

Christopher Richmann: Welcome to Professors Talk Pedagogy, a podcast from the Academy for Teaching and Learning and Baylor University. I'm your host, Christopher Richmann. Professors Talk Pedagogy presents discussions with great professors about pedagogy, curriculum and learning in order to propel the virtuous cycle of teaching. As we frankly and critically investigate our teaching, we open new lines of inquiry. We engage in conversation with colleagues and we attune to students' experiences. All of which not only improves our teaching, but enriches and motivates ongoing investigation. And so the cycle continues.

Today, our guest is Dr. DeAnna Toten Beard. Dr. Toten Beard is Professor of Theater History at Baylor University, where she teaches a variety of undergraduate and graduate Theatre Studies courses. In 2012, she was named a Baylor Teaching Fellow, a recognition of great teaching with a cohort devoted to experiment in teaching. Dr. Toten Beard has also taught in the Baylor interdisciplinary core and is the past co-director of the Baylor in Oxford study abroad program. We are delighted to have Dr. Toten Beard on the show to discuss how place affects teaching, what students learn about themselves and each other and others when they study abroad. And much more.

DeAnna Toten Beard, welcome to the show.

DeAnna Toten Beard: Hey,

CR: We're so glad to have you on here today. And the main thing that we wanted to talk about is teaching and studying abroad. And teaching abroad is not something that every faculty member participates in. So I imagine that there's a story here to some degree of how you got involved in study abroad at Baylor?

DTB: Yes, it is. The kindness of others is how I got involved in it. Specifically, Dr. Lane Scales approached me and asked me if I would like to partner with her in the Baylor in Oxford Program. She had been involved in it for years and there was room for another faculty member to join. And she thought of me, which I was appreciative of and humbled about obviously. And specifically, she was interested not only in the fact that she had a sense that I would lead good classes, but in the fact that I was a good organizer and an administrator, and she saw a real potential there to be valuable to the program. And it's true that the teaching matters a lot on study abroad, of course, and engagement with students while we're there matters a lot. But study abroad is a lot of administrative prep. Lot of planning, a lot of communicating with people far away for months before you hit the ground and do it with the students. And it does need that other part of your brain as well. So she correctly identified that I would enjoy this kind of challenges—

CR: And maybe that's why not every faculty member does do against that. It flexes a different set of muscles. I

DTB: It's not, it's not easy. I mean, it's obviously a pleasure, privilege and worth it, but it is a lot of work all year round and then the work on the ground. So she approached me in about 2015 and I co-lead Baylor in Oxford with her until 2020. 2019 was our last trip together.

CR: So how does that partnering with another faculty member work both in the planning stages of and in the actual on the ground, working with students abroad?

DTB: Well, the, the on the ground and working with the students abroad is the heart of it, of course, and the partnership has to be really good there. So we spent a lot of time talking about what we wanted students to get out of the program, then reverse engineering everything else for months to

arrive at that. So what were our priorities, what were our goals? And how could we make as much of the trip experience a good educational experience for the students. They spend a little bit of that time, those 4.5/5 weeks, 24 hours a day--a little bit of that time, a small sliver of that is in class with us. We have classes in a classroom with them. But we are so aware and we were from the first time we started talking, that the learning that's happening is 24/7. And how do we create a trip that enables and what kind of growth we would love to see students have. And then we reverse engineered it from there. And we were of such a like mind in those goals that it was a lot of fun to plan it.

CR: It strikes me that one of the main differences from the student perspective when you're studying abroad, whether it's yours, it's a summer program, right? Or a semester, is that they're spending their time outside of the class in such a different way. So what do you see? How do students spend their time? I mean, I assume there's some structured things that the faculty plan, but a lot of it is, is student-determined too. So how do they navigate that? How do they make those decisions about how to spend their time, right?

DTB: We had to sort of teach them how to do that, especially on our trip where, where we are in Oxford, about an hour from London on the train. Oxford, it's not a huge city, so there's a limited number of things to do, not plenty to do. And then London is not very far away and they have a train pass. But they don't know what to do with that freedom in that time. And so we have to structure experiences on the trip, a way that teach them how to be independent, adventurous, how to have a curious thought and then follow through on it. We have to give them those tools in a methodical way. So we have to introduce train travel very early. We have to take them to London as a group and show them how to navigate the tube. We have to have lessons in group meetings where we talk about how to read the train signs and how to use 24 hour clock time. And all the, all the way from those technical things to sort of the, the behavior that's expected on transportation or what to anticipate the experienced being like. We have to coach them and all of that so that they will, by the end of the trip, by the second half of the trip, be doing things like deciding amongst themselves that they all want to go someplace. And then executing that. That's what we want. We want them to be independent and to feel bold and brave in going places.

CR: Yeah.

DTB: But we can't just tell them be bold and brave and go places. We have to give them the tools to do it. And that's all happening outside of the technical classroom, but is most certainly a lesson that they will take for the rest of their lives. How to travel, how to be in another country, how to use public transportation. So we, they use their time--to answer your question. They use their time outside of class, studying for class in beautiful places, going on field trips that are either organized or encouraged by their various classes. And then taking free time to explore and being equipped with the knowledge and tools to make good choices and, and fun things to do.

CR: You don't have to tell any horror stories, but I assume that they're in, in the years that you've done this, you've run into some difficult situations with maybe a student who's just not gelling with the rest of the group, kind of a loner situation, or if there's been a like serious homesickness or just kind of freaking out in general. How, how, what's the role of the faculty in, in those situations?

DTB: Well, again, you can't just tell them if you ever have any problem, you can speak to us and then expected that's how it will work, right? You have to make a relationship with them first. So that's another thing that Lane and I were intentional about. So the first few days of the trip, we make sure that we're with them a lot in a large group setting, it's not that large a group. We take about 20 students, that in a full group setting, that they're with each other, they're making relationships

and that they're with us so that they know us and we've learned their names and their faces and things about them. And we have meals with them heavily on the first end of the trip. And then spread out throughout. We do group field trips the beginning of the trip so that they have some relationship. We move around them, we we go on these scheduled long walks where you can sort of fall into step next to a student and ask them things?

CR: Yes.

DTB: So that when they do have a problem, they come tell us or if somebody's having a problem, another student feels comfortable telling that so-and-so was upset today.

CR: Yeah.

DTB: And that makes it possible to have, for us to be there for them. But if it were a much larger group, it would be challenging to do that. Instead, it's a sweet spot that faculty to student ratio on bill or an Oxford.

CR: So how many are usually...

DTB: We usually have unusual, usually 20, 18 to 24 saying students self-selected for people who thought being in a beautiful place like Oxford and taking classes on literature and sociology and religion are the very things we offer in any year, sounds lovely. And so we sort of self-select for students who--oh and they're picking a program that they know is in the 20 student range, right? So they, excuse me, they are people who generally want close relationship with a faculty member. They want to have a small class and talk about things they're reading. And they want to not be lost in a crowd. And, there are programs that are great for people who do need a summer session where they're getting a little bit lost in the crowd in a good way, a little bit of quiet anonymity can be just what the doctor ordered sometimes, yes. But the students who pick this trip want to be in relationship and they tend to be pretty intentional kids.

CR: Yep, as crucial as that relationship forming is for the social aspect of study abroad, does it ever complicate the academic part of it, or does it simply enrich it? And in what ways does it?

DTB: in my experience, it only enriches it. But I'm also speaking from the perspective of being a professor and Chair in the Department that sort of philosophically foregrounds relationship with students as a primary component of our educational mission. We know all of our students. We know them by name, they know us. Nobody can get lost in the crowd there. So that's sort of how I, I always think education is best delivered in relationship. And I can't think of any experiences at Baylor and Oxford in which the students feeling comfortable with us outside of the classroom created any difficulty inside of the classroom. On the contrary, I had students calling at two in the morning because they had missed a train and weren't sure what to do, but they knew they could call,

CR: Right, yeah.

DTB: And I would coach them through what do. students inviting me to their wedding years later?

CR: Yes.

DTB: You know who who stay in contact. So that relationship has only born good for it so far. What have you.

CR: You mentioned the preparatory work, especially thinking about what you want students to get out of the experience. Baylor right now is sort of midway through our quality enhancement plan, which is Global Education, Global Baylor. And with study abroad, a lot of times you hear this word, intercultural competency that's used. Is that something that you and Lane thought about? Is that, how do you craft activities and experiences for the students that, that really dive into that?

DTB: Yes, we think about that a lot and here's an example of how we, nuts and bolts try to reach those goals. So Lane scales teaches a class on sociology. That's her area of specialization in one of her many areas of specialization and an assignment that we did every year--She did every year in her class, is that her students in that class who say are about a third of the group, because our classes are about that size. They would all read this wonderful book by Kate Fox, called *Watching the English*. They would read it before the trip. And they would be given this popular nonfiction book. But by a sociologist about English people, she would assign them sections of that book, certain aspects of culture. And they would then on the first day that we're on the ground, we have a group meeting and they would teach as an assignment the rest of the group, Mores and rules of English social life, things like how to do weather talk the right way, how to wait in line, how people introduce themselves, how to be on public transportation. And they would teach that from the perspective of their course and what they had learned about sociology and the outcome of it. So it's a part of the assignment that class, but the outcome of it for the whole group is orienting the class towards noticing the differences between American society and English society and conforming their behavior to be good guests in another country. And then once that was established, it became a talking point for all of the group. Every day for the rest of the trip, somebody would say, Oh, it happened. Somebody on the train asked me a question and I knew what to do about that kind of question because of the lesson and so this is what I said. Or they would report at dinner that they had observed some example of something we had, we had learned about students

CR: what a beautiful immediacy of what they read in a book. And then, and then actually get to experience

DTB: it was, and that they were hearing it delivered from students to students. And then reporting back about how it went to the whole group--Put the knowledge, expertise on the students as a whole in a way that was really good for the dynamic of the group. And that's one little example, but very concrete example of how we tried to build cultural competency into the fabric of the program, not just for people who are in one particular class.

CR: And that's also a good example of thinking about how the space that you're teaching in when it's a foreign space especially affects your teaching. So from, from the perspective of your classes, theater and theater history, how do you how do you work that?

DTB: Well, we were having some of our meetings in a classroom in Christ Church at Oxford. But a lot of the content is also being delivered on our field trip. So we're going to theaters, were going to historic sites, we're going to contemporary theaters. And then talking about it as a group. And again, when we would go to the theatre, the whole trip went to see a play. Maybe only the students in my class have an assignment related to it. And maybe students in my other class of a different assignment related to it, but everybody saw it. So we then also have these common experiences. We had all gone to see *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* together. And now that was something that was special for all 25 of us, right?

CR: Yeah.

DTB: And and that happened in a particular geographic location and getting there and leaving there was all part of the experience. So to Dr. Scales and I into the wonderful faculty who, who were often on the trip with us like, I mean, we just like all stars. We have Richard Russell and Hope Johnston and Lynn Tatum, Greg Garret, Tom Hanks. I mean, we have amazing people on the trip. All of us embrace the idea that the learning was happening all over. Wherever we're in Edinburgh. We went to [inaudible] and they learn to dance. And that was part of that cultural experience that everybody got, whether it had to do with your class or not.

CR: There's some magic I think, of study abroad, it sounds like is, is partly this mix of formal and informal learning that happens that, that I think thoughtful faculty try to incorporate in regular residential classes. But it just screams to be done in study abroad.

DTB: It does. And it's an intense experience studying abroad, right? Each day feels like two days; a week feels—

CR: Especially when you land and you try to kinda gently really realize it.

DTB: And so you're in this intense experience, your senses are alerted because you're in new environments. And so if you imagine us like all the pores of our intellect or open, things can come in more easily. And so the whole time, there's this receptivity to learning--

CR: yeah,

DTB: --and to growth. And so you can maximize it every day. It's not just in the dedicated so-called class times. They're learning important things on that trip when we're on a bus and somebody whispers to another student, "I can't get used to them driving on the wrong side of the road." And one of the faculty says, "they're driving on the *otherside* of the road." We don't need to say right or wrong and those kind of conversations that happen casually. And you noticed by the end of the trip that they're shifting from thinking of everything that they've done in their past and in their home, state, neighborhood, whatever as being the universal obvious "right way" things are done to them, realizing that the world is much bigger.

CR: Yeah.

DBT: And and I think we, all of us who do this trip and I think any study abroad see it as an outcome to teach the students, to decentralize themselves, to de-center themselves. And starting to decenter themselves to adopt a genuine sense of humility at the face of the rest of the world. And literally relocating yourself is the best way to do that.

CR: Yeah. You so you use the word *intense* and that made me think about how when you're doing a study abroad with students, you probably see them grow and all in all kinds of ways. And as a faculty person, you have a little bit more sort of certainty that growth is happening as a result of this intense experience. Whereas when we're teaching in a regular semester on campus, students might be growing, but for all sorts of reasons unrelated to our courses, that unless they tell us, you know, that something was significant. So what other ways do you see students growing intellectually, emotionally, socially?

DTB: I see them growing in how they articulate their response to literature and works of art. That there, again, it's, there's something about receptivity and openness and their ability to notice that is intensified by being in an unusual location. They're noticing that systems are turned up, right? Yeah. So they they then notice things in some they've read with more subtlety, right? And if you can

partner them with a location to talk about something that is that they have read, which heightens it, then you just get this magic happening. Dr. Scales talked to them about class and English society. That's a great reading, but then put them on a bus with her and ride the local buses of Oxford into other neighborhoods, get off the bus and go into a store and buy something and leave again. Their ability to notice has different because of their what they're physically doing. I take them to sit in a beautiful stately home, the Winston Churchill's family home, where the grounds were signed by Capability Brown, this great landscape designer who is subject matter in Tom Stoppard's play *Arcadia*. Well, they've read *Arcadia*, going to sit on the grounds. We take the bus there, we walk along the grounds. We kind of beautiful place to sit and we talk about the ideas about life and time and memory and mortality that are in this play while we're sitting in a beautiful location. And what those students say about their recognition of really sophisticated, subtle ideas is amazing and it's not something that they would say in another physical circumstance. And I see it. And sometimes they see it too, and they sort of surprise themselves.

CR: If you had opportunities to have students who you had studying abroad and then in classes with you after the fact, what sort of things do you notice long-term about how they how they grow and how what they've learned?

DTB: I do have a small number of those .I teach somebody majors classes that it's mostly happened with students who went on the trip who are also majors in my department. And one thing I notice is that they always feel like we have a secret between us, they, and I, there's always this little smile of recognition like you're my travel partner. Buddy. Which I like,

CR: Well, there's a closeness that just comes from travel, right? Yeah.

DBT: And that's helpful. Feeling connected to a faculty member like that long-term. It does a lot for students,

CR: Yeah

DBT: So I like that. But I also can think of one student in particular who seem to, and time does a lot of things, So I'm not going to credit this only to travel and study abroad. But who seem to have a sort of restless need to fill the space with talking and gestures and, and self a lot before the trip and I notice afterwards us a much more mature settled ability to listen.

CR: Yeah.

DBT: And I want to think that some of that came from being quiet. By necessity a times on study abroad, you learn how to turn your personal volume down on a bus. You learn that you need to be quiet and really listen because things are unfamiliar. You learned that it's not all about you.

CR: Yeah.

DBT: And I really do think that this student grew in their better understanding of self. Because it's studying and time.

CR: I was surprised when I did some, some training as I did with study abroad faculty at how often public transportation gets mentioned in like no matter where their going, especially in Europe where there's just a lot of public transportation, because there's just not that in Central Texas. So that is such a huge difference. But I used to live in in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota and I took the bus for years. I didn't even own a car, so that wouldn't have been as big as big of a shift for students

who are coming from Chicago or students are coming from, you know, from, from the Twin Cities or something like that, but from Waco, Texas.

DTB: And anywhere we really do not have much experience with public transportation. It intimidates them a lot at the beginning. And nothing makes me prouder than seeing them at the end of the trip, just effortlessly navigating the tube.

CR: Yep.

DBT: And reading train signs and deciding well, I've got some free time. We decide took the train to bath. We're going to go there for the day. We'll be back. Yeah, we'll see you. And walking to the train station to handle that on their own when at the beginning of the trip, they looked terrifying.

CR: Yeah.

DTB: And that is, it's about confidence. It's about a sense that you are capable of handling something. And we tell them if you get on the wrong tube car, the wrong train, going the wrong direction, you have this pass, you have this ticket, just get off—

CR: Yep.

DTB: Re-route yourself and go the other way. Is that not a life lesson? If You find that you've gone two stops the wrong direction. You don't have to just keep riding, you can get out and reorient yourself and get back on the right train. And learning to do that, internalizing that kind of confidence and self-direction is literally self-direction. It is transformation. I, I have no doubt I see to my own children who went with me on the study abroad for years. And we're free to just--one was a little older than our, our students on the trip one was a little younger. And they were free to, to go and do these things on their own as well because they had learned how and I know that it transformed them as well.

CR: How did it change or do you think affect your dynamic with the students, bringing your, bringing your own family along ?

DTB: Oh the students loved it. They loved it. They felt that they were that rather than that closing me off it opened it up that somehow now they were one of my offspring and my children--you may find this surprising, but they're both very out-going. And they would make relationships with the students and they're there. They were good at noticing what somebody might need on a trip, on an outing and sitting with that person to help them. And so our students felt that they had entered into this sibling relationship with that, with my children, therefore, this kinship with me. I think it was helpful.

CR: I've never, I've never taught abroad and some a little bit jealous of that, of experiencing that with the family and with your students. Because I, I, I'm always thinking about how can I, how can I authentically and naturally sort of bring that part of myself into, into the classroom. I just have a memory when I was an undergrad of an instructor that I did not know. Like the first slide he showed was a picture of his kids and I rolled my eyes. And so I thought there's something good, there's something good at the heart of that. But if it feels forced, like in the regular classroom, it can turn some students off. So has, has that made you reflect any on about how you bring yourself, your non-professional self, your personal self, into the classroom in the regular classroom setting?

DBT: again, I'm in this unique situation where that's almost a requirement of teaching what I teach. I teach academic courses in theatre, but I'm in a department that is primarily artists teaching their art

form to students. And I also practice as an artist. And we, we really can't leave ourselves out of the art-making. And so we are always trying to be authentic and present as our actual artistic selves in our teaching with our students. So it could be that one of the reasons why study abroad sat well on me as a teacher is that I had already learned a way to be three-dimensional--

CR: yeah,

DTB: --with my students and I didn't feel, I mean, it doesn't mean that I'm an open book. That's not healthy either, I have boundaries, but I am three-dimensional with my students. And I had already sorted out a way to do that. That felt authentic before I did study abroad. So that may have been run the reasons why I like them.

CR: And for the students, some more in terms of the student experience. Has teaching abroad helped you to think about ways to kind of establish or I use this word in the best sense, manufacturer that seemed kind of receptivity that you, that you saw, that you see in students when they're abroad? Because it takes a little bit of disorienting, but kinda purposeful, disorienting to make that happen?

DTB: It does. And it's a great question. I mean, college life disorients a bit. I think maybe part of what you're speaking to is something about first semester freshman and how we can maximize their receptivity. I sometimes do teach first semester freshman, and I do actually think there's something similar going on there.

CR: Yeah.

DTB: Probably the closest I get to doing that is because I, I offer a lot of readings of source material, plays and the dramatic texts from history to my students. Probably something that's akin is me offering them things that I know will disorient them.

CR: Yeah

DTB: I tried to have them read not the things that are most familiar, but the things that will make them notice how different they are in their own circumstances from the assumed audience of that piece. Yeah, and I tell them what you notice your expectations not being met. That's where all your antennae should go up and you realize, oh, that's telling me something about the original makers of this and their, their assumptions about their audience and how I'm different from them. And that's where we, as historians dig in to find the learnings. And that's probably similar, but it's, it's not the same as if we were doing that on a beautiful rolling hill in Oxford.

CR: And the key to doing that well, I think in the traditional class setting is to position yourself as the, as the instructor, to position yourself as an ally, a support with them in that disorienting experience, because that happens naturally when you study abroad. There's this thing, this foreign experience, and you're shoulder to shoulder with them. Rather than maybe unintentionally kinda getting positioned as the adversary, like when you assign something really challenging to a student, if it's not done quite in the right way, they can see you as--

DTB: the source of discomfort right?

CR: Yeah, and not a, and not an ally in that, right? So that's just something that I think we all have to think through and maybe there's a good, a good metaphor in that study abroad experience for



that. Well, since not every faculty has this experience, what would be your pitch to faculty who have ever thought about doing this?

DTB: Oh, you should just do it. You should get rid of all of the practical concerns about, well, I'm trying to write something right now. Will it slow me down too much? Or I'm afraid of preparing a class that will operate on that timeline when I haven't done it in that way before. All of those, you know, or put them all on the side. And look at what you'll get from this instead and think of how it will not keep you from other things. But will open up experiences and an ability to have a relationship with your students that you could not have at home. And I have to add a relationship with faculty peers that is different, that smirk that the student has for somebody that they got to go on a trip with. That's nothing compared to the bond between two faculty members who successfully got two three students through Heathrow Airport and home again and didn't lose their minds. I mean, the bond, we have the the dinners together, the conversation then on airplanes and buses, that is that good stuff and it matters.

CR: Yeah.

DTB: It's worth the effort. And yeah, you can usually bring a family member with you and share the experience of learning with them in a way that is transformational.

CR: Yeah. Well, great. DeAnna Toten Beard, Thank you so much for joining the show and talking with us today.

DTB: Thanks for asking me.

CR: Our thanks again to Dr. DeAnna Toten Beard for joining our show today and giving us such a rich conversation on learning in a foreign land. That's it. That's our show. Thanks so much for joining us and we hope you join us next time for Professors Talk Pedagogy.