



## **Race, Equity, and the Learning Environment The Global Relevance of Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies in Higher Education**

Tuitt, Frank; Haynes, Chayla; Stewart, and Sarah, Stewart, eds.  
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Book Review

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The recognition that students' identities play a significant factor in learning has begun to impact university and college classrooms over the past few decades. In particular, there is recognition that racial identities of minority students and students of color shape their experience in the educational process. What has become increasingly apparent, and therefore in need of redress, is the lack of racial equity in pedagogical frameworks and practices. *Race, Equity, and the Learning Environment: The Global Relevance of Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies in Higher Education* brings these matters to the fore and argues that critical and inclusive pedagogies (CIPs) can, when employed effectively, offer a way forward. Such approaches are not new, but offer the promise of creating rich learning environments by "(a) prioritizing the intellectual and social development of students, (b) fostering classroom climates that challenge each student to achieve academically at high levels, (c) recognizing and cultivating the cultural and global differences that learners bring to the educational experience, and (d) engaging the 'whole' student (e.g., intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally) in the teaching and learning process" (2).

The volume contains an introduction and conclusion, and in between are eleven essays reflectioning on CIPs at the intersection of race and higher education. The essays are divided into three sections covering theoretical dimensions (three essays), practical implications (four essays), and assessment (four essays). I have chosen to highlight one essay from each section that is particularly valuable for the religious studies classroom.

In part one, "Pursuing Equity Through Diversity" (Bolitzer et al.) presents a series of valuable

reflections on how student diversity can be used to encourage and achieve classroom equity. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the authors highlight three perspectives on diversity: as the intersection of identities and power, as fostering individual and collective growth, and within subject-matter learning. On this basis, they see diversity as a collective resource in the classroom that advances learning.

In part two, Koshino's article explores the racial climate and experience of a small midwestern college through interviews with students of color. The results enable her to hone in on some glaring deficiencies in the campus culture for minority students and suggest strategies for improvement in these areas. Finally, in part three Ghabra et al. critique the white, heterosexual, male norm of university classrooms through a framework informed by CIPs and intersectional sexuality. They highlight their use of performance writing to evaluate classroom interactions marked by an ethic of responsibility, love, and care. The result reveals how students and professors can work together to create inclusive spaces.

Does the volume have value for the religious studies or theology classroom? Given the personal nature of religious exploration and study, the answer is a qualified "Yes!" I suspect teachers of religion will find the essays focused on theoretical issues of more value because of their broad application. However, the essays on practice and assessment also contain material that can be adapted to the religious studies classroom. At any rate, since race and religion intersect so dramatically (especially in the U.S.), CIPs offer a way for students to think critically not only about religion generally, but to do so in a manner that also affirms and values the perspectives of their fellow students. To the degree that these essays prompt deeper reflection on how teachers can engage students in these ways, they will prove a valuable addition to the religious studies toolbox of resources.

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