

Barbara Kay: The face of Identity Studies on campus

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Academics I trust assure me the scourge of political correctness in the universities is on the wane. Specifically, I've been told by an English literature professor at one Canadian university, and a PhD history candidate at another, that their respective departments are abandoning the impenetrable jargon of postmodernism and returning to the scholastic sobriety of yore.

Encouraging, but don't put the champagne on ice quite yet. If Literature and History are indeed resuming their traditional mandates, they are, after all, real academic disciplines with a true scholarly base to return to.

This is regrettably not the case with Identity Studies — Womens/ Gender/ Men's Studies (identical triplets), Queer, Black, Disability, Chicano — which are pseudo- disciplines. That is, they did not spring from a rational, disinterested spirit of inquiry into objective phenomena, but from revolutionary beliefs and theories about society. Identity Studies are to evidence- based scholarship as astrology is to astronomy. With astrology you buy the whole irrational, unsubstantiated package or leave it. So even if they wanted to moderate their perspective, with no authentic scholarly tradition to resume, they must, like sharks, keep swimming ahead vigorously or die.

All Identity Studies arose from the disastrous philosophy of multiculturalism, which teaches we are a nation of groups, not individuals. All were forged in a politically activist crucible wrought from Marxist ideology superimposed on particular group grievances, most of them by now superannuated in this highly inclusive era. All are soft on other cultures' vices, but demonize Western civilization. All are primarily centres of recruitment for a socially transformative agenda. None offers a diversity of interpretive opinion in its readings or tolerates students' dissent from its party line.

And none is "on the wane."

You're skeptical? I urge you to take a walk through all these pseudo- disciplines in their natural habitats — their annual conferences, in which the latest "scholarship" is presented to the hardcore academic faithful — at the side of courageous international journalist and anti- Islamist whistle- blower, Bruce Bawer, via his latest book, *The Victims' Revolution: The Rise of Identity Studies and the Closing of the Liberal Mind*.

As a gay man and a classic liberal, Bawer cannot be accused of insensitivity to minorities. And as a PhD in English Literature, he is well equipped to analyze the Ur- texts that nourish the pedagogical group- victimhood industry. Bawer's book combines research into the seminal texts of each program with direct experience auditing industry spokespeople.

If what passes for intellectual content at these annual conferences were not so culturally influential — there is not a public school teacher in the West today whose education is untainted by Identity Studies rubrics — this book could be recommended for its entertainment value alone. For no satirist could possibly top the unremitting comic flow of hypocrisy, ignorance and fatuous narcissism that Bawer describes in his anthropological sojourn from conference to conference — those programs mentioned above, plus Fat Studies, Whiteness Studies and Cultural Studies.

Bawer shines a revealing light on gurus in these fields who run the gamut from odious to merely bizarre. Venerated queer theorist Judith Butler, for example, supports terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah, and denounced a gay organization in Germany as Islamophobic for criticizing Muslim violence against gays.

Another example — more amusing than shameful — comes from "Men's Studies" (not to be confused with the nascent Male Studies, a bona fide program), which is "a wholly owned branch of Women's Studies," and premised, without irony, on the operative question, "Why are men so awful?" Men's Studies' founder, Robert Connell, became "Raewyn" in a 2008 sex- change operation. The anomaly of a man trapped in a woman's body heading up a domain called Men's Studies has yet to be discussed by Men's Studies "scholars."

The road to these academic Hells is paved with bad ideas. If you haven't time for the whole book, at least read pages 14 through 38. Here Bawer provides a succinct and cogent primer on the three toxic texts that form the foundation not only for Identity Studies, but "for the political mentality that undergirds the humanities today," namely: *Prison Notebooks*, by Antonio Gramsci; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire; and *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon. Once you grasp these ideological Svengalis' essence and the anti- Western revolutionary agenda their works promote, all that ails our riven culture is illuminated.

This is an informative, credible and even shocking book in which all Identity Studies programs are hoisted to justified ridicule by their own intellectually corrupt petards. Read it and — when you stop laughing — weep.

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