



# The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning And Teaching.

*Stephen Brookfield*

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## **The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning And Teaching.** Stephen Brookfield

'Stephen Brookfield disturbs and enriches the entire field of adult learning with this brilliant piece of teaching' - Robert Kegan, Harvard University, USA. 'Simplifying without eroding the complexity of critical theory, Brookfield traverses the grand themes of ideology, power, alienation, liberation, reason and democracy; showing how they inform the adult education practice of fostering critical thinking and critical reflection' - Mark Tennant, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. 'I learned more from this book than from dozens of other adult education publications! This book is sure to become a major reference text in the field' - Elizabeth Hayes, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. 'A lucid, accessible overview of how critical theory (with its daunting vocabularies and internal debates) illuminates the contexts of adult learning and orients teaching practices' - Michael Welton, Mount St. Vincent University, Canada. 'This is a sophisticated and comprehensive treatment of the power of Socratic questioning of dogmas and a prophetic witness against the conservative status quo! A must read for all seriously engaged teachers' - Cornel West, Princeton University, USA. This major contribution to the literature on adult education provides adult educators with an accessible overview of critical theory's central ideas. Using many direct quotes from the theorists' works, Brookfield shows how critical theory illuminates the everyday practices of adult educators and helps them make sense of the dilemmas, contradictions and frustrations they experience in their work. Drawing widely on central texts in critical theory, Brookfield argues that a critical theory of adult learning must focus on understanding how adults learn to challenge ideology, contest hegemony, unmask power, overcome alienation, learn liberation, reclaim reason and practice democracy. These tasks form the focus of successive chapters, while later chapters review the central contentions of critical theory through the contemporary lenses of race and gender. The final chapter reviews adult educational practices and looks at what it means to teach critically. It is essential reading for anyone teaching, working in, studying or researching adult education.

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