**YGT episode 120**

You're listening to you've got this episode 120. Hey there and welcome to you've got this a podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day-to-day demands of an academic life. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Linder. As an Avid Reader and writer.

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On this episode. I am thrilled to bring you my second to last a book review of the year. And in this episode I'm talking about difficult subjects insights and strategies for teaching about race sexuality and gender and this is edited by Body Ahad ligardi andorian poon and it is a. It's an amazing book.

I'm super excited to talk with you about it. And it's possible that you know from my background if you've listened to the show for a while that I do have graduate degrees in women and gender studies with my masters and my PhD so this was definitely a book that I was really looking forward to reading for that reason just because it's a little bit of my background but I also want to point out that I think these conversations in the classroom these difficult conversations.

They don't necessarily get easier just because you have kind of an intellectual. Understanding of what's happening. And so when I came to this book, I really came with probably some of the same challenges and struggles that many of you have and that many people have when they come to the classroom and that is really trying to be prepared for all kinds of things that can come up one of the things I appreciated first about this book was how contextualized it was with the current political climate and really understanding that different campuses have very different.

Texts and different concerns that students are raising different campus cultures that are causing all kinds of different things to happen in the classroom. And even in places where you wouldn't necessarily expect them to be happening. So one of the things that I appreciated the most about this book was it has an incredible amount of diverse perspectives talking about issues of race sexuality and gender but also, Those perspectives are rooted.

I would say equally in the experiences of the people who are writing the chapters, but also very much in the literature and theory that they've been kind of looking at critical pedagogies and trying to kind of understand their own experiences the experiences of their students and also the experiences of the learning community that they're trying to create within their classrooms.

So I found this book to be challenging. In terms of really causing me to think and ask kind of difficult questions about my own identity my own power that I bring into a classroom setting and I definitely thought about it beyond the classroom as well because I'm not actively in the classroom as much as I was at one point in my career, but there are certainly situations in which I'm engaging with students or engaging with colleagues in a way that my power and privilege is very much at the Forefront.

I think that this edited collection does. Really nice job of complicating the situation and helping you to see the complexity of what we're dealing with in the classroom. But also as I said really contextualizing it and contextualizing it in terms of both institutional culture, but also in terms of various identities that the authors are talking about in specific ways.

I want to point out a couple chapters that I found to be kind of especially interesting. But the other piece that I want to make sure that I definitely kind of return to as a theme is this idea of how do we make space for these conversations about difficult subjects and what I the word I guess I would use is appropriate space thinking about what time of the year what time of the classroom period should these things be brought up but the other.

Then I thought this book dialogues with really well is that appropriate space doesn't necessarily mean safe space and this is a concept that we talked about a lot in my graduate program in women and gender studies was that these faces are not always going to feel safe. And how do we still have learning in the midst of spaces that may not feel like they're entirely safe and that those are kind of complicated spaces to be having these conversations in with our students.

So I think that may be a word is how do we create appropriate space in terms of kind of size and scale so that we know that these conversations are happening in an environment where students can feel like they're still learning and growing so a couple of the chapters that I just wanted to point out that I was really kind of resonating with and was drawn to one is on addressing incivility in the classroom.

And I'll admit that I zeroed in on this chapter which is written by Chevelle up Hitman because I happen to know she Avella and I know her work on incivility and she does a lot of workshops and things and so I didn't know that she was in this book until I opened it and saw her name and so I was really excited to read her chapter.

And one of the things that I thought was interesting about this chapter just to give you kind of a glimpse into the lens of what this book does is chavala talks a lot about why incivility might happen and she also talks about. Certain best practices for responding to incivility and the incivility can be toward other students.

It can be toward the instructor. There's lots of different contexts in which it can happen. But one of the things that she addresses pretty early on is that sometimes what is considered a best practice for incivility in terms of responding to it may not work for certain identities in terms of the identity of the instructor.

So there might be certain minorities identities where a best. That would work for a white instructor to respond to incivility would not work for an instructor of color. And this was something that I think she addresses really well in this chapter and she has an entire section kind of strategizing about how to.

Respond to incivility if you're coming from different kinds of identity categories, and this is where I felt like the title of the book The subtitle insights and strategies for teaching about race sexuality and gender really was highlighted well in several of the chapters because it's not just trying to give you techniques and best practices.

There's actually this discussion of this might work in this particular way for this particular situation and for this kind of person but. Might not work if any of those factors are different or change over time and that kind of attention to the complexity and the complicatedness of having conversations about race sexuality and gender in the classroom.

I just I was so. I was so happy to see it. I was so you know, it's challenging to see it because I think it makes it feel harder. But at the same time it was so real like this is how the classrooms are. It's not one size fits all so those those were definitely elements of that chapter that I really appreciated.

The other thing that I also really appreciated about kind of a tone that was set in the very beginning of this book and this is actually a quote from early on in the first chapter. And this is a chapter on what the authors call Comfort Zone racism and it's by ambedkar goon Chev and lunch and they talk about how racism in the classroom is not reducible to a disciplinary issue.

And I think that that's the other kind of strength of this volume. It really thinks carefully about you know, incivility and disciplinary issues are rooted in much larger contexts. And sometimes we're not really interrogating what those contexts are or how institutions are supporting certain identities over others and kind of creating the space.

For that incivility or creating the space for certain kinds of inequities to happen within the classroom setting. So I did really appreciate how that tone was set really early on there's also a really wonderful theme throughout many of these essays on thinking about emotion and. Effect as a part of learning and how do we create a space and again kind of an appropriate space for students to emote for instructors to emote after difficult situations happen in a political environment or you know, maybe there's a situation of violence that happens and we see that reported on a national scale and students want to respond.

They want to be talking about it. And I also really appreciated going to hear me flipping. Your pages here. There is another chapter called feeling our way to knowing decolonizing the American studies classroom by a still and one of the things that this author talks about is. The idea of refusing the rational classroom and really creating a space to allow students to think that tensions and emotions in the classroom that there can be a space for that and that that's something that is appropriate and that they can kind of bring that to the classroom and that that makes a good learning environment for students to have that situation and to be supported in thinking through these difficult Concepts and ideas together and to hear different kinds of voices.

All right. I'm glancing through to see there so there are. 14 chapters in this book and also a really wonderful introduction and conclusion. There is not a week chapter in this entire book. I mean if they're in every chapter I found to be so well articulated, especially in terms of the critical reflection that each author was doing in terms of their own placement in the classroom.

I did think that this book would make an excellent reading group book in the sense of just helping people to. Try to figure out how to talk with each other about these issues that often feel very uncomfortable and we're not sure how to talk about race. I think a lot of the time without sounding racist and and it's difficult to talk from our own experiences about what certain conversations are difficult subjects look like in our classrooms and within our disciplines.

There are a couple really wonderful chapters in here specifically about how to talk about difficult conversations and diversity in places like stem classrooms where you might not see more kind of obvious ways of addressing this there are also certainly discussions in this book about where you would think you would have more kind of obvious places like American studies cultural studies gender studies.

The other chapter I guess I really want to call attention to and I could do a podcast episode about every chapter in this book because I was just so pleased about kind of how these these topics and issues were addressed throughout the entire book was there's there's a really nice chapter that talks specifically about pronouns.

It's called the least we can do gender affirming pedagogy starting on day one by Erica chew and it is one of the best. I have seen that talks about how to kind of sensitively deal with gender queer or transgender or other gendered folks who are going to be in your classroom and how to create space for that how to help other students to create space for that and particularly in environments where this is not common where it may not be common to ask about.

Pronoun use or you don't have a space that is specifically kind of a gender studies space where you would expect to have those kinds of discussions. But how do you still from the beginning of the classroom period ensure that students have a certain level of comfort that it doesn't become an obstacle to their learning.

It doesn't become such a distraction for them in terms of how their identity is playing out in the classroom that they can't focus on the classroom material itself. So a lot of this book is really about creating support structures for campuses for students and for faculty in terms of helping them to think about what does it mean to navigate having these difficult conversations with each other with their students and with the larger Campus Community.

I think you can tell that I loved this book. I felt like this was a book that I could revisit annually. That would continue to challenge me to think about things in new and different ways. It is definitely a book if you have been kind of challenged or you've been questioning or thinking about how do I deal with these kinds of issues on my campus?

How do I deal with difficult conversations in my classroom? I would absolutely recommend it. I also think it's a really wonderful book if you want to do more kind of critical reflection on your own teaching and you're not sure how to write about it. You're not sure what kind of the genre conventions would be for that.

I think that there is a really nice variety of voices and perspectives in this book to give you a sense of how you might do that from kind of a rhetorical perspective or a mechanics perspective of what that looks like to. That kind of critical reflection in a written text. So again, this book is difficult subjects insights and strategies for teaching about race sexuality and gender it's edited by a hard ligardi and poon.

And of course we are so excited to give away three copies of this book. What I would kind of love to hear about via social media, you can always connect with us connect with stylus on Facebook. You can connect with stylus or me on Instagram and I'm going to link to how to do this in the show notes.

And of course you can always tweet to me or tweet to out stylist Pub about your response to this. Question, please use hashtag YG T give away so we can find a response. My question that I would love for you to answer is what is your favorite technique for encountering or engaging with difficult subjects in the.

And what has worked for you in terms of creating that space that appropriate space to allow students to engage with these topics and ideas and issues in a way that really allows them to continue to deepen their learning not just about the subject matter itself, but about their own identities their positionality, 's and their own power and privilege or lack thereof.

So I hope that you will seek out this book, of course, you can always use for you don't happen to win the giveaway. You can always use the code ygt 24 20% off any purchase on the stylus website. So I hope you'll check out the book. I'll link to it in the show notes. Thanks so much for listening to this review this episode of ygt.

I'll be back tomorrow with my final update for National novel writing month. Let you know that final word count and again on Saturday answering a question for lifework. Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening to this episode of you've got this show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Katie lender dot work / podcasts.

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