



BOOK REVIEW

The Critical Media Literacy Guide: Engaging Media and Transforming Education

Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share

Boston, MA: Brill Sense, 2019

(xvii + 126 pages, ISBN 900440452X, \$30.00)

Reviewed By

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For those interested in learning how to evaluate media and decipher fact from fiction, this book is a helpful resource. *The Critical Media Literacy Guide* addresses critical media literacy, ideology and power of media, race and racism, sexuality, environmental justice, and how to teach critical media literacy (CML). The authors state that they wrote this book “to promote critical media literacy as a theoretical framework and practical pedagogy in order to enhance individual sovereignty vis-à-vis media culture, empowering people to critically read, write, and create a better world” (xi). The authors accomplish their stated aim in the introduction. With the ubiquitous use of social media and polarizing views and news online, this book addresses a current lack of resources in theological education on this subject.

A cursory Google Scholar search on CML in theological education reveals a gap in scholarship of the last twenty years. Although not written from a theological perspective, *The Critical Media Literacy Guide* offers some important points religious educators ought to be aware of and implement in their classrooms and pedagogy. For educators in liberal arts subjects, such as English, media, and sciences, it includes teaching examples for the classroom.

The examples, aimed at K-12 subjects and educators, are informative. A graduate instructor could incorporate these examples into a course across various disciplines. The issues of sexism, gender stereotyping, and power dynamics of media, would be a welcome addition to a Christianity and culture course. CML addresses how one engages thoughtfully with all forms of media to discern what is false and uncover the ideological message of the medium. According to Kellner and Share, media is not neutral: often media is racist, sexist, and biased towards one view of gender identity and sexuality. Ironically, in their quest to bring awareness to bias in media, the authors come across as dismissive of other viewpoints, particularly religious ones. In addition, the book makes absolute claims about truth and gender identity that some theological educators may find offensive.

Nevertheless, *The Critical Media Literacy Guide* is a valuable resource for those who want to know how to engage with media in the classroom. This volume is a welcome contribution: it treats a timely subject with clear writing and raises awareness of critical issues. The current media landscape is fraught with contradictions, polarized viewpoints, and outrageous claims that have life and death consequences. This book helps readers discern truth from fiction. Further, the authors challenge their readers to discover the message behind the media and not be passive consumers of media in any form.