

[Written to USAFA classmates concerned about Critical Race Theory “teachings” at the Air Force Academy]:

On 2021-09-15 09:42, Kevin Donovan wrote:

As Joan Rivers used to say, “Can we talk?”

“Support” versus “Teach.” Here’s an academic primer:

When I was a senior service school professor at the Naval War College, we used multiple frameworks for analyses to help explain, understand, and critically analyze national security events and policies. We asked students to compare and contrast Allison’s ‘rational actor,’ ‘organizational process,’ and ‘government politics’ models in analyzing US national security policy decisions. In an International Relations Theory course I helped develop for the War College, we presented various theories pertaining to Realism, Pluralism, and Globalism approaches (which included Marxist and Liberation Theology theories) as ways (i.e., “frameworks”) in which our O-5 and O-6 students could critically analyze international relations. All of these models and frameworks merely provided a way to think about, analyze and critique policy decisions.

We “taught” these models without “supporting” any of them. In fact, besides just demonstrating a solid understanding of the model/framework, the student officers who received the highest grades usually included criticism of the appropriateness of a particular model as an explanation for the case study at hand.

Although the Academy apparently doesn’t “teach” Critical Race Theory anymore (see Burr’s August 23rd email that included CAS minutes), my guess is that Professor Garcia’s approach in her classroom was much the same as above: here’s a framework for understanding and discussing racism in America. As a student, is it useful to you? Does it make sense? In your view, what’s wrong with it? Can we learn anything from it? We can teach and gain insights from theories of economic and racial exploitation without institutionally “supporting” them.

Simplified, for all those concerned about CRT in an academic environment, my message is this: don’t be afraid. It’s even less

painful than a COVID shot.

Kevin Donovan