

Book Review

Penny, L. T., Nicholas, J., & Bondy, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Feminist Pedagogy in Higher Education: Critical theory and practice*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. ISBN 9781771121149

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One of the hottest topics in pedagogical discourse in higher education is incorporating feminist philosophy into the classroom. While the concept of feminist pedagogy isn't anything new, over the past few years, feminism has truly entered the mainstream. One of the most visually impactful cultural touchstones of 2014 was the sight of Beyoncé standing onstage at the Video Music Awards in front of the word 'FEMINIST' displayed in bright shining lights behind her, while an excerpt from Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "We should all be feminists" TEDx talk played in the background. In the subsequent two years, we continued to see the proliferation of the word 'feminist' making it to the front pages of mass-market magazines aimed at teenage girls, such as *YM* and *Rookie*. Collections of personal essays, such as Roxane Gay's "Bad Feminist" and Lena Dunham's "Not That Kind of Girl," made it to the *New York Times* bestseller list.

It is therefore quite timely to have an academic collection of essays written by feminist scholars and educators with backgrounds ranging from gender, sexuality, and women's studies, to philosophy and law, which addresses not only the critical theory behind feminist pedagogy, but also how to incorporate it into one's practice in the classroom. Editors Renée Bondy, Jane Nicholas, and Tracy Penny Light – all of whom have backgrounds teaching women's and gender studies in Canadian universities – bring together scholars from across Canada and the United States, as well as two from the United Kingdom and Australia, to examine why inequities as they intersect with race, class, and gender remain in higher education, and what can be done to address these issues.

Through the thoughtfully-curated collection of essays, the various authors aim to answer several crucial questions: how do we define feminist pedagogy in the twenty-first century? What constitutes the feminist classroom and feminist teaching strategies? What do feminists bring to teaching?

The classroom should be a space that allows students from different backgrounds to interact and relate. Feminist pedagogy empowers students to challenge ideas and people, while reinforcing that all opinions are valued, and that everyone – women in particular – should be able to express them without fear. While the benefits of feminist pedagogy – encouraging critical thinking and imagination, promoting intersectional awareness, reconnecting students with the humanities, and preparing students for meaningful lives – are clear to some, a recurring theme throughout many essays in this collection is the resistance felt by feminist educators from both university administration and students alike.

The works offer tools and feminist teaching strategies, such as practicing Community Service Learning, incorporating images of transgressive texts into the curriculum, focusing on experiential learning in the classroom, and moving outside the classroom by building small tutorial sessions to act as feminist book clubs.

If there are any oversights in these works, the editors themselves are the first to acknowledge them: there is an absence of scholars in the STEM disciplines, as well as a Western bias. While this collection was published in 2015, most of the works cited in the essays predate 2012. There has arguably been a sea change in how younger students have come to perceive feminism in the last four years, and an

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openness in having informed, scholarly feminist debates, both on social media and in the classroom. A follow-up collection from these same editors a few years down the road would be most welcome, in order to see how the state of feminist pedagogy has evolved and examine new trends in feminist scholarship.