

**Bonni:** [00:00:00] Dr. Kevin Gannon talks Radical Hope- A Teaching Manifesto on today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed number 112.

**Production Credit:** [00:00:11] Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

**Bonni:** [00:00:20] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present where our students.

**Bonni:** [00:00:48] I get to welcome back to the show today Kevin Gannon. He serves as professor of history and also the director of the Center for excellence in teaching and learning at Grandview University in Des Moines Iowa. He confesses that he is a total geek for history pedagogy and technology particularly where the three intersect. He says that he thrives on experimentation as well as occasionally OK maybe often thumbing his nose at convention. Kevin welcome back to Teaching in Higher Ed.

**Kevin:** [00:01:25] Thanks. And I'm glad to be back.

**Bonni:** [00:01:27] I was mentioning on a recent episode about going to this podcasting conference and one of the people that we got to quote unquote meet or hear from was Alex Blumberg and he talked about that when you listen to a podcast you start to feel like you know that person in some way that that is not real.

**Bonni:** [00:01:46] And I was like wow I really do feel like I know you it's like you're inside my hand right now and I feel that way a little bit about you Kevin both in terms of getting to hear from you regularly on Twitter and then also from reading the blog post that we're going to be speaking about today. Do you find yourself

feeling that way about other people where you've not actually quote unquote met them but you feel like you know them.

**Kevin:** [00:02:08] Yeah. You know I do feel like there are people certainly on Twitter but on blogs that I follow those who I've never spoken with in person but spoken with a lot online and I feel like I maybe know them better than some of the people I actually work with here on my campus. So yeah I totally understand that.

**Bonni:** [00:02:24] When I read this blog post that we're going to be speaking about today and the title of it. It just speaks to my soul. Radical Hope- A Teaching Manifesto. Do you come up with titles like that before you write your blog posts or after.

**Kevin:** [00:02:39] I think it depends on the post..for this post, I knew I had the idea of a manifesto sort of kicking around in my head for quite a while and it had been about over a month since I updated my blog I've taken a little bit of a summer blogging break so I knew that when I turned on the blog that I would be posting something of that nature because that's what I've been kind of preoccupied with the working title was just a teaching manifesto.

**Kevin:** [00:03:03] But the last part that I put in there and answered it's a mantra that I return to again and again. You know teaching is a radical act of hope and so I thought that that more than anything else probably summed up the heart of what I was trying to write. So that became the final version of the title.

**Bonni:** [00:03:19] When you talk about this process of reflecting you really do enter into a painful place. Tell me about the process that you go through in being a critically reflective practitioner and to the extent that you can be really specific. Are you journaling. Are you looking at Cal... What are you what are you doing to come up with the kind of reflection that you want to have.

**Kevin:** [00:03:44] That's a great question. I think it varies from year to year. Some years it's mostly just sort of thinking back and maybe looking at student evaluations e-mails that I've gotten from students a student work some of their capstone projects and things like that and then sort of coupled with my own you know reflections and memories of the course but but lately I've been feeling like I wasn't a very systematic way that I can I can be prone to sort of selective memory for example or sort of you know any sort of bias.

**Kevin:** [00:04:15] And looking back you know not wanting to really confront things that maybe need to be confronted. So this year's process I not only look back over student work and of course documents when you know we use Blackboard. And students have you know discussion post and then our blogs and so I went back and re read a lot of what students did and then couple that with notes that I'd written down anywhere from within a journal to you know I used notes on blackboard that are visible only to myself it's a non-visible course note.

**Kevin:** [00:04:44] And so I'll make a note of something that seemed to work or didn't pass also had the opportunity this year because I'm participating in a grant funded project with the council or the council Independent Colleges for online teaching. And of course that was part of a consortium where we had to do a lot of sort of weekly reflection and journaling and tracking our time and you know try to collect some data from the consortium so cite some opportunities to build that.

**Kevin:** [00:05:10] And I went ahead and expanded it to the rest of my classes as well. So I mean it's still kind of them collage things but it was definitely much more intentional this year in terms of me keeping notes throughout the year and really going back and looking over not just selecting things but stuff that I knew had not worked as well as I wanted it to and I wanted to go back and get into that and sort of rediscover why I thought at the time it wasn't working well had that opinion changed with with the passage of a few months. And if it didn't why not you know what today. What did I think I was going to do differently the next time.

**Bonni:** [00:05:45] I have been reading a lot of what I can get my hands on in terms of books about memory everything from the book called Moonwalking with Einstein I don't know if you heard of that one. The guy.

**Kevin:** [00:05:58] Yeah. It's a good book.

**Bonni:** [00:05:59] You read it? It's so good. And for anyone listening who is not familiar with it he goes and studies the memory champions and finds out. Is this something that they were just kind of born with this particular gift or is it something that would be accessible to all of us.

**Bonni:** [00:06:13] And spoiler alert it's accessible to all of us and he ends up competing himself in a Memory Championship as the journalist studying all of

this. But anyway so reading that and then also I listen to a lot of podcasts that that bring up things about the mind.

**Bonni:** [00:06:29] And then I have had a chance to have some cognitive experts here on the podcast as well so it's always swimming around in my mind but one of the things that came up recently that I know just enough to be dangerous about and say like one sentence there is this idea that when we you said you were talking about selective memory that actually when we go back and remember something in that very act alters the body the true nature of what that memory should have been like we messed that up just by remembering it. Does that make sense.

**Kevin:** [00:06:59] Oh yeah. Right. Absolutely.

**Bonni:** [00:07:00] So it makes it that much harder I think. My husband and I we get together every week we tend to be pretty disciplined about having a weekly date night. And the question that we ask each other on this date night is this past week. What brought you life in this past week. What took life away from you?

**Bonni:** [00:07:20] And one of the things I find myself having to do is pull out my phone and look at my calendar because I literally can't remember that week. I don't know what happened. And that will help me sort of come to mind some of the memories of that sort of thing so it's wonderful that you have those notes on blackboard.

**Bonni:** [00:07:38] Some of your reflections the student work on the blog post can just be so helpful in terms of that reflection what do you think are key questions that we should be asking ourselves at milestones like the end of a semester.

**Kevin:** [00:07:53] Well I think you know I ask myself who immediately went of course was done. You know what's my gut feeling how did that go. Because I think being there in that immediate moment is pretty important to be able to sort of capture that somehow. So if my students are taking a final exam or I'm in my office and students are coming by and dropping off a final project or something like that that's a really opportune time to just sort of capture that immediate sense of ok this worked well or well you know maybe maybe this could have gone better. But then also with with a little intervention of time it's good to circle back around and think about that again.

**Kevin:** [00:08:30] And I think the simple questions like that simple direct questions are often the best. What worked what did it. When I have my students do informal evaluations around midterm I ask them to talk about what are the things in this course that are helping you learn.

**Kevin:** [00:08:45] And what are some things that are getting in the way of learning what might you change or what might you recommend changing and those are good questions for us to ask ourselves too. You know what promoted learning and what got in the way. And then look at what got in the way and see if there are ways that you know those obstacles that that ended up appearing in the course. Can we get around them over them or through them.

**Bonni:** [00:09:07] Prior guests have talked about something called retrieval practice and this idea that going back and reviewing the highlights on my notes is one of the biggest waste of time as compared to if I test myself and ask my brain to retrieve the information and really challenge myself that way but one of the things that really is still rattling around in my head in a good way is this idea that in much of the research that they've done if you asked students these questions like you just posed what's helping you learn what's getting in the way of helping you learn they will oftentimes show a bias that they didn't learn that way even though they did it. Does that make sense?

**Kevin:** [00:09:52] That it makes perfect sense.

**Bonni:** [00:09:53] Because I didn't like it.

**Kevin:** [00:09:56] And I used retrieval effect of that you know testing effects stuff all the time. And yeah it is something that you know they chafe about at least for the first few weeks. One of my courses I teach medieval history survey course with team based learning. And for students who haven't experienced that before that's a that's a really different way to do Course material.

**Kevin:** [00:10:18] And there are some who are resistant. You know certainly at first saying well you know we're teaching each other you're supposed to be teaching us you know and the structure of the pedagogy is very off putting to them.

**Kevin:** [00:10:28] So yeah that's an excellent point and I think that there's value to seeing what the student perceptions are. Yeah. You know if the students see you know if they say well this is getting in the way of learning but I can look and see that you know scores on the first exam were higher and tie that to a regular

use in the retrieval of fact you know built into some of the informal assessments I've done. Well then now I've got a talking point for class and I'll say you know it's interesting that a lot of you identified this is something that you saw as problematic but you know let's look at some data here because what I'm seeing actually shows it to be effective. Yeah.

**Kevin:** [00:11:01] So then you get into a little bit of metacognitive reflection and you get students to think about not just how they prefer to learn but how they learn. A lot of times students come to us I think with sort of one set of tools in the toolbox from from secondary school from high school and think that that's the way that everybody learns best. You know that one size fits all.

**Kevin:** [00:11:20] You know that you go back and read and reread your highlights and go back and read and reread the text and when you tell them Well no that's actually kind of the worst way to do it. And here are some other strategies that you know that there is some resistance because I know it's something I've been asked to do before.

**Kevin:** [00:11:35] I just think that it's useful to get them to think about themselves as learners not in being told how to learn but that they have a lot of ownership and control over that. And in order to make the best decisions about their learning that good data helps and maybe they just haven't had the chance to access that.

**Bonni:** [00:11:51] What are you hearing when you ask the question what is helping you learn what's getting in the way of helping you learn.

**Kevin:** [00:11:58] A lot of times when students will identify what's getting in the way. I've been surprised by how honest and frank they are about their individual habits. You know I've had so you know what's getting in the way of you learning and I've got these things that I don't study. Well yes I can see how that would be getting in the way of learning you know.

**Kevin:** [00:12:15] I need to spend more time with this or you know I'm not doing the reading or I work so many hours a week and I'm struggling to keep up with the coursework. You know so a lot of them identify sort of out of class things as what's getting in the way of learning. You know I mentioned I'm doing this team based approach for my survey class and I will occasionally get some students who are in these midterm evaluations will talk about you know maybe one person on their team isn't pulling their weight that's aggravating and that seems to.

**Kevin:** [00:12:45] And they'll say you know I'm still doing what I need to do but it's aggravating and it's kind of frustrating. And then there are ways within team based learning to address that within a team where students can can fix those problems as well. But a lot of what I get is actually you know students tend to look at themselves as individuals mostly out of class. You know what am I doing or not doing.

**Bonni:** [00:13:06] You start out about a third of the way through the post. You say this is my teaching manifesto if I want my students to take risks and not be afraid to fail then I need to take risks and not be afraid to fail. What are some risks that you've taken lately. Ones that have succeeded ones that have failed.

**Kevin:** [00:13:26] Well I think teaching in itself can be seen as a risky act right. Because when we're fully invested in what we're doing in the classroom and it doesn't go well. So you know we sort of put ourselves out there. Everybody likes validation. Right.

**Kevin:** [00:13:41] And so I've invested a lot of time and emotional energy to play in this course or this thing or this activity. And if it flops then you know that there is a personal toll on that because I think we're in a profession where we do identify so much of what we do with ourselves personally too much in some ways I think but it but it leaves us vulnerable.

**Kevin:** [00:14:01] And I think acknowledging that is helpful. What I've really tried to do in the last couple of years is turn more and more control over not coursework and gender but just the types of work that students are doing. Turn over control to students themselves.

**Kevin:** [00:14:18] So my projects for a class tend to have several options. You know you can do this or this or this or this to complete this project you know so I don't just do a standard research paper I offer several different vehicles that students can demonstrate the type of outcomes that are framed for that assignment. Having students blog I've been doing a lot of blogging in my courses and that's intensified the last year as well and giving students ownership essentially on the blog each week.

**Kevin:** [00:14:46] You know it's one or two of the students who are going to be the lead posters the lead authors for that for that particular week. And so they really set the agenda. You know they bring the subjects to the table that we're

going to talk about on the blog day. They're the ones that frame the conversation that start it and keep it moving.

**Kevin:** [00:15:02] And so I think for me being able to turn a lot of that control that decision making over here I create scenarios and create spaces for students but what they do in those spaces and how they go about doing it. I've tried to let them have as much autonomy as possible. A lot of times that works well but sometimes it doesn't.

**Kevin:** [00:15:21] You know sometimes you know like don't get very good projects from some folks at the end of the semester. They they see the opportunity maybe to do something different than a traditional research paper you know I'll let them you know create a digital exhibition on a Web site platform for example or for my students we're going in education and have them build a curriculum unit on a particular topic with some some stuff that gets in the research and information literacy that I want to see him demonstrate as well.

**Kevin:** [00:15:49] And I've had students sometimes you see that as you know all of this isn't as hard as a research paper so I can sort of you know not do anything on it until the last week and then throw something together. So sometimes students who fall into that trap I get some work that in retrospect we probably could have done a little better. But turning over that sort of control that day to day control to students you know where do you want to go. What what in this course is motivating and interesting to you.

**Kevin:** [00:16:17] And how can we fit that with the material that I have to bring to the class. And how can we create something in our time together here that is engaging that really sort of gets you thinking. In my case thinking like a historian thinking discipline disciplinary moving into that scholarly conversation there are a number different entrances to it. So which entrance are my students attracted to.

**Bonni:** [00:16:39] You cite Paulo Freire when I'm talking about the bankin model of education. Can you share a little bit about that.

**Kevin:** [00:16:48] Sure. Freire his book The Pedagogy of the Oppressed is you know kind of the intellectual godfather of critical pedagogy and I've always had a real deep interest in critical pedagogy. It ties in to you know learning as a man and the story Act ties into social justice a lot of themes that I'm interested in as a historian as well as a teacher.



**Kevin:** [00:17:10] And what he talks about is this idea of a banking model in that you know the traditional way of education and he's writing this you know in the 60s where he is the sort of very modernist approach that you know you're a receptacle to be filled with knowledge. So the instructor will deposit knowledge into the students and then the students will make withdrawals when they need to. For a paper a test for example.

**Kevin:** [00:17:33] And so learning becomes very transactional and it gives you output B and there's nothing that's really done with it it's you know there's no it's transactional but not transformational. So for he uses that is kind of a foil to what he talks about. You know for pedagogy of the oppressed when he's working with genuinely oppressed you know marginal subaltern groups in Brazil teaching literacy for example you know working with peasants and and dispossessed residents of the slums and Brazilian cities where education is a dialogue where students see their part in the process that they are just vessels in which things are deposited.

**Kevin:** [00:18:10] But they are active agents in the process of education and we learn that education is you know a set of arbitrary facts carved in stone that you just transmit from point to point to point.

**Kevin:** [00:18:21] But knowledge is constructed learning is constructed it's conditioned by our society. And so you you are critical in both the you know critically important but also critical in the sense of being a critic of the educational process if you're a student and I find that much more intriguing and certainly more fulfilling for everybody involved in this idea of just wrote banking Here's information any information B. And then eight weeks later I'm going to have you pass back information and information to me in a slightly altered form you know to me that's kind of a waste of everybody's time.

**Bonni:** [00:19:00] You instruct us to reclaim assessment for what it is meant to do to show what our students can do as a result of our classes. If we don't tell our stories someone else will tell them for us. I'd love to kind of break this into half first. I'd like to talk a little bit about how you're a protein assessment differently than maybe when you first started teaching and then also the struggle of someone else telling the story for us. So let's start with your assessment. How is your view of assessment changed over your time teaching.

**Kevin:** [00:19:31] Well I think when I first started teaching I had that sort of typical view of assessment. You know here's this bureaucratic thing that we're being

asked to do and I don't see what the point of it is you know how many more curriculum maps do you really want me to make.

**Kevin:** [00:19:44] And I think that reflected some of the institutional context I was in at the time but the institution where I'm at now here at Grandview University we revamped our assessment process about six or seven years ago.

**Kevin:** [00:19:57] And to me it really kind of it helped that I was serving on our assessment committee right after this new process was in place and it really opened my eyes as to you know what assessment can be as opposed to what it often is. I mean basically you know assessments one of those words it's been so abused now that you know it's kind of poison. Right.

**Kevin:** [00:20:16] When we hear assessment there's this automatic you know I'm going to roll my eyes and you know they want me to do this and this but at its root what assessment is doing is our students doing what we have told them they would be able to do as a result of our course or on the curricular level as a result of this major or as a result of being a student in our institution you know...

**Kevin:** [00:20:37] Did we tell you the truth when you came in. You know we said we're going to be able to do this this and this. And if you're an active participant you are going to be able to come out of it with these sort of outcomes and all assessment is saying did it happen. And if so why and if not why not.

**Kevin:** [00:20:53] So if we have an assessment be a sort of a way for us as faculty to come up with organically in our courses. What am I going to show people if they say what did your students get out of your medieval history class. You know I showed them that the outcomes that we had for the course.

**Kevin:** [00:21:09] And then I show them student work and other material other forms of evidence and data that say Yeah you know this. This shows me that students got from point A to Point B you know it doesn't have to be test scores. It doesn't have to be you know we're students going to have a 95 or better attendance rate every day. It can be a lot of different things as to what students are doing.

**Kevin:** [00:21:29] And I think we as faculty need to stop rolling our eyes and reclaim assessment you know exactly as we need to be able to demonstrate especially in these times where we're the very purpose of higher education in the United States seems to be under attack from certain quarters. We need to be able to meet those attacks. We need to be able to defend ourselves will say

look you know here's what students are getting out of these courses these experiences and in particular in the humanities it's in vogue to bash the humanities.

**Kevin:** [00:21:57] We defend the humanities as imparting incredibly important skills to students not just in understanding of Renaissance art or medieval history or whatever the particular subject matter may be but as a way of thinking as a way of being in the world right and that all sounds wonderful but how are you going to prove that students are getting that as a part of your course.

**Kevin:** [00:22:18] Well that's where the assessment comes in and the people who are best qualified to talk about what students are getting out of the course and the people who have designed that course and help students move through it and that's us.

**Bonni:** [00:22:29] Before we started talking today I mentioned to you actually I put it on Twitter too that I decided to use the hypothesis which is a annotation tool but it's a public annotation tool that kind of lays on top of of a Web site in this case your blog post that we're talking about today and allows people like me to sort of lay things over that and comments and feedback.

**Bonni:** [00:22:51] And so I probably was reading the article for the seventh or the eighth time right before we got on line today and it didn't occur to me until this moment as you were talking that the sentence doesn't say as a result of our class. It says reclaim assessment for what it is meant to do to show what our students can do as a result of our classes. It's a plural.

**Bonni:** [00:23:14] And one of the weaknesses I've seen maybe I'm just living in a particularly challenging is it's very hard for faculty to engage in that collaborative way and maybe it's a cultural thing and maybe maybe some institutions have a better culture that facilitates the kind of deep collaborative work that is needed to look at the result of our classes in plural.

**Kevin:** [00:23:38] Yeah I think that's really important to be able to do because otherwise you've just got a whole bunch of disaggregated data that will tell you some things but we talk about higher education college university education. You know there are some who will say that oh we can unbundle all of these things right that students can take some courses here and we'll unbundle the first year and they can transfer this in and take care of this here.

**Kevin:** [00:23:59] And I really have pushed back against this and I think a lot of people have because we are our line of defense is you know a college education higher education is more than just taking classes. It's you know certainly what happens in the classroom is a crucial element. It's at the heart of our enterprise but it's not the only thing that we do.

**Kevin:** [00:24:18] And so if we say well I've got a bunch and of course level assessment what we're basically saying is this is all colleges which I think is wrong. You know the whole is much more than the Salmoni individual parts.

**Kevin:** [00:24:30] And so it absolutely moves us to work as you know departments or disciplinary Klostors you know collaboration across campus. I know in my department you know the history department here we articulated a set of what we call a would called The History credo. It's basically some broad outcomes that we aim for in our courses and that's how we do our department assessment where students moving in these outcomes.

**Kevin:** [00:24:53] And so so a couple of them are very specific art students showing you know are they showing good skills and research and documentation of historical evidence. But then there's other stuff you know are students able to see the past and present as occupying a continuum rather than totally distinct from one another. Are students able to empathize with the other to appreciate different perspectives completely alien to their own.

**Kevin:** [00:25:17] And so we have assignments in our courses and we talk about ways in department that are classes plural are getting students towards those outcomes even if they only take one or two history classes as part of their core curriculum here.

**Kevin:** [00:25:32] They're going to get at least some movement towards these broader outcomes and I think that that's really helped us think about what we want to do individually in our own classes and how that complements a larger vision that we have as a department. And I think there's more than one way to get at that.

**Kevin:** [00:25:48] But I certainly think you know you need to be thinking about assessment on a class level the curricular level and the institutional level because we have to tell our story. You know we have to show people that what we're doing matters. You know I think a lot of times we think it's so self-evident why all this stuff is important but if we can articulate it to a different audience

that it really doesn't matter what we think. But I think that's where sometimes we fall a little short.

**Bonni:** [00:26:13] I have a question I'm going to leave for the end but since we have a minute or two I'm just going to ask you real softball questions as we're recording this. And it really doesn't actually seem to matter when we're recording this. There have been some recent devastating tragedies around the world.

**Bonni:** [00:26:31] And one of the things I struggle with I teach business so I'm I think maybe I'm going to be even more extreme than for someone who teaches history to win something like that comes up how do you handle because you've got stuff you talk about coverage. I got to cover this.

**Bonni:** [00:26:47] And the reality of it is that I do think there was this look which I should probably go back and reread before I reference it because it's been since I was a long time ago. But Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance were basically you just end up sitting in your own filth because you're so much in despair of the world and engaging with it. I think that I do know that book and did I just completely.

**Kevin:** [00:27:11] I do yep.

**Bonni:** [00:27:11] Did I do OK with it?

**Kevin:** [00:27:14] So you know that that's a place where you can end up. You know I think he does say that.

**Bonni:** [00:27:19] Yeah. So I think that the answer isn't that horrible things have happened so let's never progress with your college education. But yet to not address things when they come up how do you balance that the fact that something devastating has happened and yet there can be important ways that these students can change the world without college education so I don't I don't know what I'm asking. How do you do it.

**Kevin:** [00:27:45] Well that makes I mean I think I follow your say I mean you know I do use the word cover but but I'm also very critical of the idea especially in history of coverage like we have to get through X amount of material and we fail.

**Bonni:** [00:27:58] It's dangerous.

**Kevin:** [00:27:58] Because that's an unrealistic standard. So we have to be we have to be very clear you know what is it we're trying to do here. And for me as a historian it is a college level educator what I want my students to be able to do transcends specific core content. Right.

**Kevin:** [00:28:13] And so one of the values of a liberal arts education is the ability to be more self-aware but also aware of others in a really meaningful and important way. You know we call it global awareness or intercultural competence or whatever you want to call it. To me this ability to empathize with perspective is completely different from your own to be able to encounter different viewpoints and opinions in a way that is constructive rather than destructive.

**Kevin:** [00:28:44] And that's what you have to stand by with everything that's been going on you know a lot of what what we suffer as a society part of it you know you can tell in the dialogue and the recriminations and go back and forth and it's just a stunning lack of empathy you know for people who criticize Black Lives Matter and say you know what you're just out to attack cops or you know black lives matter all lives matter it's it's an amazing lack of empathy for what the black community and Black Lives Matter are talking about it instead of experiences which are very foreign.

**Kevin:** [00:29:17] You know certainly to my experience and to others but that doesn't mean that we can't have empathy and that doesn't mean that we can't approach them as fellow citizens who are concerned about the welfare of our whole society. And I think that higher education really needs to be able to cultivate that with students. It's a broadening of perspectives. It's opening students eyes to a world of ideas that some of which they may be familiar with but we'll see in a new light others which they may have never encountered before.

**Kevin:** [00:29:47] And your first response to something new is you know automatically you don't know this was new. I don't like change. You know we certainly do that in academia but for ourselves and our students we have to be able to get to a point where encountering something new and different and unfamiliar maybe even at first threatening does not give us that shut down reaction that we have to be able to move beyond that we have to be able to enter into dialogue and enter into conversation with people with whom we might never converse before or interacted with before and if we are able to do

that if we aren't able to get students to be willing to do that then we've got problems.

**Bonni:** [00:30:27] Take me into one of your classrooms. Just pick whatever horrific incident you like to pick because there's plenty there. It's Monday morning. And how do you start the class.

**Kevin:** [00:30:41] Well coming on the heels of you know something in the news like say for example the shootings of the police officers in Dallas. Right. You know coming on the heels of that I would open the class by saying well you know you probably have heard the news and read about it you know. So anybody want to talk about it. What do you all think. Where is this coming from.

**Kevin:** [00:31:02] And usually people will want to talk about it or have questions about it. And mostly I just try to let the students talk and answer each other's questions. I don't want them to look at me as you know I'm the arbiter.

**Kevin:** [00:31:13] And I will tell you if your reactions to this are correct or incorrect but I try to use questions to nudge the conversation along. And then you know what I usually try to do is then tie it back into what we're talking about in class. You know OK we're in history class here's this event that has just occurred it's you know very raw and very real and very immediate.

**Kevin:** [00:31:35] But is it new. Does it remind you of anything. You know have we talked about some of these things or have you encountered this and maybe another face or another shape this semester in getting students to contextualize and understand that every event has its history it has its story and that if we aren't aware of that broader context then we can understand what's happening today. That's easier to do and a history course I think than maybe some other courses but I think getting students to think critically to engage critically.

**Kevin:** [00:32:07] You know this wasn't just some awful bad thing that happened out of nowhere and then will happen. You know it didn't come from anywhere and it won't have any ramifications down the road. I mean it's foolish to think of something like that. So let's let's put it in its place let's talk about where it might have come from and try to understand you know what what are the reasons that people might have this reaction or that reaction to it in a way those let's let's engage with those and let's not let's not shut anything down but let's you know let's do what college students are supposed to do and to think.

**Bonni:** [00:32:39] One of the resources that I find particularly helpful in my discipline is a AMP's Marketplace podcast. And they they will take something where I may not necessarily be able to instantaneously draw superintelligent parallels that don't aren't wrapped up with my own emotion too significantly to have the kind of influence I'd want to have.

**Bonni:** [00:33:00] And even being able to play little snippets and a few there that particular podcast is out every single day. And also of course airs on NPR but they ought to be able to take things like that to help us build those bridges for the students. I think it's great when and then of course being on Twitter or being a part of a personal learning network and being able to it's been one of the reasons I really enjoyed following on Twitter is I kind of think when we've had these difficult weeks there are people for whom we are in solidarity and we can grieve together and that's just really been a helpful solace for me.

**Kevin:** [00:33:35] I agree that and you know my involvement on Twitter is just put me and connected me with such interesting and original people who write such interesting and original sayings that I'm able to then direct my students towards or bring some in a class whether it's a blog post or a series of tweets or something like that.

**Kevin:** [00:33:54] And you know to help bring that bring those voices into the conversation you know that maybe students haven't encountered and let them know that you know there is a larger conversation about this and I think it's important for us to be you know aware and tapped into it and to be to be empathetic to its participants you know because things look different in central Iowa than they do in a lot of other places in the country so.

**Kevin:** [00:34:16] So let's try to understand that and with social media with podcasts having that other perspective as if you're not bringing those other perspectives and you're not trying very hard because there's so much out there that we can bring.

**Bonni:** [00:34:29] Before we close to the recommendations part of the show. You end your post saying no matter what teaching is a radical act of hope. Kevin what are you hopeful for.

**Kevin:** [00:34:43] Well I'm I'm hopeful that teaching works. You know the higher education is certainly you know the discourse that surrounds it. You know budget cuts and what's the value of it and you know what are you professors do anyway and just you know all the news is bleak and grim and but what we do is



some of the most important essential work that's out there and there's a reason that universities have persisted as long as they have this model of higher education is so entrenched because it has a lot to offer to society.

**Kevin:** [00:35:14] And lest we forget that with all that's going on to me getting into the classroom working with and among students you know that's the essence of how we change things. If we see something that's missing in the world you know in the classroom in higher education we have the very real ability to fill that void.

**Kevin:** [00:35:33] It sounds like a cliché but you know we work with the future and that's a really really incredible responsibility but also an incredibly liberating thing to keep in mind especially when you're needy and committee work and bureaucracy and reading and other awful op ed in The New York Times about higher ed or something like that it's it's very helpful to return back to the essence of what I am doing with these students is having an enormous impact. Whether I see it or not it's going to have an enormous impact beyond what my own individual capabilities are.

**Kevin:** [00:36:06] And when I teach I am because I keep doing it. I'm expressing that I do have hope. There's a reason I'm doing this. You know if I didn't think that teaching mattered I wouldn't be doing it. So when I'm in the classroom and when I work on my courses when I reflect on what went wrong and what I can do better in this sort of constant feedback cycle I'm in myself I'm doing it because ultimately what we do is we keep hope.

**Bonni:** [00:36:33] Thank you. This is the point in the show where we give recommendations and I have two small children and I also have a very eclectic taste in music. In fact if there's not music playing I generally speaking have a soundtrack that plays in my head and I know that people who are very musically inclined tend to have that same thing I thought I was the only person but apparently it happens to other people.

**Bonni:** [00:36:56] And it is so fun when my kids musical tastes overlap with mine. My daughter right now really loves the song, Old MacDonald and I will say that that is not one of my favorite songs. However hearing this version from Ella Fitzgerald.

**Ella Fitzgerald:** [00:37:16] \*Old MacDonald plays.

**Bonni:** [00:37:42] That one I don't mind listening to on repeat. So I'm going to be recommending that if people have small children or if you don't you should listen to Ella singing Old MacDonald and I will be putting a link to that in the show notes which are going to be a [teachinginhighered.com/112](https://teachinginhighered.com/112) by the way.

**Bonni:** [00:37:59] The other thing that's going to be in the show notes is a link of course to Kevin's article and also a link to the hypothesis annotated version so if you'd like to participate and join me in making some reflections on his writing I just encourage you to do that so he can see it from a different view. It's like commenting on a Web site but it's within the text and I think it's just an interesting experiment. Kevin what do you have to recommend for us today.

**Kevin:** [00:38:23] Well I mentioned Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and I've read that several years into my teaching career and it absolutely transformed the way that I think about what we do in higher ed in particular but education in general and it's a book I go back to and get more out of each time I go back to it. And so that's my recommendation.

**Kevin:** [00:38:45] But in a broader sense I think it's important that we reconnect with whatever it is maybe it's a text maybe it's something else that was transformative for us as we evolve as teachers are working with students or however we engage with higher ed go back to that thing or things reconnect and recapture what it was that brought us to where we are now. I think it's really important for us to do that and I think it's something that we often forget to do as well.

**Bonni:** [00:39:14] Thanks so much for coming back on the show I hope that it's just a continuing conversation because I'd love to have you back again.

**Kevin:** [00:39:20] Well thanks for having me. I really appreciate it.

**Bonni:** [00:39:23] It was so great to talk to Kevin again I really appreciate him taking the time out to share his story is with us he really inspires and challenges me. And I would like to inspire and challenge you to join the conversation at [teachinginhighered.com/112](https://teachinginhighered.com/112). And if you would like to get these conversations coming into your inbox once a week where you can get the show notes automatically and not have to remember to go look at them.

**Bonni:** [00:39:49] And also an article about teaching or productivity included in that email each week you can go ahead and do that at

teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. And I would also encourage you to leave a rating or a review on iTunes for the show.

**Bonni:** [00:40:06] And actually I found out that if you subscribe to the show in iTunes even if you don't actually listen to it that way it really helps other people discover the show so I'd love for you to do that and leave a radio interview while you're there. It's so fun to see this community growing and having more people contributing to it. It's just great so thanks so much and I'll see you next time.

*Teaching in Higher Ed transcripts are created using a combination of an automated transcription service and human beings. This text likely will not represent the precise, word-for-word conversation that was had. The accuracy of the transcripts will vary. The authoritative record of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcasts is contained in the audio file.*