

beck pooley_mixdown

Fri, 5/14 12:28AM 1:01:59

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

students, neighborhood, places, teach, class, lehigh, classroom, pandemic, gina, question, talking, spaces, people, karen, semester, pedagogy, map, assignment, day, hear

SPEAKERS

Gina Turner, Tom O'Connor, Karen Beck Pooley, Kelly Allen

-
- G** Gina Turner 00:00
1234 Pedagogy a Go Go. Pedagogy, Go go go. Hello and welcome to Pedagogy-a-go-go, a podcast about college faculty sharing what happens in their classrooms and why. This is Episode Three, the evolution of an educator. And we are your hosts, Gina Turner and Tom O'Connor. Happy May, Tom!
- T** Tom O'Connor 00:34
Happy May, Gina, welcome to the last episode of our season. How are you doing?
- G** Gina Turner 00:39
I'm doing good, we are at the end of our semester. And we are excited to be talking to someone who's not part of the NCC community, but nonetheless has a lot of really interesting stuff to share about being a professor.
- T** Tom O'Connor 00:55
We are! I'm so excited for our guest today. And for the record, if you say you're doing good at the end of the semester, that means you're doing great. Cuz I'm barely okay, which means that I'm doing good! That's my end, that's my end of metric for the semester.

G Gina Turner 01:09
I like it.

T Tom O'Connor 01:09
But yeah, no, we have a very special guest today, Dr. Karen Beck Pooley from Lehigh University is going to be joining us. She's the director of the Environmental Policy Program. She's a professor in the political science department. And I'm super excited both to hear about her experiences in the classroom and what it's like to teach this material. But I'm also just, I don't know about you, but this discipline is way outside of my wheelhouse. But it's also connected to so much of what I teach, because when we talk about urban planning, when we talk about developing and redeveloping you know, we're talking about issues related to gender, class, you know, food security, you know, politics, you know, all of which are, you know, the blood of bread and butter of the humanities and certainly psychology too. But it's from a perspective that we don't see all too often.

G Gina Turner 01:59
Absolutely. So it will be a great to have an expert talk to us about the thought and planning and then sometimes the not so much planning that goes into the lived spaces that we're in.

T Tom O'Connor 02:12
Exactly right. So I'm super excited to talk to Dr. Beck Pooley. But before we do, you gave me some homework. Actually, no, it was better than homework. I'm going to I'm going to directly quote you, Gina, you anointed yourself my... Was it my wellness fairy?

G Gina Turner 02:30
The Wellness Queen!

T Tom O'Connor 02:34
My wellness Fairy Godmother! I re-listened to the podcast, because I wanted to make sure that I was actually like, did I actually do what was asked to be according to my memory and and I'd like to say I think you're going to be proud. So just to recap quickly for our audience, you describe an assignment you do with your class for them to essentially think about their own mental wellness. And think about..



Gina Turner 03:02

Actually physical health.



Tom O'Connor 03:04

Right mental and physical health. And kind of set themselves a kind of diary, journal small, it's something, hopefully, hopefully accomplishable task. But even if they don't accomplish it, they could still get an A the assignment was the way it was described to me, but to think about their physical and mental wellness, and we we know that that's not my forte. And so I decided, when when you know, and us, you're like, what are you going to do, Tom? And I'm like, I don't know, you can't just throw that out. And I have a quick answer. So I actually began by spending a lot of time thinking about it. And, and, and Becca, likes to tell a story about me and she says, this is the perfect Tom story. This is gonna pay off I promise. And she said, Tom decides one day, 10 years ago, I'm going to get in shape today. So I get the p90x workout. And I decided to cue up the most difficult p90x workout which is the plyometric workout. Never mind that I have terrible ankles. And I do first day out the full 45 minute plyometric workout. I feel exhausted, I go to bed, sleep, the sleep of the well rested, I wake up the next day to go hiking and I say, let's go hiking and as part of my new wellness journey, and we went to Ringing Rocks, and I stepped out into it, which is a boulder field. And I stepped out onto the first rock. And I went to jump to the second rock, which was maybe two feet away, and my legs and ankles said, No. And I went about six inches and fell into a crevasse between the rocks where I pretty much broke my ankle. At which point I woke up the next morning and said, I'm never working out again. So this is the heart of my physical and mental wellness program. And so I said, I need to fix this. So I set myself actually a really large task and I simply said, I want to do something physical in my backyard. That is going to contribute and benefit my life in a way, so it's work I'm going to do to produce something that makes me feel good. And when even when I'm finished, there will still be good work to do that I want to continue. And so I have always longed to have a kind of fireplace hearth. And my wife and I moved into a relatively newer house with a gas fireplace. And I had a fire pit in the backyard that you could roast a hot dog or a marshmallow on. But, you know, any one who listens to the show knows that I love to cook. And that that's part of my mental wellness. And so. So I set myself a grand task, I said, I'm going to build myself a pizza oven, which was absurd, because I know nothing about masonry. And turns out that the firesafe bricks are really, really expensive. And it would have cost like \$2,000, just for the bricks themselves, which was great, because it set my perspective. And I said, I'm gonna, I'm gonna find a way to do this that's fiscally responsible, that doesn't break my back. And it's also something that I can do and feel good about. And so over the last couple of weeks, I went to flea markets, I found a set of antique andirons for \$20, I found a really large piece of slate, and I use materials around my house and I'd set myself kind of small tasks, you know, throughout

days so that I didn't break my back and do a plyometric workout that broke an ankle. And I ended up with this incredibly beautiful hearth in my backyard, it looks like the hearth of the gods it has massive stones around it that I used a cart and kind of trenched up and it has a cooking area. So I literally right before our podcast, I went on an Amazon spending spree. And I will send photos, so if any interested listeners want to see the fruits of your homework's labors, I have this great cooking hearth. So like that I'm really proud of it's not a pizza oven. But you know, every day I know like, I like it.

G Gina Turner 07:01

I'm so proud of you, because you linked this physical activity with many things in your life that you value. You love antiquing, you love cooking, and you wanted to do something that would last after the physical effort. You get an A on this project, because you've incorporated - Not only did you accomplish your goal, but you've incorporated all of the concepts that make a goal doable. Well done.

T Tom O'Connor 07:31

And I didn't even bring you an apple for our virtual class. Thank you, Gina.

G Gina Turner 07:35

Well, thank you for that report. And now, let's go ahead and move on to our guest.

T Tom O'Connor 07:41

All right.

G Gina Turner 07:45

If you had just one or two, describe yourself as a teacher, what would it be?

T Tom O'Connor 07:55

So but first, just allow me to begin by welcoming you to our podcast. We are here today with Dr. Karen Beck Pooley, from Lehigh University, where she's the director of the Environmental Policy Program and Professor of practice in their political science department. Karen, as I was saying to you, before we began our podcast today, we're so excited to have you. I know you share an alma mater with my co host. And you now work where I did my master's and doctoral work and taught for a bit when I was doing so at

Lehigh University. But you are also involved in a program that a first of all, we have not had the the opportunity to talk with someone with your specific, your specific background, who teaches in your specific fields. But more importantly, the field that you teach and I think has a is specifically meaningful to our population of students at Northampton Community College, right. So like, so let me begin by asking you, we're gonna we're gonna delve into that. But I am fascinated carried by the program you direct in the coursework you teach at Lehigh? Can you tell us a little bit about both to begin and and tell us you know, what is it about your your discipline that makes you excited to teach it that drew you to it in the first place?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 09:10

Absolutely, um, as you mentioned, I direct the Environmental Policy Program. It's an interdisciplinary program. So we have students coming into it, who have academic backgrounds, kind of all over the place, some in the natural sciences, some have, you know, come up through political science, some were English majors, but care a lot about the environment and want to learn more. And so over the course of our program, students have a chance to sort of catch up in what area whatever area, they didn't get a chance to study, as an undergrad, whether that's sort of the sociology sort of the way we relate as people to the environment, the policy and the legal framework to the environment and some of the science. People don't have that kind of background. At a certain level, though, it's kind of ironic that I'm directing an environmental policy program because I'm at a city planner, and so my environment, the one that I know about the one that I think about and study and work on is the built environment. And certainly one thing we've noticed over the course of the last, you know, year and a half is that the environment broadly defined, not just the natural one, but the built environment in which we live has a huge impact on us. And that's one of the reasons I love to study it. That's one of the reasons I study it, and work on it. And it's one of the reasons I love to teach it is because it's a topic that's so accessible, that we're all whether we realize it or not, we're all kind of experts on it to begin with, because it is the place we live in, we inherently know what about that place works, what doesn't, what we like about it, what we don't like about it, what in it makes it easier for us to go about our day or to do the things we need to do. And that's really what city planning is about figuring out how to intervene in that space to make it work better for the people who live there. But the other thing about neighborhoods and why I think you know, those are, that's my environment is neighborhoods, why I think it's so important to work on those because really, when you think about it, you know where you go, depends on you, and sort of how hard you're working and what you're capable of it depends on your family, because they are your biggest cheerleaders and support network beyond you yourself. But then it absolutely depends on your neighborhood, and what kind of opportunities your neighborhood has to offer. So that's another reason I love to think

about neighborhoods work on neighborhoods, and why it's important to teach sort of the behind the scenes, but not really that far back behind the scenes way in which they work so that people can get involved in them.

T

Tom O'Connor 11:34

So can I ask you quickly, like, what are some of the specific courses you're teaching? And I know that that in, you know, in Bethlehem where Lehigh University is located. And I know that you worked in Allentown and part of their revitalization for many years. And there is a South Side initiative going on in a look to revitalize Bethlehem. You know, do you involve your students in that process in terms of research or activism or being active in that? And tend to I'm going to just kind of wade in and I promised I'd start with softballs, but like, let me ask, like, in terms of that, like Lehigh has a vested interest in that Southside initiative? In terms of, you know, it looks at students live there, they looked at the safety of the students and growing that community. But many of the students affected by that revitalization are on Northampton students. Yeah, you know, right, who are who we hear from our students who are concerned because their house was bought up by somebody else. And they're, they're going to look and rent elsewhere. So there's impacts for Lehigh, there's impacts for other schools, and it sits you squarely in what you're doing. And something that's, that's deeply important on both sides. And, you know, like, how do you navigate that? What's it like for your students?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 12:47

Absolutely. I mean, it's an amazing case study. And, you know, some of the courses I teach on are about sort of thinking about how we invest in places today, some of them are going over the history of ways in which we've invested in places in the past. And the south side, where you know, where we're sitting as we're having those conversations is an incredible case study on both of those fronts. It's, it's tricky. The south side is a place where you've got a lot of different players, a lot of different actors, some of them are really big. Some of them feel smaller, you know, if you're one student who's living in the neighborhood, versus Lehigh, which is a much bigger actor in the neighborhood. But you know, the place if you think about it works like any ecosystem would, that no one actor gets to make all the decisions, when they do things start to fall apart, and you lose things that you don't realize how much you needed them. And so, you know, one of the biggest challenges in that neighborhood is that you have a lot of really big actors, who, you know, when you're big enough, you tend to think that you can sort of, you know, maybe not enlist as many other ideas or opinions or, or teammates as you're thinking about what might be best for the neighborhood. But that tends to not work well, for neighborhoods in the long term. Because particularly urban neighborhoods, like our neighborhoods in

Bethlehem, they sort of rely on a whole bunch of people doing a whole bunch of things, investing their time and their money and putting their stamp on those places and continuing to put their stamp on those places. And that's really when neighborhoods work best when they engage a whole bunch of people doing a whole bunch of different things in the same space. And that's one of the challenges for the south side is that you've got some big players in that neighborhood.

G

Gina Turner 14:29

It's so fascinating to hear you talk about this and before we started recording, I said that I was a little intimidated because this is so completely outside of my knowledge base in any way, shape, or form. But as I've been listening to you talk it's it strikes me how cross disciplinary your work is, I love the way you describe how these three those three different prongs of students that you get, right those those students interested in the environment. Those students were coming from political science and those English majors even which is really exciting, it must be lead to such fascinating conversations in the classroom. And then I was also thinking, well, that's a lot of what I love about my own discipline is that I feel like it's the lived environment we're all in, right? You're talking about the streets that we walk every day and drive every day. And when we walk outside of our door, who do we see? And what do we see? And what resources do we have? In the same way that as a psychologist, I'm interested in, you know, how all of that and you know, just what people do in the world? So, of course, I see psychology everywhere, right? I have a hammer in my hammer is psychology and everything is... But um, it's kind of brings me, you know, roundabout way to the next question, which is, I feel like you are synthesizing and integrating so much information and also lived experience for your students. And we like to ask people, if you had just one word to describe yourself as a teacher in the classroom? Can you narrow it down to one word, or even a phrase? How would you define yourself in the classroom?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 16:14

It's, it's hard. I, my, my word that I was thinking of, is probably enthusiastic. Because this is stuff that I'm very passionate about. And so you know, I like to show them to be passionate about it, too, and usually doesn't take a lot. Because we're talking, I explained, you know, I make a point of talking about the places that they care most about, if we're going to talk about the way places work, I want to talk about places they care about. And so it's, it's easy to sort of get others enthusiastic about the same kind of topic, but it is it's stuff that I, I love, and I learn from them all the time. So it's one of those things that's sort of constantly new and exciting to me. So thinking it'd be along the lines of enthusiastic.



Gina Turner 16:56

Yeah, that's great. I mean, I get your enthusiasm, even just in answering these questions with us here today. And I'm thinking to have what you were saying about, obviously, in this past year, looking at the neighborhoods we live in, in some ways, and maybe from my personal experience, right, working completely from home, the neighborhood I'm in has been a lifeline for me, because I have created a social network in my neighborhood. There's the psychologist part.



Karen Beck Pooley 17:28

That's important.



Gina Turner 17:29

Yeah, definitely. Definitely. So that's another really important element, you know, those those shared spaces, right? Within neighborhoods and things like that? So yeah, now I want to take a class.



Karen Beck Pooley 17:47

I was I was gonna say shared spaces before before you even did so you know more about city planning than you thought you did.



Tom O'Connor 17:56

Karen, your enthusiasm for city planning, and what its implications are right, in an increasingly urban world where people are moving towards that center. And, and I'm really curious in terms of- your enthusiasm for that as clear as you've described yourself that way, and I look at the events of the last year, right, and how they've changed all of us how they change the way we teach and how they've impacted our classrooms specifically. And also our disciplines. And how have the events of the last year changed your classroom? And I guess I'm thinking because, you know, when you talk about urban planning, as you said, it's interdisciplinary, you're talking about class issues, race issues, food insecurity issues, food deserts environmental isms. [Karen's dog barking in the background] For once I hear a dog barking and it's not mine. No, no, don't apologize at all. That's what makes this great. You don't don't you don't need you don't need to mute it. He thinks I'm rambling in my question. He wants me to get to the point. That's what's going on here. Believe me, I feel him. So I guess to my point, I mean, like with, with all of the issues around race, around how urban in urban environments have you know, have

come alive and are playing a point in changing history and are also epicenters of the pandemic? You know, how has that changed the way you approach the material you teach? Has that changed the classroom dialogues that you have around that material? You know, there's so much there as there and every time I think back on the last year, I'm overwhelmed by it. So it's kind of a catch all question in terms of, you know, how is this last year you know, changed your classroom?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 19:40

On one teeny tiny level, we've been fully remote so it's meant doing this without getting out into the field. So because students are everywhere some students on campus in Bethlehem some students far and wide, we can't walk the streets to sort of see this stuff as we're talking about it in the past. But but bigger than that, You know, this last year and a half now has been an incredible lesson in the impact of, you know, our built environment, our neighborhoods, our physical and mental health. It's, you know, COVID is not evenly spread out across neighborhoods, it's in neighborhoods that are impacted by mistakes that planners have made in the past places without a lot of green space where, you know, there's not a lot of fresh, healthy, affordable food, there's more air pollution, from environmental hazards, you know, those were all places that we built, that have been less healthy for people to live in. And those were places that had greater consequences from the COVID pandemic, places without, you know, safe spaces to walk those shared spaces we were talking about to, if not do more than socially distance or waved a neighbor but didn't have even spaces like that did some damage to, you know, mental health as the pandemic continued. And this last year and a half has certainly brought issues of of equity and systemic racism and those types of disparities to the fore and the field of planning has almost as much atoning to do, I would say, as the criminal justice system, you know, if you think of sort of some of the big things that have shaped our cities, and where there's opportunity, and where's there's not where there's investment, where there's not things like redlining, things like exclusionary zoning, you know, those all stem from planning, those are planning tools. The fact that certain neighborhoods don't have access to the things people need, like food and health care is a function of planners having not paid attention to there being a need, you know, a quality of life under which we're not going to let any neighborhood fall. And so talking about that, with students has been really powerful. And you know, the, the classes I teach are always sort of challenging students to say, like, Listen, it's not like we've written a book on this one, it's not that you just have to memorize it, and then go do what we've already figured out and gotten perfected before, this is an ongoing challenge, because the cities of right now look different than the cities of five years ago, and five years from now, they'll look even more different as technology and transportation changes, who knows, sort of what these places are going to look like. And so that's always been my sort of challenge to them to say, I don't know, I'm going to tell

you about what we've done, I'm going to tell you about the mistakes we've made, and then stir that all together and come up with something better. But that's been sort of even more emphatic this year, sort of with the mistakes of the past even more sort of up front and center, really.

G

Gina Turner 22:42

Well, you said that really beautifully that it's this past year has really highlighted the mistakes of the past? And do you find that- Do you feel that your students are frustrated by watching how much what they're learning about in class is so integral to what has happened over this past? You know, however many months it's been now 16 months or something like that? Do you? Are they frustrated? Are they angry? Are they upset?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 23:17

Yeah, yes. And that's kind of the goal, you know, I want them to sort of see this stuff and realize this stuff did not happen by accident. These stuff were, you know, the outcomes of explicit decisions. And we look at some of those explicit decisions, which had, you know, the best interest of some in mind, but certainly not the best interest of others in mind. And so we sort of bring that right up and think about that. And then look at, you know, some of the most powerful things maps, which planners increasingly use are just such a powerful way of showing sort of how things compare and contrast across different geographies. But to look at sort of conditions of the past and layover conditions of the present on certain places, and see how sticky some of this stuff is and how long these mistakes stick around. Another thing that really sort of, you know, catches people.

G

Gina Turner 24:12

Yeah. You know, Kelly has let us know that you do some fantastic, really interactive experiential learning options for your students. So I'm really excited for you to tell us about those. But I'm also just wondering how you know, students are not only seeing all of this happen in real time and seeing these examples of how the our mistakes have have led to some of the problems that we're fighting now, at the same time, that they are also possibly fighting the pandemic themselves, fighting illness themselves, losing jobs themselves, struggling with working from home, struggling with childcare, and yourself also, I mean, I don't want to dig into your personal life but right? We're all sort of trying to use this as a kind of learning laboratory at the same time as we're trying to keep our lives together, are you finding a way to help yourself find that balance and your students to kind of find that balance?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 25:18

As best, you know, on the one hand, in some cases, getting sort of clinical about it lets you detach yourself from the situation and look in, which kind of, you know, not that it's not that it always leaves you feeling happy about things it doesn't, but at least sort of lets you step outside of it from a minute, if that even makes any sense, you can sort of like, let's use this moment to just see what's going on and sort of float above it for a second at least give ourselves a little breather that way. But then to, you know, working in sort of all the things people have done over the course of the year to give themselves that break, you know, we get to talk about all the walks that students have taken with their families, or the ways in which they've changed their routines to make this period just work as best it can. And sort of what lessons come from that, you know, we're learning a lot about, you know, how important it is for us to get to sit outside in spaces where we can at least see other people and how much that matters, or how we can walk and see green space or things like that. It's a good, you know, if something worked for one student, that's a good way to sort of, you know, give hints to the rest of us that we all need to go try to do whatever it was that work for them. But then it also sort of tells us more about the kinds of spaces, we just need to be, you know, more physically and mentally healthy.

T

Tom O'Connor 26:38

That's a perfect segue into the next question. I was hoping to ask you, Karen, because you got started talking about your students and what they're sharing and what they're doing in their own lives to stay sane, and how we can all use that. And so an important part of this podcast is, obviously we're talking about the classroom and teaching and one way that we learned about how we do in the classroom is by sharing the stories of our students. And this has been a crazy year. So I'm gonna actually I've got to give you some short burst questions first, just to just so are you mostly teaching undergraduate or graduate classes right now?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 27:12

Both.

T

Tom O'Connor 27:13

Both? Okay. For so and the answers might differ depending on them. This past year, have you been basically doing like a high flex classroom with some students coming into the classroom in a few people coming in remote? Or has everyone been there? Or has it been fully remote and online?

K Karen Beck Pooley 27:29

I have been fully remote since spring break of last academic year.

T Tom O'Connor 27:34

Okay. So much closer to what, what has been the experience for those of us so yeah, so. So thinking in terms of that fully remote environment? The next question is, obviously, Lehigh University students come from all over the country. But I imagine that in your graduate classes, you also have students that might be local to the area, correct?

K Karen Beck Pooley 27:51

Yeah.

T Tom O'Connor 27:51

So which, so obviously, what you're teaching is near and dear to the hearts of some of those local students? And then you also have these students kind of coming in looking at the situation, are you willing kind of to share either one, you know, student's experience from the last year or several students' experiences that have kind of come as a filter for what this experience has meant for them, for what your classes kind of mean for them in this kind of tumultuous changing moment?

K Karen Beck Pooley 28:21

Well, I mean, one of the one of my favorite thing is, and this did not happen during a pandemic, and you'll see why this is an example from pre pandemic, is that when you teach about plague cities and places and how they work, you know, just like Gina, you're saying, like, I see psychology, it's all over the place, like students start to see city planning all over the place. And so my favorite is when I get emails from students on spring break, who are like, I'm here in New Orleans, and it's just so walkable, I can't even stand it, I'm like, success, we have achieved success. And so that, if I ruin a spring break, I'm always incredibly pleased! So that it hasn't happened during the pandemic, because no one's going anywhere. But one of the things that's been possible this, this stretch, as students are studying at Lehigh, but at home, in many cases, is that I'm hearing far more about: Oh, you know what, my dad worked on this kind of thing, you know, when he was early on in his career, and I'm - fantastic! Huddle up with him, ask him these questions. And you can turn that in if you want to have that, you know, stand in for that writing assignment that we're doing on transportation policy. And so that happens in some cases, where student

will tell me: Oh, my, you know, my dad's a city planner, or my mom studies this or my sister's doing this in DC and so we'll try and check back in with those relatives as the semester goes on. But I've had that happened more because I think, you know, students are, you know, doing this class from their living room and so they're have more of an interaction with their families about it. And so that's been sort of One shining light, I've heard more about, more relatives and their interest in the topic. And we've gotten more of those relatives reading more of our class readings. So that's always good toOo!



Tom O'Connor 30:11

Your class became globally local, for like every student in it. I love that.



Gina Turner 30:17

That's great. Well, so given that they're kind of, you know, doing these oral histories now of their families and the work that they've done in this area, is there... have you, I mean, it's hard to do curriculum development when you're just trying to tread water! Keep your head above water! But has that triggered you to think about any new assignments or new projects for your students that have maybe resulted in some kind of exciting or surprising outcomes?



Karen Beck Pooley 30:50

That's fantastic, I've always sort of played around with, you know, as students in one of the classes, that's sort of an overview of city planning, sort of walking through sort of all the things planners tend to do category wise, so transportation and environment, and, you know, health related concerns and things like that has been to say to students, as they're sort of summarizing one of those topics, they're looking at sort of a best practice case out there. I say, like, you know, call somebody about this, if you hear that there's a town doing this, and you think it's really interesting, like, email them, like, reach out. And I think I may push that side of things even more. And make sure students know that: Oh, yes, that's great if it's a city official, somewhere in City Hall, but that's also great if it's your mom, and you want to interview her on how hard it is to walk to the grocery store, and how much that's been a challenge about her, your neighbor? That's, I think that's fantastic.



Gina Turner 31:49

Yeah, that's great. I'm just imagining how they could even you know, make a little documentary, just people on the street, in their different neighborhoods that are illustrating all of the things that they're learning in their classes.

K Karen Beck Pooley 32:05
And that is a big thing that so many of my assignments have been written assignments in the past. But one thing that's been true of this last year and a half is, you know, student, you know, all of us get much better at recording, all of us getting much better at, you know, recording voices or recording ourselves as video and sort of make more room for that kind of assignment is, would be really nice.

G Gina Turner 32:32
Yeah, the pros and cons of all this technology. But it's it has pushed us in directions that we might not have chosen to go in.

K Karen Beck Pooley 32:39
Right?

G Gina Turner 32:40
But I'm kind of grateful in a lot of ways to that aspect of it.

T Tom O'Connor 32:47
I'm becoming increasingly comfortable with discomfort. And, you know, in that direction, this question is probably an artifact of Gina and I both being huge Brene' Brown fans. So we like asking people to be a little vulnerable. But, Karen, would you be willing to say or talk a little bit about what your biggest struggle is as a teacher? And how are you working on improving or growing in that area?

K Karen Beck Pooley 33:14
Absolutely. That, you know, as much as I love it, there's still a part of me that's kind of scared to death when I'm up in front of a classroom. And just the concern that: Oh, my gosh, am I going to know what to say? Am I going to have enough to say, is it going to get the kind of reaction I want to get? Is it going to hold everybody's interest long enough? And so it's not that that's an overwhelming feeling, but it's there. And so if a question gets thrown out to the room, and there's no immediate response, you know, I'm not very good at at like telling myself, it will be okay. Someone will say something soon, just sort of let it go. And so I need to start getting super chatty. So there's anything but silence, but so I'm trying to get much better at sort of giving people space to think. And then knowing that

someone will respond and get, you know, step back to let that conversation unfold.



Gina Turner 34:04

Do you feel like that has changed with teaching online? Do you feel like you're more or less comfortable with the space or silence if you're facing a, you know, a screen full of boxes?



Karen Beck Pooley 34:18

It's harder, because you don't see much body language you don't see when someone sort of leaned forward in their chair to get started with something, you know, and in a classroom, when people are sort of clumped together, you can have an idea of what sort of 15 or 20 people are sort of at least expressing at the same time, whereas with boxes to sort of quickly scan to figure out who's about to speak, it's very hard.



Tom O'Connor 34:43

Are your students good about keeping their videos on for those boxes?



Karen Beck Pooley 34:47

Some are, some aren't. And so if your video is off I'm gonna have no idea if you know you've left the room or if you're about to say something. It's really, really hard.



Tom O'Connor 34:56

But that's my favorite. The end of class moment: Hey, Chris, do you have a question for me? Hello, Chris, are you there? [Dog barks] Oh, I broke my own rule, the happy hands for the effect knocked on my marble and my dogs now think there's someone at the door.



Gina Turner 35:21

So now we just need mine to run downstairs and we'll have a trifecta. And I did hear him barking upstairs.



Karen Beck Pooley 35:29

Now I feel better.



Gina Turner 35:31

Well, well. So Karen, you and I were comparing notes on our fantastic graduate school experience. And I promise we're not being paid for this. But we both went to graduate school, I guess under the umbrella of the New School. So yeah, Karen went to Milano... Well, you can say what the name of the school is...



Karen Beck Pooley 35:54

It has recently changed. But the focus was all on urban policy and politics.



Gina Turner 35:59

...in New York City. And I went to the New School for Social Research for my graduate work. And so we were we both had fantastic experiences as students. And so we always like to ask people about what experiences that you remember from being a student that you take with you into the classroom and into the work that you do now.



Karen Beck Pooley 36:23

Absolutely, the one that really stood out was actually in a class that I didn't like very much. I was a political science major as an undergraduate, and very interested in American politics and local politics. But in order to get your major, you know, you got to fulfill the distribution requirements. So you got to take international politics. And so that was a class I was sitting in, did not have a very good attitude for this one. Because I just was sort of convinced that this was not going to be the thing that I was very interested in. But that semester that I was taking the course, Yitzhak Rabin, who was Prime Minister of Israel was assassinated. And so I cannot tell you what the bulk of the material in the class was about because as I said, that was not my favorite. But I know that we must have had class, the day after that event occurred. And the professor sort of stopped everything we went, set the syllabus aside, and just talked for the hour about that, that episode, sort of what was at play what was going on, sort of his emotional reaction to the entire thing. And it was incredibly powerful. It was incredibly powerful. It was connecting this topic that I didn't fully sort of recognize how it impacted me. And made it sort of incredibly concrete, and showed sort of how these things don't just exist in books, this is playing out around us all the time. And so that's one thing that I always leave room for if there, which is why we you know, the courses this semester, even if they're ones that I've taught several times, looked a little bit different, because we had to talk about what we were all going through this year. And that was one of the other big, impactful experience that I hope everybody has is from another class on social inequality is one that I was super interested in. So this

was an easy one had a far better attitude with this one. But some of the books we read. In particular, there are two books one is Crabgrass Frontier about sort of the history of housing policy in the United States. And the other is American Apartheid, which was looking at levels of residential segregation in the 1970s and 1980s. Just made my head explode. Just I couldn't believe what I was reading and was what absolutely set me on the path of where I would go. And so I assigned both of those books, because they're both incredible. And I tell students as they're reading them, like, this is what these books meant to me. This is my experiences, I read these, they don't have to be this powerful to you. But I hope you find that book somewhere. Like I call out that experience I had.

G

Gina Turner 39:10

That's so great, I also have a beloved book that I still assigned to my students in every health psychology class, yeah, cuz I was exposed to it when I was in graduate school. And I have to say also, I moved to New York City, August of 2001, started grad school the first week of September 2001. And so one of my professors actually did research on memory around 9/11. And so, like you say, we were right there in a graduate psychology program, talking about trauma, talking about memory, talking about all those things. So yeah, that was a powerful lesson for me too.

K

Karen Beck Pooley 39:50

That is actually- I there's no September 11 that doesn't go by that we don't stop and talk about September 11. Because there's a lot of planning history on the World Trade Center site. And there's a lot of, you know, planning process that occurred to figure out what that site would become. And so in keeping with that model that I had from my undergraduate experience, September 11, we always stop and talk about that.

T

Tom O'Connor 40:16

Karen? Can I ask a memory question? Because I'm thinking, something Gina said made me think about this. But one thing that we were talking about struggles as a teacher and one area of great envy, so so I teach literature, right. But I have not written the great American novel. But your a professor of practice at Lehigh University, and you've done urban planning, you worked in this field for years and years and have brought this incredible experience. So the first question is really easy, which is, how did you come to teach in the first place? But the second question, the one that's really related to memories, is this: having come to teach and brought your experience to bear in front of your students? Was there a moment when like, you kind of had that, you know, you felt like an instructor or you felt like a teacher and a professor, because it's not day one, at least it

wasn't in my experience?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 41:05

No. It was not day one at all. No, I never sort of saw myself on the path towards being a professor or being a teacher. I went for my PhD because it was a topic, I wanted to dig into that much more and sort of the time in my life presented itself to sort of take a break and just sort of study this, this idea of neighborhoods and how they work. And so most of that was then put towards doing that work out in, you know, different communities all over the place. And so I came to teach kind of by accident, sort of adjuncted picked up a class here and there, we were already in the valley. And I had some some time, and there was nobody teaching Urban Studies, or urban politics, or those kinds of courses, over Muhlenburg, or over at Lehigh at the time. And so they asked if I would just teach a class. And I agreed, and like cried my eyes out the first time, it was definitely not like, Oh, this is it from minute one and made my husband promise, like, Do not ever let me do that again. And he was like, he just sort of nodded and was like, okay, fine. But then it was a matter of talking to people. All right, what am I - What don't I know, because I don't know anything about teaching. I know a lot about city planning, I can talk to you about that all day, but I've no idea how to teach, I'd never been taught how to teach. And so to avoid tears in the classroom, going forward, you know, reached out to people about the kinds of things that worked and figured out the kinds of things I needed to sort of set myself up with so I'd be comfortable. And, you know, got sort of shoved back in front of classroom again, a couple of times got to the end of the semester, and it worked. And like we had gotten through and the students had gotten something out of it. And that was sort of the affirmation, I needed to give it another try. And so like I said, it's still a kind of thing that makes me nervous. It's still a kind of thing that I know, I have room to improve on. But But I feel like, I've got it, I do I love it. I'm glad I did not like run screaming from the building that first day, but like stuck it out. Because I do I love it. Because I love this work. And it's incredibly powerful when you sort of share it with somebody else and see them sort of go on to do that work themselves.

G

Gina Turner 43:28

That is so- the most exciting part of teaching is to see when those things that you're saying to them, light their eyes up with making those connections that they might take out into the world themselves. I think we didn't get a chance yet to ask you. What is one of the experiential things that you have your students do that you see them making those connections when they do it, you know, some of the hands on stuff that you have them do?



Karen Beck Pooley 44:00

Some of it is, you know, kind of hands on sort of a step removed, but playing with maps and the data and sort of seeing in a way they haven't seen before. But there's another class, you know, we talked about how the south side is this living laboratory, that one of the earliest things I asked them to actually make them do this on the very first day of class, which they're so incredibly nervous about. But I say all right, phones away, everything goes away blank sheet of paper, make a map of the neighborhood for me. And they think, but but it's going to be bad. I'm like, of course it's gonna be bad. That's kind of the whole point. Like you're not being graded on it, like, put it down. What what which streets Am I supposed to include? I don't know, you're supposed to include every streets you can think of? Put anything that's important about the neighborhood on your map. Let's see it. And they are totally horrified by this exercise. But it's an incredibly powerful way to show them like Well, here's what you know about the neighborhood. Here's what you don't hear the pathways you take through the neighborhood. And that's a class that over the course of the semester, we think about sort of how do we you know, expand, you know, the places people walk in the neighborhood? How do we change your relationship with the neighborhood? What's having you turn left instead of turn right right here? Have you ever seen this part of the neighborhood? And why aren't you exploring over there. And so that's just the best opener for that kind of way of recognizing, like, what we what we know and what we don't know about the spaces around us. A lot of fun.



Gina Turner 45:24

Gosh, I love that so much. I want to use that in my psychology classes, because it strikes me that it's so subjective. And so you might get two students who live a block away from each other, emphasizing wildly different things on their maps. And then the size of things might be wildly different on one map versus the other person's map. This, this actually brings me back to one of the things that I was intimidated about before this conversation, which was this concept that you were you were talking about what you're researching this interplay between the geography of affordability, where housing is affordable, versus the geography of opportunity, where there's access to jobs and high quality schools, and it just strikes me that those could be the same neighborhood, right?



Karen Beck Pooley 46:17

At their best, that's exactly what those are, yes.



Gina Turner 46:20

Although one student might only approach or might only experience one half of it. And that, again, their neighbor might experience the other half of it even within the same neighborhood, you want both, but not every person's going to experience both?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 46:36

Absolutely, because we say geography, but in some of this stuff does literally have to do with how far apart things are, you know, as the crow flies, or how long it takes you to walk from one thing to another. Some of it, the geographies that we have in our mind are based on our perceptions. I know this street, but I don't know this street, I'm on this block. And I tend to always go this way. And so that's part of the block that feels like my neighborhood. And actually, you know, it's not- this other part isn't far away from the part that I know. I just don't know it. And so it's as if it doesn't even exist. So yeah, absolutely.

G

Gina Turner 47:08

Yeah, that's great. I was talking to my husband, he hates- we moved a few years ago. And he feels like the Home Depot is three times as far away as it used to be in our old neighborhood. And we googled it, and it's five minutes further away. But it's five miles further away. Exactly. Yeah, the distance is so much longer, because you don't have to deal with the traffic.

T

Tom O'Connor 47:34

I'm, I'm obsessed with this map lesson. And I'm gonna ask it. Well, it is. And I have an innocuous question that I'm desperate to produce a wildly inappropriate answer, like, do you ever have a student submit something with information on the map that told you more about the student than like you really wanted to know, things that they value? You know, like, the Lehigh student that only is like the late night bar in the massage parlor? Like you only do things on the map? And you're like, Oh, dear god, no.

K

Karen Beck Pooley 48:01

Well, it was very funny. You know, we have these kinds of conversations in class. And, you know, when it comes to how neighborhoods function, everything about them is important. There was such a great project I was on in Canton, Ohio, of all places. And so one of the things we wanted to figure out as we were sort of drafting city wide and neighborhood based plans, we're like, well, what are, you know, your neighborhood assets. And so of course, the first stuff everybody talks about the art museum is, you know, in Canton, it's a Football Hall of Fame, these sort of big Symphony Hall kind of places. And we said, okay,

guess we'll put those down on the list. We're gonna long list we'll make those sort of big A assets. But now, like, think about your neighborhood, what are the most important spaces in these neighborhoods? And so like a pizza parlor really matters for Lehigh students, there was one bar and it closed. And we spent time that semester talking about how much how sort of, you know, that entirely changed the way in which they got out and about and where they went in the neighborhood, and also these gatherings and so that Canton was a great city, maybe it was the church, maybe it was somebody's house who sort of is out on the block all the time. But those are the important places to recognize to. So yeah, it tells me a little bit about them. But you know, they get to hear about me that I like to go to some of those places, too.

T

Tom O'Connor 49:15

As a graduate student, if You're Welcome Inn and close and, it may have closed in the intervening period. If that if that place had closed, I wouldn't have known what to do with myself. My entire social network would have shut down overnight.

K

Karen Beck Pooley 49:30

Yes. So there's there's that we did that semester, we did have to discuss there was a little bit of loss that we had to talk about that.

G

Gina Turner 49:41

Well, I guess that brings us sadly to our last question, which is a little move away from from talking about the teaching, and it's a move to talking about something that gives you pleasure. So what is something- and we call it guilty pleasure. And then I have to say: But don't feel guilty about it. What is something that you love to do that maybe your fellow faculty members at Lehigh wouldn't know about you?

K

Karen Beck Pooley 50:10

Well, one thing that- and I blame my daughter for the dog. I blame my son for this one that this summer, you know, two summers ago, my son who's now 12 informed us that he we knew he loved to hike, but he informed us that he was going to hike the Appalachian Trail.

G

Gina Turner 50:28

Wow.

K Karen Beck Pooley 50:29
Oh, okay. Um, and then the pandemic hit, and schools were closed. And we said, let's do it. Let's just get started. And so what he and I have been doing over the course of the last year and a half is, is section hiking bit by bit day hike after day hike after day hike, all on the Appalachian Trail. And what started off as this crazy idea has become all of Pennsylvania and New Jersey and New York and West Virginia and Maryland. And we're working our way through Virginia, and we're gonna head up to Connecticut next weekend. And so that has been, you know, just a pleasure in this this sort of crazy time.

G Gina Turner 51:09
Yeah. Oh, gosh, that's a perfect, perfect because it's a goal. So it's something you can keep checking things off. So it gives you that sense of purpose and also you're outside. That was a - your son is very smart.

T Tom O'Connor 51:25
I needed a 12 year old son for this pandemic to get through to get me to drag me on hiking, it was you guys- as I took my like early morning drive to the supermarket and like the one time I would leave the house on the weekend. You guys were like on the pull off to the Wind Gap entrance to the Appalachian Trail

K Karen Beck Pooley 51:40
Exactly. Out there and seeing no one and I'm totally out of my element. Like I know about the trail mix and that's all I got. It makes for you know, it made for you know, as everything shut down. We're like, Okay, good, because we have another hack we want to do. Yeah.

G Gina Turner 51:57
Have you read the book A Walk In the Woods by Bill Bryson?

K Karen Beck Pooley 52:00
We did!

G Gina Turner 52:02
So as long as you're one step up from Bill Bryson and his friend, then you're a hiker!

K Karen Beck Pooley 52:08
I'm holding on to that!

T Tom O'Connor 52:11
That was the movie with Nick Nolte and Robert Redford. Is that right?

G Gina Turner 52:16
I never saw the movie. But the book is hilarious.

K Karen Beck Pooley 52:21
The book is hysterical.

T Tom O'Connor 52:22
I'm the English major, the guy who teaches literature is like: I haven't read the book, but I'm pretty sure there's a movie. I teach intro to film too. So I guess I get away with that one. Very little bit. Struggles as a teacher, we'll go back to question eight.

G Gina Turner 52:45
Oh, my goodness. Well, thank you so much, Karen. This has been such a delight and I seriously, I'm going to take that map exercise. I just let it also reminds me of you know, there were those. I think it's in the New Yorker. It might have been an old New Yorker cover the you know, what the United States looks like from a New Yorker's perspective, right? Yes. It's like New York. And then there's some grass. Exactly.

K Karen Beck Pooley 53:08
And then an ocean maybe?

G Gina Turner 53:09
Yeah. And a cow.

K Kelly Allen 53:23

So real quick, Karen. So you're talking about like how your husband needs like, more nature in like New York City wasn't doing it. Have you seen the thing that Ocasio Cortez is like doing? So she's been focusing on what does she do to maintain her her mental health and she goes, she's a backpacker. And she's sharing with people like these great places that you can go on backpacking trips and day hikes. While using like the city's like transportation system,

G Gina Turner 54:01
Oh, cool.

K Karen Beck Pooley 54:02
That's amazing.

K Kelly Allen 54:03
Which I think is just it's phenomenal. And I knew that like if you go north, on their mass transit that you can get to some pretty sweet spots. And I think that you can actually access the 80 from New York City transit.

K Karen Beck Pooley 54:20
Yes, you can. Yes, it actually crosses some of those those lines and Bear Mountain I think is right there. And there's a spot on the 80 where you can see the new york city skyline which is really pretty cool.

T Tom O'Connor 54:30
Is it terrible that I can't hear Bear Mountain without this is a Dylan deep cut, but is anyone familiar with the Bob Dylan song?

K Kelly Allen 54:36
Think about it every single time. Yeah, the Bear Mountain massacre.

T Tom O'Connor 54:42
I'm lucky to be alive.



Kelly Allen 54:46

So Jeff, we got to play that tune. [Excerpt of Bob Dylan: Call this one talking Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues]



Gina Turner 55:00

Pedagogy-a-go-go Pedagogy-a-go-go go. What a great conversation with Karen. I'm so glad that she was able to come on our podcast,



Tom O'Connor 55:17

I love meeting someone new. And it's so much better when they bring something that I know, relatively little about, and just such a fresh perspective, and are just such a lovely person. So it was great.



Gina Turner 55:29

And it's always great. You know, I tend to brag about community college, because so many of our colleagues at the community college have worked in their discipline, and then they come to teach having all of this practical experience and to be able to apply what they've done in their professional lives. And that's what we're hearing from Karen is that she's applying all of the very high level esteemed work that she's done doing city planning in New York City in Bethlehem and applying that to her classrooms.



Tom O'Connor 56:04

Well, and her work directly affects our students who live in the Bethlehem Allentown area. You know, I know, I'm often up at the Monroe campus, but the vast majority of our students are living in and around an area that, you know, she is working to, you know, I think, you know, we spoke briefly about this, you know, but she spoke about areas of opportunity, and an areas of affordability, like two different spaces for people one with access to, you know, jobs and education, and one that is offers affordable living, and sets the ideal as the place that can be both. And here's a person who's whose life work is about creating spaces that embody both of that, and that are, you know, she's investing her students in that work. And it was so cool to, you know, hear her kind of move between when her students lived in and amongst the Lehigh Valley right had come from afar to think about specifically, you know, an area that was relatively new to them, to how she shifted that, throughout the pandemic, you know, exactly, to ask them to think about where are you living? Now? What's the work that has been done that can be done, she

even used atonement? You know, I didn't get to follow up, but it made me really think about, you know, what, Professor Biden - that's the first lady! But what President Biden, you know, is talking about, you know, in his infrastructure bill is actually very much all around, you know, a built around this, you know, talking about, you know, the neighborhoods, you know, the neighborhoods of color, the poor neighborhoods that they built the super highways through, and trying to reimagine and rectify kind of the sins of the past, you know, and so there's a history lesson in that as well. So I was just fascinated by everything she had to say.

G

Gina Turner 57:44

And I was especially fascinated and excited about taking that assignment that she gives her students on their first day of class creating those mental maps of their neighborhoods, because, again, it's that that same idea that you were just just revisiting, right? The idea that one person's neighborhood might be accessible. And the other one's might be sort of, you know, aspirational, and they might live next door to each other. So I will say that our producer, Jeff Armstrong, suggested that you and I create our own cognitive maps, and then share those on on the website for our podcast. So I guess we have to decide because we should probably each draw, should we draw a map of the same place?

T

Tom O'Connor 58:35

Oh, I feel like we should draw a map of where we live. I mean, I mean, we could draw a map, but I mean, like, I feel like what do you think is better? I mean, I I defer to you.

G

Gina Turner 58:48

I was just thinking we could both draw a map of Bethel campus. Of course, you're mostly at the Monroe campus.

T

Tom O'Connor 58:57

I'm at a disadvantage, like, I'm already I'm already set up to fail this assignment since I were such huge blinders. Like I know where the grocery store is, the antique stores where I live my neighbors and little else.

G

Gina Turner 59:09

Okay, well, Joe's chimed in and said he thinks that where we live is good. So we will each draw a cognitive map of where we live.

- T** Tom O'Connor 59:17
So I think that this is gonna, this is gonna be great and terrifying, Gina. People are gonna get a good glimpse into into my mind that I'm not sure the world is prepared for.
- G** Gina Turner 59:31
I'm just excited to get out my colored markers. And I'm a terrible artist.
- T** Tom O'Connor 59:35
I'm a terrible artist too. So this is this is gonna be this is gonna be awesome. And I'm excited to see what we produce. And I'm just excited to have been excited. Right, you know?
- G** Gina Turner 59:48
Yeah.
- T** Tom O'Connor 59:48
Karen talked about, you know, her enthusiasm in the classroom and that came out and everything she had to say and and she got me kind of enthused.
- G** Gina Turner 59:57
Exactly.
- T** Tom O'Connor 59:58
Try to- to try to put myself in the headspace that she puts her students in.
- G** Gina Turner 1:00:02
She gave us an assignment, homework, and we're excited to do it.
- T** Tom O'Connor 1:00:05
She didn't know she was doing it at the time.



Gina Turner 1:00:08

Jeff said no Google Maps are allowed.



Tom O'Connor 1:00:11

No, no, no, absolutely not. Well, as the end of the season, let me just say, you know, thank you for everything. Thank you to all of our listeners, for goodness sake, who have been through like us, you know, an incredibly tough year. It's it's been a real pleasure to be able to be here with you guys. And certainly with you, Gina, with our showrunner Kelly and with with our producer, Jeff as well. So I just want to thank you so much, all of you.



Gina Turner 1:00:41

Yes, thank you, Tom. These episodes are always a real bright spot in my weeks and months. And so I am very grateful, as you say, to you, to Kelly, to Jeff, and to anyone who shares their valuable time to listen to us. So, take care.



Tom O'Connor 1:00:58

Hey, thanks for listening to Pedagogy-a-go-go recorded in the Center for Teaching Learning and Technology at Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Our podcast daydreamer slash show runner is Kelly Allen and Pedagogy-a-go-go is produced by Jeff Armstrong. If you've got any questions, please send them to Pedagogy-a-go-go at gmail.com. Our social media handle is at Pedagogy-a-go-go and you can stop by our website at www Pedagogy-a-go-go dot com for copies of podcast transcripts, guest assignments and other useful tidbits. Keep in mind there are no hyphens or dots in any of the above web addresses. Until next time, this is Gina and Tom saying: Take care and teach well.