

GERALD WALTON

The Polarization of Privilege

2022

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

In this Equity Studies in Education lecture, Dr. Gerald Walton discusses the polarization of privilege. Decades of research and scholarship have explored social privilege in its many dimensions. Yet, privilege remains a thorny topic and difficult to talk about, inciting eye-rolling, confusion, denial, resentment, and perhaps even rage, among other responses. Walton argues that building understanding of equity relies on reshaping educational approaches to teaching about privilege. Recognizing the risks of polarization in spaces of learning, Walton insists that it is up to social justice scholars and educators to find ways to mitigate it. In his view, the work is especially incumbent upon those who, like himself, benefit from social privilege. His presentation for Equity Studies in Education focuses on how scholars and educators can teach about social privilege in ways that engage all students, even the most resentful ones. The question is: how?

keywords: polarization, privilege, critical pedagogy, diversity in education, social justice, academic freedom,

Discussion questions

- 1) How are “earned privileges” derived from or related to “unearned privileges”? In what way has privilege shaped your life?
- 2) What are the implications of “Diversity in Education” being an elective course instead of a mandatory course?
- 3) What strategies have you (or would you) use to address student resentment about social justice topics in a course you were teaching?
- 4) What are the limits on academic freedom in light of human rights legislation and university EDID initiatives?
- 5) As an educator, how can you be “on the side of” minoritized students without being their rescuer? How can you gain the trust of students

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who do not share the same outward privileges as you do? What strategies can you employ to create a classroom environment that is more inclusive of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized students?

- 6) Dr. Walton says: “That is how privilege works. We don’t see it unless we *work* to see it.” – What does this statement mean? What work can you do to improve your ability to “see it”?

Further reading

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