and conclusion – all within just five minutes. As with all proposals, flash talks may align with the conference theme, though all topics will be considered. We encourage participation from graduate students, first-time attendees, and long-time members alike. When submitting your proposal, under “Presentation Format” on your proposal form, you may indicate that you are willing to have your proposal accepted as a flash talk if it is not chosen for a paper session, or you may submit specifically for the flash talk format. If selected, please arrive prepared with a timed, practiced talk—brevity and clarity are key

CONFERENCE PROPOSAL GUIDELINES. Proposals should be submitted to Gabriel Keehn, Program Chair, at ohiovalleypes@gmail.com on or before **May 15, 2026**. The subject line of the email should read “OVPES 2026 Proposal,” and proposals should be attached as Word documents (.doc or .docx format; no PDF’s please). Author identifying information should be removed from all proposals prior to submission. In addition:

PART 1: In the body of your email message, please include:

1. Proposal title
2. Presentation format (e.g., paper session, panel, or alternate session)
3. Your name, title, and institutional affiliation (as you prefer to be listed/spelled on the program; this should be the main contact person)
4. Your email
5. The name(s) of co-presenter(s), if applicable (as preferred to be listed/spelled on the program)
6. An abstract of up to 150 words

PART 2: Please attach a Word document that includes the following information:

1. The proposal title and presentation format
2. A summary of up to 500 words, describing how you will address your topic and/or its line of argument, explain its significance, and indicate several major references you will draw upon to make your argument and to place it into scholarly conversation. Please make the connection to philosophy of education clear, and, if applicable, explain how your proposal relates to the conference theme.
3. Remove all author-identifying markers, including references to your prior work.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. You will receive an email acknowledging receipt of your submission within 48 hours. If you do not, please email the Program Chair at ohiovalleypes@gmail.com. Please note that OVPES will not provide technology or technological assistance at the 2026 conference. Authors who wish to use technology must bring and operate their own. Graduate students whose individual paper session proposals are accepted for presentation and who wish to be considered for the OVPES 2026 Graduate Student Paper Award will be asked to submit their full papers.

PSIE JOURNAL CONSIDERATION: Full-length papers presented at the conference should be no longer than 4500 words, including footnotes, following the Chicago Manual of Style. Papers presented at the conference and meeting all the editorial requirements will be considered for publication in *Philosophical Studies in Education*, the refereed journal of OVPES, following a separate, peer review process. A separate call for submissions will follow the conference (see manuscript requirements at ovpes.org/journal).

¹ Jacques Derrida, "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils," *Diacritics* 12, no. 3. (1982): 2-20, 2.

² Derrick Jensen, *Endgame: Volume 1* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006): 3.

³ Doctorate recipients from U.S. universities: 2023 | NSF - national science foundation. Accessed January 24th, 2026. <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf25300/report/postgraduation-trends>.

⁴ "2024 Survey of College and University Chief Academic Officers ." Interfolio. Accessed January 24th, 2026. <https://interfolio.com/resources/research/2024-survey-of-college-and-university-chief-academic-officers/#:~:text=How%20do%20Provosts%2FChief%20Academic%20Officers%20%28CAOs%29%20feel%20about,tenure%2C%20artificial%20intelligence%2C%20DEI%2C%20mental%20health%2C%20and>

%20more.

⁵ Gilbert Ryle and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁶ Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 2009), 414.