**Transcript: Friday, October 24, 2025**

**C:** So how long have you teaching for and in what capacity?

**P4:** I've been teaching for 14 years as initially as a TA, which is equivalent to a seminar tutor and then after a few years, I got some course directorships, eventually I worked a polytechnic where I, I was course director, which essentially means you are running your own … you are both the seminar leader and you are running your own course… you kind of do everything. But in the UK, I was a lecturer for a few years, then a senior lecturer, sum total of 7 years.

**C:** Ok great, and throughout the years what kind of teacher training have you received or had access to?

**P3:** Very little. My TA-ship was part of my funding where I do my PhD, everyone, essentially as part of your funding you have to work 10 hours a week. Either in a research or teaching position, so everyone gets assigned, most people get these TA-ships. There was some kind of weekend, there was a bit of training, but it was … I was away, I didn't get it, but I don't think it was training, it was more of an induction that training, but I felt extremely ill-equipped for the job. And just sort of learned along the way. A few things were helpful for me: a few years into the PhD, the university offered, you opt-into, the university offered a TA-GC or something like that, it was a type of postgraduate certificate in TA-ing, and that's where I first encountered teaching observations and pedagogical reflection and so forth. And then when I started working at the polytechnic I had a bit of professional development stuff there, and then also at [redacted], every time you take on a new job you get a peer observation, but no formal training. And then I did a PgCert here, but mainly because I was expected. I don't know if I'd really call that training, because it's about the wider context of pedagogy, rather than training. [3:01]

**C:** I was wondering if you could reflect on some difficult moments within your teaching or to describe some challenging scenarios where you have not been certain of how to proceed

**P3:** That's a good question, and I used to have them in my back pocket for interviews, but now I can't really remember a lot of them. You know, certain things like you have one person who really dominates the class. I had this one guy who seemed really nice, he would just talk, he didn't really know what he was talking about, and he was very loud and kind of talked over people. At a point I could see that it was kind of distressing others, and I talked to him one-to-one and I said, 'your input is really valuable, but can you sometimes let other people speak', which kind of worked. The toughest teaching I had was my first semester, first year teaching at [redacted], teaching sociology of sport for students learning golf management out in [redacted]. So these people are farthest away from any kind of group that I could personally relate to, total small town, suburban, like white, jock, bro kinds, kind of people who would bully me in high school. They, I just kind of rolled with it and it kind of worked. There was an issue that I basically failed to deal with, [4:53] which was that whenever I would leave the room for a break, they were rough housing, which led to complaints, because we had one of those walls that comes across and they were sort of banging into the wall and then someone from the other class came in, and this is really mortifying [… redacted…] and I did tell them, like guys you are kind of embarrassing me, you need to wind it in, just as people, can you please have some reason, and actually that kind of worked, I think, but I didn't understand that you had to be a disciplinarian. That kind of moment was challenging, because I saw myself as a teacher dealing with adults. But [in this case] it was extremely immature adults. Who are not far out of high school, and they are behaving as if it were high school, and I don't really know, I probably should have handled that class better from the outset, but I didn't training, I didn't really know how. And then, I've had

similar to the moments that you were talking about here where cultural appropriation time bomb, and I can't really think of specifics, I've also had lots of students. And this is in tutorial, where students are crying, about various other things, but I think that's probably outside [the scope]. Those are always really challenging, you have to be empathetic, but also [6:47] maintain a certain level of professional distance. I've had students crying, 'I just can't write […]', you have to reassure them what kind of support they're going to get, by the end they liked it alright and they were really surprised in themselves because they were told that they were stupid and they couldn't write and all that. But difficult things in seminar rooms, I don't know… I think cause I don't really, the way I sort of teach is to listen to what someone is saying and trying to say 'I think the kind of point you are trying to make is this and why don't we think about this bigger context which is about cultural borrowing and power.' I probably have not shut down conversations but it's a combination of you've got limited time and this is…this is not nice … you sort of address it, and you kind of move on, you let people talk, rather than […] I remember there was a German woman who got irritated at a student about cultural appropriation saying 'oh what we can't borrow any culture' and I'm like 'no, I think people are far to quick to call cultural appropriation', we live in a culture of censoriousness, but the point is that cultural studies needs to move beyond shouting at each other on the internet discourse [8:22] and to understand these bigger things of power. And that sort of worked

**C:** Just to build on that, do you think about your positionality, how do you define your positionality in the classroom, and how do you build that into your teaching practices? Because you spoke about being a disciplinarian and offering that emotional support in someways, how do you think about your role in the classroom?

**P3:** Do you mean [9:00] So you don't mean positionality in regards to identity reflexivity instead of professional practice?

**C:** Both, for me, I think they relate to one another. For example, I think about my power in relationship to my own identity, so I was just wondering how you reflected on that?

**P3:** [9:24] Yeah, I mean, you know, obviously there's peoples' ideas of what a teacher looks like, and its probably white and male, so, I look like a teacher, and I was what 29 when I started teaching. So I was older than my students but not that old. But there is a thing where you sit, you suddenly go to the front of the classroom and you know in the higher education system has conditioned people to defer to that authority. So simply by talking a bit louder, saying 'hey we're ready to start whatever' you kind of you know I didn't really realise what you were meant to do, I just tried to remember, or you kind of awkwardly occupy that little podium at the front. And I used to hide behind that podium too, but my teaching practices have kind of changed over the years. In relationship to things I've read, peer feedback and things like that. To be much more facilitative, and much more moving around the room, getting groups to pair and share. Since I've come here, especially as things are more bureaucratic, much more quality managed, I was [redacted] by the second year I was here. [10:47] or when I was course directing in [redacted], I needed to think: ok what do I need to get through? There were certain objectives I had to meet and things like that. So I always had that kind of hat on. So I guess what's my position? I guess its to facilitate, but you are also an educator, even if you teaching something that you don't know anything about, you know more than your students do. Just by virtue of your training, you are able to sit through someone else's lecture, or do the reading. And its your job to help them understand, that's essentially your role as educator is to ascertain understanding or facilitate understanding. Identity-wise, my thinking has developed on that […pause…thinking] Identity, I think, has become a poisoned chalice in relation to Zionism [11:54] in the sense that, its made me really reflect on the way that, and [redacted] in general, I would have definitely pushed

this idea that everyone has an identity, particularly teaching in [redacted], [redacted] multi-ethnic city in the world, and I'm thinking 'think about your identity and your position' and respond to that. I'm not saying I don't do that, but the thing that has made me a little weary is that I think, I don't know if solipsism is the right word, there is a culture where the authority that you have is solely based on lived experience or personal identity, which we see as weaponised in the context of [redacted] students don't feel comfortable, because they're [redacted] and you have to listen to them. And in the past, I probably would have said, I probably would have thrown something in to say my positionality being [redacted], because to say, that there are different minority experiences, and that helps students relate to you, to say ok, that you are minoritised in someway or the other, and that you can reflect on that identity and reflect on it, and be shaped by it, but I now, well A. that idea that oh well you should always respond to your identity, I've come to also understand gets pushed a lot in design, sort of as we were talking about earlier, where students are told that everything needs to be about your identity. So everyone is the total of their identity and that everyone shapes them and the sum total of their experiences shape them, but I'm sort of moving in my thinking away from, I think we've gone too far in the other direction now. Saying that you can only speak to something if it relates to your identity. And also you know also, I've had to teach in sociology of sport, I had to teach about sport, and I don't know anything about sport, and I had to teach about racism, and fundamentally, you don't need to be a racialised person to understand [14:10] to be able to explain to students the difference between equality and equity, what is structural racism, how does racism operate in the context of sport, which again, you know, whereas it might be better for a person of colour to teach that because they can talk about their experience, at the same time, I don't think experience and position is everything.

**C:** Ok thank you, kind of on the back of that, what kind of political and/or societal conversations do you think have emerged more recently, do you notice the shift or the tone in debates that are emerging within the classroom since you first started teaching?

**P3:** Do you know, I haven't taught any seminars in a while, [15:07] because I was on [redacted], because I'm not teaching one right now. I mean spend a lot of time on the internet, I kind of know, I see what are the, when students are talking about something, I see 'oh yah ok this is a thing from right wing internet, or this is a thing from left wing internet'. And I can see what they are responding to, in terms of the, I don't think that last few years have changed hugely. I think the thing that has struck me is that most students seem apolitical. One thing that you have to remember when teaching, is that even that some of the positions, if you are working within conflict school of sociology, cultural studies, you are working within a set of assumptions about the world that are rooted in Marxism, which is an epistemology that I subscribe to, but you have to recognise that it is not a universally accepted [16:16] way of seeing the world, and that it exists alongside other forms of understandings and epistemologies and so forth, and paradigms. You have to then … I used to get these seminar evaluations, and there was one that said I feel like I am just paying for a Marxist brainwashing or something like that, which was funny. So you have to recognise that, you know, I think there is a tendency especially in our area to be like 'hey students fuck the system, we're all in this together' and this is going to be so cool to decolonise everything to show how radical we are, there are those students who respond to that, and they do the best in cultural studies, and there are… I see intellectual currents, when the students are strong and they want to talk to you about Mark Fisher, a few years ago, Zizek, now it's Mark Fisher. They're already reading, and they're interested in this stuff, and they're on theorygram and things like that, but most students are indifferent and there are certain things that are sociological facts, like race is a social construct, I would say that is a sociological fact. Empire was an exercise of exploitation and killed millions of people. Those are empirical facts, but how you interpret them as a critical thinker is up to the students, and obviously we have particular framework, but I think you have to be open and also just consider that sometimes, and that's

kind of the problem with teaching, we're kind of teaching this like a universal truth, like its physics or something, but it's not. It's an interpretive system. And sometimes with our essay questions, you might be telling students, you know show how people resist the empire, it's already a loaded question, it's built into the set of assumptions that you are giving. And most students will just do that because they want to please the teacher and they want to get good grades.

**C:** Do you think that you, have you ever encountered someone who was ideologically very different from you, but they have a tight argument, that draws on evidence. How do you deal with ideological differences within the classroom, I mean you say that students are apolitical, so maybe you haven't encountered that, but when you do… [19:13]

**P3:** Yeah I have, I've just taught so many classes. It's really hard to remember. Sometimes you see stuff in essays and its like … ok, I don't agree, but you've put through an argument. I think in [redacted], I had students are a little bit more forceful about disagreeing in the classroom. The thing is, you are always at kind of an advantage, because you are an academic, and they're a student. You can recognise the jingoistic arguments that they have and how they are not really rooted in scholarship and no I have. There are huge bodies of scholarship about the historical benefits of empire or the in defence of liberalism, but those students are going to that, because someone would have to be teaching that and we're not teaching that.

**C:** You briefly spoke about identity politics, and the potential problems of that [20:34], but I was wondering if things like being doxed, this fear come to foreground, when you get a comment that you're being brainwashed for leftist policies, do you then reconsider how you teach, or is this something that is then just part of your perspective?

**P3:** Well I reconsidered how I taught, not because I was afraid of being doxed but because that made me pause to consider and reflect. Teaching is always about reflecting, and developing your practices. I am very afraid of being doxed I have to say, because that's the kind of culture of the moment. I don't think. Do you know who Brad Traumal is? He's a failed artist turned YouTuber, he's like a Patreon meme guy, who is very critical of, wokeism, liberalism, from a left perspective. And he's an artist, and most of his critique comes out of the artworld and art studies, and I think he has an MA, and does things about artspeak, pastil, and woke flat illustrations, and one of the few people like that that I follow. My introduction into alternative academia, outsider journalism. I was one day looking on Instagram, and there was a picture of one of my slides on one of his Instagram stories, because I used Pepe on a slide on masculinity. And I had done that in a provocative way because I think it was funny. And I don't know if that's how the student interpreted it. Somebody put that on reddit, on 4Chan, or Twitter or something. I've also seen my lecture, I use a meme from Sockshousemeeting, and I've seen that featured on the meme page, so you are always being watched. And things can be misinterpreted, very easily. And I am very careful about that, but at the same time, there are certain things. I don't know, I don't think someone is going to dox me by saying race is a social construct, or explaining what hegemony is, I'm not saying Britain is evil and it should be destroyed. And increasingly, I have talked about Palestine, and there is a big risk there. I thought, you can't live in fear forever of that [23:59]. I don't know how much of a risk it is here, because of the student base. If you are teaching in LSE or King's, in political science, you are much more likely to have the kind of students that are right-wing. Because this is an art and design school, I think everyone is either apolitical or sympathetic – there are probably a few people. And also, I also feel like I can, they can't accuse me of antisemitism, which comes back to positionality, I have a bit of power there, where you kind of need to use it. But at the same time, I don't think it's the role of a cultural studies lecturer to lecture people on how Israel is an illegitimate state or

whatever [sorry it's not?], it isn't because we're not teaching history. But it might be the role to contextualise that, you know, to use contemporary examples to explain, what is resistance? Well resistance at the moment may be, one of the most important resistance movements that is happening in Britain is Palestine Action, Defend our Borders, why talk about the resistance movements in Palestine? No? You're just inviting yourself to a world of shit and to what gain? You're not there to proselytize and its not necessary. [25:40] Similarly, you can take about media bias, and I think that's all very forensic, and that's where you can bring in media bias toward Israel, but there's no position, I'll do think, like there's themes in textiles, where I've talked about detail about intifada dress where I put the slides up, I just call it dress. There's a version of the slides that go onto Moodle, that's different from the slides I present in my powerpoint. Just because a little thing like that can cause a world of pain. Down the road, even though intifada just means struggle, and in the lecture, you say, and explain that's what that means, and in the lecture you say this is from the 1980s from the first awakening of Palestinian resistance, mainly non-violence in that period, and it's called this because of the colours, the passing effects they were banned, so you can provide all that context, but in a slide it doesn't have all that context and it can be circulated.

**C:** Are you familiar with decolonial pedagogies, non-violent communication, or brave space theory, and if so, what is your understanding, and do you employ them within the classroom?

**P3:** To an extend decolonial pedagogy, but I find it to be quite woolly, because perhaps I haven't been trained in it properly. Because sometimes it seems that people just want to be like 'hey man did you know that lecturing is developed in the boarding schools for the British aristocracy and training for the empire?' Yeah no, I do know that. And so, what's the alternative? And a lot of the decolonial pedagogy has been captured to be…decolonial pedagogy became the new diversity theory, EDI, institutionally captured by individuals who had an institutional career advancement need, and primarily have encountered decolonial pedagogy here in white people telling us that we shouldn't teach academic readings, because reading is colonial. And academic work is colonial. And then asking us to decolonise our curriculum without understanding that our colleague is a decolonial scholar who's been here long before I've been here. And that's been in the [redacted] curriculum for years and years, because they make an assumption that oh you must be teaching the history French fashion, and we are going to come in and intervene and do this decolonial exercise. I've had people, I've sat in meetings with the library, where they explain decolonial pedagogy (which is a white person doing this) and telling the librarian if they have had other kinds of sources. And the librarian is like yah we have all this kind of stuff on decolonial scholarship, black thought, and they're like what about non-academic sources? And they're like yah there is this zine library, it has this and that. And they are like oh no but what about blogs and YouTube? The librarian is like what? You are asking us at the library if we have the open web. Fundamentally, this to me, I think this is really important, when we start to talk about oh we need to decolonise the curriculum, that means somehow dumbing down, there is an implicit racism there. I think about cultural studies projects, or decolonial projects, [29:47] starts with critical theory starts in the 1800, workers educating themselves, organising themselves, gaining literacy, make these gains. Cultural Studies develops in the 1950s, people doing extra [?] education, factory workers wanting to be literate, wanting to have the tools to critique society. Talking about the decolonial context, CLR James, really documents that in the *Black Jacobins* about how the ideas of the French Revolution were taken up by slaves in Haiti, and so many former colonies. Their decolonial struggles were formed in relationship to critical theory, some of it coming from Europe, and then a lot of it developed in the Global South in relationship to that. But you can't do that if you can't read. Or respond to academic concepts. So it becomes, are you saying that you want us to stream racialised or international students into some sort of easy options where they do a YouTube video, and that's what they were kind of talking about.

So I understand decolonial scholarship in the proper sense of it, which I think is of particular importance in literature and art history, places where there is a canon, but decolonial teaching, every time I've encountered it, maybe that's because I'm set in my ways, I've overly resistant, but every time I've encountered it has been some sort of top-down corporate exercise in things that don't make any kind of sense to me in practical terms. Whereas your second one was?

**C:** Non-violent communication

**P3:** Yeah no idea

**C:** And brave space theory?

**P3:** A little bit from reading what you sent, but no not really.

**C:** Do you know what Chatham House Rules are?

**P3:** It's some kind of Oxbridge debate rule thing – nothing you say there can be said outside of the room?

**C:** Yeah, exactly. And are there emerging trends that you've noticed in your seminars? Just a couple more questions. I'm aware of time too.

**P3:** Say that again?

**C:** Are there any emerging trends or things that you need training for? I know you said that you haven't been teaching in a while, but is there anything that you wish you had more training for?

**P3:** I mean, more around just the basics. I would like to have more training on facilitating active seminars, reading skills, the real basic things that you assume, and this has less to do with your research, but you know the things you assume [32:57] students come to university with. They don't necessarily, and we understand that and we calibrate our teaching to it, but sometimes I've been very mindful of that, which we teach essay structure, which they never did since they started here. Even things like how to read effectively, I kind of see that as academic support's job, but it's something I would like more training in. In helping students be less intimidated by academic reading, and more able to engage. I would like more training on dealing with students who speak English as a foreign language, but that would be a huge one. The one training I got here was on Confucian heritage students. And it was a woman from China just giving us a powerpoint with the most stereotypical things about Asian students, like Asian students have parents who want them to work hard. It was amazing and absurd. What I really want training on is an understanding of the epistemologies of knowledge in China, Japan, and Korea, other colonial, other Global South countries that we deal with often they are operating on a Euro-model, they might be from French Africa, but its all, that's fairly straight forward. They have very different education systems, they have very different understandings of learning. And responding to learning. And that's what I find a real challenge, and that's where we need training. And that's where sometimes you have problems with staff being like 'oh well', they say certain ill-educated things about the difficulties of teaching East Asian students, and partly its because of the lack of training. [35:14]

**C:** Is there anything else you want to add? That is the conclusion of my questions.

**P3:** Yeah, I guess I mean, if there is spicy conversations, it's almost something I would welcome. And when it does happen, it's like 'oh at least you care', because I just find that, overall, when you read the pedagogical literature, it's written by people who are running literature seminars at Yale or something, and just haven't done the in the trenches, whether they are estheticians, carpenters, golf course people, or textiles students or jewellery students, and just sometimes they are operating on the assumption that students are going to have a language of identity, which they don't have. Even if they are from the Global South and marginalised and racialised or whatever, and that kind of pedagogical scholarship is assuming a level of engagement that isn't there. So sometimes when students are talking about cultural appropriation, or masculinity, or things like that, which do get a bit like errr, and that's your job to guide it before someone takes offense or gets upset. Sometimes it's a good thing to have a bit of vigorous debate. Something interesting has happened, people's ears have perked up, they've engaged. I find the hardest thing is to have anyone express an opinion. There are a few students and they're the ones that always talk, they are the one's that go on to do well in [redacted], but to get the other ones talking is really hard.

**C:** Can you speculate on the causes of the apoliticism is or the apathy or how do you encourage those debates to happen? Maybe that's a broader question…

**P3:** That's the thing, that's a broader question. I remember sitting in the staff lounge at [redacted] and someone was reading the Union newspaper, someone was about to retire. And someone was complaining, this was about ten years ago, students now, they don't do the reading, they're so disinterested, perhaps people have been saying that since time immemorial. It's always easy to say students now, they aren't taking enough studentship, but I think they, most people are apolitical, the media, the ideological systems that we have foster that. What an apolitical populace, to be politically aware is stressful and hard and challenging. And we are also not, and lots of students are politically aware and politically engaged, but we're not teaching sociology, we're not teaching political science, we're certainly not teaching decolonial literature, students are here to learn art and design, and maybe they didn't, they don't feel that engaged with politics, or even just ideas in general.