

DEVIKA AGRAWAL
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EDUCATION

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Ph.D. in Education, Expected August 2026

Committee: Catherine Elgin (Chair), Sarah Dryden-Peterson, Elizabeth Dawes Duraisingh

University of California at Berkeley,
The Goldman School of Public Policy, CA

Master of Public Policy, 2019

Master's Thesis: Combating U.S. Gun Trafficking to Mexico

Scripps College, Claremont, CA

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, 2015

Thesis: The Impulse to Punish: A Critique of Retributive Justice

RESEARCH FOCUS

Indigenous and anticolonial education, alternative education worldwide, ecological education, social epistemology and epistemic polarization, ethnographic methods

BOOK-PROJECT

My dissertation, titled “**Independent India, Independent Thinking: Liberatory Education Philosophy and its Contemporary Practice**” is an interdisciplinary exploration of the educational experiments and pedagogical resistance that emerged at the height of British colonialism in India. The study traces the history and education philosophies of Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo Ghose and Jiddu Krishnamurti, and follows the afterlives of the schools they founded—asking how antimodern visions of education navigate modernity. To understand the legacy of this movement in practice, I study a sample of six anticolonial schools using ethnographic methods. On a pedagogical level, these schools provide the template for urgent and actionable practices of ecological education and climate justice. On a theoretical level, the study finds that Indian liberatory education was a movement of **epistemic resistance** that challenged conventional science and expanded the notion of “rationality” to include psychological self-observation and self-transcendence (that is, expanding our sense of “self” to include all natural beings). The canon demonstrates that India’s struggle for independence was never only about political sovereignty from the British—but also intellectual sovereignty. Rather than reproducing Global North ideas of speed, scale, profit, and efficiency, Indian liberationists defined development as restraint and anticonsumerism.

INVITED TALKS AND CONFERENCES

1. North Eastern Philosophy of Education Society (NEPES) at Columbia University, October 2023, “*Epistemic Broadmindedness and the Alternative Education Movement of India*”
 2. North American Association for Philosophy & Education (NAAPE) in Chicago, October 2023, “*Epistemic Reproduction (and Resistance) In Education*”
 3. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), El Seminario de Estudios para la Descolonización, Mexico City, February 2025, “*La resistencia epistémica como descolonización. El caso de las escuelas alternativas en India*”
 4. Global Philosophy of Education: Field-Launching Conference, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, March 2026, “*The New Critical Thinking: Indian Anticolonial Education and its Contemporary Possibilities*”
 5. Philosophy of Education Sans Frontiers (PESF) Seminar Series, University College London, April 2026, “*Can Philosophy Do Psychology? Lessons from Indian Anticolonial Education*”
 6. European Seminars in Philosophy of Education (ESPE), American University of Paris, June 2026 “*The Counter-Machine: Indian Anticolonial Education and its Technological Critique*”
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PUBLICATIONS

- **Agrawal, Devika.** 2025. Awakening ‘the Indian genius’: The epistemic aims of Indian liberatory education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2025.2459094>
- **Agrawal, Devika.** Forthcoming. “Escuelas alternativas, futuros alternativos: Descolonizando la educación y la política en la India del siglo XX” *Cuadernos del Seminario de Estudios para la Descolonización de México*. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas Cátedra Extraordinaria Rubén Bonifaz Nuño. UNAM: Mexico.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION

- **Can Philosophy Do Psychology? Lessons from Indian Anticolonial Education:** This paper argues that Indian liberationists like Tagore and Aurobindo reimagined “critical thinking” not as logical reasoning, but as a form of psychological self-inquiry. In contrast to dominant Euro-American models, these philosophers emphasised self-awareness, inner transformation, and the role of subconscious attachments in shaping thought. Due May 2026 for *Education Philosophy and Theory*’s special issue on Eastern approaches to philosophy.
- **Rethinking Childhood in the Anthropocene:** Since the twentieth century, educational norms around childrearing have increasingly centred on protecting children from hardship and discomfort. Drawing on Tagore and Gandhi, this paper argues that an ecological conception of the self generates an entirely different educational ethics—one in which labour, austerity, and responsibility become legitimate pedagogical aims. In revisions, for “Framing Educational Ethics”, Edited by Meira Levinson, Xin Xiang, and Liz Block.

AWARDS AND GRANTS

HGSE Doctoral Professional Development Grant (*March 2026*)

- Recipient of \$500 to present ongoing research at Vrije Universiteit and ESPE.

GSAS Dissertation Completion Fellowship (*August 2025 – May 2026*)

- Recipient of \$45,000 for dissertation writing.

The Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship (*August 2024 – May 2025*)

- Recipient of \$34,000 to conduct a year-long anthropological investigation of the alternative education movement of India, spanning dozens of schools across the country.

HGSE Doctoral Professional Development Grant (*October 2023*)

- Recipient of \$500 to present ongoing research at the NEPES and NAAPE conferences.

HGSE Doctoral Research Grant (*October 2023*)

- Recipient of \$3,000 to research alternative schools in rural Rajasthan, primarily conducting ethnographic research and 30+ interviews with various stakeholders.

GSAS Summer Predissertation Fellowship (*May 2023*)

- Recipient of \$3,000 to form trusting relationships and collect informed consent from four Indian alternative schools for participation in future ethnographic research.

The William F. Milton Fund (*July 2021 – July 2023*)

- Awarded \$43,000 to research Indian social studies textbooks, their varying representations of identity groups, and the sociopolitical outcomes of these narratives.
- Team: Emmerich Davies (PI), Blair Reed (Ph.D. MIT), and Akshay Dixit (Ph.D. Harvard)

Presidential Fellowship (*August 2020*)

- Recipient of \$4,000 merit-based fellowship by President Larry Bacow.
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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Teaching Fellow (2021–present)

- S105: The Philosophy of Education with Dr. Catherine Elgin (Fall 2022, Fall 2023)
- S121: Art and Understanding with Dr. Catherine Elgin (Fall 2022, Fall 2023)
- EVI101: Evidence with Dr. Joe McIntyre (August 2023)
- T418: Education in Uncertainty with Dr. Sarah Dryden-Peterson (Fall 2022)
- EDU-A840Y: Global, International, and Comparative Education with Dr. Fernando Reimers, Dr. Emmerich Davies, and Dr. Sarah-Dryden Peterson (Fall 2021, Spring 2022)

Colegio Eugenio de Mazenod, Mexico City, Mexico

High-school Teacher (2019-2020)

- English Literature, Mexican History and World History teacher.

University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA

Graduate Student Instructor (2017-2019)

- GLOBAL173: International Human Rights with Dr. Darren Zook (Fall 2017, Fall 2018)
- LSC-180U: Wealth and Poverty with Robert Reich (Spring 2018, Spring 2019)

Teach for India, New Delhi, India

Middle-school Teacher (2015-2017)

- Social Science teacher for 200 students in a low-income public school.
 - Teacher trainer for 14 public school teachers on historical and critical thinking pedagogies.
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RELEVANT POLICY RESEARCH

Innovations for Poverty Action, Mexico City, Mexico

Policy Analyst (2018)

- Statistical analysis for an RCT aimed at enhancing police procedural justice across CDMX.

Inter-American Development Bank, Washington D.C.

Policy Analyst (2018)

- Analysed labour-market distortions caused by Transport Network Companies (Uber, Lyft) in Brazil and crafted policy recommendations for the São Paulo government.
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METHODOLOGICAL TRAINING

Quantitative Methods

- PUBPOL 240A: Decision, Modelling, and Quantitative Methods 1 at UC Berkeley
- PUBPOL 240B: Decision, Modelling, and Quantitative Methods 2 at UC Berkeley
- EDU S052: Advanced Statistical Methods for Applied Educational Research, Harvard
- EDU S061: Statistical and Psychometric Methods for Educational Measurement, Harvard
- EDU S059: Quantitative Text Analysis, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Qualitative & Historical Methods

- INFO 272: Qualitative Research Methods at UC Berkeley
- HIST 275E: Survey of Latin American History and Historiography at UC Berkeley
- HIST 280E: Advanced Studies in Latin American History at UC Berkeley
- EDU S504: Introduction to Qualitative Research at Harvard University
- EDU S0527: Ethnographic Methods at Harvard University
- EDU S507: Interviewing in Qualitative Research at Harvard University

ACADEMIC SERVICE

- Reviewer for *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* journal, Taylor and Francis.
 - Reviewer for *North Eastern Philosophy of Education Society* (NEPES) conference.
 - Member of the *Research Doctoral Advisory Committee* (RDAC) to advocate for improved doctoral student experiences at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.
 - Member of *Mowana Research Lab*—a social science laboratory at Harvard to provide feedback on education research, specifically research that uses interdisciplinary methods.
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SKILLS

- Technology: STATA, R, NVivo, ATLAS.ti, Otter.ai
 - Languages: English (native), Hindi (native), Spanish (advanced/C1), French (proficient/B2)
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REFERENCES:

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