

## 2008-2009 Dallas Executive Precepts Program

Sponsored by the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions  
Princeton University

### Education

This year we will examine ancient and modern texts on **education**. The Greek poet Pindar said “Become what you are,” by which he meant that people are the realization of tendencies latent within them, tendencies that are organized and shaped by education. Logical analysis and the manipulation of symbols are necessary but far from sufficient as the substance of education.

Every program of education is a disguised theory of human nature. Every theory of human nature is at the core autobiographical. “If only I had known then what I know now” is a universal lament. No one can reflect upon his or her own life without some element of regret. We educate the young in certain kinds of skills, certain kinds of habits, certain kinds of goals. We hope to educate the young to avoid our mistakes, freeing them up to make their own.

Education is the ultimate political problem because education determines what the future makes of the present. It determines our collective future and this future will determine retroactively whether our decisions here and now were wise, our goals worthy, our mistakes irreparable, our sacrifices in vain. In educating the present generation, the young become what they are and we, their elders, become what we are.

### Reading List

- Book of Proverbs and Blake’s *Proverbs of Hell*
- Plato, *Republic*, Books 2 and 3 (Bloom translation)
- Quintilian, *Education of an Orator*, Books 1 & 2
- Franklin, *Autobiography*
- Voltaire, *Candide*
- Dickens, *Hard Times*
- Freud, *Sexual Enlightenment of Children*
- Mill, *Autobiography*
- Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, pp. 25-137 (Last Precept with Professor **Robert P. George**)