

CR: Welcome to Professors Talk Pedagogy, a podcast from the Academy for Teaching and Learning. I'm your host, Christopher Richmann. PTP 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. Mark Long, Director of Middle East Studies and Associate Professor in the Honors College at Baylor University. Dr. Long specializes in contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and extremism in America. Before coming to Baylor, Dr. Long served eleven years on active duty as a Middle East analyst and as an instructor at the Air Force Academy where he taught Arabic and English literature. We are delighted to have Dr. Long on the show to discuss teaching in multiple contexts, the good and bad of addressing politics in the classroom, and his reflections at the close of his teaching career.

CR: Mark Long, welcome to the show!

ML: Thank you, Christopher.

CR: I want to begin by congratulating you on receiving the Outstanding Faculty Award in Teaching recently here at Baylor. And I'd love to hear you just reflect on what that teaching award means to you, how you interpret such an honor. What's being recognized in your own teaching by something like that?

ML: Christopher, I hack and say it really has a great honor. And I'm sure others would have said the same thing. I can say that I owe so much to so many that would make it possible. And again, I'm sure others have said something similar. I recognize that there are other very, very capable teachers on campus, so you certainly are deserving of the award. But what strikes me most about this is what I would call the almost complete implausibility of my, my winning. And that, that requires a story, if I may?

CR: Please!

ML: As I've thought about what this represents, I went to high school in Houston in the 1960s and I was, I was setting new records, I think, for mediocrity at best in high school. I was not, I was not a good student, was not motivated. Part of it, in all likelihood was my own family background, a dysfunctional family. But when I was in high school, I played golf. I owned a surfboard and would go down to Galveston or to Surfside. I'd spend time with my friends, as all high schoolers would, dated a lot, but as a student, it just wasn't there. I recall that I flunked chemistry, I flunked biology. I did okay in PE, and did pretty well in math. But, German for instance, and English. Those were a wash. And I recall in my English class. I had, I look back now, and I think I had an outstanding teacher. And I didn't really derive the benefit from that that I could have. I don't recall reading a single book in high school that was assigned. I was just too lazy to do it. And I recall that as the exam would approach, a couple of times I got the CliffsNotes. I was too lazy to read the CliffsNotes. And I would go into, to an essay exam. I

would look at the back of the book. The description of say, Les Mis, one of the texts that we had. And then try to bluff my way through an essay exam with my Rice-educated English teacher. It didn't work very well. And what I did in class generally was just to, to try to make light of it. And at a certain point, my teacher who had a great deal of patience with me, more than she should have, possibly, began calling me her Harlequin because I was the class clown. Well, I graduated from high school. Shuffled across the stage. It was no, it was not a glamorous thing because I really was such a poor student. I had no plans for college. My dad insisted that I go. I had no idea where to go. He said, "Well, go to the University of Houston. It's close by." It's actually across town, we lived in West Houston. I didn't have any idea what I might major in. He said "Major in business," because that's what he had and he was very, very successful in business. I went for about a half semester, I recall I got to the midterm exams and then I just quit going. I didn't tell my parents, my dad, the stepmother, I just quit going and I spent my time doing other things. And part of that time was spent reading the Tolkien trilogy. But college was not something that I wanted to do. And I recall in January that next year, this would now be, well, 52 years ago. My parents asked me if I would be going back to college and I said, "No." And they said, "What do you plan on doing?" And I said something about listening to music, like Jimi Hendrix, and perhaps becoming a farmer. I knew nothing about farming, I was raised in the suburbs of Houston. But I gave them the answer. They invited me to find someplace else to live. And so, college was through for me. And then a Baptist pastor said, "Mark, you have to go back to school." And I said, "Should I go back to the University of Houston?" And he said, "No, I think you need to go to a place called Howard Payne." I never heard of it. But I went. His son was also starting Howard Payne at the same time to play football there. And it was a very different environment. When I was at the University of Houston, I can still remember the number that I was given, the student ID number. And this now approaching 53 years. I was number 190745. I was lost on campus in so many ways. And I arrived at Howard Payne and I had a group of faculty and staff people there who welcomed me in and spent time with me teaching me, not just about American history and chemistry. Chemistry again, chemistry for majors, in fact, to try to redeem my lost academic soul. But they taught me things about life that I had simply missed. And they invested in me in so many ways. And so now I come to this afternoon and, and this conversation with you, Christopher, and I think it's implausible that I would be someone who would win this award, because I was such a terrible student in high school, because I was a college dropout. But there were people who made a difference in my life, a profound difference. And so if you asked me, what does it mean to me that I would get this award? What it means is the point between 1969 when I dropped out of college and the points today are two widely separated points that could only be bridged by grace. And I experienced it. And this teaching award is an indication of that grace working in my life. And I'm profoundly grateful.

CR: What do you hear from students about your own teaching and the impact that it has made on, on them? I assume that in a lot of ways your teaching is animated by wanting to make the kind of difference in their lives that teachers made for you?

ML: You know, Christopher, on the way over, I happened to run into, uh, two of my students they're, they're both seniors and they know that I'm retiring. And they just said, "Thank you." They said "We'll miss your stories, and is there any way that we can hear more of your stories that you've told over these years?" And I said, "Well, maybe one more story at the senior

recognition banquet." But I think what students have responded to is simply a reflection of what I saw as an undergraduate and my second chance education. The kind of attentiveness, that sort of presence that I discovered with the teachers that I had as an undergraduate and then later in graduate school, that they're seeing those things of someone who wants to be present and who wants to acquit them for the kinds of lives they are called to live.

CR: We know from your bio that you were teaching before you came to Baylor, teaching in a traditional academic setting here at Baylor. How did you get involved in teaching at the Air Force Academy, and what was that like?

ML: Uh, d'you know, Christopher, it's like so many other things that I've experienced. It was not my plan that I would be there. I had gone into the Air Force as an intelligence analyst and initially in my first couple of jobs I worked as a Soviet specialist and then I applied for what the Air Force called, at the time, the Area Specialist Program. And I was selected for that. And I said, "I'd like to be able to continue to study the Soviet Union." (This was back in the eighties.) "And take Russian." And the Air Force said, "Thank you very much. You'll be taking Arabic and studying the Middle East." So they propelled me in a direction, commanded me to pursue a particular direction that was not of my choosing. And I thought, Oh no, I can see the handwriting on the wall and I can't read it. Now, that was pretty much the story with Arabic when I encountered it. But they sent me for the two-year program. And when I finished, I finished that program, it was a master's degree in National Security Studies with a focus on the Middle East, and then a year of intensive Arabic. The Air Force assigned me to teach first at the Special Operations school, part of US Special Operations Command. And I taught Middle East Studies there. And then because of the Arabic background, now the Air Force said they needed me to teach at the Air Force Academy. And so I went there for three years. I taught Arabic and I taught English literature. So it was by order of the United States, Air Force that I landed at both of those teaching positions.

CR: And what is, what is teaching like in that setting, compared to what most of our listeners would be familiar with. And in the public or private kinda university setting is, I imagine is a different beast.

ML: Oh, in fact, that word Beast was used at the Air Force Academy because it was an acronym that described the basic training that they would take before the academic year actually began for the freshmen students at the Air Force Academy. It was a very different experience and I think about that pretty regularly. The academy is a very structured environment, as you can imagine. I had a very large core program like that. I just went back and checked, cadets, Academy cadets right now will graduate with about 140 hours, 75 hours of that 140 are core education courses. And so every cadet, every cadet is going to be taking mechanical engineering, aero engineering, astro engineering. They'll all take courses in law, economics, philosophy, math, foreign languages. It's a demanding curriculum, as you can imagine. And because of the structure of the academy, and it would be this way at any of the service academies, whether Annapolis or the Military Academy at West Point. It is so structured. And the cadets are required to do so many things, to maintain physical fitness, to do the military training they have to do, as well as the academics. And one of the things that I remember best was going into a classroom with freshmen cadets and trying to teach principles of Arabic grammar at eight o'clock in the morning. And I

might think that the Arabic verb system with its 10 measures is a thing of great beauty. I was not always able to convince them. And so I've found oftentimes because when I was teaching Arabic, it was almost exclusively freshmen. Or "doolies," as I recall, or "four degrees," or sometimes "smacks." It's another acronym. The military lives and dies by acronyms. Smack is "student of the military without ability, courage, or knowledge." But I would go into the classroom and I'd think partway in, how do I wake these kids up? And so I sometimes in class would have them do push-up contests. I found actually that the women were on equal footing with the men. They were very, very fit. I taught them how to count in Arabic. So we had assumed the position and we started doing push-ups, counting off, "Sifr, waaHid, ithnaan, thalaatha, arbi3a," we'd go through the numbers in Arabic. I had one thing that I recall doing and I would never be able to do this at Baylor, although I've joked about it. And the students would sit in desks of about five or six cadets each. And I would tell them, Okay, we, we had old-style chalkboards still at the time. I'd say, "Now, if one of you falls asleep, I'm going to go to the chalkboard and what appears to be pieces of chalk are in fact, scud missiles." (I was riffing on Saddam Hussein's scud missiles from the first Gulf War.) I said, "I'll go to the blackboard, I'll pick up one of these scud missiles. And the rest of you can take Dr. Peter Abboud's large orange textbook, provocatively titled Modern Standard Arabic. (And that's just a title that'll put you to sleep right off the bat.) I said, I said, "You'll have some sleeper at your table. The rest of you can take your textbooks and form sort of an air defense system around the sleeper." What I found when I first did this, and it became a pattern, I went to the board and I recall getting a piece of chalk. And the other students, I thought they were going to promote esprit de corps and built this air defense system. They didn't. They began to backup from the sleeper and then point in like laser designators. And one of the times that I did that I took this piece of chalk and I, I threw it in the direction of the student, not with great force, there wasn't a lot of velocity. But you know, a shot across the bow as for the Navy. The Air Force doesn't do that. And I hit this poor cadet right between the eyes. And it left a chalk mark. I can still see this poor kid sitting there stunned to alertness with chalk between his eyebrows. And at the end of class, I stood at the door to say something to each cadet. I would always do that. And I do that here, too, I try to say, to greet every student in my classes here at Baylor by name, every class, say goodbye to them at the end of class. The student walked up, I wanted to apologize, and he just started crying and he walked off. And as much as anything that was an indication to me the level of stress that the Air Force Academy cadets and cadets at the other schools would experience with these very structured lives. I can say they were high-achieving, they were mission-driven, they were respectful. I didn't have any kind of discipline problems in class, although I would have the occasional sleeper. But they were motivated. And it was, it was a great opportunity to be able to invest in them and to know that I was investing in students who could well be going to war and be killed in combat. And that what I was doing in the classroom needed not just to teach them about the Arabic verb system. To prepare them for what they would face when they would confront their own mortality. Um, teaching at Baylor is a very different environment, of course. But I still have that same sense of mission when I go into the classroom.

CR: Can you describe a little bit that adjustment to teaching at Baylor? It wasn't immediate, was it? You didn't, you didn't jump right out of the classroom of the Air Force Academy into Baylor.

ML: No, maybe that was another act of grace. Because when I left active duty Air Force, I went into the Air Force Reserves and resumed something of the work that I'd done when I first went

into the Air Force as an analyst, in fact, got to do some work with psychological operations. But I was working on my PhD and that was made possible by the Air Force I have a real sense of indebtedness there because it was in the mid 90s. Now there was an Air Force draw down, a RIF reduction in forces. And I had the option of taking a very generous buyout program or continuing on in active duty. And I thought I found a home in teaching. And I can take this reduction in forces bonus. I finished my PhD. I can still serve the and the Air Force and the Air Force Reserves. So I had a cushion there when I came back to school to work on my PhD and that I think helped with the transition.

CR: Yeah. So you research, in part, extremism in the Middle East, and I think more recently, extremism in America as well. Have you found any challenges dealing with political issues? Do you bring that research into the classroom at all or perspectives that you gain from that research?

ML: I do bring it into the classroom and I feel it, I feel it an obligation to do so, but I, I try to approach it with sensitivity and real wisdom. I can give a couple of examples of how that unfolds. Because Baylor is a Christian university, when I'm teaching, for instance, the Arab-Israeli conflict, I know that there will be different points of view about, about the Israelis, about the Palestinians. And so I've worked very hard at the way in which I'll try to approach that. And where I come down initially maybe would please nobody. And at the end I hope it for all the students in the class. But as I approach it, the first thing we do is to look at Jewish history and what I might call the gifts of the Jews. And I look at anti-Semitism, which has sadly long been a part of the church. It's, it's eye opening to see the level of anti-Semitism that one can find in the early church fathers. And then I take students up to, to Spain and I'll say "Fill in the blank: In 1492." And they instantly say, "Columbus sailed the ocean blue." And then I say, "What else happened in 1492?" And they think for a moment and usually will not have a ready answer. I'll say, "In 1492, the last Muslim stronghold in Spain fell." And I describe what the stronghold was like. This magnificent series of castles that was, that constituted the last readout of Muslim Spain. And I lead them through what also follow that summer that the Spanish monarchs gave the Edict of expulsion. And I link that to the United States to say, you know, the Statue of Liberty. And of course they do. And has said, the woman who wrote the inscription that's on the base of the Statue of Liberty. Similar, poor, you're tired, your huddled masses. Was herself a Sephardic Jew. The SAP are deem, are those Jews who came from Spain. And I, I tie that to America to say America historically has been a place of refuge, a place for refugees, a place for people who wanted to rebuild their lives. And that America could welcome the Jews as an extraordinary thing. But then I trace it on through. And to the Holocaust. We read Elie Wiesel's Night. We read other Jewish writers, is a reflect post-Holocaust on what those horrific years really mean. And then I, I want to point to modern-day Israel to say I've traveled. There are a number of times I've been warmly welcomed in Israel. I love being in the country. Describe the differences between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. That it seems almost like cities in two different countries. And then I, I want to affirm for them my whole hearted commitment to a viable state where every Jew can. In fact, I just read this in my quiet time, reading through the book of Micah. Micah uses the expression of, of being able to dwell securely under one's own vine and fig tree. And to say, I'm committed without reserve to the security of Israel, for the Jews to have a national homeland. Then I go back and I do essentially the same thing with the Palestinians. And I trace their story to say at the end, I want to advocate for a two-state solution in which both peoples can prosper, in which their stability in the region place in which the national interest of

the United States are met. That the national aspirations of both the Jews, Israelis, the Palestinians, arabs can be met. I bring that same thing into the course that I teach on American history, world cultures for. Um, I, I wore the uniform for 15 years. I tell students that. My dad was also in the Air Force. It was then the Army Air Corps. He was a pilot in World War two. My son flew combat missions as a part of an airframe called the J stars. He was in the second Iraq war 2003, have two grandsons who wear the uniform, though. They broke faith. One is in the Marine Corps and the others in the Navy. We have generations and our family who have served our country. And so I come to 2003 and the invasion of Iraq. And what to say to students, I not only opposed the invasion of Iraq, but I demonstrated on Fountain mall against the invasion of Iraq. The news was there. I was interviewed in the spring of 2003 about that. And so I want to tell them, I demonstrated against the war because I'm still in the Air Force Reserves. It's inactive reservists that I said I've done so because I took enough to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic. That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same. And I have a moral and ethical obligation to stand up when I think that the policy in the United States do not meet our own best interest. Let's say in doing so, I want to challenge the United States to live up to the promise of America. And I find that when I give context to my students, try to tell them, here's why have the perspective that I do. Then I find that they're willing to, to, to listen to those stories that it might tell. I tell them, for instance, I'm a committed Christian. I became a Christian in February of 1960 nine by faith as meaningful to me. Hi, when appropriate. I never preaching class, but when appropriate I can describe my quiet time or my perspective on life as a Christian who say I live in a country that is guaranteed religious freedom to all peoples who are here. That's our First Amendment. The first 16 words of the First Amendment secure that religious freedom. I take them to the Constitution itself. The seventh article of the constitution is the article by which the Constitution was ratified. That article did It's glorious work and is no longer necessary. We have the constitution. So the last a living viable article is that we're still an effect as Article 6. And Article 6 of the United States Constitution closes with the words that no religious test for office will ever be made. And I said, I'll say to my students, my dear friends, we live in a great country that is secured religious freedom irrespective of one's own conscience. It's inscribed on the soul of America, and it's written in our founding documents. Do the same thing when I come to extremism. I try to say, we, we commit to an academic blender. We essentialize Muslims if we make them to be a monolithic entity. Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia is very unlike Sufism, as it's been practiced in Turkey and in a number of other countries. Just as Christianity has very distinct variations. And so I want to approach jihadist in that way and the same entity, the same thing far ethno nationalist now in Europe and white nationalist in the United States. Say this does not represent the best of our American interest. It's been my experience. And this is completely anecdotal, my little corner that students have become more sensitive to political discourse in the class. If I'll use, used to just an example from modern politics as an illustration. I've started to see in my, in my own course evaluations. Students say he shouldn't talk about politics so much. And I haven't talked about politics any more or less. But it seems to me that since I'm more sensitive to it, like they've got their ears tuned to it in a different way. And I wonder if if you can corroborate that. And if you think that it's been more difficult to talk about politics with students. And if this has been problematic, because especially with extremism, I think extremism is going through a change in American culture right now. Just recently, the RNC essentially described the January 6 insurrection as legitimate political discourse. So that can't help but be reflected in some of our students. So I know that that's a heavy question, but you might be the best person to ask.

Christopher. I don't know that I'm the best, but I'll, I'll essay an answer. Back in the eighties as I was doing my Middle East training, I recall hearing then in hearing and over times after that, when you go to the Middle East, there are two topics you should never take up with Arabs. Their politics and religion. And what I found was that my analog hitters from robot Morocco to the north of Iraq to Sana'a Yemen. Wanted to talk about politics and religion. And every country I went to, all the countries throughout the Gulf, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco. No, it was always there. And so I I think maybe easy to say, easiest to say that initially I got some training and talking about politics and religion. And talking about politics and religion in the Middle East where I was told not to talk about it and I didn't bring it up. The Arabs what, and that meant Arabs are Muslims and Arabs who were Christians. That meant talking to Jewish Israelis about it. In fact, students are more sensitive to it now. But I have done my best to find ways to be able to talk through issues like that. And in fact, with the RNC just said is very much on my radar. I don't consider legitimate political discourse. I've watched and watched, and watched videos of the capital insurrection. I wrote an op-ed that was published locally several weeks ago and conjunction with January 6th. And I've studied I've studied the language, has studied the texts that are behind it. The passing of the great race, Madison Grant, from 960 and forward. I've looked at the text. I don't think it's legitimate political discourse. High fact I vigorously with dissent from that point of view. But what I've tried to do in my class is first not push discussion of a particular topic like that. But as it comes up to be able to say, you know, I have worn the uniform, as I said while ago. In the years after 9 11, I consistently volunteered for a return to active duty every year I'd have to fill out paperwork for the Air Force Reserves. And I would say AI because it add the space on there to do it. I would say I'm a volunteer to return to active duty or active reserve duty. And I want to put it in writing. I'm a volunteer to go to Iraq or Afghanistan wherever my country needs. And so it gives me some credibility if I say, I'm opposed to some particular policy directive or initiative with respect to national security, then I'm not, I'm not voicing dissent because I hate America. It's because I love America, because I feel fortunate to be here. And I tried to trace the story of America by being honest about areas where we failed egregiously, in areas where we seated gloriously. And so it really is a joy for me to talk about the Marshall Plan and to see how transformative that was to show Americans participating in the Berlin airlift. When we flew with our British friends literally millions of miles to keep a starving city clothed and fed. America at its best is the great hope of the world. And in that regard, fair for me to add this because because I am older, I just turned 71 and because I grew up in the South. I guess true Southerners and Mississippi and Alabama might dispute my claim that Texas was part of the South. Now, but I grew up in Houston and spent a lot of time in East Texas and Louisiana. Wince my paternal and maternal lines. And I saw Jim Crow firsthand. Hi, I saw this separate bathrooms, separate water fountains. I saw the separate facilities for school. I saw it. And so what I can say in the midst of heated discussions about critical race theory, would be a couple of things. First, the United States is not an inherently racist country. But we have certainly seen our share of racism in the United States and we've seen it's traumatic impact. And I want to tell my students, because I've seen it. I want to work for the promise of America. And the way I put it is to say, I regard America as this constellation of values and have a vision where, as one historian of the 19th-century put it. Frederick Jackson Turner. America is another name for opportunity. And I want to say my young colleagues, that's America. And it's incumbent on us, as, you know, citizens to compel our country and whatever gifts some ways we are available to us to live up to the promise of America. That's the way you love America by challenging the United States to live out those stated values. Aside from perhaps the increase in

sensitivity and flatness of politics, what other ways have you seen undergraduate students change in your time here at B and that you've been here 20 years. Is that right? I got here 27 years ago. I started teaching in the fall of 2000 as an adjunct and then followed 1001. A tenure-track faculty member may be curious to say, perhaps not the first thing that struck me in arriving on the campuses that students dress differently. I was focused on events that could go, cadets. But I. Baylor students are remarkable people. There. It's obvious to me that they're intellectually gifted. I sometimes joke that I, I prepare for class as diligently as I can. I I I go through the materials and think as hard as I can because I know these kids are smart and sooner or later they're going to pass me up at that just will do it. They're they're gifted students. But I have seen a change in one, in one regard. It's really impressive. The data are there to, to back it up, that we attract students of increasing academic ability, a higher caliber with respect to test scores and their accomplishments as high school students. They really aren't impressive lot. And for me to go into the classroom and initiate a conversation is just exhilarating. And I've, I've often said that when I teach I live. There's a kind of analogy that I used in a very different context recently with somebody else. It's an advertisement that that sum will have seen from Bose speakers. And what it shows in this frame that I've seen is it's a black and white picture of a fellow who's sitting in a chair. And there's a small beause speaker in front of him. And you see that Is being blown back, his tie as being blown back at because of the power of this tiny bows Speaker. Well, I feel that way oftentimes in class. Then I'm encountering this academic intellectual law on that for me really as exhilarating. And the high point in any class for me is when the conversation can begin and I just walk over to the side of the classroom and let it go and periodically come back to kinda keep it between the rails. So I see that academic ability. I see students coming in with hopes for making a real difference when they've graduated from Baylor. But on the other hand, and I want to be as honest as I can here. I find the students that I see now not just driven, but oftentimes having a very hard path that they're following. Sometimes I think with some of the students, they just seem more fragile to me. And, and I understand they, they've come of age in a very, very difficult context. And the data are there to show both the academic prowess that the students bring and the various struggles that they have. I see it in an additional way. Later this afternoon at five, I'll walk over to Baylor Addiction Recovery Center. I've been a faculty volunteer there now for, I guess four years. And I'm grateful to the family, the beach and family that that funded the addiction recovery center. Of that week by week, I'll go over on Thursday afternoons and sit with the students. The addiction recovery center, the beach and addiction recovery center goes by an acronym, the bark. And so when I walk in the door of the bark, there's no question that I'm older. The gray hair is a giveaway from a 100 yards anyway, but when I go into the bark, I become mark from bark. And I have the opportunity to sit in conversation with a circle of students who are struggling with drug and alcohol addiction, who are struggling with depression, with anxiety. It's a range of things and we come together and moments of honesty. And just as an aside here, I'm grateful to this family far giving funds for the center and for the willingness a baler to make available a center like that, as well as the counseling resources we have. It is a great, great gift to our students and their times. And I feel like my heart is breaking when I sit with these students. And maybe it's even heavier when I'm talking to students outside my academic classes and I see their struggles. But they're not going to the resources that Baylor has so generously provided. I don't force it. But I've seen some of my own students that the addiction recovery center and from time to time when appropriate, and in as diplomatic way as I can I tell someone story of having gone through a period now some years ago, a deep clinical depression. And it's an opportunity for me to say, and again, I try to be very, very circumspect in this, but I



say there really is hope change is possible. And I'm on the north side of that river now, and I'm so grateful to be there. And so grateful to so many who have given me help along the way. Now it's my chance to pay forward what I've gotten. So when I walk over later this afternoon, it's to sit with students and to be able to quietly say thanks to people who have graciously helped me. I love talking with faculty and residents because a lot of times you'll get, if you engage them on questions about their interactions with students and how it translates into their teaching or even their reflection on teaching. These experiences with students in settings outside the classroom. Really dial up the empathy. That's right, you know, and that can't help it change how you approach your teaching even if it's primarily philosophically. How have, how have you changed in your teaching, either as a result of how you've gotten to relate to students or just as a result of decades in the business? Well, you know, when I got here to Baylor, I was older. My my objective when I left active duty when in the reserves and started my PhD, was to be able to finish my degree and be in the classroom. I had two points. I wanted to be able to do that before I turned 50 and before I had my first grandchild and I flunked both test, I was 50, had turned 50 before I finished the degree and I had my first grandchild, the grandson, who's now in the United States Navy, vet, I came in with certainly an array of experiences I'd worked as an intelligence analyst. Air Force had sent me virtually around the world to places where we do intelligence, both stateside and overseas. I had a range of experiences, particularly in the Middle East. High. I'd written in Egyptian taxis, which is pretty scary thing. And I drink coffee with the, with the Saudis and been in the, in the soup. Morocco. And, and I had the academic training now when I went into the classroom and I think that the most profound way in which my, my approach to teaching in the classroom has changed is that it came in with, with the understanding of texts that I had, the experiences that I had, and I was a transmitter of knowledge as it were. I don't know that it would stick or has stuck, but now I see the classroom in a very different way. And I've described it like this, that when I go into the classroom now and I tell students in every class at the start of the semester, I tell them this. I want us to conceive that what we're doing is sitting in a circle. There's a text or an idea at the center. And r is our responsibility in the first place is to listen as closely as we can to that text. And I tell them, I'm a student with you. I've read the text before. I've read the Bhagavad Gita a number of times and the Epic of Gilgamesh and have read The Great War memoir that we use and World Cultures for that looks at Vietnam, the things they carried. But there's always something new for me to learn. So I'm in a sit with you. And this circle. It may just be a metaphor, but it's the way I approach it and say, well, listen. Then we'll begin to interrogate. The text will ask it questions. And then our objective ultimately is to see what we can take from the texts that changes us and that equips us to be agents of change elsewhere. And that for me, has been a powerful metaphor for what it is that I hope to do in the class. The other thing I came about from something that CS Lewis wrote, it was, if I'm not mistaken, the last book that Lewis published before he died in November 1963. And the book is called, at some more novella length is called an experiment in criticism. And in the last chapter of the book, there are a couple of stand out pages that I have copied it and I abuse with students every semester. Because when Louis comes to the end of this book, could experiment and criticism, he poses the question, why do literature that says, why do literature? And Lewis says because it lets us. And then he answers that again. He says another way of putting it is that it lets us in, we'd pairs, as Lewis writes, the Leibnitz see in monad. And he goes on to say, as he surveys world literature and that's what makes it so powerful. It's not just Christian literature, he's engaging world literature. He comes to say, my eyes are not enough for me. I would see with the highs of a thousand others. And he goes on to add that literature, it's a, it's a powerful phrase.

Literature heals the wound without destroying the beauty of, of our own individuality. And so I say to students, that's what we want to do. We want to see with other eyes. And Lewis writes and this powerful essay, they doesn't agree with everything that he's read. He doesn't agree with everything that he's reading the Iliad. He brings that in specifically Thetis rising from the sea. But he's still derives from things, from all of them. Something a benefit. And it's, it's similar to something that St. Augustine wrote. And one of his sermons. When he said that he's engaged other literature because he's taking away silver from the mines of Divine Providence. So I say, that's going to be our task. We want to be able to derive from these texts. We read something of value, even where our perspective this fundamentally different in that transformed the way that I look at my classes. And the, maybe the best example is the class that I teach on the Middle East. And tell them, we're going to read about the Middle East. But it's not just to get information. At the end of the class. My real hope is this, that we will be able to read events in the Middle East, both literally and figuratively. That we will be able to read events in the Middle East from the perspective of the participants themselves. It's the cultivation of empathy, which I think is essential to a humanistic education. And most certainly for us in our enterprise as a Christian university. So I want them to see the perspective in this middle class, middle class or the Palestinians and Israelis. And in fact, we'll use that to interrogate the jihadist. With the jihadists do is morally reprehensible. It's deplorable. But we still want to ask what motivates them. If we can't understand that, we can develop an effective national security strategy to counter it. And my hope is to be able to do that with students when we engage the American story. To see these different perspectives. And to be able to engage different perspectives with respect, even when we are committed politically in different ways, to be able to cultivate this capacity, to listen. And even though we're not sympathizing and all instances, we can at least. And empathize. Well since you are retiring at the end of this spring semester, now's your chance for any parting thoughts. What advice do you have for new or young faculty or graduate students who have a faculty role maybe on their horizon. But this whole academia and teaching business. The first thing I think I'd say is to put it in an advertisement for your work, Christopher, and those of your colleagues and the Academy of teaching and learning, it is a fantastic resource. I've now had the opportunity twice to be able to be a part of the summer faculty institute. Once. Now the first time is a very new instructor here at Baylor and then again just several years ago and drew a great deal from it both times. There's so much that's covered. There have such great value how to integrate faith and learning, how to integrate teaching and research to teach what your research to research what get Teach. Find ways to balance one's time. Not only within the classroom and research, but balancing that with a home within one's own home life, There's so much of benefit I drew from it. And beyond that, when I think about the academy and about the summer faculty institute, the opportunity to meet our academic professional peers from across campus. There are people that I met almost 20 years ago with whom I still have a friendship and they are from very different departments to include. I think of Mike from electrical engineering, for instance, electrical engineering and computer science. But there are any number of people I met in that capacity. And it actually parallels something if I can bring the military backend. When I started officer training school, I had little idea of what to expect. But in our individual squadrons, there were other men and women who had been enlisted and who now wanted to commission is Officers. And I learned so much from those prior enlisted folks about what the real Airforce, if I can use that phrase that I heard so often, what the real r force would be like. And it was everything from learning how to put on my uniform to what to expect in dealing with the personnel office, to being a leader among young women and men who were enlisted. The

Academy for teaching and learning and this Summer Institute will do some of that, but there's some ideas beyond that that I can chart out briefly. One is to learn the art of mindful teaching. And they're doing a number of texts that someone could find that won't speak to that about how to ask questions in class that provoke real interest. Second thing that I would put in is the power of integrity and presence. We don't have to impress students with academic credentials. We come with PhDs or other terminal degrees. And so students know ABO from the outset that, that we have worked hard to come to this place where we have that degree and have now been brought on board with the faculty at Baylor. But what I find is that students want to meet the person behind the professor. And they want to find someone who really has compassion as well as academic excellence in their teaching, who has a presence about her or about him, about him. That is there. Now for the students to access, to be able to build those kinds of relationships has been a great joy for me. And I've taught many times if, if I'd been offered the opportunity to teach at the University of lecture and University of Texas, where I did do some post-graduate work, where my father went, where my daughter went, my aunt went Part of me as orange. But if that were the offer to teach at Texas where I would do lectures to large groups of students and some teaching assistant would grade their exam. So I'd say that's not for me. I want what happens in the classroom. And I have to bring all of myself into the classroom to be present to all of them. And the last thing I would say is to learn how to tell stories. I've had students who've graduated and they will come back and say, I remember the story you told about. And they'll, they'll tell me the story. Sometimes the story, I have an immediate connection to something we're talking about in class. Maybe Arab culture in the power of this little phrase, Must shot a lot, which means what God wills, how it works in that culture. Can give a westerner and entree to that culture. And they'll remember that story. If I just told the principal, they may remember it for the exam and then forget it, but they won't forget the story. And then occasionally, and usually for me it's maybe every other week. On a Friday in the, say, the last five minutes of class. I want to tell a life story. I want them to hear something that is of fundamental importance to me. And one of those life stories I can tell briefly here, it's just, it's just the story that came to me now. My dad was an Air Force pilot, as I indicated earlier in World War Two. He was fascinated by flight and it transferred to any number of things. In later years. When I was growing up, when I learned how to drive in Houston, it seemed like he brought in the stories of air combat and he would tell me, okay, scooter, that was his nickname for me. Keep your head on a swivel. It I didn't just have people following too closely behind me. I had buggies at six o'clock, but his love of flight transferred to something else. And I recall being at a lake with him and we were watching ducks land on the lake. And he said, Screw to watch this, watch this duck because it comes in. Watch I adjust the flaps. What a great landing. He would get so enthusiastic about it. But what I see most profound, a dad was watching geese and be transmitted to me this love of the flight of geese. And to hear that, I think of it term that General Douglas MacArthur used in a very different context, was talking about the toxins, witching sound. That toxin is a, is a bugle that she used in combat. But the geese for me have that sound and I I have a love for that, that comes from my dad, but he would you'd see the geese flying overhead and he would talk about what it was like define formation. And he found it very, very moving. So I grew up with that love and I brought it to the Baylor Campus. And I recall one day outside BSB, it was class change and students and faculty and staff for all out in that area between the slick and the BSB and seemed like everyone was on his or her phone. All heads were bowed. I don't think there were praying, but everyone was was on the phone. And then I heard I I heard that witching sound. And I looked up in the geese were flying overhead. And I wanted to say, I didn't, maybe should have, but I wanted to

say to everyone around me, stop. Look up. Look up. It's the geese. And I've told that story several times to my students and they said, that's one of the gifts that I want to give you at Baylor as the gift of the geese. That to say we can be so caught up and what's immediate in the cares of the day. The the next text we got on the phone, whatever it happens to be. And there's something magnificent, something magical, something powerful that is beyond us, that beckons to us. That says, look up. I want my students to do well. But I also want them to look up. And they I think can take that metaphor and as it were, they can fly with it. Look for the geese. Well, Mark long. Congratulations again on the Teaching Award. Thank you for your work here at Baylor and thank you for sharing your stories with us today, Christopher, thank you so much.