

AWAKE IN A WOKE WORLD

Dr. Neil Shenvi

May 11, 2023

Trinity Christian School

This talk is not about Trump



This talk is not about Trump



This talk is not about Trump



This talk is not about Trump

This talk is not about Trump

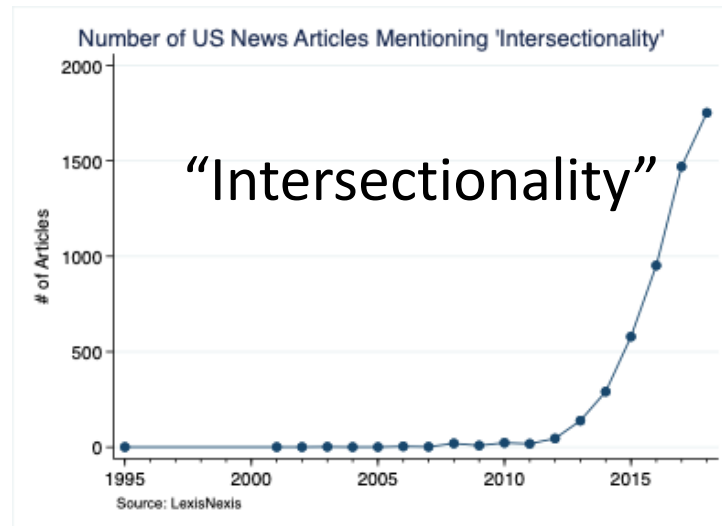
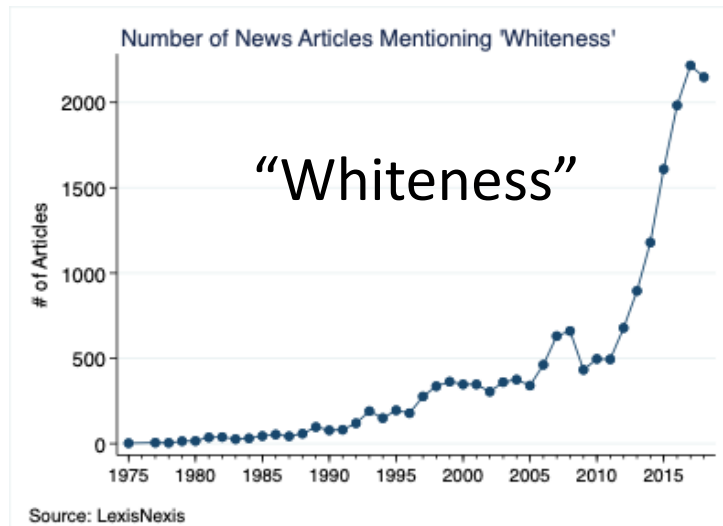
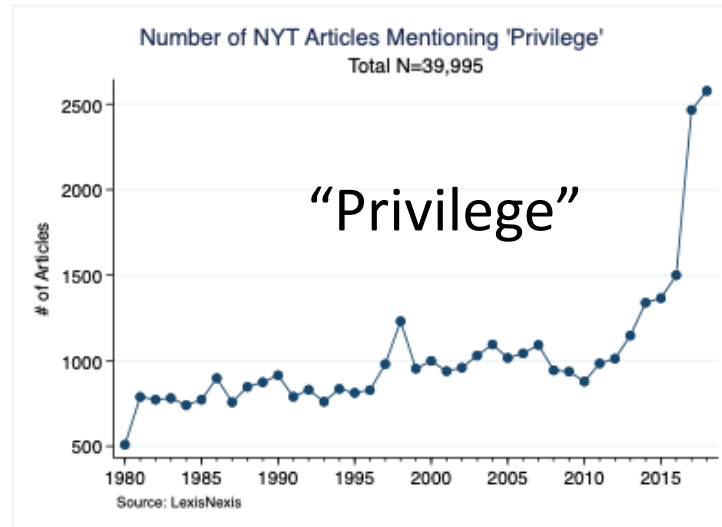
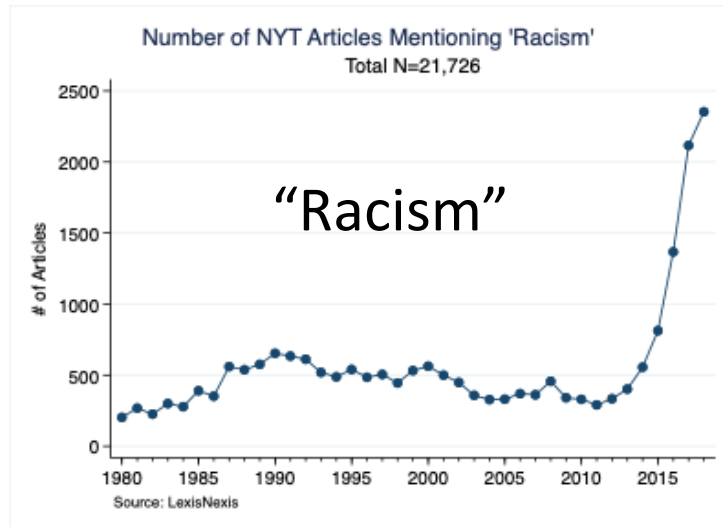
This talk is not about Trump

This talk is not about Trump

This talk is not about Trump

This talk is not about Trump

New York Times word usage




Smithsonian NMAAHC

“Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups of are compared.”

TALKING ABOUT RACE | NMAAHC

ASPECTS & ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITENESS & WHITE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

White dominant culture, or **whiteness**, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the institutional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture — including people of color.




Rugged Individualism

- The individual is the primary unit
- Self-reliance
- Independence & autonomy highly valued + rewarded
- Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment, “You get what you deserve”

Family Structure

- The nuclear family: father, mother, 2.3 children is the ideal social unit
- Husband is breadwinner and head of household
- Wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband
- Children should have own rooms, be independent



Emphasis on Scientific Method

- Objective, rational linear thinking
- Cause and effect relationships
- Quantitative emphasis

Black Lives Matter

“We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans-antagonistic violence...

We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual (unless s/he or they disclose otherwise).”



Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?

Why should we care?



Christena Cleveland - Urbana 15

More from InterVarsity
twentyonehundred
[Autoplay next video](#)

CHRISTIANITY **TODAY** WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO NEWSLETTERS [GIVE NOW](#)



SECTIONS OUR LATEST THE MAGAZINE

VIEWS

Truth Be Told

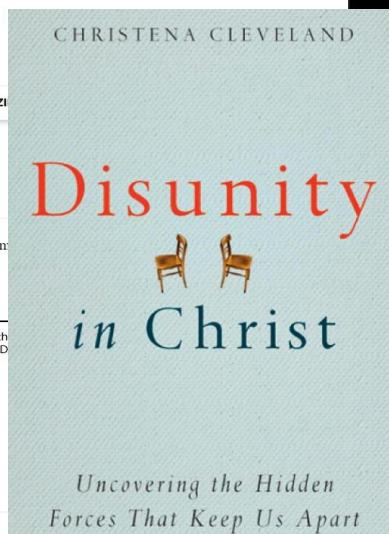
Truth Be Told is a series on privilege, power, and how churches can be more attuned to both as they live out the gospel.



Christena Cleveland

Christena Cleveland is associate professor of the practice of reconciliation at Duke University's Divinity School, where she also directs the Center for Reconciliation.

[Browse All Columnists](#)



Cru Spring 2017 — Christena Cleveland

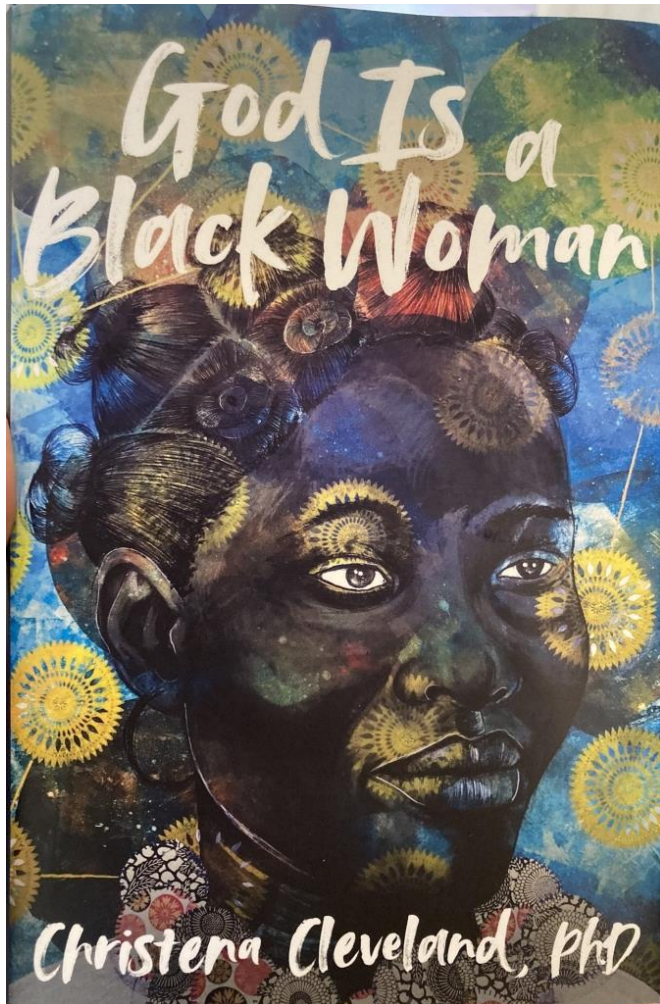
NOT YET RATED

6 years ago

[cru](#) Central Wisconsin Cru

[+ Follow](#)

Why should we care?

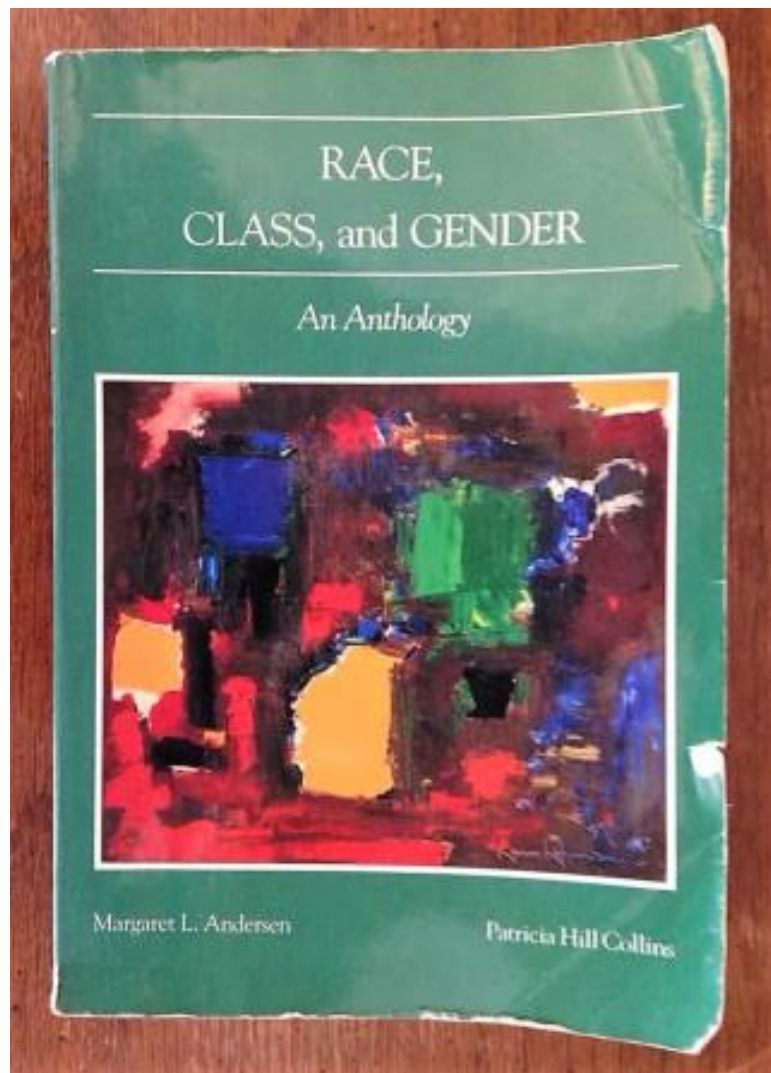


“I increasingly recognized that [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship] was **homophobic, anti-Black, money driven, and imperialistic**” (p. 179)

“**The liberation of all Black women requires the dismantling of all systems of oppression—white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and more**” (p. 223)

“more than anything, we must eradicate the transphobia within ourselves and our communities. For **if God is a Black woman, then She’s a Black trans woman. Obviously.**” (p. 232)

Why should we care?



Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?

The Taxonomy of Critical Theory

“critical theory” = critical social theories

Neo-Marxism

**CULTURAL
STUDIES**

**Queer
Theory**

**CRITICAL
PEDAGOGY**

“Critical Theory”
= Frankfurt School



**GENDER
STUDIES**

feminism

**intro to
critical
race
theory**

Critical theory resists essentialism (it is hard to define!)

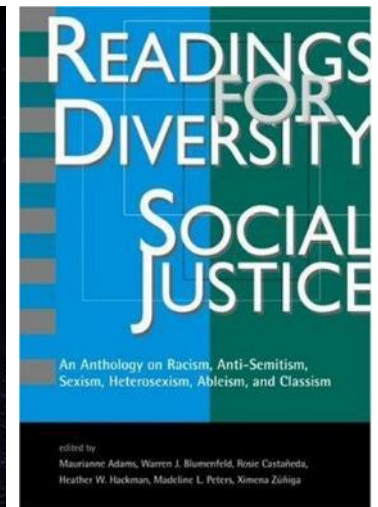
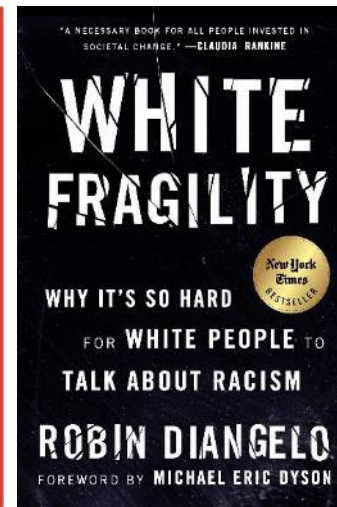
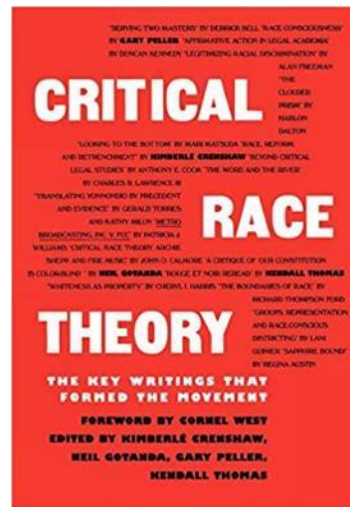
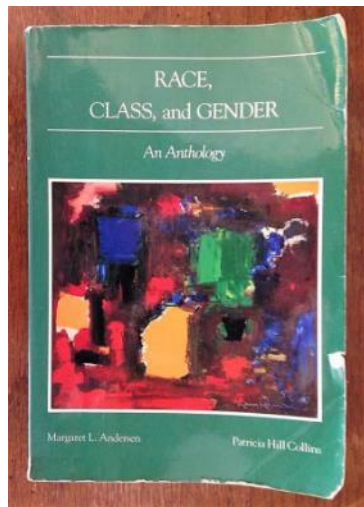
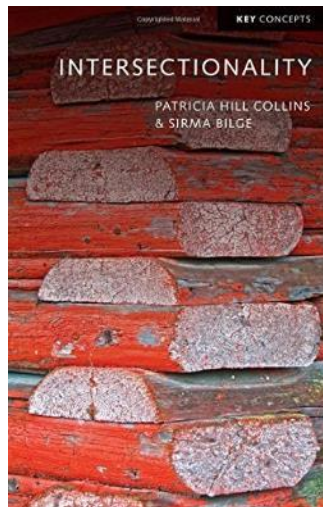
The central premises of contemporary critical theory

Premise I: Social binary

Premise II: Oppression through ideology

Premise III: Lived experience

Premise IV: Social justice



Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
 - Premise 1: Social binary
 - Premise 2: Oppression through ideology
 - Premise 3: Lived experience
 - Premise 4: Social justice
 - The strengths of critical theory
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?

Premise #1: Society is divided into oppressed and oppressor groups

64

Is Everyone Really Equal?

Figure 5.1. Group Identities Across Relations of Power

Minoritized/Target Group	Oppression	Dominant/ Agent Group
Peoples of Color	Racism	White
Poor Working Class	Classism	Owning Class
Middle Class		
Women; Transgender; Genderqueer	Sexism	(cis)Men
Gays; Lesbians; Bisexuals; Two Spirit	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals
Muslims; Buddhists; Jews; Hindus; and other non-Christ- ian groups	Religious Oppression Anti-Semitism	Christians
People with Disabilities	Ableism	Able-bodied
Immigrants (perceived)	Nationalism	Citizens (perceived)
Indigenous Peoples	Colonialism	White Settlers

Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
 - Premise 1: Social binary
 - Premise 2: Oppression through ideology
 - Premise 3: Lived experience
 - Premise 4: Social justice
 - The strengths of critical theory
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?

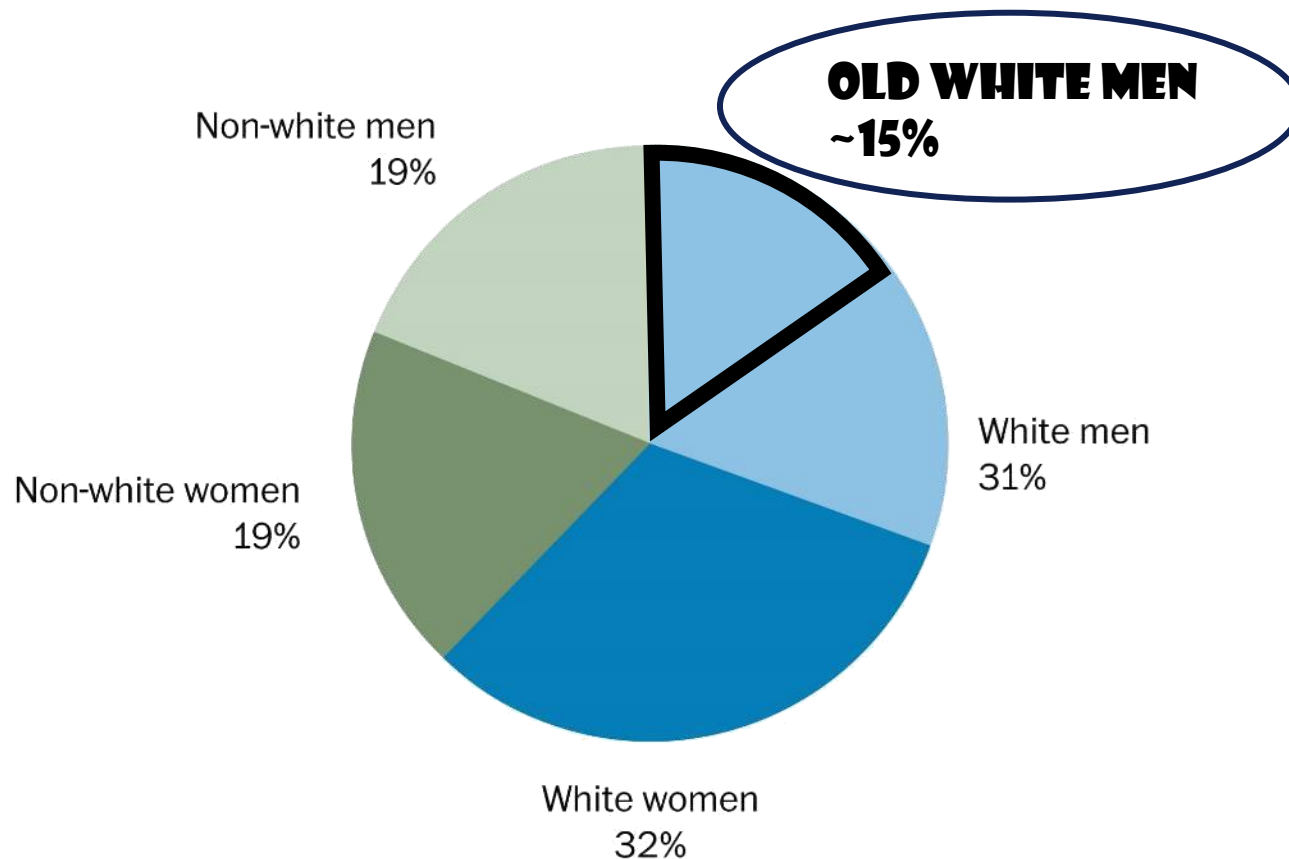
Idea #2: Oppression occurs through hegemonic power

“*Hegemony* refers to the control of the ideology of society. **The dominant group maintains power by imposing their ideology on everyone.**”

“From a critical social justice perspective, **privilege is defined as systemically conferred dominance** and the institutional processes by which the beliefs and values of the dominant group are ‘made normal’ and universal.” – Sensoy and DiAngelo, *Is Everyone Really Equal?* p. 73, 80



Premise #2: Oppression occurs through hegemonic power



Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
 - Premise 1: Social binary
 - Premise 2: Oppression through ideology
 - Premise 3: Lived experience
 - Premise 4: Social justice
 - The strengths of critical theory
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?

Premise #3: 'Lived experience' gives oppressed groups privileged access to truth

“The idea that objectivity is best reached only through rational thought is a specifically **Western and masculine way of thinking** – one that we will challenge throughout this book.” – Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins, “Reconstructing Knowledge,” in Anderson and Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender*, p. 4-5



Premise #3: 'Lived experience' gives oppressed groups privileged access to truth

Oppression and epistemology:

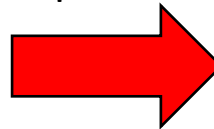


Privilege



Internalized oppression

Lived
experience



Liberatory consciousness

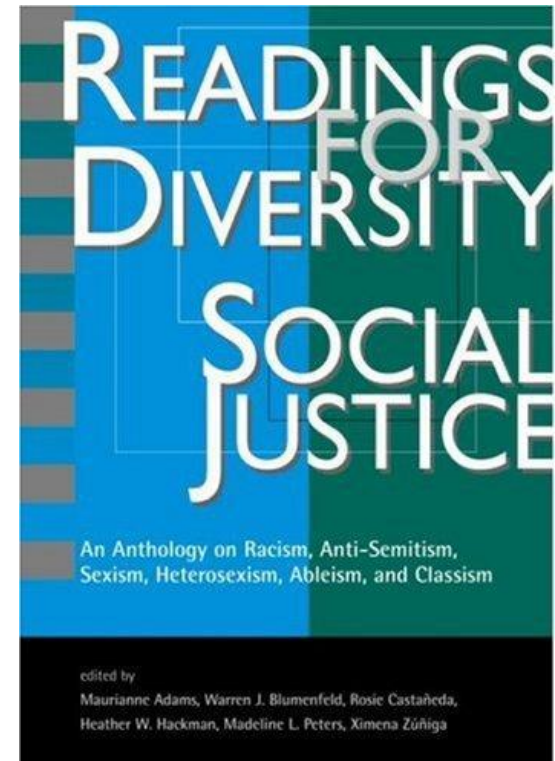
Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
 - Premise 1: Social binary
 - Premise 2: Oppression through ideology
 - Premise 3: Lived experience
 - Premise 4: Social justice
 - The strengths of critical theory
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?

Premise #4: Social justice demands the liberation of oppressed groups

Definition of social justice:

“Prior to celebrating diversity, we must first eliminate intolerance. No matter what form it takes or who does it, we must all take action to stop intolerance when it happens. Working towards a celebration of diversity implies working for **social justice – the elimination of all forms of social oppression...** Social injustice takes many forms. It can be injustice based on a **person’s gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, or economic class.**” – Mary McClintock, “How to Interrupt Oppressive Behavior,” *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, p. 483



Outline

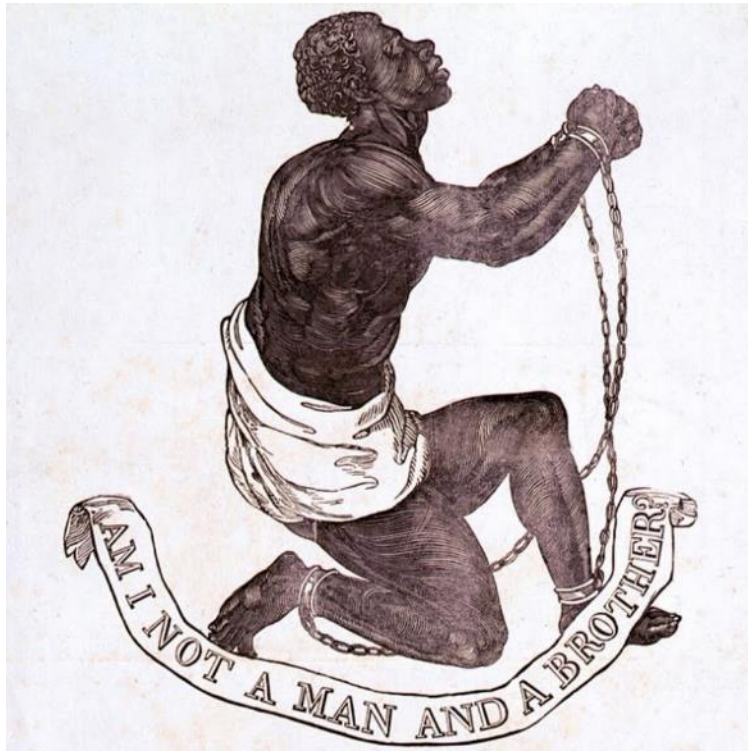
- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
 - Premise 1: Social binary
 - Premise 2: Oppression through ideology
 - Premise 3: Lived experience
 - Premise 4: Social justice
 - The strengths of critical theory
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?

Strength #1. Emphasis on the sinfulness of oppression

- “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.” – Is. 1:17
- “Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” – Zech. 7:20
- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” – Mark 12:30
- “Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” – James 5:4



Strength #2. Focus on structures, systems, and norms



Strength #3: Recognition of hegemonic power



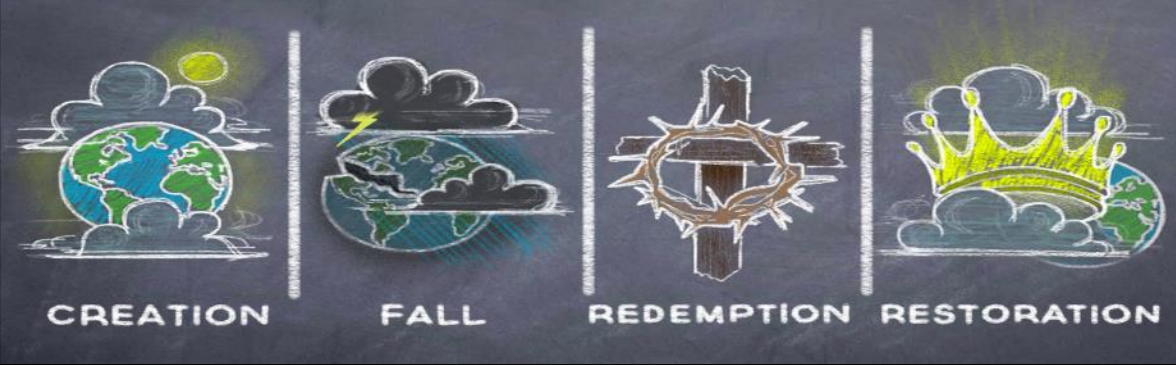
Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
 - Worldview
 - Epistemology
 - Adversarial identities
 - Hegemonic power
- What can we do?

Worldview questions

- Who are we?
- What is our fundamental problem as human beings?
- What is the solution to our problem?
- What is our primary moral duty?
- What is our purpose in life?

Christianity and critical theory are competing worldviews

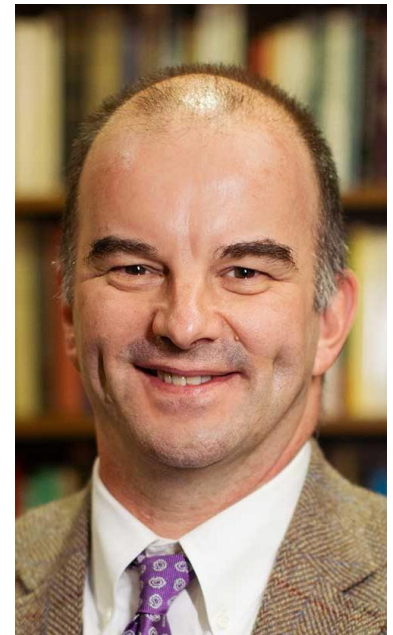
Christianity	 <p>CREATION FALL REDEMPTION RESTORATION</p>			
Critical theory	----	<p>Patriarchy White supremacy Heteronormativity Toxic masculinity</p> <p>OPPRESSION</p> <p>Classism Ageism Ableism Cisgenderism</p>	<p>Protest Resistance</p> <p>ACTIVISM</p> <p>Education Awareness</p>	<p>Equity Power reversal</p> <p>LIBERATION</p> <p>Justice Diversity</p>

Worldview questions

	Christianity	Critical theory
Who are we?	God's creatures	Members of various groups
What is our problem?	Sin	Oppression
What is the solution?	Jesus	Liberation
What is our duty?	Loving God	Liberating the oppressed
What is our purpose?	Glorifying God	Working for liberation

Critical theory as worldview

“the cluster of philosophical approaches to [issues of identity is] **known by the umbrella term critical theory**. Critical theory is today a diverse phenomenon that draws deeply and variously on strands of Marxist thought, psychoanalysis, feminist theory, postcolonialism, poststructuralism, queer theory, and deconstruction... at the core of the various approaches of critical theorists lies a relatively simple set of convictions: **the world is to be divided up between those who have power and those who do not; the dominant Western narrative of truth is really an ideological construct designed to preserve the power structure of the status quo; and the goal of critical theory is therefore to destabilize this power structure by destabilizing the dominant narratives that are used to justify –to ‘naturalize’– it**” - Trueman



Critical theory as worldview

“we now have Social Justice texts--forming a kind of Gospel of Social Justice--that express, with absolute certainty, that all white people are racist, all men are sexist, racism and sexism are systems that can exist and oppress absent even a single person with racist or sexist intentions or beliefs..., sex is not biological and exists on a spectrum, language can be literal violence, denial of gender identity is killing people, the wish to remedy disability and obesity is hateful, and everything needs to be decolonized.



Does this sound like a metanarrative? That's because it is. Social Justice scholarship and its educators and activists see these principles and conclusions as *The Truth* According to Social Justice--and they treat it as though they have discovered the analogue of the germ theory of disease, but for bigotry and oppression”

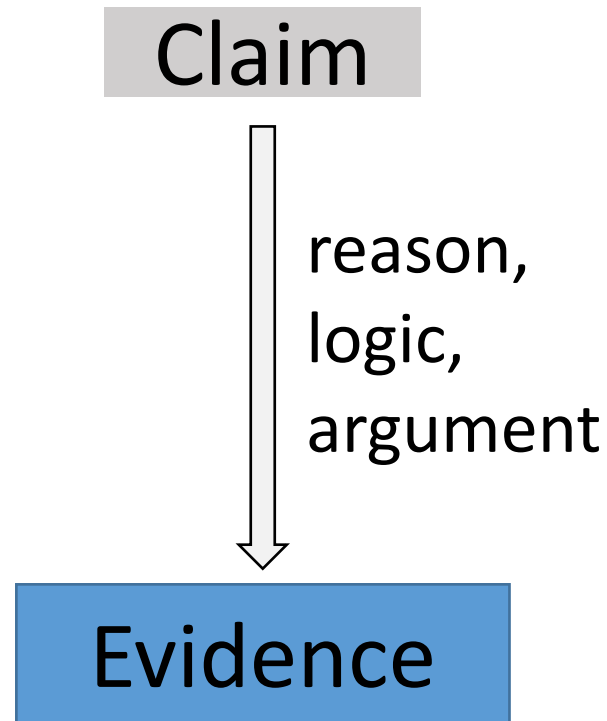
-Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, p. 182-183



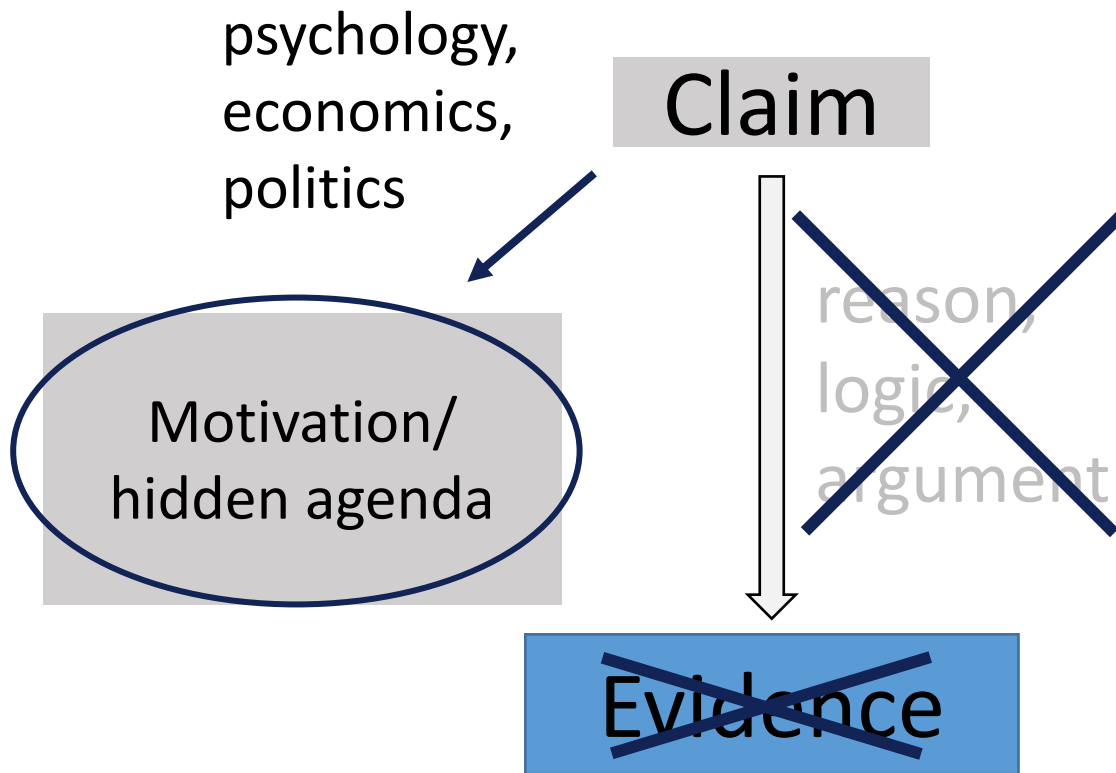
Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
 - Worldview
 - Epistemology
 - Adversarial identities
 - Hegemonic power
- What can we do?

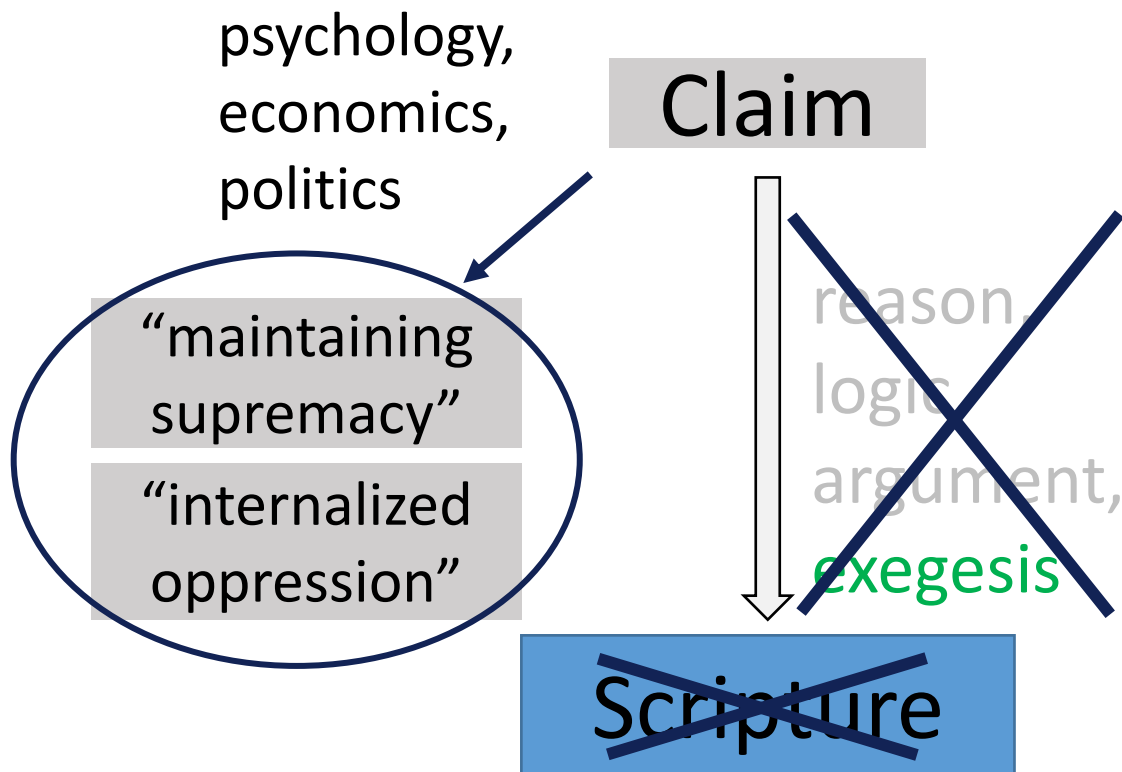
Epistemology



Bulverism



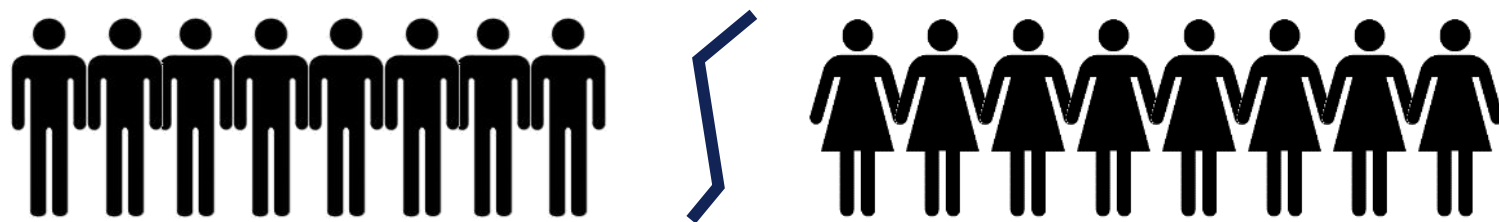
Epistemology



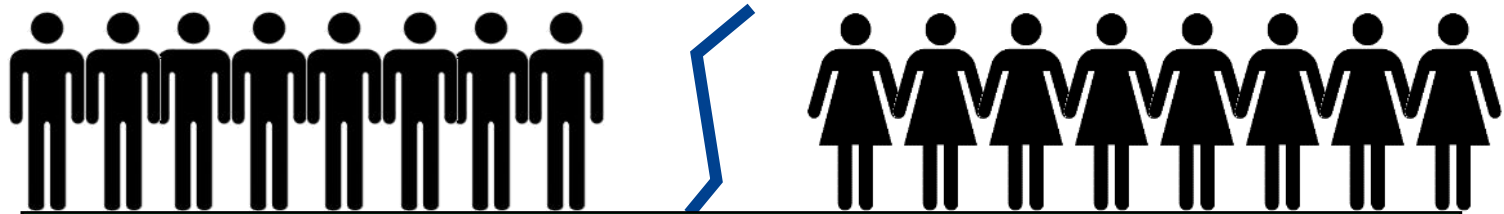
Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
 - Worldview
 - Epistemology
 - Adversarial identities
 - Hegemonic power
- What can we do?

Identity and solidarity



Identity and solidarity



Creation

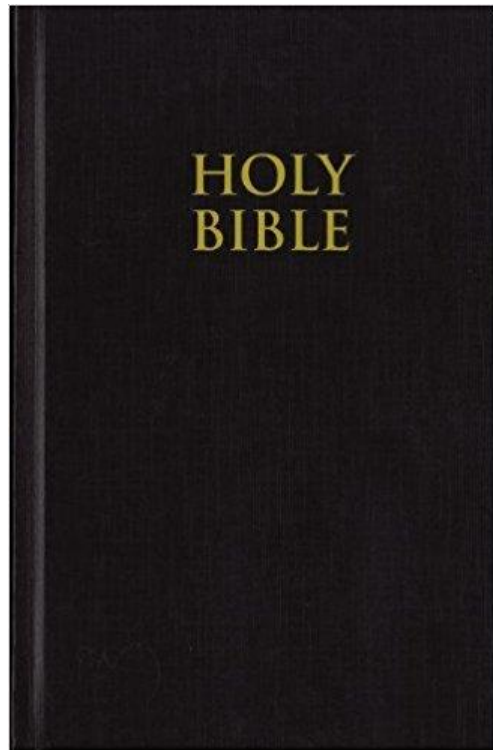
Sin

Redemption

Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
 - Worldview
 - Epistemology
 - Adversarial identities
 - Hegemonic power
- What can we do?

Christianity as hegemonic discourse



Religion

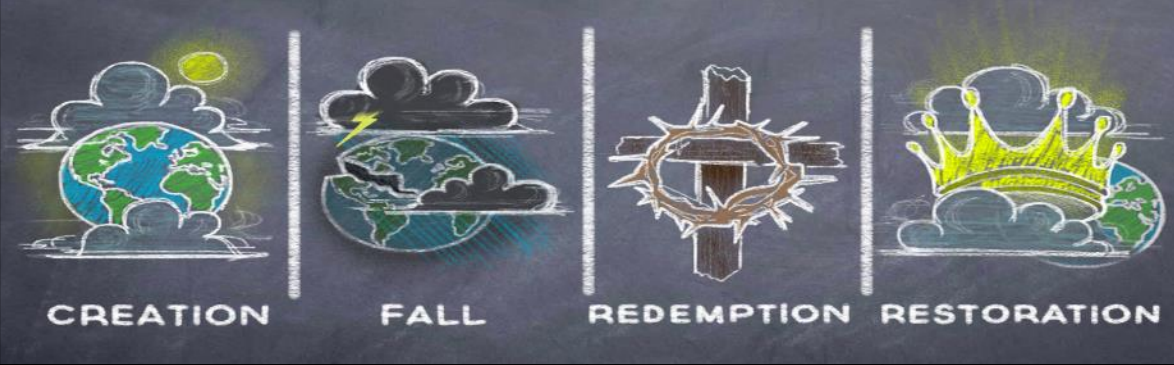
Morality

Sexuality

Gender

etc...

Christianity and critical theory are competing worldviews

Christianity	 <p>CREATION FALL REDEMPTION RESTORATION</p>			
Critical theory	----	OPPRESSION Patriarchy White supremacy Heteronormativity Toxic masculinity Classism Ageism Ableism Cisgenderism	ACTIVISM Protest Resistance Education Awareness	LIBERATION Equality Power reversal Justice Diversity

Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?
 - Acknowledge and fight racism
 - Be charitable
 - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
 - Read broadly

Acknowledge and fight racism



Acknowledge and fight racism



Acknowledge and fight racism



Acknowledge and fight racism



Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?
 - Acknowledge and fight racism
 - Be charitable
 - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
 - Read broadly

Be charitable



LET EVERY PERSON BE
**QUICK TO HEAR,
SLOW TO SPEAK,
SLOW TO ANGER.**

- JAMES 1:19 ESV -

Don't be that guy



Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?
 - Acknowledge and fight racism
 - Be charitable
 - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
 - Read broadly

What's at stake

- Our primary identity is in Christ, not in race, ethnicity, gender, or anything else. (Gal. 3:26-28, Phil. 3:3-11)
- We can only repent for our own sins. (Ez. 18:14-20, Deut. 24:16 and Jer. 31:27-34)
- No one's "lived experience" makes them infallible. (Prov. 14:12, Jer. 17:9)
- Biblical justice means "giving people their due," not "dismantling hegemonic norms." (Rom. 13:1-7, Is. 1:17)
- Diversity is not always good. (Jdg. 21:25, Rev. 17:13-14)
- The gospel is an indicative, not an imperative. (Rom. 4:5, John 6:29)

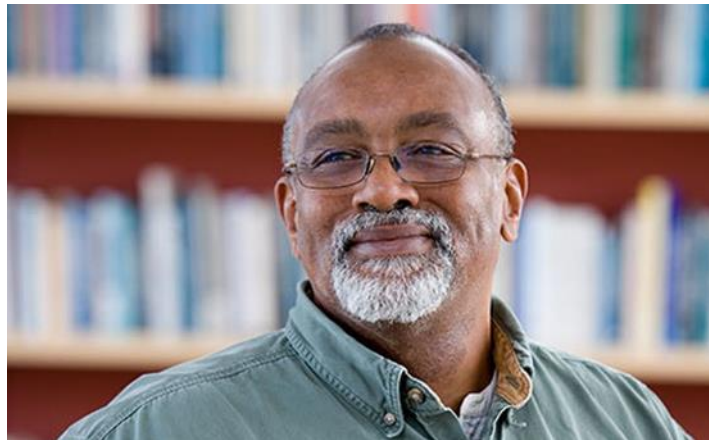
Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- What are the problems with critical theory?
- What can we do?
 - Acknowledge and fight racism
 - Be charitable
 - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
 - Read broadly

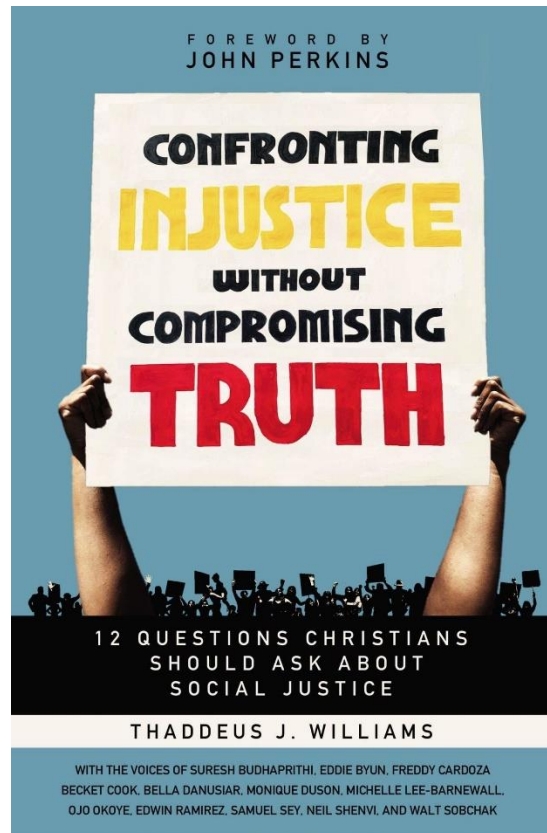
Read broadly



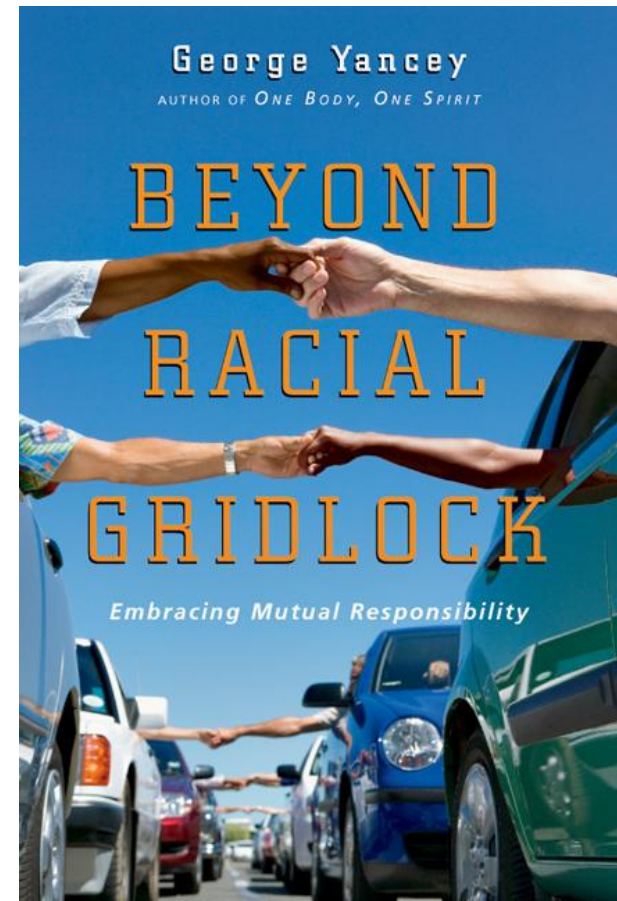
Read broadly



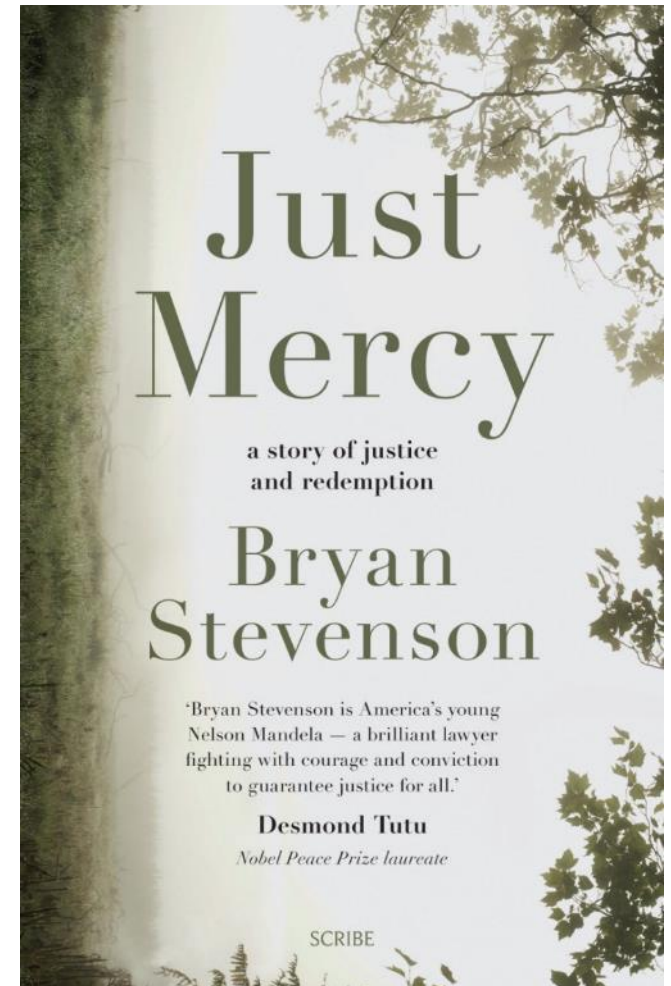
Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth by Thaddeus Williams



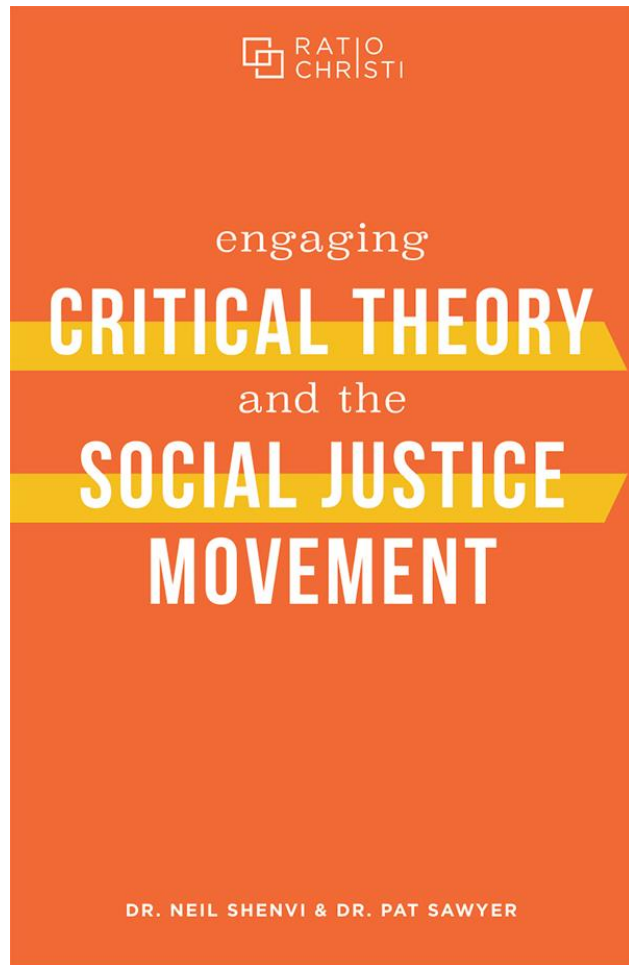
Beyond Racial Gridlock, by Dr. George Yancey



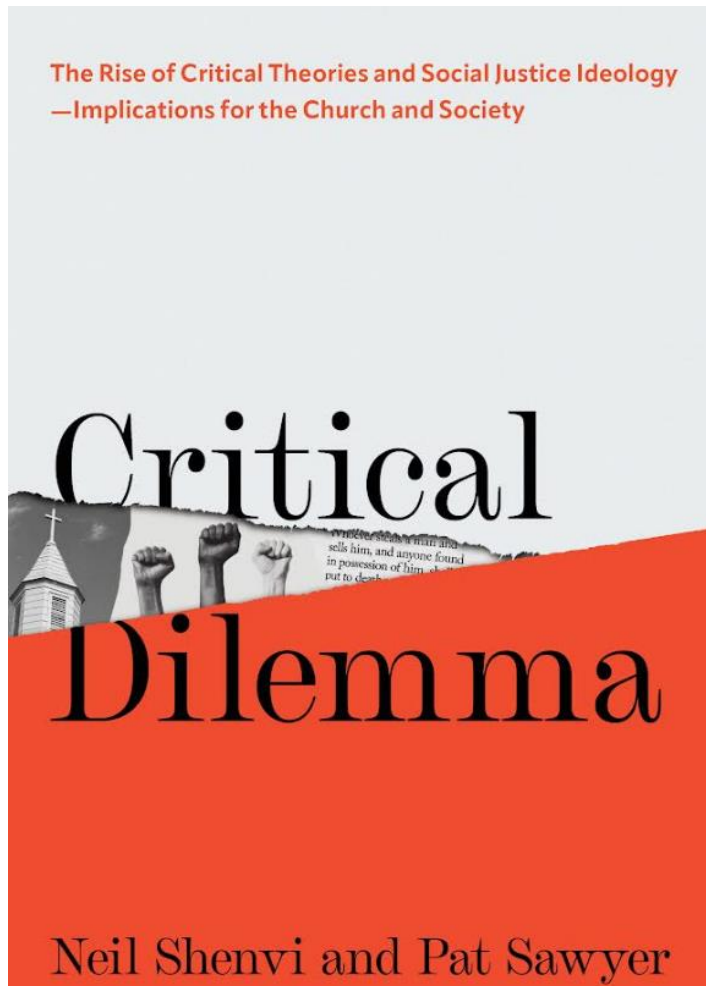
Just Mercy, Bryan Stevenson



Engaging Critical Theory and the Social Justice Movement by Shenvi and Sawyer



Critical Dilemma by Shenvi and Sawyer (Fall 2023)



Acknowledgements

Dr. Christina Shenvi



Dr. Pat Sawyer



- “The Incompatibility of Critical Theory and Christianity,” *The Gospel Coalition*
- “Gender, Intersectionality, and Critical Theory,” *Eikon*
- “Engaging Critical Theory and the Social Justice Movement” *Ratio Christi*
- shenviapologetics.com/defend19
- Twitter @NeilShenvi, @RealPatSawyer