

2. POSTMODERNISM

How Teachers Can Recognize Postmodernism in School Textbooks

(This module is more advanced than most and is designed for teachers, college students and graduate students.)

Postmodernism is the philosophy which believes that truth does not exist or is unknowable. Truth is viewed as being relative to the culture. For example, when describing the [American Creed](#), which includes the God-given rights of life, liberty and property, textbooks often imply that these rights may be “true” for Americans, but people in other countries and cultures see things quite differently. This viewpoint reflects the pervasive influence of postmodernism in today’s education system. Postmodernists believe that truth is defined by each individual culture. Truth is relative, not universal.

If truth is defined by each culture, then it is not real truth. Truth, by its nature, is universal. Truth is absolute. Relative truth is not truth. Postmodernists replace the word “truth” with words like “perspectives,” “constructs” or “points of view.” That is, they believe the best we can do is describe how various groups see the world; but we cannot presume to know what is true.

Postmodernism is largely the result of Darwinian evolution because Darwinism destroys the basis for knowledge. Darwinism is the view that all existence consists of nature plus time plus chance. That means that our ideas, including what we may think is true, also consist of nature plus time plus chance. The way we think is reduced to a “luck of the draw” kind of analysis. Americans drew one card by chance, South Africans drew a different card; as a result both cultures see things differently, but neither view can be viewed as better, or more true, than the other.

Postmodernism is now the most important worldview impacting American education. Postmodern education is based on the assumption that what people think to be knowledge really consists of mere “constructs” (ways of looking at the world), not “truth.” [Postmodern education](#) is accurately defined in the following statement:

A key word to learn when trying to understand postmodern education is *constructivism*. Constructivism is the main underlying learning theory in postmodern education. The basic idea is that **all knowledge is invented or "constructed" in the minds of people**. Knowledge is not discovered as modernists would claim. In other words, the ideas teachers teach and students learn do not correspond to "reality," they are merely human constructions. Knowledge, ideas and language are created by people, not because they are "true," but rather because they are useful.

Reality is a story. All reality exists, not objectively--out there--but in the mind of those who perceive it. Nobody's version of reality can claim to have more objective authority because all versions are merely human creations.

The authors quoted above are also accurate in their description of the effect postmodernism is having on education. Quoting Ruth Zuzovsky, they say, “Another major feature of this tentative, relativist, and instrumentalist [pragmatic] concept of knowledge is the *equal worth* of knowledge constructed by the learner, the teachers, or the scientists.” Genuine education ceases to exist under this postmodern paradigm.

Following postmodern thinking, the purpose of education shifts from teaching academic knowledge and skills to providing for a learning environment where students construct their own knowledge. Teachers are then told to become the “guide on the side” and not be the “sage on the stage.”

The “guide on the side” mentality, clearly the most important pedagogical principle in modern American education, is the result of the education cartel’s love-affair with postmodernism. “Discovery learning,” “creative spelling,” and an over-emphasis on group projects and other social settings are additional consequences of postmodern thought.

Postmodernists reduce the study of history to “perspectives of history.” There are differing perspectives of history, of course. The question is whether history is only that.

A few months ago the author had an email conversation about postmodernist history with a high school student who had objected to several of his articles criticizing International Baccalaureate schools for promoting postmodernism. She said, however, that when they studied the bombing of Pearl Harbor, they first watched a film on the event produced from the American point of view, and they next watched a film from the Japanese point of view. History was all a matter of one’s perspective, she said.

In response the author agreed that there were differing perspectives in history, and understanding those perspectives was important, but the question was then raised if it was also true that on a day certain the Japanese did in fact bomb Pearl Harbor? At that point the student discontinued the conversation. To give the obvious answer of “yes” would have been to deny the postmodern ideology with which she had been indoctrinated, a step she was not willing to take.

The National Education Standards (*de facto* federal curriculum. See the author’s [*Fed Ed: The New Federal Curriculum and How It’s Enforced*](#), St. Paul: EdWatch, 2002) adhere to the postmodern worldview. The National Social Studies Curriculum Standards, for example, written by the National Council of Social Studies, even define the purpose of education in terms of students forming their own “constructs.” These standards define “knowledge” as being “constructs.” This is postmodernism, pure and simple.

Postmodernism has even had a huge impact on the field of mathematics. The new math, which is based on postmodern ideology, (also called “integrated math,” “fuzzy math,” “constructivist math,” “Chicago” math and “Every Day math”), is now taught to one-third of our K-12 students—even though it is well-known that integrated math is decidedly inferior to traditional math. (See Appendix A for more information on postmodern math.)

School textbooks are riddled with postmodern thinking. In the taxpayer subsidized history textbook called *We The People: The Citizen And The Constitution* (authorized and funded in federal law HR6, 1994, and re-authorized and funded in No Child Left Behind, 2002) the writers say:

As fundamental and lasting as its guarantees have been [past tense], the U.S. Bill of Rights is a document of the eighteenth century, reflecting the issues and concerns of the age in which it was written. ... Other national guarantees of rights also reflect the cultures that created them. Many of these cultures have values and priorities different from our own. In many Asian countries, for example, the rights of the individuals are secondary to the interests of the whole community. Islamic countries take their code of laws from the teachings of the Koran, the book of sacred writings accepted by Muslims as revelations to the prophet Mohammad by God. [p. 207]

This, again, is postmodern ideology. Students are here being taught that the foundational principles of the United States (called the “American Creed”) are mere constructs (created by culture) and are not really true or genuine. For that reason the U. S. Constitution and the American Creed are taught as being of little importance. (See Appendix B for an outline of the major beliefs, or doctrines, of postmodernism.)

Sample Lesson Plan

Grade levels: college—graduate school

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand the postmodern worldview.
2. Understand the impact postmodernism is having on contemporary education.
3. Begin to understand the nature of integrated math (postmodern math).
4. Recognize and understand the postmodern approach to history and other academic disciplines.
5. Recognize postmodern methodology.

Materials:

1. Access to *The Matrix* as an example of postmodern thought.
2. Access to the internet.

3. Printed resources.

Procedures:

1. Teachers may wish to lecture on this information or may assign students to the information and resources included on the Cmods.org webpage.
2. Students may be asked the following questions:
 - a) Have you seen *The Matrix* (the first film)?
 - b) Can you describe how *The Matrix* illustrates postmodern ideology? (All worldviews include a definition of evil, reality, and some kind of salvation.
 - c) Can you identify these elements in *The Matrix* and in the postmodern worldview? (Answer: “Sin” is manipulating people into thinking they are free and living in a real world when they are actually under the total control of others. “Reality” is the postmodern philosophy that even though we think we understand what the real world is, we really don’t. “Salvation” is defined and brought about by a small group of elite heroes who are trying to bring others into the real world.)
 - d) Define the term “construct.”
 - e) Define the term “integrated math”? Why are students schooled in integrated math at a major disadvantage in college?
 - f) Look in the index of your various textbooks. Is the word “truth” listed there? If the word “truth” is used in the book, how is it used? Does the use or non-use of the word “truth” in your textbooks relate to the influence of postmodernism in education?
 - g) How do postmodernists interpret the U. S. Constitution? How does such an interpretation relate to judicial activism versus judicial restraint? (Answer: Postmodern judges are activist judges who have little regard for the Constitution because they see it as being a construct, not as being a genuine guideline for good government. As a consequence they have no hesitation about issuing rulings that actually are contrary to the Constitution, even though they have taken an oath to uphold it.).
 - h) How does postmodernism relate to the issue of gay marriage? Is gay marriage largely an issue of a traditional view of knowledge versus a postmodern view? (Answer: Postmodernists see marriage as being a construct. As a result, it can be “reconstructed” or redefined at any time.)

Vocabulary:

Darwinian evolution: The worldview formulated by Charles Darwin which holds that all life has developed from a single living cell in the distant past as a result of nature plus time plus chance. Darwinian evolution has no answer for the origin of life itself and does not allow for any kind of purposeful design or force outside of nature. For that reason it is also referred to as “naturalism” (the world consists of nature alone) and “materialism” (the world consists of material alone).

Construct: Mental images or ideas that people formulate in order to seek to understand the world. Also called “paradigms.” Postmodern theorists believe that most constructs are devised by those in power, especially white males, in order to maintain dominance over females and other racial groups. This view is also a central tenet of Marxism. Postmodernists say we must “deconstruct” all knowledge, that is, we must eliminate the constructs of those in power and replace the old constructs with new ones developed by the exploited classes.

Integrated math: Also called “new math,” “reform math,” “constructivist math,” “fuzzy math,” “Chicago math,” “Everyday math,” as well as other titles. Numerous studies and experiences have demonstrated that integrated math is inferior to traditional math, such as Saxon math and Singapore math. Integrated math is “integrated” in five ways: (a) Subjects that in traditional math are separate, such as algebra and geometry, are combined into one class—the two subjects are integrated. (b) The postmodern worldview is taught in the math class—math and ideology (like global warming) are integrated. (c) Math is not taught in the abstract but only in the setting of the life of the student—math and the student’s experience are alleged to be integrated. (d) Math is assumed to be different for different cultures—math and multicultural theory are integrated. (e) New math is supposed to eliminate the learning gaps between different races, genders, income groups and cultures—learning outcomes are supposed to be integrated.

Postmodernism: Worldview which believes that real truth does not exist or is not knowable. Postmodernists replace words like “truth” and “knowledge” with other terms such as “constructs” and “perspectives.” Postmodern history, for example, will consist of “perspectives in history.” Postmodernism is largely a consequence of Darwinism which reduces the world to nature only. “Truth” is a concept that transcends nature and for the postmodernist, therefore, cannot exist. Postmodernism is also a reaction to humanism (also called “modernism”) which emphasized the rationality of human beings. Postmodernists deny rationality. Many postmodernists believe that a few sophisticated people, namely themselves, have risen above all this and really understand the world—as illustrated by the movie *The Matrix*. Such individuals commonly see themselves as the “New Masters” who will rule the world.

Appendix A: Integrated math.

(See also chapter 2 in [America’s Schools: The Battleground for Freedom](#), (by Allen Quist, Chaska: EdWatch Publishing, 2005) and see also the extensive information at [Mathematically Correct.website](#).

Dr. Fred Greenleaf, Professor of Mathematics at New York University, made this comment on New York City’s recent adoption of integrated math:

I had no idea just how bad the NCTM-based math programs being introduced in the city really were. ... It is clear to us [now, however,] that

the NCTM programs, if they remain in place, are going to have a terrifically negative impact on the prospects of all students who aspire to college. [paper delivered to the National Association of Scholars Convention, May 22, 2004, p. 1]

The reason the new math is such a total disaster is because it is based on the false world view of postmodernism. Jack Price, former NCTM President, put it this way: "[Traditional math is] good for high socioeconomic-status white males" [[Kids Do Count](#)]. Price's statement means that math is allegedly a construct of powerful white males and is used to keep all others in positions of inferiority. That is standard postmodernist dogma.

An article written by Marilyn Strutchens, printed in ERIC Digest, published by the U.S. Department of Education, describes the worldview which she says forms the foundation for NCTM (integrated) math. (Marilyn Strutchens' husband helped design integrated math with funding from the National Science Foundation.) The article by Strutchens, which is sympathetic to integrated math, is called, "Multicultural Mathematics: A More Inclusive Mathematics." The article explained what Strutchens concluded is the real nature of integrated math. She said:

NCTM math ... provide[s] a framework for empowering all of our students through multicultural mathematics. [Marilyn Strutchens, "Multicultural Mathematics: A More Inclusive Mathematics," ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Education, p. 2]

In using the term "multicultural mathematics," Strutchens is really describing postmodern mathematics. "Empowering students" is a central concept in postmodernism. For the most part, multicultural education is postmodern ideology in disguise.

Appendix B: The doctrines of postmodernism

Gene Edward Veith, in his classic work *Postmodern Times*, says that postmodernism consists of the following positions or doctrines:

1. *Social Constructivism*. Meaning, morality, and truth do not exist objectively; rather, they are constructed by the society.
2. *Cultural Determinism*. Individuals are wholly shaped by the cultural forces. Language in particular determines what we can think, trapping us in a "prison-house of language."
3. *The Rejection of Individual Identity*. People exist primarily as members of groups. The phenomenon of American individualism is itself a construction of American culture with its middle-class values of independence and introspection, but it remains an illusion. Identity is primarily collective.

4. *The Rejection of Humanism.* Values that emphasize the creativity, autonomy, and priority of human beings are misplaced. There is no universal humanity since every culture constitutes its own reality. Traditional humanistic values are canons of exclusion, oppression, and crimes against the natural environment. Groups must empower themselves to assert their own values and to take their place with other planetary species.
5. *The Denial of the Transcendent.* There are no absolutes. Even if there were, we would have no access to them since we are bound to our culture and imprisoned in our language.
6. *Power Reductionism.* All institutions, all human relationships, all moral values, and all human creations—from works of art to religious ideologies—are all expressions of the primal will to power.
7. *The Rejection of Reason.* Reason and the impulse to objectify truth are illusory masks for cultural power. Authenticity and fulfillment come from submerging the self into a larger group, releasing one's natural impulses such as honest emotions and sexuality, cultivating subjectivity, and developing a radical openness to existence by refusing to impose order on one's life.
8. *Revolutionary Critique of the Existing Order.* Modern society with its rationalism, order, and unitary view of truth needs to be replaced with a new world order. Scientific knowledge reflects an outdated modernism, though the new electronic technology holds great promise. Segmentation of society into its constituent groups will allow for a true cultural pluralism. The old order must be swept away, to be replaced by a new, as yet unclearly defined, mode of communal existence. [Gene Edward Veith Jr. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossways Books, 1994), pp. 158-159]

Veith also says: "The belief that reality is socially constructed, as David Horowitz has pointed out, can only be a formula for totalitarianism." [*Ibid.* p. 159] Postmodernism is a false view of reality.