

**Bonni:** [00:00:00] Today on episode number 224 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, I welcome back to the show Jesse Stommel and Sean Michael Morris to talk about An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy.

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**Bonni:** [00:00:30] Hello and welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm 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 improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

**Bonni:** [00:00:57] What an absolute joy it is today to be welcoming back to the show two such memorable guests for me personally and I know for so many of you that have listened to past episodes with them. Jesse Stommel is the Executive Director of the Division of Teaching and Learning Technologies at the University of Mary Washington. He's also the co-founder of Digital Pedagogy Lab and Hybrid Pedagogy, an open access journal of learning, teaching, and technology. And before I go to introduce Sean Michael Morris, I did want to mention that Jesse also has a rascal pup, Emily, two clever cats, Loci and Odin and a bad ass daughter.

**Bonni:** [00:01:40] Sean Michael Morris is the Director of the Digital Pedagogy Lab at the University of Mary Washington. Sean is interested in the practice of critical digital pedagogy as a social justice movement and has been working in and around digital learning environments for 20 years.

**Bonni:** [00:02:00] And in their new book that they'll be talking about today, An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy. Audrey Watters writes the foreword. And I can think of no better description than hers for the book. She writes, "for at least a century now we've been told stories that machines are poised to revolutionize education. The rationale for this revolution

has remained largely unchanged. Machines will make education more efficient. Sean Michael Morris and Jesse Stommel teach towards a different future. One in which dignity is prioritized over efficiency. One in which agency and freedom are prioritised over compliance and control. As the title of this collection of writing makes clear in the face of stories insisting the future will be automated, that is in the face of the urgency of machines, Morris and Stommel want us to agitate instead for an urgency of teachers and positing pedagogy, critical pedagogy specifically, as a lever for change. They ask us to join them in resisting the stories that machines have wants and needs and that their logic dictates the shape of the future. Instead they urge us to center care and justice in our practices to center humans, knowing that this will require a radical reordering of the priorities of our institutions and ideologies as well."

**Bonni:** [00:03:45] Sean and Jesse, welcome back to Teaching in Higher Ed.

**Jesse:** [00:03:49] Hi, it's nice to be with you again.

**Sean:** [00:03:51] Hi. it's nice to be here.

**Bonni:** [00:03:54] Sean, I don't know if you had a chance to read this blog post that I wrote but I spent some time at Chuck E. Cheese recently crying over one of your recent blog posts. \*Sean and Bonni laughing\* And it's an awkward place to just be weeping openly. Both of you have been such a special part of my life since I was introduced to you. I treasure your work. You so regularly just remind me of the urgency and the vitalness- is vitalness a word? Can I use vitalness?.

**Sean:** [00:04:27] I think so yeah.

**Bonni:** [00:04:28] Of what it is that we do. And I know so much has been happening in your lives since we last spoke. In fact Jesse, I think it may have been back in 2015 when we first spoke to have a conversation about Twitter that really transitioned into a conversation about kindness. But could you talk a little bit Jesse about what's been going on in your life?

**Jesse:** [00:04:50] Yeah I'm happy to. Yeah. It was interesting- it was so nice to be on one of your very first episodes, I forget which episode number I am but it's pretty early on. And it's really great to be back talking to you again. And I'm a completely different human being.

**Jesse:** [00:05:06] So on December 12th of 2016 my baby daughter was born and we were there at the hospital holding her. We were the first, my husband and I

were the first to hold her. And she sucked our fingers. And now she is a wild woman, 19 month old blazing around my house just turning my life upside down at every possible moment. And it's impossible for me not to bring her into my work because she's changing who I am.

**Jesse:** [00:05:40] I've actually pretty carefully not put her out on the internet except in private forums because I want her to have the decision about how she owns the space of the web because I know how powerful that space is and what that space can do to people.

**Jesse:** [00:05:55] But I can't not bring her into my work all the time and to not talk about her and not talk about how she's affecting and changing my work would be to be disingenuous about who I am and how my work happens. And I had the one thing I would say and I know you and I have talked about this is that having a kid, especially such a young child who is seeing the world for the first time makes me understand education in a completely different way. I can't really think about education without thinking about the way that she looks at the world. It makes me feel joy. It makes me feel like a kind of hope at what what this work can be because if she can look at the world that way, then we all can.

**Bonni:** [00:06:37] Just yesterday we got home late. I had been at work. We were doing hiring at my institution. So it's one of those just all day your brains on, you're fried. Picked them up from camp. Of course stopped at McDonald's.

**Bonni:** [00:06:49] Sorry my father in law who worked there for 30 years. You know this isn't the idealized version of motherhood certainly. We get home, unload the backpacks, get the shower, the whole thing. And my daughter says "Mommy can I show you something?" And I'll say my first thought was "absolutely not, get inside the house" but I thought let's not always go off of our default settings and she showed me the most wonderful little tiny mushroom that was growing in our front yard. I mean and how much more then can our students just show us new ways of looking at the world that some of us have become just too jaded to remember that sense of discovery and curiosity. And on and on it goes.

**Bonni:** [00:07:31] Sean, I know much has changed in your life since we last spoke as well. What's been going on?

**Sean:** [00:07:38] When did we speak last Bonni? It was a few years back. I think I was working, it must have been Middlebury then.

**Bonni:** [00:07:43] Yeah.

**Sean:** [00:07:44] OK. So since then I've actually moved from Middlebury to the University of Mary Washington. And I'm working now with Jesse in I think our first official capacity since 2007, since we were working together at the Community Colleges of Colorado online, when I hired Jesse to design courses there. I mean now we flipped the tables and I'm working for Jesse.

**Jesse:** [00:08:12] He's a way better boss than I am.

**Sean:** [00:08:16] So that's that's one of the biggest changes. I'm still living in Portland, Oregon. So I'm still working remotely which continues to offer some interesting challenges and also some really great perspectives on what it means to be teaching and learning online. So much has changed since Jesse and I were working together in Colorado around online learning and teaching. For example, Zoom, this video platform that we use actually out UMW, we used it at Milbury. It's an amazing tool for basically communicating seamlessly across great distances. And that sort of thing is very different from what we had 10 years ago. From the perspective of someone who was working remotely, understanding this sort of idea of what it's like to be on the other side of the screen. I recently said something about two groups of teachers at the Open University when we were there that when we are teaching online, we're not teaching to a screen, we're teaching through a screen.

**Sean:** [00:09:07] And I think that was sort of an important distinction for folks because we forget that there is a physical human being on the other side of that screen somewhere. So that's a piece of continuing to work remotely even though I'm now working- It's funny when I say I've moved from Middlebury to UMW. I may have changed the room I was in in my house but other than that I pretty much have stayed in the same place. The difference is it's who I'm communicating with remotely and how that communication works. That's been an interesting change.

**Jesse:** [00:09:37] He still has that stained glass that same stained glass and that bear. And so it's really fascinating to watch over the many many years we've worked together and work together at a vast distance, different kinds distances but almost always working together remotely. And what you end up seeing is you end up seeing this framed view of their world. But those objects end up being so important. That stained glass hovering over his shoulders helps me feel a kind of constancy, a sense of where he is, the place that he is in.

**Sean:** [00:10:09] That's actually an interesting point pedagogically. And I want to bring something up. I realize we're on video and no one will be able to see this on the podcast, but I'll show you guys. I do have a bear on my desk. It's a little stuffed bear. This bear has been on my desk for oh my gosh, 15 years? Something like that. Because this bear was given to me by the very last class that I taught on ground at CU Boulder. The last day that I was teaching, they rewarded me with this bear. And I told them this bear would always be nearby where I was writing. And so it has always stayed nearby where I was writing and that's just that sense of constancy but also that sense of there's something physical on the other side of the screen. There's somebody who has objects on their desk that are important to them. There's a sense of humanity beyond the digital that we often forget about and that certainly a lot of our educational technology doesn't allow for us to even consider in the way that it asks us to teach. And so I like the story of the bear because it has traveled with me all over. It's always near where I'm writing and no one knows that when they're talking to me on e-mail or chatting with me on text message.

**Jesse:** [00:11:17] I think that that's actually true of the physical classroom also. I mean so I teach film theory or have in the past. And there's this notion of the open frame or the closed frame. A closed frame is sort of completely contained. All the information you need is inside the frame. Where as an open frame is always kind of looking beyond itself and getting information from what's outside the frame and there's kind of suggestion of a world outside of the world that the film or the world that you could see on the film.

**Jesse:** [00:11:45] And I think that's totally true about these kind of relationships that there is outside of the frame that I'm looking at right now. And yet it is so influencing in that story you are telling. And so influencing the work that you do all the time in the back of your head.

**Jesse:** [00:12:01] Same thing with my daughter. She's not in the classroom with me, at least not all the time. She's not in this conversation with us and yet she is. And I think that that sense of even a physical classroom being a box that we're inside and how much of the world outside that box do we let in? Do we bring with us when we come into a classroom? Whether it's physical or virtual.

**Sean:** [00:12:23] About this idea of the open frame, if we think about that pedagogically we think about that in terms of what we bring that to the teaching experience. We often go into teaching with objectives. Sometimes very literal learning objectives, but usually in a classroom we have some objective for our time together. Same thing online. And that's sort of a closed

frame perspective of everything's going to happen in this frame. What happens when we open that frame up pedagogically is we get moments where people say can I show you something? And it's a little mushroom and you have those moments of the unexpected that you can learn from that they're learning from and you get to see what learning actually is as it happens in the moment. As opposed to this constructed learning that you're trying to create in a room.

**Sean:** [00:13:10] And I think that that the idea of the open frame is really lovely because I was just going to say when you told a story about the mushroom I was going to say so much of good teaching requires time and space and allowing ourselves a space to breathe and to allow things to come up that bubble to the surface that we don't expect and giving platforming for those things to rise up. Those moments when you really just want to get inside the house, but in fact your better self says no, I'm going to see what she wants to show me. And having those moments in the classroom where I want to see what you want to show me, I think that that's a really important pedagogical move.

**Bonni:** [00:13:47] I had many years of infertility before I was able to sustain a pregnancy and then a second. So that's the result of my two children. But I quite literally physically changed. I was over 40 and one of the things I was a high risk pregnancy for a number of reasons so it was just to be in a constant state of awareness of my own body and not allowing myself to become stressed over things that will the very next moment matter not.

**Bonni:** [00:14:18] So my students who had me before, they're like "you are so much more mellow now that you ever were before." But one of the things that really has done now because yes that was first about caring for this life growing inside of me but then it also now today has become much more of being finely attuned to what others bring into our learning spaces.

**Bonni:** [00:14:46] I mean everything from still being haunted and shaped by watching colleagues die from cancer and then our students. I mean just the contexts with which they enter in and our unawareness sometimes of what's right there in front of us but cannot be seen yet. And just it is hard work that we do. And you're using the word "urgency" in a lot of your speaking and your writing I wonder if you would spend some time just reflecting what is urgent today? What is changing about what we do?

**Jesse:** [00:15:25] I'll start and say that I've spent a lot of my career focused on research and activism and advocacy around student agency and pushing back against the culture of shame that we've created in education where

students often feel belittled or feel not respected. Not respected in some cases by their teachers but more by the institution of education, the kind of work very hard wall box that we've created. That their work doesn't always smash against kindly.

**Jesse:** [00:16:00] And recently I've been thinking more and more about the need to guard space for teachers. The work of teaching. Here I am 18 years into my career as a teacher and I feel like honoring how difficult that work is and how difficult it is for us to bring ourselves to this work every day especially given the world that we live in.

**Jesse:** [00:16:21] And I think that Sean and I have really devoted so much of our career to faculty development, working with other teachers, and we're trying to gather together our thinking to try and suss out what is it about the world we live in where teachers and the work of teaching is so urgent so vital so necessary? And how can the work of teaching- and when I talk about teaching I mean not only the teaching that I do, and the teaching that Sean does, and the teaching that you do but also this teaching that our students do as well when they teach us- that the urgency of this work of teaching pushed back against the increasingly inhumane world that we find ourselves in.

**Sean:** [00:17:07] I think that's I think that's all right. And I think there's something important when we when we talk about the idea of sort of well academics like to do research, broadly speaking. And I think there's a thing that happens when we think about teaching and learning, we think about our profession and that sort of thing and that is that we tend to hunker down a little bit and we say OK so what have we learned? What can we gather together that is that is this thing that is teaching and learning? But the truth is that that's constantly changing and the work of research should also be a work of listening so that our minds are being changed all the time.

**Sean:** [00:17:40] We don't go forward with a thesis. We go forward with a question. And that allows us to gather different kinds of formation, more honest information I think because we're not just making assumptions and then bolstering our assumptions up with other researchers who have said the same thing. Looking for places where we haven't looked before.

**Sean:** [00:17:59] And I say all of this I think in part because we've talked about our kids. And my own is a 23 year old and they're nonbinary. And they have taught me a tremendous amount about what students are facing today. They are an undergraduate here in Portland. And it's a very different world than it was

when I was an undergraduate. And the idea that I would have any idea what their lives are like and what they're facing everyday when they come into class is absurd.

**Sean:** [00:18:32] And the idea that I would then take "well we're going to learn about Ernest Hemingway today" and it's like well Ernest Hemingway has absolutely no relevance whatsoever to a queer kid living in almost poverty level conditions trying to make their way through school. What is Ernest Hemingway know about that? How does Ernest Hemingway teach us about that? And yet we bring canon to respond to non canon circumstances.

**Sean:** [00:18:57] And I think that it's really important when we think about teaching as urgent that we recognize that it is. Jesse has said often that teaching is a work of activism. And I think that's absolutely true. It has to be something we are listening to the world and we are responding to the world appropriately. And not just bringing our assumptions forward and forcing them to say it's always going to stay the same, it always has to stay the same because the world has not stayed the same.

**Jesse:** [00:19:24] I think over the course of the years that I've been teaching there was a sort of sense of a classroom as- and I don't really mean this to be abstract. I mean to say the classroom as a sacred space, a sort of space guarded from the rest of the world. And I mean I don't I mean not really quite literally a classroom can be a space that you can close the door and reflect and have conversations and try out ideas and rehearse ideas and make mistakes.

**Jesse:** [00:19:52] And I think that I've found that over the course of my career that there are no spaces that really are sacred like that. There are no spaces for reflection that can't imagine that the world outside of them doesn't exist. I think that we have to acknowledge that that world continues to exist. Sometimes we do need to close the door but we can't forget that the world still goes on outside of it.

**Sean:** [00:20:18] I would wonder if we could say that if the classroom is not a sacred space and there are no spaces that are closed off from the world then that isn't the whole space a sacred sort of learning space. All of the spaces we occupy are that moment outside your house when you just want to get inside and that that right there. That was a learning space right. There was a sacred thing happening in that moment.



**Sean:** [00:20:42] And if we no longer close off the classroom as that only space that happens and all of a sudden, our pedagogy has to change. Our teaching has to change. Because it isn't just contained to there. It isn't just our autonomous little space where we get to do what we want. It has to be reflective of what's going on out there in the world.

**Bonni:** [00:21:01] What ways have each of you used digital tools, digital approaches then to help bridge- I don't want to say it's a gap- but just build those connections?

**Jesse:** [00:21:15] The one thing that I've found that digital tools have helped me in my life is to recognize that the open frame is a whole lot more open than I ever imagined it was. So being able to work in real time and collaborate in real time with people somehow simultaneously on multiple sides of the world, to be able to feel like I'm present in conversations that are happening on other continents and in other cultures, in places very different from the one that I live. I think ultimately that's the only reason I'm surviving the current political quagmire of the United States right now is because I learned that there was a much much bigger world.

**Sean:** [00:22:03] I think that's right. I think that we often think about digital tools as a way of transmitting teaching. I'm going to use this tool to do this and this tool to do that. But we can also use the digital tools. I mean things like social media for example to listen and to absorb instead of push out our ideas. It can be a place where we actually just hear. I mean there's problems with social media because you're hearing certain kinds of things depending on what algorithm you're subject to and who you follow and who follows you and etc.

**Sean:** [00:22:31] But I think they're recognizing that the thing that the digital allows us to do is recognize that our world is not small and is not as small as certain news channels would want you to believe or a certain president might want you to believe, that we can reach across those boundaries.

**Sean:** [00:22:46] And Jesse and I through digital pedagogy lab actually we've done a lot of work internationally and that continues to inform what the lab is but also what we think of as our community as as a pedagogical community. And even what our pedagogy is. Because as it gets informed by people from other cultures, it changes, it shifts, it has to. So it can't just be western.

**Bonni:** [00:23:07] One of the things that I think often about each of you is that a sense of confidence- not confidence in yourself but confidence in the work. And I

mentioned early in our conversation about the Chuck E. Cheese Blog post that I wrote. And it was one of those when I was speaking with Harold Jarche about personal knowledge mastery- one of the things he brought up, I just realized I had such a misunderstanding about was his whole thing is he has a model of you go out and seek information, you make sense of it, and you share it. So seek, sense, share.

**Bonni:** [00:23:46] So we were getting to the share part. He's not so much on the share. He's on building things that are shareable. And that distinction was just wild to me, so I realized as I had written that post originally it was really a sharable post but I didn't think I was ever going to be brave enough to share it. And then I think about some recent episodes that I've had that felt really scary to share. I mean and some not so recent episodes. I feel like so much of the work that I'm doing now is just terrifying to me, the vulnerability that it's required is both terrifying but so rewarding that I keep doing it.

**Bonni:** [00:24:24] Do you feel that same terror and you're doing it anyway? Or is there something that you have been able to get to that has either eradicated that or it was just never there in the first place?

**Jesse:** [00:24:38] Yeah I'll say that absolutely. But terror isn't maybe the word that I would use. I would say hard, deeply hard. The work is hard. The work is emotionally hard, physically hard sometimes, obviously mentally hard. I actually over the last two years about have started to bring myself forward in my work. I've always seemed I think like an approachable person, like an approachable person and like a person who is open.

**Jesse:** [00:25:09] But I also am pretty guarded. I'm pretty boundary. And I very very carefully share. And sometimes I'm sharing because I want to be open and I want to make myself vulnerable. And sometimes I'm sharing model vulnerability and model what that sharing can look like. But I've also been very guarded in the way that I've done it.

**Jesse:** [00:25:30] And recently in a couple keynotes I've decided to put myself in a truly uncomfortable place. And the reason I did it was because the subject I was talking about was deeply uncomfortable and I couldn't hide that. And so I realized if I'm going to do this work, if I'm going to bring myself to the table of what it's like to be a queer person working in the open pedagogy movement for example. If I'm going to bring myself to the place of talking about what it is to be queer and work openly online, I really have to sit with that. And I really have to sit with all of the facets of that that are hard.

**Jesse:** [00:26:10] And so a couple of keynotes recently I've actually wept in front of the audience. And at least one of them the audience could tell that I was weeping in front of the audience. And it was a big moment for me because it was a moment where I realized that if I feel unsafe then what I have to do to counter that is to be bolder, braver, kick more asses, put myself out more. I don't think everyone can do that.

**Jesse:** [00:26:39] And I think that the reason that I feel like I have to do it is because there are people who can't. And so what am I doing? I'm not standing in for them because I don't feel like I can do that. I don't feel like I could stand in for other people.

**Jesse:** [00:26:56] But I feel like what I can do is make space. And if making space means kicking over some chairs and pushing some stuff out of the way. Sorry for my language, but the thing is that when you come to your work from an emotional place that language bubbles up for because my emotion can't keep it down.

**Sean:** [00:27:16] So I recently wrote a blog post on my blog where I came out as borderline personality as I've been diagnosed by a borderline personality disorder. And that was a move that was incredibly vulnerable. I had no idea what the repercussions would be. I intentionally shared it with a few people that I work with very closely so that they would understand the conditions under which our relationship had always operated. And I thought that was really important.

**Sean:** [00:27:40] But I think similar to what Jesse's talking about and kind of what you were talking about too, this idea of modeling vulnerability. Modeling it so saying I'm going to go out there, I'm going to take this step so that other people can take that step too.

**Sean:** [00:27:55] And sure there are certain risks. I face fewer risks than a lot of people in making those sorts of moves. But I want the world to be a safe place where people can talk about those sorts of things. And similar to the kinds of things that I've learned from my nonbinary kid, there are things that people aren't talking about that are factors and a lot of invisible disabilities a lot of things that people face microaggressions for that we have no idea that shakes every day and bringing these things to the surface, bringing those voices and those conversations to the surface is incredibly important.

**Sean:** [00:28:30] So there is a way in which I feel like my job is in no way to speak for others but to speak when I feel like there is silence and then to go silent. And hope that what rushed in are other voices. Because I feel like it's more my job to listen and more my job to be quiet than it is my job to speak out except in situations in situations where I feel like OK if I if I put this out there maybe someone will feel safer doing the same. And that's what I try to offer. I did want to make one quick comment about that about the idea of the- what did you say? What was that three steps?

**Bonni:** [00:29:13] Seek sense and share.

**Sean:** [00:29:16] Yeah. So seek, and the sort of sense making pieve of it. That sense making piece of it is hilarious to me because you're constantly returning to the things you've observed and making different sense of them. And I think that I've noticed this when looking back on some of my older writing on hyper pedagogy for example thinking oh my God, what was I thinking? That was a stupid thing to say.

**Sean:** [00:29:38] But at that time it was valid. And at the time it was reflective of what I was learning. If we only put out those things that are our perfect thoughts and that we're done now and not going to think about this anymore, then we're not learning anymore.

**Sean:** [00:29:50] And I think it's important for people to be able to recognize when they write, go ahead and write and put this stuff out. And this is again this this part of the urgency of teaching is that we have to be willing to let this be a process and not a finished product. And even ourselves as people who may have- Jesse and I been teaching for a really long time and yet we still go every single time into it as though we don't know what we're doing. Because we don't. We don't know what's going to come up. And so that sense making piece of it. Sometimes you have to share before you really have made sense.

**Bonni:** [00:30:26] And that's part of the process. Absolutely. Earlier Jesse spoke about guarding space for teachers. And one of the things both of you have spoke so eloquently about is just the importance of not venting about our students, the dear student letters in the Chronicle are disparaging to our students and don't regard them with the kind of honor that is due.

**Bonni:** [00:30:51] How do you do this hard work? Venting, should it ever happen? If it should, where's the right spaces and ways to do that? And how can we both

individually guard space for our own challenges? And then also how do we start to do that for each other collectively?

**Jesse:** [00:31:12] One when I talk about student shame and talk against student shaming I'm always really careful to point out that we also need to speak out against and pushback against teacher shaming. And that pushing against student shaming should never be seen as a kind of teacher shaming. Ultimately and every time I talk about it I always point to the larger structures that make this happen. Because if you look up even higher, most teachers are experiencing- are being disparaged themselves. The work of teaching itself abstractly is being disparaged. The work of education, particularly higher education in the United States is disparaged.

**Jesse:** [00:31:54] And so to imagine that teachers would just be able to never have feelings themselves or never feel frustrated or never feel anxious or never deliver that down to their students. I think it's unreasonable. I mean what has to happen is the system that makes all of this go. What has to change is the system that makes all of this go.

**Jesse:** [00:32:17] And I think that what we have the best way to not shame students as teachers is to make sure that we're not shaming ourselves. To make sure that we're creating a space in ourselves to honor our work. And how difficult our work is. And that means recognizing and acknowledging that students are not an undifferentiated mass. The work of teaching isn't all rosy and happy and shiny and lovely and unicorns. It is some of the time and when it is, it's amazing.

**Jesse:** [00:32:45] But it's also hard, difficult, frustrating, and making sure that we find the right spaces to express that and to talk about that with each other. And you know in general that just shouldn't be a public space. And it should be a space where we're honoring how complex it is.

**Sean:** [00:33:04] In response is sort of your crushing around venting- and because I think that people can see venting as a kind of self care in a certain way. Right. You need to get it off your chest and then you'll feel better. What I try to encourage is vent to someone who's going to talk you down rather than someone is going to join you in that venting.

**Sean:** [00:33:27] Because there's always someone who's going to talk you down and that's what you actually need is someone who can help you move through it and come back to a place where you feel good. And this was one of the-

when I worked at Middlebury actually one of the dynamics that I had with Amy Collier when I was working there is that I'd be having a bad day I would talk to Amy and she would be like "well and isn't it nice that- And isn't it beneficial that-" And that was a nice sort of dynamic. And then she would do the same with me. She would be having a bad day. We would talk and it would be just kind of like "OK but remember we love doing this work" and it always came back to that. And I think that if you can find- this is one of the pieces of the community that we try to build with Digital Pedagogy Lab with that sort of sense of positive feeling that we try to bring to the lab and to the work that we do in community generally is we try to lift people up as opposed to just let's all just gripe. That doesn't help the work of of teaching and learning I don't think.

**Bonni:** [00:34:27] This is the time in the show where we each get to give recommendations. And I wanted to share that when Brian Dewsbury was on the show. He recommended the podcast Scene On Radio. It's put out by Duke University and he recommended the season that they had called Seeing White. And I do try to bring my own recommendations to bear on the podcast as you have been listening for a while would know but I can't resist saying I echo Brian's recommendation to listen to Seeing White on Scene On Radio.

**Bonni:** [00:35:05] It's been an interesting thing to listen to and parallel with so many of the conversations I have here in fact on this very conversation that Jesse brought up the description of higher education and teaching this systematic way in which teaching is disparaged. And so the same thing here, racism as a set of systems a set of structures and he looks at it from a historical context. It's absolutely brilliantly produced. It's a wonderful way to go even deeper into the work that we need to do in our work as teaching as activism. And I'm going to pass it over to... Jesse.

**Jesse:** [00:35:44] So I have a couple of strange recommendations because I can be a strange guy sometimes. Some people don't know about me but I have done a lot of research into horror films. And I am a big horror film fan. And there's two recent ones. One is extraordinarily good and the other is less good but both do something that I think is really important. So one is the film Get Out, which I think a lot of people have seen.

**Jesse:** [00:36:07] And then more recently there's a movie called The first Purge. It's the fourth movie in The Purge series, a series of B movies. But the reason I bring these two up is they both address race relations in the United States in a really direct way. And one of the things having watched horror and researched horror for so many years is that horror films can often push on our politics, push

on our thinking. They're often more radical than any other genre. And I also watch them because I have nightmares and people think Oh gosh well you probably have nightmares because you watch so many horror films. But actually I watch them for catharsis because it's a way of kind of letting go of anxiety, anger, grief, etc. But I think that some of our most radical political thinking and pushing upon political ideologies is coming out of the horror genre. So that's my recommendation.

**Bonni:** [00:37:01] Thanks Jesse. And Sean, what do you have to recommend?

**Sean:** [00:37:06] Not necessarily watching horror movies. \*laughing\* And actually I've just watched a lot of horror movies that Jesse told me to watch. And often they are absolutely right. And Get Out is an amazing an amazing film, if people haven't seen it, they need to see it.

**Bonni:** [00:37:21] So can I ask, if I haven't seen it and I don't like horror movies, still watch it?

**Sean:** [00:37:27] Yes. OK yeah. It's not horror in the same way that most horror is horror.

**Jesse:** [00:37:32] I would say don't watch the first Purge because it's it's - yeah don't watch that one. Watch Get Out though.

**Bonni:** [00:37:40] It seems like it was such cultural thing. I mean and I didn't...

**Sean:** [00:37:43] Yeah yeah. It's an it's an amazing film. Kind of shocks you in a different way of thinking about things. I was really excellent.

**Sean:** [00:37:50] Along the lines of actually things that shock you in the different way of thinking about things. I wanted to recommend the comedy special Nanette by a standup comedian, Hannah Gadsby. She's an Australian comedian and identifies as lesbian and the comedy show is hilarious. There's lots of really funny stuff. And it also is there are moments of real human drama that take place in that and it's tremendous. I've never actually seen anything quite like it so I would definitely recommend that.

**Sean:** [00:38:19] And in addition I would recommend a book called Releasing the Imagination by Maxine Greene. This is a book that actually I was first turned onto by Lora Taub-Pervizpour at Muhlenberg College and when she spoke at UMW, she talked a lot about Maxine Greene's work in imagination.

**Sean:** [00:38:37] And the imagination in this context is the kind of creative thinking that we have to do in order to imagine things different and imagine things can be different. So in following the tradition of critical pedagogy where Paulo Freire talks a lot about reading our world critically and understanding our circumstances and then recognising we have agency to change. Maxine Greene takes that one step further and says this is how we imagine how to make things different. It's like a piece that I feel has always been missing a little bit from Paulo Freire's work that he come and jumps from one place to the next. She actually fills in this gap of how do we imagine things different? And I think that *Releasing the Imagination* is one of her key works and I would definitely recommend people pick it up.

**Jesse:** [00:39:20] I have one last recommendation which is that everyone get a little bear for their desk.

**Sean:** [00:39:28] Everyone should have a little bear for their desk.

**Bonni:** [00:39:30] I am chuckling to myself because one of the reasons I wanted to speak with both of you today is because of your book. And you know I almost just let the entire interview end without bringing it up. Would you please speak about your book and how people can get their hands on it- Or I should say their eyes on it because they might not even get their hands on it, they might just get their eyes and ears.

**Sean:** [00:39:57] I guess that's a recommendation right? We can recommend ourselves.

**Bonni:** [00:40:03] The whole reason I wanted to talk to you.

**Jesse:** [00:40:06] So Sean and I have put together a collection of- I've called it at different times a duets album, also a mix tape. It's a collection of the writing that he and I have done separately and also together over the last about seven years. And it's not all of our work. It's a small fraction of it and we've kind of sequenced it the way that kind of a collection would be sequenced. So it tells a story but isn't linear. So it's not chronological.

**Jesse:** [00:40:36] And we really try to let the ideas as we had them live in the world that they lived in. So we didn't make a lot of edits. Although it is pretty carefully edited across the volume but the ideas we were having in 2012 are allowed to just sit there as the ideas we were having in 2012 and creating a kind



of friction against the ideas we're having now. The book is available a print on demand and we are self publishing it. And not with not a lot of fanfare and part because it's less about selling a book and it's more drawing a circle around the work that we've done over the last seven years and say this is a thing and I want to hold space for this work so that we can move on to other work.

**Sean:** [00:41:22] I would just add that with this book I would like to put it out there again as a kind of model for other folks. There's a lot of people out there doing a lot of writing about education and they may not think of themselves as people who would self publish and who would take the risk of saying someone wants to read what I have to say. And I think people want to read what you have to say. And so this is a way to to have that done. And I think that it's important that we have as many possible voices out there as we can get.

**Jesse:** [00:41:50] And the book is called An Urgency of Teachers and it will be available on Amazon. It also has a Web site [anurgencyofteachers.com](http://anurgencyofteachers.com) And it's available in various different formats Kindle, digital, there also is an open access version.

**Bonni:** [00:42:07] Thank you both so much for joining me on this conversation. And I'm excited to say that we'll have some episodes coming up in the future too with some of the people that are coming to Digital Pedagogy Lab. And I'm just excited to share those voices as broadly as we can collectively.

**Sean:** [00:42:23] That's great. Thank you Bonni.

**Jesse:** [00:42:24] Thank you.

**Bonni:** [00:42:26] What a joy it always is to get to have a conversation with either Jesse or Sean and in this case, what a joy to get to have a conversation with both of them. Thank you Jesse and Sean for being a part of the Teaching in Higher Ed community not just for this episode, but for many times in the past.

**Bonni:** [00:42:47] And I'm excited to note that some of you are participants in the Digital Pedagogy Lab will be joining us sometime in a future episode to tell some of their stories of teaching. I'm so excited for whenever that ends up happening when we get our ducks in a row and I'm just so appreciative of your work.

**Bonni:** [00:43:07] Thanks to all of you for listening. We've got some great episodes coming up. Tell a friend tell a colleague about the Teaching in Higher Ed

podcast and how easy it is to subscribe and contribute to one's professional development. Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.

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