

Hi, and welcome to our podcast. You teach, we learn. We are your hosts. I'm Jessica Mansbach. And I'm Polina Pine, streaming to you from Loyola University, Chicago. We love teaching, and we are excited to introduce you to our colleagues from Loyola. And from around the world who look at their connections between teaching theory and practice, and who are passionate about student learning. Thanks for joining us for today's conversation.

Bridget: Well, we're excited to have two guests with us today. I'm joined by my colleague and co-director, Jessica Mansbach, as a co-host today. So thanks for being here, Jessica.

Jessica: Good afternoon, everyone.

Bridget: And we are joined by two of our colleagues who are in our faculty scholars program at the Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy, Michael Schumacher and Patty Lamberti. And they are in roles where they're working with our center to create some resources for the rest of our colleagues around civil academic discourse. It's a really timely topic and we're excited to chat with them a little bit about that today. So let me just ask for each of you, I'd love to hear from you, maybe a little bit of an introduction. What would you like to find people listening to this to know about you? Patty, you wanna start us off?

Patty: Sure, I am the program director of multimedia journalism within the School of Communication at Loyola University Chicago. I've been here in a full-time role since 2008. Prior to that, I worked as a journalist covering a lot of social justice issues. I teach communication classes, so I'm really excited to be involved with this, especially because some things are just so hard to talk about.

And the rest of the year, I have a feeling in 2024, we're going to keep encountering things that are hard to talk about. And I'm excited to give some tips and to learn from others about how to get people talking without ending up in a screaming match. And I've also found students are just so scared to talk. And so are professors, understandably so. So I'm excited to learn and give some advice.

Bridget: Great, thanks. Yeah, these are, feels like tense and high stakes times, a lot of these conversations that are happening in the classroom and outside the classroom right now. So thanks, we're so glad to have you. Mike.

Michael: Thanks, Bridget, and thanks, Patty, and thanks, Jessica, for being here too. I'm Dr. Michael J. Schumacher. I'm a lecturer in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology here at Loyola. I actually got my PhD from Loyola as well.

I got my PhD in political science, which is wonderful. So I've been, I've really been at Loyola for 10 years now, which is crazy, both as graduate student and then first as full-time faculty member for the department of political science. And now since fall of 2023, full-time lecturer for criminal justice and criminology. I was really excited about this position because while I know generally we're always challenged by what's happening in the world and like Patty said, trying to find avenues by which we can have civil dialogue about it is really important. But me in particular, area of expertise is on international criminal justice, on international terrorism, on political violence. And it seems that conversations are really veering in that direction these days. And it's become more important than ever to be able to talk about them in a meaningful and productive way, especially in the classroom. In particular, my research has focused on the proliferation of international terrorism, especially since we take like 2011 when we really saw a global spike in that type of political violence around the world. And my region of expertise has been the Middle East and North Africa, where I've spent time, especially in North Africa, on places like Morocco and Tunisia. I call Tunisia my home away from home. It's a tiny little country at the northernmost tip of Africa there. And my subject matter of expertise has always been on Islamic-inspired terrorism and political violence. That's really always been my focus in the classroom, introducing myself in that way, making students are familiar with my work in that regard, especially the work on the ground I do, talking to people who have, you know, frankly engaged in that type of violent extremism. So, it was amazing when this position opened up. I thought I was perfect for it. I'm glad you guys agreed. And I'm so happy to be here to talk about it more.

Bridget: Thanks. Really glad to have you both. So what we've been focusing on with these podcast episodes in general is really trying to get an inside look into people's teaching. What is it that you're doing? It's such an interesting profession, I feel like, where we're doing so much with our students, but our peers don't know what happens in our classroom. It's like the black box of education where we are so attuned and planning and so engaged, but folks outside don't know what's happening unless they happen to sit in on a class or we tell them about it. So I guess maybe we could start. I'd love to just maybe get a little window into what your classrooms are like. Could you describe for us what it's, what maybe it might be like to be a student in your class?

Michael: You know, I really, my first ever class I ever taught was since actually, oh my God, 10 years ago exactly, it was spring 2014. I was a graduate student, I taught a class on international humanitarian law, not an uncontroversial topic in and of itself. I wanted to call the class war crimes and they said, why don't we ease up on the directness of that and call it international humanitarian law and bring in the theoretical frameworks of international relations and political science into that. And since then, I don't think I've

ever been in a class that hasn't talked about some kind of a controversial topic. And in a way, I'm more traditional than you might expect me to be in my approach to teaching. I kind of set that tone like immediately, day one type of thing where I really learned my lesson early on that telling my students at a time, look, we're approaching most of these subjects in a very generalized, historical and comparative manner, but there is going to be something, the sad reality of our world and of this discipline is there's going to be something in whatever semester we're engaged with, regardless of the topic that is going to bring attention, like require our attention. And we'll deal with it when it gets there, but I just want you to prepare for that in a way, having set that tone and being like, we will address it as appropriate for the course content and we'll kind of get there. so my classes always begin with very much expertise, introductions, lecture, theoretical frameworks, all scholarship, trying to orient them towards their thinking, whether it's about international humanitarian law, international criminal justice, terrorism, political violence, what have you. It's important. I always found students, they're not ready yet to talk. That's why they're in the classroom. You have to put yourself up as that subject matter expert as a point of contact for them as a reference point so that they know that you know what you're talking about. It's so important. And I think allowing yourself to approach that with a degree of authenticity is important to set up upfront too. And so the classroom becomes a space where I deliver expert content, classic lecture, talking, PowerPoints, scholarly readings, but also opening it up as much as possible for authentic question and answers, things that come up organically and the like. I think what I've learned though, over the last decade or so, is the recent advent in technology has really allowed us to engage with students in a way that hadn't existed before. So being able to depict for students in a careful way, things that it's very difficult to relay in readings, PowerPoints, whether it's YouTube videos or films or what have you, any type of media content that gets created now. Introducing that in the classroom has been really good too. So the classrooms have been this like multimedia space now where we transcend lecture and PowerPoints also include visual aids and audio as well as robust discussions about those things. So yeah, I'd love to hear more from a journalistic perspective too, Patty, about what your classrooms look like.

Patty: Yeah, Mike and I, obviously, I see why we're both in this role. We share one thing very much in common in terms of our teaching philosophy, which is that I always try to remind my colleagues and to have to remind myself that students are students. They are not working professionals. They're here to learn. Sometimes people get frustrated thinking they don't know enough or they should know more than they do. But I feel like we have to remember, although not all college students are 19 or 20 or 21, they frankly are not as old as me. So they quite simply know less. My job is to teach them. And I teach them as if they are adults, not kindergartners. Unlike Mike, and it might just be

because we teach in very different fields and disciplines, I do very little lecturing although I don't buy the time American and I want to talk and definitely talk too much I tried to actually use my phone set my timer to talk for ten minutes and I give them a ten or fifteen minute activity where they actually right or create something using a computer or an old-fashioned piece of paper and pen now Mike and I have a feeling one thing that's different is I teach in computer labs so I know they all have a computer right in front of them. But I know, I also feel like students, I think about their day from their perspective, they probably sat through a class or two before they get to me. And sometimes I just worry, they're just tired of like listening to people. I try to get them, you know, I talk with 10 or 15 minutes, they do have to learn something and listen to me. But then I try to have them do something either alone or with a partner.

Michael: There's this great compliment I got from a student one time that just reminded me of this too, is, and this is, I'll just say it. So the student came up and they just said, I love your classes because I feel like I paid to be here to listen to really smart people teach me things. And I was just like, well, thank you. And they're like, I love my fellow students. I think we all have opinions. It's important to talk about them, but I love listening to you talk. And I said, thanks. Like, it was just so nice. Cause that's my number one anxiety in the classroom is that I'm too much. don't get me wrong, the course evaluations we'll get at the end of a semester will sometimes suggest things like, but it's never consistent, always, I love more group work or this is too much group work. You're never gonna win that fight. But to know that that student every now and then will come up and say, man, I just really love learning from you. It was a powerful message. And I think it, like you said, Patty, they are students and we are imparted with this great privilege to be able to teach them and I do feel it's a privilege to be able to be up in front of a classroom often to impart that knowledge in a way that is meaningful, also in a way Objective to the extent that objectivity is even possible. But in a way that allows them to articulate it in a way that is consistent with their background and their beliefs and just be open to that as much as possible so we have this amazing power whether or not it's forcing them to engage in debate and activities or forcing them to listen to us just be smart for 50 minutes at a time. Classrooms are wonderful places for that.

Jessica: I think both of your disciplines are conducive to talking with students about current events, things happening in the world, things that have happened in the past. How do you sort of prime students or set them up for conversations that you or they may perceive as quote unquote difficult?

Patty: Well, one thing I do is, whenever we're approaching something difficult, where I know, I mean, we're a very opinionated world, right? People tend to be on one end of the political spectrum or another, on one side or another. You're either pro-Taylor Swift

or anti-Taylor Swift, it goes on and on and on. whenever we're about to get into something that is potentially going to become heated, or actually is just distressing for them. All of my students have been saying to me, I just had them take an exam, the one common theme, I asked them, what's your reaction when you read the news? What do you think in your head? And they all said, I couldn't believe how many of them said the exact same thing. Am I dreaming? 75 % of them said that. The other 25 % used a lot of swear words that I won't get into here.

Bridget: Yeah, I bet.

Patty: It's, they're very anxious and depressed by it. So one thing I always say first is this is hard to talk about. I myself find it hard to talk about. I also say it's going to be sad. It's okay for us to be sad and it's okay for us to acknowledge that this is hard to talk about. So I also try to tell them you probably have a fear of saying something wrong. And I use air quotes around it. And I say, don't worry, I have that fear too. We all have a fear of cancel culture. We all have a fear that someone's gonna start screaming at us. These are normal things to feel. We're gonna do this in a way where that won't happen. There won't be any screaming and there won't be any yelling, but it will be hard.

Michael: It is very difficult and I'm glad you brought up your exercises on evaluating modern media because I do think so often when I talk about or introduce difficult subjects, I often say that we actually deal, in the US especially, we have different what I call arenas of discourse. And they're all different and they all have their own nomenclature. In fact, they all have their own definitions of really complex topics that you would think that we would all be on board with or in this like talking about the same thing, we're really not. So I often say that these arenas include everyday speech that you have with your friends or family members, just the public discourse generally. You have academia, which harbors its own forms of dialogue and nomenclature. You have government, which is going to be heavily geared towards particular policy positions or objectives of our state. And that's going to be different depending on which government you're talking about, remind you. Then there is that fourth estate, the media, which also has its own discourse and they all approach those things in different ways. In many ways, the media focuses to some degree on expediency. They want to be sure they're delivering the news in a manner by which it is happening so that we have an informed populace. There are many virtues to that. As an academic, I'd say there's many pitfalls to that, which I think your students, Patty, are really picking up on. So when I approach a discourse academically, I remind my students that, man, oftentimes when we just have to talk about a topic, we're usually talking about it too late. That's like the one pitfall of academia. I always remind them about like what peer review is like. I'm like, you're not going to read about a recent current event for another year or two. It's going to take

forever for those articles to come out. And that's a good thing. That's one of the virtues I see of academics is we're careful. We're studious. It's supposed to be hard. It's supposed to be rigorous. And I remind them like, try not to jump to too many conclusions. Try not to harbor only what one media pundit says, try to remain a little bit curious and avoid harsh judgment. And then let's approach these things with an understanding of what these different arenas say. This is probably the most evident for me. And I do it like day, week one, week one, in any class I've ever taught on terrorism. You know, I often say there's this relationship between terrorists and the media, whereby most of the time when you're thinking about a terrorist attack, they're trying to get media attention. So when they get that media attention, it's like a victory. That's a really dangerous symbiosis that we have. And if we don't recognize those types of things, thus the average student who's going to get most of their information from Apple news or Google news or what have you is already conditioned to think about this in a certain way. And so we need to like pull back, pull back again, top level, recognize what that discourse is and how it compares to other discourses that are out there.

I think that's really important is to understand that these are different discursive realms. And I always tell my students too, this is a common thing. I say, don't take for granted like the knowledge that we have within these four walls. I'm referring to our classroom. What you understand us and me and my, you know, whatever, 35 undergraduate students is going to be very different once you leave this classroom. One, the next class you're going to go to is not going to be about the subject that we're talking about. And two, the moment you leave Loyola, you have to understand that people haven't had this type of exposure and experience like to an academic setting. So your now discourse has to change the moment that you leave and the people won't be able to sometimes have those same discussions with you. It's a problem. It's a good thing. It's just a reality. It's a reality that these arenas exist.

Bridget: You know, it strikes me as you both are talking, you know, different disciplines, slightly different approaches to how you do things. But what's coming across pretty clearly to me anyway, is what feels like a real passion for what you do for a care for your teaching and for your students. And I wonder, how does that set you up and set your students up to be able to have these conversations in a way that might not be possible if someone was approaching them with sort of less passion for their teaching or less care about their students?

Patty: That's a good question, Bridget. It's hard because it's funny while Mike was just talking, I thought one thing that's very similar about Mike and I is it's clear to me we're both very genuine people. What you see is what you got. Mike and I are both like, some people might not like that, but that's true. That is hard because I am very passionate

about teaching. I'm very passionate in general. I have at times talked to students about the Buddhist concept of having an open heart and a closed heart. And I've always say I have an open heart, but that often hurts me in the long run. And I said, just remember the people who you might think of as closed hearts, meaning that they might not have such a parent passion as Mike and I do. It might not be as obvious and written all over their face and come out in their words. They still have good hearts. They're trying to protect themselves from a lot of the pain in the world. And I've said that I understand that with students too, because if anything, I find students very quiet and scared to talk. And part of it is we're all animals trying to protect ourselves.

Michael: I've been seeing a lot of discussion about current events that is focused around the term of empathy. Right. Which is what I think you're kind of circling around, Patty, with your anecdote, too. Passion and empathy kind of go hand in hand. They don't have to. But I do feel like in a way what maybe you're picking up on, Bridget, with your noting of Patty and I being passionate people is I think we're empathetic people. Right. In a way, when you. If you were in a high, you know, bringing us faculty scholar for civil academic discourse, I do think you have to be able to be a person that is capable of one, empathizing with multiple different sides of the story and being able to harbor multiple different thoughts in their heads and ideas in their heads at once without kind of going crazy. I think one, that's part of the best thing about being an academic is learning how to do that. But I do think it's a special type of person too, that is capable of doing it and being able to do it by the way without feelings of what has been termed recently, like empathetic distress, whereby caring too much can lead to mental health concerns for yourself. You might not be directly experiencing trauma or conflict or violence. Seeing it can be very distressing because you're trying to understand, you're trying to empathize. And I tell my students, you would almost be troubled. I'm doing it right now and you won't see my smile. I'm not happy by talking about these things. Um, but it's in a way, mechanism by which I try to avoid the, just not avoid, uh, recognize the distressing aspects, but also put on a desire to learn more, to understand the wise, to understand the roots, to understand the causes. And, and I think that that foam, it's just this degree of like your word, Bridget care, just the ability to care and want to know and want to help and want to change requires that, that open heart.

Bridget: Yeah. Yeah. Which is just a fundamentally different orientation to the educational process compared to, here are these books that I have to make sure they read. Right. Right. Right? That we talk about being student-centered, we talk about care for the whole person, and approaching education from that starting place just changes the whole, it changes what you talk about, it certainly changes how, but I wonder if you could say any more about that? How this orient, not that you have to compare yourself

to your peers, but how this kind of orienting toward the student experience just shifts what ends up happening.

Michael: There are no isolated people. Everyone comes with, not in a pejorative sense, but like baggage. They come with background, they come with experience, life experience, family experience, cultural experience, racial experience, different ethnicities. Everyone is so not to like, everyone is unique. Like we all are and you don't know what people's background is. And maybe in many ways we will never know deeply where our students come from. But at the very least, at the most superficial level, we can acknowledge that all 35 of them in that classroom are different. And so they each require to some degree a bit of just care and recognition. They're gonna have different opinions that are based on those different experiences. And there's no way we can overgeneralize them just because they're all 20 year olds. Yes, they're gonna be in some ways similar because they're all 20 year olds, but there are 20 year olds that are all very, very, very different. And without that just baseline acknowledgement, you're already betraying the experience of being a professor that is there for all students, for sure.

Patty: Yeah, I mean I often just in casual conversations with colleagues I mean I'm sure all of us sometimes we're frustrated with our students, you know They come or they don't come or the students are wearing one ear pod or You know, it can be very frustrating at times But I casually when I run into fellow teachers and they're complaining or and honestly I understand they probably had a bad day or something were wrong. I do try to remind them. We're being we're being paid to stand in front of the room and they're paying to be in the room. And even if we're frustrated, we have to keep that in mind. And we also have to keep in mind they're here to learn. They are not working professionals. We cannot expect them to have the same level of knowledge and skills that we have. When fellow instructors and professors, especially after COVID, and we were having such a problem getting students actually to come to class, one thing I did was on the first day of class, I showed them how much Loyola cost each semester. Then I broke it down by credit hour. And I said, so these three credit hours for this class, we're going to divide it by 15 weeks. My math is probably a little off. I hope no math professors listen. And then we met two or three times a week. So I came up with a number. And I said, each class is worth, I think it worked out to around \$141, and I said, I'm gonna do my best to make that \$141 worth it. I'm not gonna hit it out of the ballpark every day. But I said, I'm also gonna treat you like an adult. If you're sick, please don't come to class. But if you're just laying in bed because you wanna watch Netflix, I want you to remember this number, because you're throwing it away. And after that, I've never experienced as many problems with attendance at all. And I actually have it on

the syllabus, how to do the math, because I just keep it in mind that it's their loss if they don't come, more than anything.

Jessica: Yeah. It's interesting as you both describe kind of the empathy and the passion you bring to teaching and then into the classroom. How do you think that translates into the students' experiences? Like, what do you think they take away or how do they perceive some of these harder conversations or some of their interactions with you based on, I don't know, feedback you get from them or your reading of them quote unquote when you're in the room.

Michael: Trying to find a way to answer that without sounding like I'm bragging. I'm just. Well, Mike thinks about.

Patty: I mean, one thing I found because I do a lot of anonymous message boards that I can get to later. But one comment I see that after I tell them I'm scared to talk about it i don't i'm worried i don't know the right words i'm not even sure how i myself feel um... i think the beginning of the uh... uh... i'm going to come back to the middle east in october i said to them you know what one thing that i happen to consider i taught the day after uh... october seventh i said i i felt like such an idiot yesterday because i realize i forgot the history of this area i forgot how we got here. And then I had us all read a one page primer or like a timeline that was very factual from the New York Times. And then I had them write about their questions, their feelings and their fears on an anonymous message board. And later on, they all said they were glad they didn't have to talk about it out loud because they weren't ready yet. But they were also glad to hear, wow, even someone who's got professor in their title is confused.

Um, and a few of them told me that it made them feel better because a lot of them are scared to talk because they're afraid. And at the end of class, a lot of them told me, I don't want to sound dumb. Yeah, no one does.

Michael: That helps me think of how to articulate what I wanted to say, which was, and you said it perfectly. Students that are commenting, I don't want to have to talk about it, but I want to talk to you about it. Right. That's been a thing that has been really powerful and important for me. That has, I think, been a clear signal that some of my approaches to this have been right. I don't know if right is dumb, like appropriate at the very least where students have come and they said, look, I didn't want to bring this up in the classroom. didn't want to ask, do you mind if I sit down in your office hours and just talk to you about like my feelings? And it's like a diverse array of students that just, whether it's just, I want to know more or they're like, I'm X thing, X religion from X place. I feel like you would understand no one else will. Can we talk? Great. I'm happy with that. I don't think students should be forced or compelled to have to talk or speak up in the

classroom, certainly not targeted for their experience. so anonymous, it might be your best approach, Patty. And I've done the same thing. I said, we don't have to talk about this. To the extent possible, I'm very fortunate that many of my classes provide frameworks for students to start to articulate ideas about current events, which is the best thing. And to the extent that they want to explore those things further later independently or with me and in office hours or whatever, they've done that. It's felt good to do that. It's felt good to be that type of resource for people. So going back to Jessica's question, what kind of responses do you feel like you've gotten from students based on your like approaches about being caring, being open? I feel like in a way I've compelled students to want to come talk. I've had a busier office hours this year than I've had in years. Just people who are trying to make appointments, who are trying to just talk, including from outside of the classroom, by the way. So their students are definitely talking to each other and they're starting to be like, who do I go to with questions? It's like this guy or this person. It just felt good too. It's busy, but it feels good. So that feedback, Jessica, I think is what kind of what you're asking for and where I said it's hard to say it without sounding a little braggy in a way, they're talking to me more than ever. And in ways that have been overwhelmingly just positive and curious than any bit of like negative, is really good. It feels like they're feeling inspired to just want to learn. To avoid that like awkward post-horrific event comment that makes them look ignorant or bigoted or whatever, they're really trying to understand because they want to just know and empathize and help. And that's been a really positive bit of feedback I've found.

Patty: And I'm gonna just to show you Mike is not bragging. I teach it a journalism class. One of the first assignments was you have to go out and interview somebody and cannot be a friend of yours. And it has to be someone who's newsworthy or knows a lot about a topic. So anyway, one of my students said to me, I have this one professor, I don't know him, but I love him. I just think he's so cool, even though it was only three weeks into the semester. Anyway, I got the assignment and they had interviewed Mike. And indeed, Mike, it was a wonderful interview.

Michael: Yeah, Patty did send me that and I appreciate it. You weren't talking about going to sleep with a big smile on your face. I did not know it was for your class until you let me know. And boy, was that nice of that student and of you. Bring that up and that's going back to reinforcing that it does feel like you're making a difference when those students are saying those things and coming to you and writing those things or doing those interviews. Something's working right. Yeah. Right.

Jessica: Yeah. mean, how validating one that the students are coming to office hours, which we know is something sometimes they don't do for whatever reason. And then

two, having these vulnerable conversations with you, especially those who aren't in your class. I mean, I think that really says a lot.

Michael: You learn the most from a student that comes and talks to you independently. You want to talk about being able to achieve that Jesuit goal of care for the whole person. It's really hard to do it first for someone who's a lecturer. I teach, I'm teaching four classes. I have 170 students. I can't care for the whole of, you know, that's very difficult. I want to, trust me, I really do. It's very hard. It's really making sure the students feel comfortable to come and express their feelings and their backgrounds, tell me a little bit about themselves, then I can apply that care. So it's really nice, yeah, to have them want to come do that. Because it's not always easy to get them to, I'm not begging them to come do it. I'm just saying they want to more, which has been good.

Bridget: Yeah, and you're suggesting that they're seeming more open to learning, more available. That you're learning from them. I heard that too, from both of you, and that it originates with this connection. So you said earlier the kind of showing up authentically and kind of creating these learning experiences that are curated in a way that demonstrates your care for the students. And so, then there's this connection. And my guess is that that connection is felt whether or not students come to office hours or not, that they're gleaning the benefits from that just by virtue of being in the class. And that that is where this more impactful learning is happening because they're willing to think about and reflect upon what they know and what they don't know, what questions they have and what they're nervous about. That level of just cognitive but also emotional affective consideration of things is so much deeper than what were the dates that I have to remember to be able to get an A on this quiz that's coming up. It's just such a different dynamic at that point.

Michael: Yeah, in addition to it being very affirming of your role as educator and then the approaches that you adopt in the classroom, it's very affirming about the world. And it's coming back full circle to kind of where this conversation started, especially talking about sort of the, you look on the news and you're just flummoxed by what's happening out there. It all seems so negative. It seems like we're all at each other's throats all the time. It seems like it's very polarized. I got to be honest and maybe this, I'm very fortunate to be in this position. I haven't found that in my classrooms and I certainly haven't found that amongst my students. Um, man, if I, if I was going to write a news story about how my students have approached these difficult subjects, I would say it's been nothing but like just sheer curiosity and empathy and just care. I mean, no one, I've never had a fight. I haven't had, you know, hot moments in the class. I mean, I've had hot moments in classroom, but it feels like it's almost been less this year when you would expect it to be more based on what's going on in the news. It is not like that.

People are not instinctively at each other's throats. People are instinctively caring and wanting to know. That's really been an amazing lesson to be able to sort of kind of ignore, but just reevaluate what's out there right now, especially on the news and just feel a lot better, especially when you talk about generational differences and you're talking about the next generation of leaders who are going to be emerging from our university into roles that are going to determine the direction of our country, how our society talks about things, of how we approach social justice. Man, do I feel good. I'm gonna be honest, too. I feel good about it.

Patty: That's funny, Mike. Yeah, because a friend of mine said to me over the weekend, my friend said, I can't believe how optimistic you still are. And I just realized my part of it, you know, and I do read news a lot. I limit how much news I read and the times I read it, but I wonder now if I'm optimistic because, like you're saying, I work with young people and they make me feel good. I still believe people are good. I still believe the world is good and I still, and I definitely think so it's sort of a loop. I think I give a lot to them, but they're giving me a lot back.

Michael: Yeah. In a way you'd think that they, mean, they are troubled by the state of the world, but in a way that is, I feel like they're motivated about being better and doing better. And that's where I get the optimism. I'm not optimistic that the world is good. I'm optimistic that they are like, feel this capacity to change. Um, and so it's not like they've revolved into or devolved into like nihilism at, any re like at all, if anything, it's, it's made them more passionate and idealistic about, about making things better, which is really affirming. Um, for sure. To the extent that you and I, Patty played any role in that, by the way, makes me also feel very good. so, of course we did it. It was just me and you.

Bridget: Yeah. That's amazing.

Go ahead, Jessica.

Jessica: I was just going to say, you've talked a lot about your passion and your empathy, and you've given examples of it. How did those qualities translate into the kinds of activities you do in the classroom? So share some examples. I think you've started us off a little bit, around using anonymous forums around the kind of activities you do in the classroom to have conversations that can be challenging.

Patty: Well, I did, you know, because I have a lot of empathy, I put myself in there, Sue's, and I also remembered what I was like when I was 20 or 21. Right now, I'm definitely an extrovert, but when I was 20 or 21, I would never raise my hand in class. I turned bright red. There is no way I was going to talk about armed conflicts in this world.

Michael: Man, it's so funny to hear you say that because I feel the same way and now you would never know it talking to you.

Patty: Yeah, I know. But I don't know if something switched in my late 20s, but so I always remember who I was uh... and also again I remember it's not like I'm particularly comfortable leading a discussion about it that's why I looked for ways I remember when I uh... uh... around October seventh soon after I started I did go to the New York Times database their Learning Network uh... and they were right away they had it here is an uh... anonymous here's what to do with your college and high school students. They had a one-page primer and then they had already set up an anonymous message board. And they asked people, please do not comment on this if you are not under the age of 23. This is supposed to be a space for just young people. It's still up by the way, and people still use it and write on it. But it also got me thinking, well, how do I do this on Sakai? How do I guarantee that they're anonymous? And so I've started doing it on Sakai and that's worked really well because I remember being shy. I'm still hesitant to talk about a lot of things that I don't know everything in the world. So that's why I found the online anonymous boards a great way to get them thinking critically without necessarily having to talk. Because also now that I'm an extrovert, I know that I have a tendency to dominate a conversation and that's not fair to the introverts in the room.

Michael: Someone who teaches classes on political violence and conflict, it's really hard to articulate to students like what this, like what that feels like. So to be a part of, to be victimized by, to know someone who had experienced something horrific like that. I've found because of how I perceive these, you I had mentioned previously these different discourses that exist in our society, culture has this amazing ability to sort of pick up on these discourses. And so, I've started to use pop culture. Like I've been really using films a lot. Actually find film to be especially good at being able to do this. You know, for example, we're, you know, we're recording this two days after Oppenheimer just won the Academy Award for Best Picture. And talk about, like, if you don't know anything about the development of the atomic bomb, probably one of the most seminal events in political and scientific history and recent memory that has had foundational impacts for our politics and society today, the existence of nuclear weapons. You can learn a little bit about that from going watching Christopher Nolan's Oppenheimer. And while you have to, of course, as an academic kind of like frame what popular movies do, they can be a really amazing tool for introducing students to controversial and violent parts of our world. It's been, it's been really good with all the usual caveats and warnings about the depictions of violence, dramatized or not on screen. It really does open the door to have dialogue about conflict and violence in a way that I think I've mentioned previously too. You can't do just making them read

academic articles and articulate them on a PowerPoint. Go watch Hotel Rwanda. You know, Terry George's famous film from 2004 that was released 10 years after the Rwandan genocide in 1994 also won a seminal event, one of the most unambiguous cases of genocide since the Holocaust, maybe. Students don't know that, they weren't alive in 1994. Right? So if we're gonna talk about that as, it was another amazing film, it can help just bring another level to that conversation, bring another level to that topic that you wouldn't otherwise get just by, go read this article that talks about it or whatever increasingly film technology media is opening up new avenues by which we can do that. It's been really great going back to your question, Jessica, about how to sort of bridge these gaps that has been really, really powerful.

Bridget: Yeah. You know, there's part of St. Ignatius's legacies that have contributed to the kind of education we try and do at a Jesuit institution that starts or has the foundations in his spiritual exercises, but that is inviting people into using our sort of human senses and sensibilities to fully understand and appreciate and experience things. And part of that is like through our senses. We know from neuroscience about how learning is actualized at kind of a higher input and output when the parts of the brain that are about emotion and about personal connection are lit up, that our learning is deeper. And so what you're suggesting then is using art as a mechanism to access the parts of us that make us deeply human. And that it turns out our brains are oriented to learning when we are in those neurological places. And yeah, there's just something about that and wanting to help to curate, think thoughtfully, not rashly. We don't want to harm our students, obviously, by exposing them to things that are too emotionally raw and that sort of thing. there is an art, dance, a balance to inviting our humanity into what we're learning. Because that's how we learn. That is sort of how we're set up as human beings.

Michael: Think about the conversations you all we all have, like with our friends and family. It's not about dense academic topics. It's did you see Oppenheimer? What did you think about, you know, this project? Go make students do that in a small group setting in your classroom after they've all watched a movie. I guarantee you will get the best discussion section in a class that you will have had ever because you're tapping into that thing that is intrinsically human. Takes out that veneer that you have to have that perfect academic vocabulary to talk about a thing. No, you're talking with amongst friends over a coffee. Sure, you're in a classroom about something that is otherwise really academically important. And if you just give them a little bit of extra oomph with some language, some scholarship to make those connections, boom, you've just done it. You've just, you've just bridged this gap that has tapped into the thing that we all do anyway. Um, which is engage with art, engage with culture, develop these ideas, talk

amongst ourselves about them and come to some, sometimes control, sometimes very uncomfortable conclusions and differences among each other. It's, it's really powerful. So it's, and it's fun too, frankly. Um, which is, which is I think important for students say engaged.

Jessica: Yeah, I think you also get at the idea of humility, right? So knowing that you bring expertise into the classroom from your own learning and experiences, but that also there are multiple perspectives and you don't always need to be the person sharing your perspective. So I think that use of art models that and also the ideas that we want to see in our classrooms related to anti-oppressive pedagogies, right? Bringing in multiple voices to the conversation, multiple perspectives, sharing ideas in different ways. We don't always have to look at PowerPoint like you're saying, Mike. And so those are other things that we really hope to see in our students' experiences here at Loyola.

Michael: We're lucky. We're very fortunate, very privileged to say that most of us don't have to experience a lot of the things that we see on TV. How do you make people think about it in a way that's different? Sometimes art, other forms of exposure does it. Yeah. Yeah.

Bridget: Yeah, so it strikes me that, you know, another thing that we talk about here is about the scholarship of teaching and learning and how educators can be sort of using a scientific critical lens to understand what's happening in their classroom. And I feel like I've thought of several research questions based on what you all have talked about that would be so fascinating to investigate. And I wonder, if you think about your teaching in that way or even reflecting on our conversation, are there things that you wonder about? What is the thing that's making the difference here and where there might be some invitations or open doors for you in thinking about scholarship, about your own teaching and your students learning?

Patty: Yeah, mean, I'm genuinely like Mike. mean, I'm genuinely passionate about teaching. I always want to do great at whatever job I've had, I enjoy reading teaching tips, newsletters like from the Chronicle of Higher Education. I read it weekly. I want to read weekly. I get some great ideas about what to do in the classroom from it. And also just in terms of planning, like Mike, I teach three or four classes. Those help me save a lot of time. They've got some built in activities that are wonderful that I can just use and grab. So yes, I really enjoy reading any sort of newsletters or going to the New York

Times Learning Network. Some of the lessons are geared towards younger elementary students, but some of them, even some of the elementary lessons work actually fine at a college level.

Michael: I always, have, I tell grad students this all the time, you will never learn a topic better than when you are forced to teach it. And I had, you know, having this faculty scholar position has actually really been great about making me reconsider like what my research has always been doing. And I hadn't really thought about it as being intrinsically about competing discourses. But then I look at, you know, the last couple of things that I've published and I'm like, Oh, holy cow. Okay. That, I mean, I'm already like, that's what I'm doing. And so I've, never been more, again, affirmed about that role. And it kind of like, is this great way to think about my approach to teaching and scholarship as very synthetic.

You know, thinking about, you know, one of a piece piece that came out in 2023 that I wrote, was about different religious approaches to peace building that have persisted throughout Palestine and Israel since, you know, for the last hundred years or more. And, and how this can be a baseline by which we talk about new solutions to the conflict or writing recent pieces about how different violent non-state actors have articulated their justifications for violence across time and how we can see, discrete similarities that kind of betray this idea that things have radically changed. In many ways, there's been radical sort of approaches to using violence for perceived justified ends. But even thinking about, you know, pop culture as a discourse, I've been doing some research, especially because it's an election year on to what extent pop culture influences public opinion towards particular topics, which can actually sway people to vote for politicians in a particular way that these are all like these. Like you said, Bridget, these research questions that I'm like now thinking about maybe in a way that I might not have otherwise. Um, but nevertheless speak to, think that the, really the impact that a position like this and an approach like this can have on both teaching, but now of course on, scholarship as well. Cause that's really what we're, we're also here to do is investigate these crazy trends and correlations that happen in our social world. And man, there's a lot of avenues to do that and there's still so much to explore.

Bridget: Yeah, I feel like that's the perfect, there's so much to do and so much more to explore. I'm feeling that very much, just even in our conversation, it makes me think that we maybe should make this part one and that we would come back together with you another time, because this has been really just enriching, I feel like, and interesting to get a window into what is happening in your classrooms, particularly as it relates to

talking about really challenging things that we and our students are exposed to and going through outside the classroom generally and how do we manage it inside the classroom. we just want to thank you so much. I love that. Thank you so much. We hope for those of you listening that you were inspired. Maybe there's some new things you want to try in your classroom. Maybe there's some questions that you have rolling around and we're going to keep talking about these.

From me and Jessica. Thanks so much