Bonni Stachowiak [00:00:00]:
Today on episode number 581 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Joyful justice with Alexandra (Ana) Kogl. Production Credit: Produced by Innovate Learning Maximizing Human Potential. 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. Today's guest, Alexandra (Ana) Kogl grew up in California and attended the University of California, Santa Cruz as an undergraduate. Ana received her PhD in Government and politics from the University of Maryland, College Park. She currently teaches political theory and women's studies courses as a political science professor at the University of Northern Iowa. Ana lives in Waterloo, Iowa with her husband, sons, dog, cats, and many plants, and she wrote a chapter for the book Joy Centered Pedagogy in Higher Education, Uplifting Teaching and Learning for all, edited by Eileen Camfield.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:01:35]:
And I'm excited today to get to talk to her about Joyful Justice. Ana Kogel, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:01:43]:
Thank you so much. It's good to be here.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:01:45]:
I am so enjoying seeing the plants in the background and they're bringing me so much joy right now. And I'm going to quote from you in this beautiful chapter that you wrote. You write, "I didn't expect to find joy in the classroom when I started teaching political science 20 years ago." Tell me, what did you anticipate that teaching would be like before you actually got into the classroom?

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:02:10]:

I thought it would be all intellectual work. I thought that teaching would be to some extent about imparting knowledge. Even as a grad student, I learned that one of the things I liked doing was leading students in discussion. But even the discussions were kind of very intellectual. They were sort of all very much focused on ideas in sort of a disembodied way in a way that didn't really engage the emotions that much. And that's a striking thing to say now that I think about it, because I was a teaching assistant for classes dealing with evil and the Holocaust and really heavy topics. And yet I think that generation of political scientists that trained me were not particularly in touch with the affective dimensions of political science. And frankly, my discipline still isn't, to be honest.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:03:02]:
I mean, there are a few people that do more affective work. But so it seemed like the kinds of things I would do in the classroom just wouldn't have any kind of emotional dimension or if they did, it would be my own emotional response to injustice. Feelings of horror, for instance, or sadness at injustice. But that I think I anticipated I would need to compartmentalize those emotions myself. So if anything, if I thought about emotion at all, it was more, well, I'm going to have to kind of be in control of my emotions to be effective dealing with this very intellectual material. And then I certainly didn't think that talking about truly miserable topics, horrific topics, I certainly didn't think that that would ever be joyful or fun. I mean that even feels like a weird word to use. But it is fun sometimes, not, not all the time.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:03:54]:
So I think I just thought it would be very, very intellectual. Oh, and that I would need to be an authority figure. You know, I was a 30, something like 32 year old short blonde woman and I thought I'm going to have to really be really firm and tough and stern and scary and be an authority figure. And being those things is definitely not conducive to joy. So yeah, I, and I guess I'd add, I don't think I had experienced joy in any classrooms really. And you know, maybe not since childhood, maybe early elementary school. I don't think I experienced joy in higher ed settings, especially not in graduate school, but probably not even in undergrad. The pedagogical model I think was much more zero sum.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:04:43]:
It was much more. Well, if we have a discussion, there's an implied winner and an implied loser in the discussion. And I think that that implicit model gets in the way of joy. So I just think, I thought this is all just gonna be very serious all the time. Not joyful, not fun.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:04:59]:

Thank you so much for that, Ana. I'm excited for us to talk about another author, a poet who comes up in a lot of your collaborators work. You stress that joy isn't something that we can coerce out of students. But instead you draw from Ross Gay's work and you invite us to consider how we might quote, open the door to joy, set a place at the table for it and hope it graces us with its pretense. Ana what becomes possible when we set that table?

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:05:33]:
A lot of unpredictable things become possible. So this is something that I have observed over the decades that I've taught. A discussion in which I am fully present and I'm present to the wide range of students own thoughts and feelings about what we're talking about. It enables us all to truly engage with whatever the emotional content is that we're discussing in class. So when we in a sense I think, and I may slightly deviate from what Ross Gay says here. I think in a sense, we set a place at the table for the full range of human emotions, not just for joy. And I think that when we do that, we can explore more freely needs that maybe we didn't even know we had. So I believe that we all have a need for fairness or a need for justice.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:06:34]:
It's not just a cognitive kind of philosophical thing where maybe we appreciate a theory of justice or a principle of justice, but I think we have a need for that. And when we open the door to the wide range of human experiences, that's when students start realizing, oh, I never thought of this experience of mine or this story that my dad told me or this conversation I had in another class. I never really thought of that as justice or injustice. I never really engaged it. So when we're open, even in a class that's ostensibly fairly philosophical or theoretical, when we're open to the range of human emotion, students engage with their whole self, which enables them to engage cognitively in a much richer way. Whereas if I surface level, or even if I were. And to go back to the Ross Gay idea about, it's an invitation, even if I were to present with kind of like a cheerful, happy, like, we're going to talk about something really heavy, but it's okay because we'll make sense of it. If I started off with that kind of tone setting, I think paradoxically, it would really not lead to joy.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:07:47]:
So I think if. I mean, first off, I think if students read me as phony, it's not going to work. But if they read me as kind of open to a range of human possibilities, there's a range of possible reactions to this material. There's a range of possible emotions that we might feel. And that range is okay. Diversity is a given in talking about these kinds of situations or questions about injustice in particular. And then

the other thing I think becomes possible is it's not like we can reverse injustice. We can't just sort of undo what's been done.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:08:24]:
But almost instantly we can recognize that other people share my need for justice. Other people see what I'm seeing. You know, it's that moment of, are you seeing this, too? Is this really. Is this really as bad as it seems? Or. I've also had students sometimes say, wow, I never even had a name for this particular experience. That partly has to do with the fact that I research sexual domination. So sometimes students will say, sometimes even in class, they'll say, I didn't even realize people talked about this stuff and it seems so heavy and so depressing, but there's this expansive moment of holy smokes. I didn't even know we could talk about this.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:09:07]:
I hadn't even talked, in a sense with myself about this. I had sort of pushed this down. So all kinds of things become possible. All kinds of, I think kind of mental liberation in a sense becomes possible when we open the door to the full range of human emotion.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:09:24]:
You spoke about earlier what you anticipated a college classroom would be like with you as the professor. I know neither one of us wants to overgeneralize students, but what themes do you get evoked in you when you think about what students tend to anticipate about how they think the college experience is going to be?

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:09:47]:
I will try not to overgeneralize, but I do see a general difference between students. I teach in general education classes, which are requirements for all university students. They have a choice of which classes to take, but they have to take something to fulfill the general education requirements. Those students, it seems like, often are expecting busy work. They're not expecting their professor to explain why we ask them to take these classes. They're not expecting to feel good. They're not expecting to have fun. They're not expecting humor.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:10:22]:
They seem to expect a lot of lecturing. And I do have students tell me that they like my classes because I don't lecture all the time. And it always kind of breaks my heart because I think I actually lecture kind of a lot, maybe too much sometimes. So those often students in those general education classes seem to. I don't want to exaggerate, but often they seem to expect to feel dead inside in

the classroom, which is heartbreaking. Just because I'm laughing at it doesn't mean it's not also heartbreaking. That's just my coping mechanism. My political science majors.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:10:57]:
So these are students who by the time I have them in upper level classes, they've usually taken a couple of lower level classes with me. Those students seem to expect that we will have discussions, we will have open ended conversations about complex issues, that they will be engaged. But even they sometimes seem to expect a certain heaviness, a certain gravitas that we're talking about politics. Politics is depressing. So the idea that we might actually have fun, we might have a sense of humor sometimes still seems to take them off guard a little bit.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:11:31]:
I was very intrigued with at least how you begin one of your classes, an ancient human sacrifice. Talk about the intent behind starting that way and what does it help inform our thinking about what suffering has to do with joy?

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:11:50]:
I start, as a lot of political theorists do, with the ancient Greeks. And the ancient Greeks are not known for their joyful, light, cheery texts. So I start a class that wrestles with justice and injustice. I start by assigning the Oresteia. And honestly, when I began teaching it maybe 15 years ago, it was because it offers a variety of ways of thinking about justice and it. And it doesn't argue for one in particular. It says there's lots of ways of thinking about justice. So it's a useful text for teaching undergraduates about justice.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:12:25]:
It's a narrative, it's dramatic. But the longer I've taught it, the more I've noticed. It dovetails beautifully, number one, with my research, which, as I said, is about sexual domination, and with particular attention to heterosexual domination of women, women and girls. So it dovetails with that. But also the longer I've taught that text, the more I've realized that we can focus on suffering in the text and focus on the connection between suffering and injustice. That would we even call an event an injustice, if it doesn't cause suffering? So if we want to think about injustice, I believe firmly we need to think about suffering. We can't put that to one side. It's one thing if we're in a legal setting and we need to adjudicate, we have laws, et cetera.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:13:17]:

But if we are in a political setting where we're trying to conceptualize justice, we need to think about suffering. But to think about suffering, we need to feel about suffering. And there's this beautiful passage at the beginning of the Orestaya. It's beautiful, but it's really heartbreaking. The chorus describes the sacrifice of a young girl, a teenage girl. And they describe it in just heartbreaking language. And it almost was an accident that I started reading this in class. To student.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:13:48]:
It was almost kind of just a guess that this might engage students with the intellectual ideas if I can engage them emotionally first. And then the longer I've taught it, the more I've realized if I engage them emotionally first, something unexpected happens in the class, which is I become more deeply engaged in thinking about justice and suffering because I'm emotionally engaged. And so then we all approach the topic in a more fully human way, is the way that I would say it.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:14:22]:
You write the opposite of joy isn't suffering, it's numbness. Tell us more about the numbness as a reasonable human response.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:14:35]:
We live in times that I think require us to numb ourselves. But we also live in times in which our opportunities for numbing are. It's so easy to numb in so many different ways so much of the time. I think it's a default state for many people, perhaps especially for many young people. I actually want to answer this, though, by telling a story of a recent class experience I had, which was one of those just delightful experiences that you can only open the door to, you can only hope for. And it gave me a perspective on numbing that I hadn't really had before. We were discussing. It's in the class I write about in the chapter.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:15:14]:
We were discussing Michael Kimmel's work on masculinity. The essay is Masculinity as Homophobia. And I asked my students, I said, look, I'm a woman, and I don't know what it's like to experience masculinity directly. So, you know, tell me, do you think. Do you think Kimmel is still right that men are ex boys and men are expected to not express any vulnerable emotions, maybe not even any emotions at all other than anger? And my students said, oh, absolutely, that's still relevant, and that's still true. And I have a couple students that are in the military or have been in the military. I have a couple students who are or were wrestlers. So students who in their daily lives are performing very conventional forms of masculinity.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:15:56]:
But one of the former wrestlers said that absolutely, he had learned to just suppress all of his emotions. And I asked you specifically, how did that happen? And he said very clearly, his dad explicitly told him, you just push it down. And he made this gesture of pushing down the emotions. So in other words, we were talking about numbing in class, in a sense, and he was able to be honest about having been explicitly taught that he had to numb. Explicitly taught to suppress his emotions. And this was one of those beautiful, beautiful classes in which he said this kind of momentous thing about, yes, indeed, hegemonic masculinity still affects men, including the men that perform masculinity, very well in the sense of the hegemonic expectations for masculinity, but that it is harmful. I mean, it became very clear. But somehow the class, like, shifted into talking about wrestling and.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:16:55]:
And joking about wrestling and. And a different student who had also been a former wrestler said, yeah, you know, but, you know, really, when you think about wrestling, it's actually pretty gay. And, like, people started chuckling, and they weren't being homophobic about it at all. They were joking about, like, there's this weird Venn diagram where, like, stuff that's, like, really manly is, like, also kind of gay. And it was like they just turned on a dime between, like, this deep, vulnerable, painful conversation about masculinity to jokes about wrestling. And then. And then this other student said, well, have you seen Turkish wrestling? I mean, it's even more gay. They're all oiled up and they're wearing leather pants, and the whole class was just, like, giggling.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:17:36]:
And so it's just fascinating to me how, first of all, it's delightful when students, like, collectively, they start having these conversations that are so rich and fully human in that sweet spot where we're being vulnerable, but we're also laughing about things that are actually pretty damn painful. So if I can get students out of that need to know if we can have an environment where it's safe to stop numbing and we're physically present with one another and we realize, like, oh, my God, things just got, like, weird and real and funny all at once. Then I feel like I've done my job. So, I mean, we need to numb, or we. We need maybe to compartmentalize sometimes. But I think we also get very addicted to numbing. And I don't think we can actually think very well, and I don't think we can do good political work when we're numbing. And so I'm still figuring out, like, again, how to open that door to joy or open that door to the full range of human emotions.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:18:43]:

But somehow it still happens.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:18:46]:
Even now, if I were going to be your personal large language model, and I were reading through your chapter, and I got. And I was going to predict what came next, you know, as your personal chatbot, you talking about this numbing, where I would have predicted that you would take me as a reader next would be what I. What I, by the way, find very nourishing. But it. I would just think we're going next to, hey, none of us are helpless. We all can do things. What are the small things that we can do? Small is all. Which is quoting Adrienne Maree Brown.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:19:24]:
For those not familiar with that wonderful set of words of hers, I thought, that's where we're going next. You don't take us there next. You stress the importance of being able to tolerate helplessness. And I'm quoting you now. In the face of pain, our own and others, why did that not go where I thought it was going to go? What role does my ability to tolerate helplessness, which I feel a lot these days. So I'M very ready for you to even expand on what I was able to take away from this beautiful work.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:20:00]:
Politics is ultimately about action. It's about doing things. It's not just about internally feeling our feelings. It's not just about internally thinking our thoughts, good thoughts or bad thoughts. It's about doing things in the world. And so I don't dismiss the importance of doing things with other people by ourselves and so on. We do need to act sometimes, but I think our culture in the United States lacks, again, to go back to the ancient Greeks, lacks a tragic sensibility. Richard Rodriguez wrote an essay about this way back in the 1980s.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:20:35]:
He was comparing Mexican culture and US white Anglo culture. And he was saying, compared to Mexican culture, Anglo culture in the US is so focused on optimism and onward and upward. And we can do things and we can right wrongs, and we can always make a change, and we can always. We always have it in our ability to act in ways that. Where we can kind of predict the outcome and it'll be good. I share Rodriguez's sentiment here, and I share that in Ancient Greek awareness that sometimes we actually can't do anything, and sometimes our actions don't have the effects that we think they will. And so to circle back to politics, very often our actions do not have the effects that we hope they will. Very often our actions seem to result in nothing.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:21:30]:
We attend a rally or we go on a march, or we protest or we call our representatives, and we don't see any outcome. We don't see any benefit of that. So when we emphasize action too much, we set ourselves up for disappointment, I believe. So we have to emphasize action, but I think we have to slow down a little bit and also realize first we have to grieve the bad that already happened and that we can't do anything about. And in grief, we acknowledge that we're helpless. We cannot undo the bad thing that happened. We have to sit with the helplessness for a bit and realize that we still are going to have to act. We're still going to have to do something, but we need to pause and accept the fact that there's only so much that we can do.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:22:26]:
That's true, I think, personally as well as politically. That's one piece of it. Why I don't immediately rush to let's now do the good things. We do need to do the good things, but we need to pause first. There's an old idea that I actually learned as an undergraduate, and it had to do with the philosophy of the Polish Solidarity movement. So this was the movement that helped to bring down communism in Eastern Europe. And the movement had this philosophy of not differentiating between the means and the end. So sometimes in politics we tell ourselves that, well, I'm going to do this thing in the hope of achieving this end.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:23:04]:
And the Polish Solidarity movement said, each action has to be an end in itself. I think when we have that more tragic sensibility that accepts bad things have already happened, injustices have already happened, I am going to act now as best I can, and that action has to be enough in itself, then we are actually, maybe paradoxically, more empowered to keep acting. Because we realize, I'm not going to change the world with one action. I'm not going to instantly reverse the horror that has already happened, but I am going to do my best in this moment to act in a way that I feel is itself, just, is itself right, and to not get bogged down in these like kind of grand utopian visions of what could happen in the future.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:23:52]:
Part of your wisdom for us was more predictable to me, and that's because I've been able to witness it. And colleagues who also teach very difficult topics tell us about how we can use, or how you use a fairly flat affect to model. And I'm quoting you next, having our feelings, but also holding them at arm's length.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:24:18]:

There's a couple things that I have learned about the importance of my own affect. And one of them I've learned primarily as a parent, that I've learned that sometimes you have to fake calm even when you don't feel calm, that the best thing you can do is project a certain neutrality. And maybe if I rewrote the chapter, I would use the word neutral affect or calm affect rather than flat. But so sometimes we need to really regulate or at least perform calm so that other people have space for their own emotions. If I project strident rage, which is very often what I feel, if I act strident, then I've learned from experience that silences students really fast. It shuts them down. I mean, number one, if it doesn't shut them down, it's going to empower the students who are also strident. And we're going to have a very boring, very orthodox, very one sided conversation if we're all just being strident together.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:25:21]:
I have friends I can do that with, I have family members I can do that with. I can be strident with other people. I don't need to be strident and enraged in the classroom. So. So I want to avoid the rage and the strident, kind of rigid, like, I'm all up in my feelings that. That side of it. But the other side that I think was less intuitive to me or that I didn't learn as quickly is I teach about white supremacy. I teach about transphobia.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:25:46]:
I teach about injustices that I don't myself experience. There's a temptation to communicate with my affect, a kind of pity, which I think is deadly. I think it's disrespectful. I think it's dehumanizing. And I think it sends terrible messages to everybody. To people that may have experienced certain injustices. I'm interpolating them as pitiable. I'm interpolating them as weak in a way, especially in a culture that does so much victim blaming.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:26:19]:
So I think that's a terrible message to send, is that I am the material, compassionate expert who is telling you that I feel sorry for you. That's not going to empower them to speak up in class. And really that's what I actually want. If we're talking about injustice, I want people that have experienced injustice to speak. They're going to find that joyful, and other students are going to find it joyful to realize people survive injustice and they thrive. That's joyful. So I don't want to interpolate people that have experienced injustice as weak. I myself am comfortable with the word victim, but I know that our culture is really ambivalent about that word.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:27:01]:

So I try not to use that word if I can help it. But then it's also suggesting to people that have not experienced those injustices that they should join with me in this kind of performance of pity or this performance of. Of, yeah, we should really feel sorry for these people. And I think that's hogwash. As well as just being wildly inappropriate. I really don't want people who themselves have not experienced injustice to think they should feel sorry for people who have. Not only because I think that attitude is appropriate, but I think it also triggers in people. Let's say I'm talking about racial injustice.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:27:38]:
I think white students are likely to feel. Some white students, especially I teach in a red state. Some white students, I think are likely to feel pretty defensive if I act like, oh, yeah, we should now all really feel sorry for the black students. It's wildly inappropriate in the ways I've already mentioned, but also in the sense that I think white students are likely to get defensive as a result of that. Okay, you, as this. I've got to say, I've got to describe Myself, since this is a podcast, I'm a pretty maternal looking middle aged short lady and students increasingly like kind of even say that to me that like you're a mom. So I'm going to tell you my tale of woe about my girlfriend breaking up. I don't want them to think that my compassion is finite by implying it's directed only at people that have experienced injustice.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:28:30]:
And I, and I think that kind of zero sum thinking is something we struggle with so much right now in our politics, the idea that some people deserve compassion and others don't. So I've had to figure out other ways to model compassion or other ways to communicate compassion rather than having an affect of, oh, whoa, this is so sad that this thing happened and sometimes I struggle, but. But I have just found we have much more interesting, much richer conversations if I'm fairly neutral.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:29:05]:
One final question, although I will admit to grieving that it's the final question and my final quoting from your work here, I'd like to ask how does joy play into unlearning things about justice so that we can, and I'm quoting next, begin to feel justice as restorative and inexhaustible, grounded in the realities of human fallibility, capacity for growth and interdependence?

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:29:35]:
There's a beautiful Audre Lorde quote about how in experiencing joy, pleasure, satisfaction, our differences from one another become less frightening. And I think about that quote a lot. And I think about the way in which, again, we tend

to frame justice as zero sum, that we have to take something away from one person and give it to another person in order to have justice versus Dr. King's language of we're all woven together in the same fabric of destiny. We're all in this together. And so I really am harmed if somebody else is harmed in my community, even if the harm for me may be less tangible or less intense. We're all affected by that injustice because we all need justice. We all emotionally need justice.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:30:31]:
We need to believe that we're part of a good community. I think so often we do think of politics as zero sum. And when we experience joy together, we realize it's really not. I want to tell one more story that a student told in class just the other day. I asked whether competition, whether students believe that competition is part of human nature, is it natural to human beings to compete? And we had a good conversation about it, in part because I've got a couple students that are on the soccer team, I've got a competitive swimmer in class and so they have real deep thoughts about competition. And the swimmer said she was at a swim meet and her teammate was starting her event from close to where the other team was standing. But my student went to stand near the other team to cheer her teammate on. And as she was cheering her teammate on the opposite team, their competitors started also cheering for the teammate.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:31:32]:
So they were cheering for their competitor. And I thought, what a beautiful image that is for so many things about human nature. That when we see somebody excelling, when we see them doing something beautiful and amazing, we feel good about it regardless of where we are positioned. That human beings, of course we have this capacity to be competitive or to be zero sum in our thinking, but we also have this capacity to be inspired by other people and to take joy in that. And so it's not at all clear to me which way the causal arrows point. Like, are we able to work together better because of joy, or is it the other way around? That when we work well together, we realize that we're part of this larger community and that brings us joy. I have no idea. Which is part of.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:32:21]:
Part of why I don't want to operationalize any of this. Does that answer that final question?

Bonni Stachowiak [00:32:25]:
Oh, my gosh, it answered it. And then now I want to ask 30 more questions. I just heard. I'm just going to reflect quickly on two aspects of what you just shared.

One is I've never been a sports person, so I took ballet for 11 years growing up. So I love this just richness of a conversation around. Is it inherent in humans to want to compete? That's fascinating to me. I have just recently taken up interest in basketball.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:32:51]:
I'm not going to belabor the story because I did share another thing that it's telling me about learning. Since it is all new to me. I shared that on another episode. But I love. Now one of my favorite things to do is to leave the game on after it's over and then to watch them go. And I'm discovering that some of them are on opposite teams, actually have very deep, rich friendships. And I certainly didn't know that. And it also isn't obvious when they're actually in gameplay.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:33:18]:
Obviously, you're not gonna. I shouldn't say obviously. I don't ever observe those close friendships that are opposite while the game's happening. But there's kind of like the masculine hug, which is like we're performing a hug, but then when they go in for a second squeeze and then I. Then I get really curious and oh, they're actually really good friends. And I was like, wow, I wanna learn more about this friendship. So anyway, that's what I was really noticing and getting excited about. But the second thing that I'm noticing and getting excited about that I really want to do some journaling and thinking about and reflecting in my own teaching is something I've been very curious about for a long time.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:33:56]:
And when I first started to really think critically about this is it comes from the work of Mike Caulfield who for those listeners who may not know his work, he teaches what sadly is super controversial stuff but shouldn't be, you know, like fact or checking, you know, things like that, having evidence to support, you know, that kind of thing. But he. So he came up with this sift model which I'll link to in the show notes in case someone's not familiar with it. But he starts out teaching students non controversial things. So I teach it in my classes now. So what they. What they get choices of what they want to look at. But one of them, that's my favorite is whether or not the toilet paper should come over the top of the roll or under the bottom.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:34:41]:
Who's going to get upset? I mean you're. Yes, I get up about it because when I sit down, I've literally when I was single, thought someone broke into my house because it was the wrong way. So I have strong feelings but I don't vehemently despise people who view it differently. So I mean I, I care. I'm interested in the

conversation just like I imagine people care about the. Whether humans are inherently competitive. But it's not. So it's.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:35:09]:
It's compelling enough to get me curious, but not demonizing people who see that differently, I would imagine. I've never had that conversation. I'm so intrigued by that. So I think all of us could benefit so much in really thinking about how to prime. And of course we've had so many examples on this podcast. Yes. Setting class norms. I've never found that just in my unique context to be kind of a super compelling practice.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:35:37]:
Even though I've done it, it just hasn't been like a really good thing. But what you're describing here to start to just get. Because part of the problem with class norms as I've experienced them, they've. One of your co authors, your collaborators talked about that people never saw that you'd go to school and get joy there. Like they're talking about joy and learning and all these other contexts. So in the same way, just the expectation that you Wouldn't just be able to go and show up and. And what. What would even norms that were ideal look like? Because I have no capacity for imagination.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:36:11]:
What a norm is how they rule our lives and communities. And then what good ones might look like, I mean, it's just too much. It's too much. So this, what you're describing, I want to be there with you in your class, as you. As you're experiencing it. Cause I imagine you're starting to set some norms without necessarily, like, we are now going to set some. We're going to experience them. I.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:36:34]:
What a beautiful story. I'm so glad that you. That you closed us. Since I just went on for a second or two. Anything else you want to just share about what I just said before we go to the recommendation segment?

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:36:44]:
One thing I would say about competition and the conversation I was having. Okay, two things that I'll say. One, we were actually talking about Marx when we talked about competition. So sometimes it's really delightful to be able to kind of. Let's sidestep what we think we know about Marx. That you either love him or you hate him. And if you love him, you're un American. And if you hate him, you're an evil capitalist bootlicker or whatever.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:37:08]:
Like everything is so polarized, including around Marx. Especially around Marx. So to be able to talk about something a little bit more philosophical. What do we think about competition? That's the one thing about Marx. The other thing I would say personally about competition is when you think about sports, it's about play. So what if we. What if we can kind of compartmentalize competition, that it's fun sometimes to let this competitive spirit out. But then after the game, we shake hands.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:37:35]:
After the game we go and have a beer together. After the. Not, of course, students that are underage. But after the game we go and have fun. So that we don't necessarily think of it as this be all, end all. But as far as norms goes, I too have. Yes, I'll have students set classroom norms, but I teach Midwestern students. They're pretty polite.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:37:55]:
They don't fight with each other. Sometimes I wish they would maybe disagree more. So setting those conscious norms and I think is not as valuable as me modeling. We're going to take care of each other here. I'm not going to mock you. I'm not going to treat you badly. I'm not even going to call on you. I'm not going to put you on the spot.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:38:17]:
I mean, I am maybe exceedingly gentle, but with the attitude being I want you to just be calm here. I want your body to feel reasonably comfortable. Maybe not safe, but reasonably comfortable. Let's bring down the cortisol levels and then let's have a conversation. And I also agree about the toilet paper example that, that when you can, I will use examples like I hate white chocolate. I think it's disgusting. Fight me. You know, and it kind of like we can actually like kind of laugh at people being ridiculously passionate about things that don't matter that much.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:38:53]:
So I could, yeah, I could continue this conversation for another hour or so, but anytime I'm happy to come back.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:38:58]:
Oh yay.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:38:59]:
Yay.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:38:59]:
Yay. Well, this is the time in the show where we each get to share our recommendations. Mine is something called joy cards. And these are tiny ways to infuse delight into teaching and learning. And there are two reasons why I am sharing this with listeners. One is because if you can't tell, we need more joy in our lives and our teaching and in our learning. And what a delightful collection of practices and approach, approaches from lots of different disciplines, lots of different contexts. It's just a beautiful collection of cards.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:39:34]:
I'm going to read a little bit from the description here. We do our best work when we're having fun and the world needs our best work. So we owe it to the universe to bring joy into what we do. As teachers, we know that a joyful learning environment helps students thrive. We know that fun is an important part catalyst of, not a distraction from the rigorous work of teaching and learning. So the first reason I'm recommending it is just a beautifully curated collection of things that you could go through and enjoy drawing inspiration from and practicing with and experimenting and dare I say, playing with in your own context. The second reason why I'm recommending it is I love the intersections of digital and analog. And this was such a delight for me to print out the joy cards.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:40:28]:
There's a PDF that you can print out and the first or second page is the actual envelope and I cut it out with a pair of scissors and you fold it up and then there's special places where you glue and it just made the sturdiest attract such an attractive vibrant colors envelope. And then all of the joy cards can be cut out very simply by it's a 8 and a half by 11 page. So slicing it one way as I learned this from colleagues hot dog and hamburger style. So you're going to cut it one way and cut it the other way too many times when either I design things or I use others. It's complicated with bleed marks and you got to get some professional cutter to do all the things. This was just a really easy. I considered it like an arts and crafts project that I spent doing over our universities and spring break and I hope it brings some of you delight. And as I read that description, by the way, Ana, I'm sure you already see this.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:41:23]:
Just how many themes Ana and I talked about. Of course, when I thought to recommend this, I had no idea how perfect this recommendation was going to be. So I'm going to pass it over to you, Ana, for whatever you'd like to recommend.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:41:37]:
I have to confess, I right now have recommendations that are going to be totally familiar to most people and I don't have resources that you can read or listen to, except with one exception. I would say that the All My Relations podcast has brought me a lot of joy in thinking about just what it means to be human in very, very difficult times. But other than that, it's springtime. Get outside, get some sun, take care of yourself. As a political scientist, I'll just say too, we know this as political scientists, and maybe many of us do too. We need the joy that is to be found in community. And I say that as somebody who is deeply introverted and occasionally misanthropic. I may seem like a friendly person, and I am, but I am realizing I need friendship, but I also need community.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:42:35]:
Community is the best bulwark against tyranny. Sorry to get super political, but it also brings us joy. It's means an end all at once. And it's also okay to build that kind of solidarity and community with students. I think I was socialized to see students as very much like a group of people I had to keep a professional firewall with. And you don't actually. I mean, you need to have healthy boundaries. You need to not turn to students to meet your needs.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:43:06]:
But there can be community there too. So that's all I've got.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:43:11]:
That's not all you've got, but that's all the time we've got. And I cannot wait until the next time because you already offered you'd come back. What a delightful conversation. Thank you, Ana Kokel, for joining me today on Teaching in Higher Ed.

Alexandra (Ana) Kogl [00:43:23]:
Thank you so much for having me, Bonni.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:43:27]:
Thank you once again to Ana Kogl for joining me on today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. Today. Today's episode was produced by me, Bonni Stachowiak. It was edited by the ever talented Andrew Kroeger. Podcast Production support was provided by the amazing Sierra Priest. If it's been a while since you have been listening and haven't yet rated or reviewed the show on whatever service it is you use to listen, I would so appreciate it if you could help me have more people discover the show by simply rating it or reviewing it or

sharing it with a colleague. Thanks so much for listening and I'll see you next time on Teaching in Higher Ed.