

# Chapter 3: Critical Race Theory

## Reason for this "Grow" Class

- Our culture has been under assault in recent years by a new movement of an old ideology in **Critical Theory** (CT). The ideology of CT stands in opposition to the liberal order of the United States and in opposition to a Christian worldview.
- We need to understand CT so that:
  - our own faith stands strong and unwavering when we encounter it.
  - we may be equipped to engage with secular culture as ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

# Two Cautions



## Two Cautions: First

- CT subverts the gospel of Jesus Christ. As such, I view CT as an enemy of the gospel that we need to understand.
- But let's be careful to not generalize antipathy for the *ideas* of CT to the *people* who believe them. We want to better understand CT so that we can stand strong and so that we can be better ambassadors for our savior in a society that is affected by CT.
- The purpose of this class is **not to agitate or to stir up animosity against people who adopt the nonbiblical worldview of CT.**

## Two Cautions: Second

- We're taking a ***critical*** look at CT, but CT is not wrong for critiquing the sins of racism and discrimination perpetrated by **individuals** and by **societies** alike.
- Let's be careful to not let our criticism of CT cause us to minimize or deny that the sins of racism and discrimination are part of our national history, and that they still exist in our country even today.
- Let's remember the Church is always called to have compassion for the oppressed (Ps. 82:3-4).



# 4

## CRIT. THEORY EXAMPLES

### FEMINIST THEORY

A theory aimed at understanding the nature of gender inequality through examination of women's and men's social roles, and how these drive interests, opportunities, and experiences in a variety of contexts

### CRITICAL RACE THEORY

A theory that recognizes racism is engrained in the fabric of society, with particular attention to structural racism, institutional racism, and how the law and legal traditions adversely affect people of color

### QUEER THEORY

A theory deconstructing sexuality & viewing it as a discursive social construction, and therefore fluid, plural, and continually negotiated rather than a natural or fixed identity

### ANTI-COLONIAL THEORY

A theory emphasizing resistance to oppressive political, economic, and cultural forces created by colonial power via advocacy for restoration of local control



# Critical Theory + Identity Politics = Many “Critical Theories”

- **Marx:**

The power dynamics in a **capitalist** society necessarily means that the **bourgeoise** are the oppressors and the **proletariat** are the oppressed.

- **Critical Race Theory:**

The power dynamics in a **White, Western** society necessarily means that the **White people** are the oppressors and **non-White people** are the oppressed.

Systemic power and oppression by **race** are the only organizational principles of society that really matter. Racism is the single-most important driving force of society.

# Critical Race Theory: Origins

- Origin in Legal Studies in the late 1970s.
  - Derrick Bell & Kimberlee Crenshaw.
- Dissatisfaction with Civil Rights Values



“The aspect of our work which most markedly distinguishes it from conventional liberal and conservative legal scholarship about race and inequality is a deep dissatisfaction with traditional civil rights discourse.”  
(Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1996, p. xiv).



# What CRT stands against...

- Rejects values adopted from civil rights movement:
  - ~~Color blindness~~
  - ~~Integration~~
  - ~~Meritocracy~~
  - ~~Equality/equal opportunity~~
  - ~~Rationalism~~ (reason as chief source of knowledge)
- **Richard Delgado and Jean Stetancic (2017):**  
Unlike traditional **civil rights** discourse, **critical race theory** questions the very foundations of liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law (p. 3).

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  - ~~Rationalism~~ (reason as chief source of knowledge)
- Rejects **Martin Luther King's** plea that we, in America, judge one another not by the color of our skin, but by the content of our character.

# What CRT stands against...

- Rejects of the values of the civil rights movement, which reflected a Christian worldview.
- Rejects the Christian worldview and instead views society and societal problems, namely racism, through the worldview lens of **Critical Theory**.

# Worldview of CRT

## 1. Who are we? What gives us meaning?

- Systemic power and oppression by **race** are the only organizational principles of society that really matter.
- **A person is defined by their social identity.** Specifically, a person's **race** and the position of their racial group in society, more than anything else, defines who they are.
- A racial group's status as oppressor or oppressed is at the core of what it means to be you as a White person or Hispanic person, etc.
  - The meaning of race and thus your identity (who you are) is inherently tied to systemic power and oppression.

# Worldview of CRT

## 2. What is our fundamental problem?

- **Racism:** Systemic power and oppression by race. Racism is woven into the fabric of American society. **Racism does not violate American ideals; it is the American ideal.**
  - Most important “driving force” that shapes society.
- **Sin by Social Identity.** By virtue of systemic power, Whites oppress people of color; Whites, by definition, are racist, people of color are not. **Whites benefit from a system of white supremacy; that makes them racist, not their actions.**
- The problem of racism is ultimately **political** and requires a political solution.

# Worldview of CRT

## 3. What is our hope?

- Our hope is political and temporal. We place our hope in **government and in activism** to **liberate** people of color from the oppression of white supremacy.



# Worldview of CRT

## 4. What is our ultimate moral responsibility?

- **Activism and revolution.** Control and disrupt the institutions of culture, promote resistance to **cultural hegemony** and acceptance of a race-conscious **counter-hegemony**. Then, dismantle and rebuild according to a Marxist utopian vision that eliminates whiteness/white supremacy (**Kendi, 2020**).
- CRT aims to awaken people to the often-hidden forms of white supremacy that inherently exist in America's organizations, institutions and thought processes (**hegemony**) and to promote activism (**through counter-hegemony**) and ultimately revolution to end racial oppression (**Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993**).

# Four Principles of CRT

CRT has four basic tenets/principles that form the basis of its framework:

- A. Knowledge Principle: What is Truth? (Cultural constructivism)
- B. Moral Principle 1: Sin and Redemption
- C. Moral Principle 2: Asymmetry of Moral Authority and Moral Responsibility
- D. Moral Principle 3: The Moral Imperative of Activism

For a complete definition, see UCLA School of Public Affairs, Critical Race Studies, <https://spacrs.wordpress.com/what-is-critical-race-theory>.)

# Knowledge Principle: What is Truth?

- **Cultural Constructivism**
- Critical Theorists reject the idea of objectivity and absolute truth. We see the world through the hegemonic lenses of our culture that are inherently biased. That means all claims of truth are “value-laden constructs of culture” (artificial social constructs).

# Knowledge Principle: Cultural Constructivism

- Race and whiteness
- Religion as a hegemonic narrative
- Rejection of rationalism
- Moral relativism

# Knowledge Principle: Cultural Constructivism

- **Race and Whiteness**
- **Hegemony**: Whites invented the concepts of race and “whiteness” to propagate white supremacy.
- **Counter-hegemony**: Whiteness is rooted in oppression and privilege.
- **Ekemini Uwan** noted at the 2019 Sparrow Women’s Conference: *“Because we have to understand something — whiteness is wicked. It is wicked. It’s rooted in violence, it’s rooted in theft, it’s rooted in plunder, it’s rooted in power, in privilege.”*
- So, if you’re a White person, your fundamental identity is deeply rooted in the moral depravity of these evils.


# National Museum of African American History & Culture: Hegemony of White Culture

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

**History**

- Based on Northern European immigrants’ experience in the United States
- Heavy focus on the British Empire
- The primacy of Western (Greek, Roman) and Judeo-Christian tradition

**Protestant Work Ethic**

- Hard work is the key to success
- Work before play
- “If you didn’t meet your goals, you didn’t work hard enough”

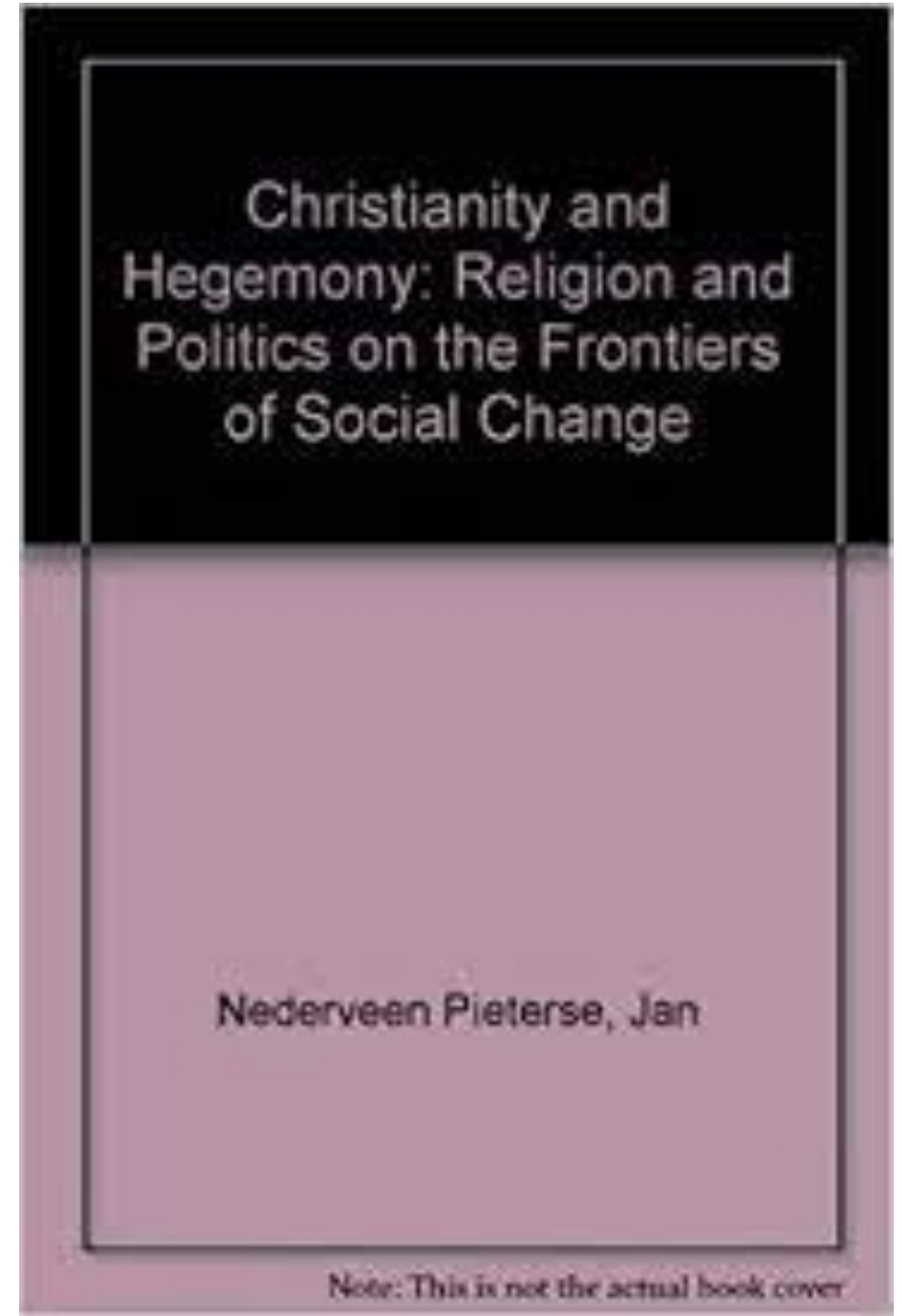


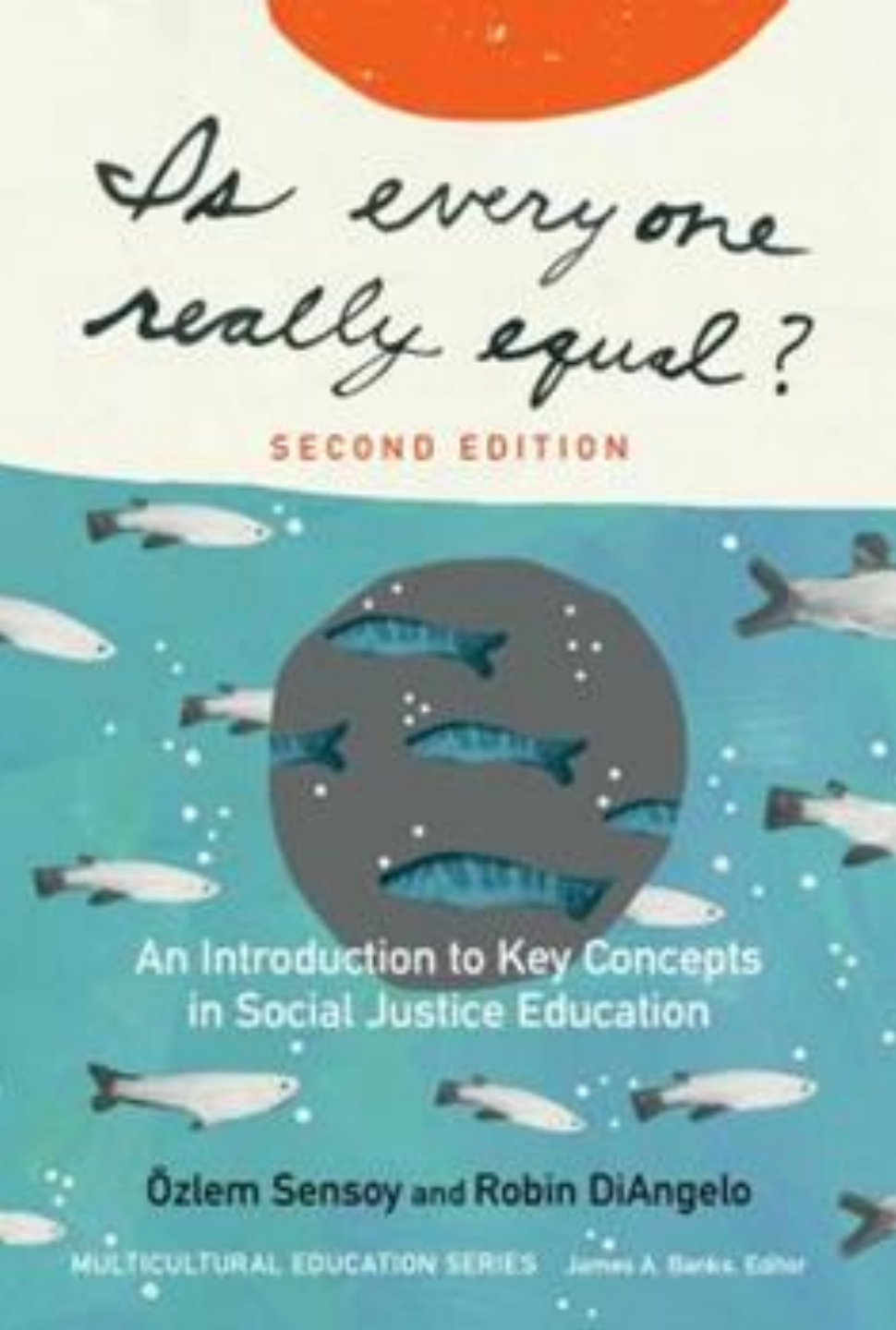
# Hegemony of Whiteness

- [Seattle Public Schools Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee](#):
- “Western mathematics disenfranchises people of color” (c.f. Swain & Schorr, 2021).
- The CRT claim that hard work, rationality, self-reliance, being polite, responsible time management are “White ideals” is absurd and tragically, such claims deny people of color ownership and control over their own lives.
- As America has defined racism up until 1989/1990 these ideas, themselves, are **racist**.

# Knowledge Principle: **Cultural Constructivism**

- Religion as a **Hegemonic** Meta-narrative
- Critical Theorists reject “meta-narratives” of religion, namely **Christianity**. By making truth claims that are purportedly universal or absolute, **Christianity** functions as an instrument of oppressive hegemonic power.





Sensoy, Ozlem, & DiAngelo, Robin (2017). *Is Everyone Really Equal?: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education* (Multicultural Education Series) 2nd Edition.

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

# Knowledge Principle: Cultural Constructivism

- **Rejection of Rationalism (e.g., scientific method)**
- *scientific method* as a means of learning about the “**social world**” is **inherently racist** (e.g., Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002).
- Instead of the scientific method “Critical theorists embrace subjectivity of perspective and are avowedly political” (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993).
- Calmore (1993) argued that the Critical Race scholarship “rejects the traditional dictates that implore one to write and study as a detached observer whose work is purportedly objective, neutral and balanced” (p. 321).

# Knowledge Principle: Cultural Constructivism

- **Rejection of Rationalism (e.g., scientific method)**
- **Narrative** is an alternative and superior “truth” (i.e., way of learning about the world) compared to objective observation of the scientific method.
- Two forms of narrative: ***legal storytelling*** and ***counter storytelling*** (Baucham, 2021, Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).



# Knowledge Principle: Cultural Constructivism

- **Legal storytelling** is “using stories, parables, and first-person accounts to understand and analyze racial issues” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, *Critical Race Theory*, p. 178).
- **Counter Storytelling** is “writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, *Critical Race Theory*, p. 178).
  - Notice that, for CRT, “truth” has a social/political agenda that is either **hegemonic** (benefits dominant White culture) or **counter-hegemonic** (reflecting the perspective and interests of people of color).

# Knowledge Principle: Cultural Constructivism

- **Moral Relativism:** *Your truth as a “queer woman of color.”*
- Critical Theorists/activists give ultimate authority for defining “truth” to an individual’s “narrative” that represents their “lived experience” over **objective evidence**.
- Any claim of truth is merely a cultural construction, and since there are many cultures and many different positions in a power/oppression matrix one might occupy within a culture, there are many equally valid claims of truth.

# Knowledge Principle: Cultural Constructivism

- Moral Relativism: “Your truth needs to be heard”
- <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/kamala-harris-wants-to-hear-your-truth-even-if-its-a-lie/>

# Cultural Constructivism: Compatible with Christianity?


- **There is no “truth”.**
- Truth does not exist on its own for us to **discover**. It is not **revealed** to us through scripture. It is a “narrative” we **create** to serve either a **hegemonic** or a **counter-hegemonic** political agenda.

# Cultural Constructivism: Compatible with Christianity?

- **Moral Relativism**

- The attack on absolute truth represents an attack on the foundation of Christianity, namely that scripture reveals the absolute and inerrant truth given to us by God.
- Moral relativism of CT/CRT redistributes moral authority from God to you ([as long as you agree with CT/CRT](#)). You (not God) define your “truth.” Rather than exalting and glorifying God, CT denies and replaces God with human beings as the ultimate moral authority.

# Four Principles of CRT

- A. Knowledge Principle: What is Truth? (Cultural constructivism) 
- B. **Moral Principle 1: Sin and Redemption Next Week**
- C. Moral Principle 2: Asymmetry of Moral Authority and Moral Responsibility
- D. Moral Principle 3: The Moral Imperative of Activism



# CRT Video: Christopher Rufo



# By What Standard? God's World...God's Rules (CINEDOC)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFHfa0s1XLM>