First, I think it is imperative to examine the ideological and material forces that have contributed to what I want to call the deskilling and commodification of teacher work; that is, the tendency to reduce teachers to the status of specialized technicians within the school bureaucracy, whose function then becomes one of the managing and implementing curricular programs rather than developing or critically appropriating curricula to fit specific pedagogical concerns and the particular needs of students. Second, there is a need to defend schools as institutions essential to maintaining and developing a critical democracy and also to defending teachers as public intellectuals who combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be thoughtful, active citizens.

These include: a call for the separation of conception from execution; the standardization of school knowledge in the interest of managing and controlling it, the increased call for standardized testing, and the devaluation of critical, intellectual work on the part of teachers and students for the primacy of practical considerations. In this view, teaching is reduced to training and concepts are substituted by methods. Teaching in this view is reduced to a set of strategies and skills and becomes synonymous with a method or technique.

What is purposely derided in conservative notions of teaching and learning is a view of pedagogy, which in the most critical sense, illuminates the relationship among knowledge, authority and power and draws attention to questions concerning who has control over the conditions for the production of knowledge

the Texas GOP built into its platform the banning of [**critical thinking**](http://truth-out.org/news/item/10144-texas-gop-declares-no-more-teaching-of-critical-thinking-skills-in-texas-public-schools).[20] Not too long ago, the Florida legislature passed a law claiming that history had to be taught simply as a ledger of facts, banning any attempt at what can loosely be called interpretation.

technocratic and instrumental ideologies

Rather than being objective institutions removed from the dynamics of politics and power, schools actually are contested spheres that embody and express struggles over what forms of authority, types of knowledge, forms of moral regulation and versions of the past and future should be legitimated and transmitted to students.

Educators have a responsibility for educating students in ways that allow them to hold power accountable, learn how to govern and develop a responsibility to others and a respect for civic life.  The key here is to recognize that being a public intellectual is no excuse for being dogmatic. While it is crucial to recognize that education has a critical function, the teachers’ task is not to mold students but to encourage human agency, to provide the conditions for students to be self-determining and to struggle for a society that is both autonomous and democratic

The violent screen culture of video games, extreme sports, violent Hollywood films, television dramas and other cultural productions do not just produce entertainment, they are mainly teaching machines that instruct children into a sadistic culture in which killing is all right, violence is fun and masculinity is defined increasingly through its propensity to make celebrities out of killers. This is a culture that serves as a recruiting tool for the military, makes military force rather than democratic idealism the highest national ideal and war the most important organizing principle of society.

a recent study has linked high-stakes testing to lower graduation rates and higher incarceration rates, indicating that such testing plays a significant role in expanding “the machinery of the school-to-prison pipeline,” especially for low-income students and students of color.

America is no longer a democracy, nor is it simply a plutocracy. It has become an authoritarian state steeped in violence and run by the commanding financial, cultural and political agents of corporate power.

The current powerful corporate-based un-reform movement is wedded to developing modes of governance, ideologies and pedagogies dedicated to constraining and stunting any possibility for developing among students those critical, creative, and collaborative forms of thought and action necessary for participating in a substantive democracy.

Every topic is taught in isolation and communicated by way of sterile pieces of information that have no shared meanings or context.

Test scores increased less, and achievement gaps grew more, in “reform” cities than in other urban districts. Reported successes for targeted students evaporated upon closer examination. Test-based accountability prompted churn that thinned the ranks of experienced teachers, but not necessarily bad teachers. School closures did not send students to better schools or save school districts money.  Charter schools further disrupted the districts while providing mixed benefits, particularly for the highest-needs students. Emphasis on the widely touted market-oriented reforms drew attention and resources from initiatives with greater promise.  The reforms missed a critical factor driving achievement gaps: the influence of poverty on academic performance. Real, sustained change requires strategies that are more realistic, patient and multipronged.

Under such circumstances, critical pedagogy becomes directive and intervenes on the side of producing a substantive democratic society. This is what makes critical pedagogy different from training. And it is precisely the failure to connect learning to its democratic functions and goals that provides rationales for pedagogical approaches that strip what it means to be educated from its critical and democratic possibilities.