

## **S2 — Episode 5 — The Intersections of Queer and Critical Race Theories**

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Tara talks to PhD students Bishop Owis and Lindsay Cavanagh about their Independent Reading and Research course on the intersections of queer and critical race theories.

Tara: Hello, and welcome to Gender Sexuality School. I'm Tara Goldstein and we're podcasting from Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Today PhD students, Bishop Owis and Lindsay Cavanagh from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education join us to talk about an exciting independent reading and research course they are taking about the intersections of critical race, anti-racist and queer theories. Bishop, Lindsay, welcome to Gender Sexuality Schooling. We're so happy to have you here. So, to begin our podcast about the course on critical race, anti-racist and queer theories that you both designed. Can you each tell us why you wanted to design the course? And what you hope to learn for, from it? Can we start with you Bishop?

Bishop: Yeah, um, I really wanted to take this course and design the course, because there is no course at OISE or I would even argue at U of T in large, that offers courses like this, there's no course on critical race theory. There's no course on queer theory, but also like anti-racist queer theory, and having that stance was important to me. So, knowing that these were theories and ideas, and we'll be using in my thesis, I— I obviously needed to know more about them. And so having a directed studies was super important to me. I'm hoping to learn all the brilliant and beautiful ideas that the authors talk about, I think I'm interested in learning about really intersectionality and how queerness and an anti-racist stance and race combine together and—because my studies working with youth, youth of colour, specifically, those— those intersections are super important. So, I'm hoping I can take away something related to that. Yeah.

Tara: Great. Lindsay, how about you? What, what made you want to participate in this course?

Lindsay: Yeah, I feel like there were a few things for sure. I mean, one of which, Bishop and I have very similar research interests, and I thought it would just be such a rich conversation and a lot of what she was saying in terms of, there aren't a lot of courses that cover these two areas. And even in readings, it can be hard to come across queer and trans of colour critiques and, you know, perspectives that are critical race theories and queer theories. So, I definitely wanted that and to think more about decentring whiteness in, in queer educational theories. And I just felt that the conversations that we'd have would likely be really rich and lead us in new directions. So yeah, those are sort of the key reasons.

Tara: Fantastic. So, Lindsay, we'll start with you for the second question. What are some of your takeaways from the course so far?

Lindsay: I think so far, it's been around intersectionality. And thinking through how it can be a sort of an analytic framework and tool, but it also goes beyond that and thinking about applications, right? Always coming back to that question of like, how can we translate theory and in our own work that we want to do? How can we bring that forward? I think also talking about like, queer world making in some of the

articles, actually having tools like in the one article we discussed today, thinking of like a prism or crystal sort of metaphor for the nuances when we are talking about multiple intersecting identities, and how, as researchers, we can think about that in terms of our own positionality. And think about it in terms of analysing the data that we will collect.

Tara: Great. Bishop. How about you— any takeaways so far?

Bishop: Yeah, I think I have two major takeaways. The first is that like, Lindsay, and I designed this course last semester, and we were hunting for articles. And I think we quickly realized that there's not a lot of queer anti-racist intersectional research in education, specifically, practice based because that's what we're all about as educators. And yeah, so the literature was very limited. And so, we, I think, both felt very frustrated by that but also inspired to fill that gap somehow. So takeaway is that I think we both want to contribute to the existing literature and make it stronger and more intersectional in nature. And then I think my other takeaway is that like, this is cheesy, but like community! Like when we get together, when Tara, Lindsay and I get together, and we talk and we talk through the articles, of course, but we also talk about issues that we're facing in the readings. And having that sense of community and being able to talk through some of those dilemmas is really powerful. Because often in class, like in a big classroom, or even when you're reading on your own, like I'm doing my own independent study, and it's just me on my own reading. And if I don't understand something, it's a bit frustrating. But to have someone else with me reading that stuff is, is great, because we can bounce ideas off one another and have that support system. So yeah.

Tara: Great. So then last question, I wanted to ask you both, is there a particular set of ideas or even a particular writer that you think you'd like to continue to follow? Who are they? What are the ideas? And why would you like to read more about them? We'll start with you, Bishop.

Bishop: I think, so, I was introduced to queer of colour critique. And most recently, trans of colour critique. And those were really fascinating to me. It's interesting how people are taking them up and some of them— so we read a chapter from Ferguson's 2004 book that I found very challenging. And, and he coined the phrase queer of colour critique, but it's interesting to see how other authors like Brockenbrough and McCreedy are taking that up in like a local educational context. And so, I think those are the main ideas that I'm kind of sticking with, like, I feel like I have a good grasp on intersectionality as a whole, but like, diving even deeper into like, queer of colour critique is, is I think, the path for me.

Tara: Tell us what exactly folks mean, when they talk about queer of colour critique, what kinds of things are involved in that critique?

Bishop: Well, I think, again, I think it depends on the author that you're reading. So, Ferguson talks about it in terms of understanding, in his case, I think Blackness and also being queer, but in a nationalistic, economic, more cultural studies type perspective, whereas Brockenbrough and McCreedy are talking about it at a local context of looking at how, I think both of them talk about Black youth, how those identities intersect and complicate schooling, for a lot of students. And so yeah, I think the context

might be different and a critique of whiteness, a critique of heteronormativity of homonormativity. Yeah, lots of things, I think are being critiqued in that process. And recently just discovered trans of colour critique. And so, and there's not a lot of literature on that. So, looking forward to finding more, I think, yeah

Tara: Wonderful. So, Lindsay, what about you: a particular idea or set of readings or writer, you particularly want to follow some more?

Lindsay: I feel like I sort of already answered this in the other question. But I definitely agree with everything that Bishop's been saying, I think, what's, what I've found really invigorating in the readings has been around like, resistance. And again, like the application of how do we take like queer and trans of colour critique or intersectionality and apply it. So, I think I just want to read more. And I'm really taking value from how scholars are writing about it, and actually modelling how they're applying these ideas and just learning from that process. So, all the ideas are great so far, but just, yeah, enjoying seeing how other scholars are doing it.

Tara: Lindsey, you mentioned the idea of resistance. What's powerful about that idea for you right now?

Lindsay: Yeah, I think resistance is really powerful for me because it's sort of moving away from you know, focus on like suffering and hardship and deficit models towards like, how are queer and trans of colour, Indigenous, Black, like, folks, how, how are people resisting? How are they thriving and focusing on that aspect, which is really powerful and has been happening forever! So, I feel like that's a part of it that I just find joyful to focus on. And can be really generative.

Tara: Excellent.

Bishop: Yeah. And I think just to jump in on that, I feel like you said like, there are queer, Black, Indigenous, Brown communities, they've been doing, they've been celebrating and— and having joy in their lives, while resisting at the same time, but I think because of a lot of, a lot of the literature on queer Black Indigenous people of colour is written from almost like an anthro like perspective or psychology perspective. And honestly, even in education, it's usually written by, by white folks. And so, they're not centring that celebration and that affirmation and that joy. And so, I think for both of us, that's something that we want to have a stance on, like how we're looking at racialized, you know, queer theories in our research. Yeah.

Tara: Wonderful. Thank you so much for taking some time out today and talking to us about this really very, very novel and innovative course that you've designed about critical race, antiracist and queer theories. I'm hoping that you continue to get a lot out of the course and that the work that you're doing will find its way into your own work. Thank you.

Lindsay: Thanks for having us.

Tara: Bishop and Lindsay, thanks so much for joining us today. I loved hearing you talk about what you're reading around the intersectionality of critical race, anti-racist and queer theories. Bishop Owis and Lindsay Cavanagh are PhD students at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Bishop's research at OISE explores what happens when queer and trans youth of colour work collaboratively to reimagine, recreate and resist heterocisnormativity in the Ontario sex education curriculum. Her work focuses on youth empowerment, and community education using critical youth participatory action research and arts-based pedagogies. Bishop is a member of the Advisory Council for the Young Women's Leadership Network, an alumni Junior Fellow at Massey College, and one of the organizers of Queer Trans at OISE. Bishop has delivered sex ed and anti-homophobia/transphobia workshops with Planned Parenthood and the Sex Education Centre at the University of Toronto. Bishop is passionate about equity issues in education, LGBTQ+ advocacy, and creating equitable spaces for women of colour in educational and political spaces. Lindsay Cavanagh is a certified high school teacher in Ontario and British Columbia. She is interested in exploring how trans, non-binary, Two Spirit, intersex, and queer educators and youth conceptualize and imagining queering and decolonizing taking place in K to 12 schools through a critical participatory action research project. Her PhD builds off on her master's thesis, where she studied a group of activist educators who formed the Queering Schools Network. Lindsay is also an award-winning poet and is interested in arts-based methodologies, creative forms of resistance, and accessible knowledge mobilization. Alright, that's our podcast for today. You can find this podcast at [www.LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca](http://www.LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca). This episode was produced with support of the New College Initiative Fund and from Doug Friesen who is a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Thanks to LGBTQ families speak out team member Kate Reid, sound engineer Lisa Patterson, and musician Doug Friesen for creating the music that opens and closes the show. I'm Tara Goldstein. All the best.