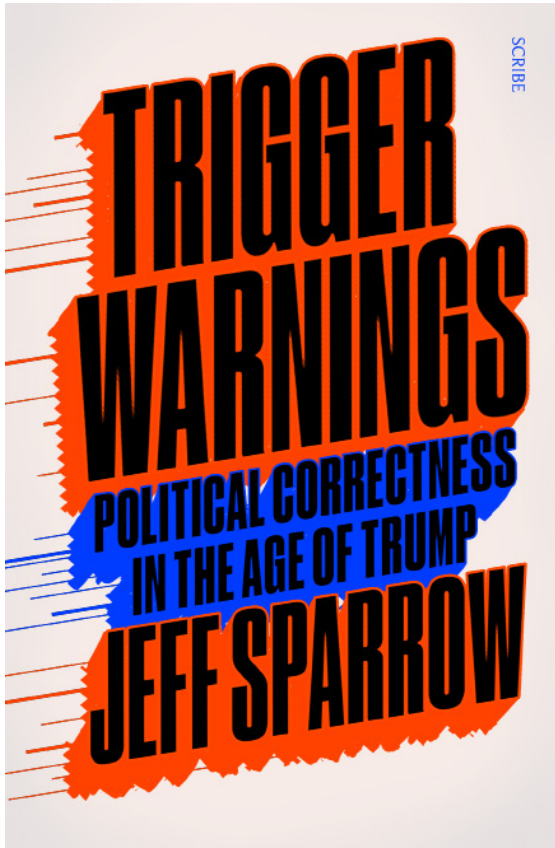


Trigger Warnings

JEFF SPARROW



BOOK DETAILS

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jeff Sparrow is a writer, editor, and broadcaster, and an honorary fellow at Victoria University. He writes a fortnightly column for the *Guardian* and contributes regularly to many other publications, as well as being a member of the 3RRR Breakfasters radio team. Jeff is the immediate past editor of the literary and cultural journal *Overland*, and the author of several books, including *Communism: a love story* and *Killing: misadventures in violence*.

Donald Trump is the Thing-that-should-not-be.

The man lives, quite literally, in a building serviced by a golden elevator. Somehow, he presented himself as the scourge of the elites. For decades, he built a persona based on the most conspicuous consumption and the crassest of excess — and then he won the presidency on an anti-establishment ticket. The unlikely rise of Donald J. Trump exemplifies the political paradox of the twenty-first century.

In this new Gilded Age, the contrast between the haves and the have-nots could not be starker. The world's eight richest billionaires control as much wealth as the poorest half of the planet — a disparity of wealth and political power unknown in any previous period. Yet not only have progressives failed to make gains in circumstances that should, on paper, favour egalitarianism and social justice, the angry populism that's prospered explicitly targets ideas associated with the left — and none more so than so-called 'political correctness'.

If Trump — and others like Trump — can turn hostility to PC into a winning slogan, how should the left respond? In the face of a vicious new bigotry, should progressives double-down on identity politics and gender theory? Must they abandon political correctness and everything associated with it to reconnect with a working class they've alienated? Or is there, perhaps, another way entirely?

In *Trigger Warnings*, Jeff Sparrow excavates the development of a powerful new vocabulary against progressive causes. From the Days of Rage to Gamergate, from the New Left to the alt-right, he traces changing attitudes to democracy and trauma, symbolism and liberation, in an exhilarating history of ideas and movements. Challenging progressive and conservative orthodoxies alike, *Trigger Warnings* is a bracing polemic and a persuasive case for a new kind of politics.

REVIEWS

‘In the age of fake news and the seeming triumph of political populism, Jeff Sparrow’s *Trigger Warnings* is a vital book for our times.’

— TONY BIRCH, AUTHOR OF *GHOST RIVER*

‘In a time that increasingly feels like it’s now or never, this book is an urgently needed intervention. Don’t just read it, do it.’

— ROZ WARD, CO-FOUNDER OF SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION

‘A crisp, elegant and timely analysis of exactly how the world and everything in it turned to wallaby poop, also whose fault it is and how we might actually be able to do something about it.’

— FIRST DOG ON THE MOON, POLITICAL CARTOONIST FOR THE *GUARDIAN*

‘Sparrow writes with a unique combination of dignified sensitivity and a concrete commitment to solidarity and movement building.’

— SAM WALLMAN, POLITICAL CARTOONIST

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How did the American ‘education wars’ of the eighties foreshadow later political skirmishes centred on campuses? In what ways did the debates back then differ from more recent arguments?
2. How did President George HW Bush reinterpret the notion of ‘political correctness’ when he addressed students at the University of Michigan?
3. What are the three kinds of leftism that the book considers?
4. How does the understanding of class presented by ‘new-class’ theorists differ from the understanding traditionally associated with the Left?
5. How did John Howard reference immigration and race in the late eighties? How did his approach change in the mid-nineties?
6. How did ‘smug politics’ develop and what distinguished it from ‘delegated politics’?
7. What did ‘identity politics’ mean to the Combahee River Collective. How and why did the term’s meaning change over time?
8. What’s the difference between the model of privilege associated with Occupy Wall Street and that developed from the writings of Peggy McIntosh?
9. What role did Gamergate play in the rise of Trumpism?
10. Think of two or three recent episodes of culture war. What would an intervention into those skirmishes based upon direct politics look like?

