

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 2, Episode 5

Place-Conscious and Public Sphere Pedagogies

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We acknowledge and are mindful that CSU Chico stands on lands that were originally occupied by the first people of this area, the Mechoopda, and we recognize their distinctive spiritual relationship with this land and the waters that run through campus. We are humbled that our campus resides upon sacred lands that once sustained the Mechoopda people for centuries.

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Welcome to the Rise, Teach, Learn podcast. I am Dr. Chiara Ferrari, Director of Faculty Development at Chico State. And we are happy to make these resources available to our campus community and beyond. The podcast is hosted by Dr. Jamie Linn Gunderson. And she will engage in timely conversations with faculty, staff, and students and give you a taste of the Chico experience. Subscribe to our podcast and explore the many resources available on our website. Thank you for listening.

01:00

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach, Learn. I am your host Jamie Gunderson. In this episode, we explore Place-Conscious Pedagogy with Dr. Ann Schulte, the Director of Civic Engagement and Faculty Fellow for Rural Partnerships. And Dr. Amy Magnus, who is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice, the Civic Engagement Faculty Fellow and our Rural Partnerships Liaison. We also explore Public-Sphere Pedagogy. And we will hear from Sue Peterson, the Director of First Year Experience and Lecturer in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, who will share examples and ideas for expanding learning and teaching far beyond the classroom.

01:48

In our conversations to prepare for this episode, I learned so much about how environment and experiences impact the formation of someone's identity. For an example, Dr. Magnus and I, one of our guests today, were both born and raised in Las Vegas, which is obviously a very expansive, diverse, and urban metropolis. And now we live in Chico, which is a much more rural, agricultural community. And I have to say that this shift in place over time has really enhanced my identity in many ways, as I've had to learn so much about how to adapt and thrive within my new surroundings. And so as I thought more about this, it kind of hit me, our students must learn how to adapt and thrive in their environments too, and we as faculty can leverage our teaching to promote and support those knowledge, skills and dispositions. But enough about me and my epiphanies, here to give us more insight on the impacts of community on learning are Drs. Ann Schulte and Amy Magnus. Amy, I'd like to start with you. Can you explain a little more about place identity and the influences on learning?

02:51

Yeah, sure. Thank you for having me, Jamie. Rurality is one of those things that contributes to our identity, it shapes our identity. And that's a lot of what my research is about, we often don't think about the ways that identity and rurality work hand in hand, right? When we think about identity, we tend to think about things like race or gender, you know, other dimensions, right, and how those intersect. But we don't often think about the ways that where we live, or where we grew up, right geography, how place impacts who we are as human beings, how we see the world, how we see each other, how we interact with each other, and so forth. And so identity and rurality are really going hand in hand. And I think both Dr. Schulte and I like to bring that into our work, both our research and our teaching, also our work with Civic Engagement.

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So, I've been using place identity and the concept of place-conscious pedagogy in my teaching with teachers for several years, to help the way they think about where their student teaching and where they hope to teach in the future. I help student teachers understand why it's important to examine the assumptions they have about where their students are from, or where they're teaching. And actually, to do that they first have to examine assumptions they have about their own upbringing, their own place of origin, and how that has shaped the way they see themselves. And the way they see others from places like themselves, or how they see students, see others who are from places different from themselves. And then as I became Director of Civic Engagement, I really started to think about how important this was as a university, for all of us on our campus, especially because we serve this region that is predominantly rural communities, and thinking and we also bring students from urban spaces in Southern California up to Chico which for their experiences is probably very rural. And so, I start to think about why it's important for us on our campus why faculty should be thinking more carefully about how our students are thinking about their own place identity, how that shapes the way they experience Chico. But also, what it might mean for them in terms of what they're learning and the professions they hope to go into. So, are we talking about what it looks like to do graphic design in Yreka? Or are we are we thinking about how political science gets played out in rural paces versus urban places. And so place conscious pedagogy is really about examining our assumptions, thinking really carefully about how places shape our experience. And in particular, critical pedagogy of place looks at how do our assumptions perpetuate oppression or injustice. And so, by challenging our assumptions, and thinking more carefully about the social, political, and economic contradictions in place, we further the goals of a critical pedagogy of place and work towards more just communities.

06:21

So, I think that place conscious pedagogy, right, that really sets us up for what we can do in the classroom, right. So very practically, I try to bring this into my own classroom, no matter what I'm teaching, I teach in political science and criminal justice, I teach primarily criminal justice classes. But rurality is still a really important part of my discipline, even though we don't typically talk about it, right. So, for example, I always try to help my students think about rurality in relation to the criminal justice system. So many of our prisons and other carceral facilities, for example, are placed in rural communities. But we don't often talk about that placement and the impact it has on those communities or on families of those who are incarcerated, right. And so, this is something that I think needs to be deeply interwoven, not just a side topic, not just something in addition to the things we teach, but

something that's really interwoven into our curriculum into all disciplines, not even just criminal justice. So I use this also, I do teach a rural justice and inequality class. And I have integrated into that class two assignments that I think speak really well to getting students to think about their own positionality, whether they're from a rural place, or from a more metropolitan place, getting them to think a little bit more in rural shoes, right. And so, I use a podcast assignment as one of the ways to do that. And I have students really talk through some of the issues that we read about some of the issues that we study, in order to educate others about what rural people might be facing some of the struggles in rural communities, but also, the areas where rural communities are doing really incredible work to respond to criminal justice issues or other social justice issues. I also have them use policy reports. And I asked them to think about a community whether it's their home community, or a community that they care about, and to think about policy solutions to some of the issues we see in rural communities, things that they want to address, etc. And so, through these two assignments, I try to help students from all places think about rural places a little bit more deeply and critically. And I think these are some of the ways that we could maybe insert critical pedagogy especially place conscious pedagogy in a lot of other disciplines.

08:44

So, Amy, gave us some examples of how to include these ideas of embedding our community within our practice. And I know that a lot of the work for the Office of Civic Engagement really focused on the same types of initiatives, can you give us some highlights on some of the initiatives or priorities or projects going on within the department.

09:07

So, the Office of Civic engagement is really focused on building our partnerships with the with communities in the region, and helping connect our students to different opportunities while they're going to college that might build their professional and their personal skill set. This is important for students who are from more Metro contexts who might be working in the Chico or the Northern California region. But it's also really important for students who come from our region who are interested to stay in our region who have expertise in the innovative types of things happening, and are really wanting to continue to be a part of that. And so, I think it's my goal as a Director of Civic Engagement is to try to engage our faculty in amplifying the youth voice in our rural communities that will help to drive the kinds of changes and innovations and opportunities that are going to contribute to the vitality of the North State. So ultimately, our strategic priority around civic engagement is to be the university that works alongside the communities in our region to improve the environment and the social and economic vitality for everyone.

10:43

We just learned and heard examples of Place-Conscious Pedagogy. But have you heard of Public Sphere Pedagogy? Here to tell us more and provide examples from her teaching practice is Sue Peterson, Sue, can you give our audience a little overview of Public Sphere Pedagogy?

10:58

Sure, Public Sphere Pedagogy is a theoretical framework for teaching that uses communities of practice, combined with John Dewey's idea of the democratic ideal. So, it brings in some of that civic engagement. And it's basically focused on students using their assignments that are planned in

sequence throughout the course to connect to a public discussion. So, the end goal is to get the student out in a public space, where there are community members not only from campus, but also from your surrounding community, who can participate in a conversation with students about what they learned during the semester. So, the goal is for the event to be both educational for the students, but also those community participants who come in and have those conversations with the students.

11:50

That sounds really fun. Do you have any works on campus that you could highlight?

11:56

Yes. So, First Year Experience Program does three different public sphere pedagogy events, historically. So tomorrow, actually, we're going to do a town hall event, that usually happens in November and also will happen in the spring in April, that is run through the political science, basic political science class. And certain sections of the political science class focus their learning on the town hall meeting, where community members are brought in students are focused on policy arguments that link to things like criminal justice. They also do political economics, kind of the funding of campaigns, things like that. So, they get to choose their topics. And then we have people come in from the community and engage them in whether those policies are theoretically probable to happen, what they might run up against, if they tried to advocate those in the community. And the students can go back to the classroom and rework their policies based on the feedback that they get from the community. We also have sense of place, and that's happening in December of this fall. And that event has our U course classes which have actual different focuses. So, we have a science education, we also have a religious studies class that are combined with an English, so they're working on writing, but they're also working on these really interesting arguments about how our sense of place, the place that we belong, whether that be their home, or Chico influences our understanding of the world around us. So, a lot of what the science education class is looking at is climate change and how we contribute to that, and how that contributes to the sense of where we are. So, things like wildfires, but also, just things like food waste on campus might be a discussion point that might come up in that. And that is happening, where people will come in from the community. Again, they'll be in conversation with the students about what they learned during the semester. And then the students will reflect on that feedback that they received. In the past we've done Chico Great Debate that's not happening this semester. But that is an event that typically would focus on getting into the downtown public space and talking to community members about things that they were learning.

14:20

That's awesome. Is there any chance that we're going to see Chico Great Debate come back?

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We hope so. Yes, we're working on a maybe a change in what department is housing it. So, if there's anybody out there who's interested in bringing back something like that, or another public sphere of pedagogy event, we're interested in working with you the First Year Experience programs that can provide you with event planning, help and also pedagogical help for any instructors who are interested in doing an event like that. And then we also invite any of the campus who are interested to come and participate in an event like Sense of Place, if you're interested, you can email me and I can get you on the list so that you know when that event is taking place, and we can even provide you with some

design intensive work for making sure that your assignments are planned in sequence to make sure that it lines up with that event.

15:16

That's awesome. So, it sounds like there are many supports for those faculty who are interested in embedding Public Sphere Pedagogy into their teaching practice. Where would one start?

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So, I think the best place to start is thinking creatively about what the community might be interested in hearing about that your students are learning. And so, every one of us I feel like at the university is doing fascinating work. Whenever I'm out, listening to others talk about what they're doing in their classrooms, I'm always shocked by how many different things are happening, that would be really interesting to community members. So, once you have that kind of touch point in your class, where you can identify something that this seems like something that the community would be interested in hearing about, then you can reach out to us at First Year Experience, you can reach out to Ann at Civic Engagement, if it seems like it fits more within what they're doing. And we can help you to identify whether you fit into any event that already exists, or whether we can help you with any event that you want to design for your students to participate in that public space. And then you just want to make sure that you're really revising your syllabus so that that endpoint is really meaningful to the students because they've been hearing about it and designing all of their materials that they're working on during the semester, to put out into that public space and get feedback. And then you finished up with a reflection exercise where the students really get to understand how it impacts them to be in conversation with someone outside of the classroom with the material that they're learning inside of the classroom. And we found that that's just been super impactful for the students.

17:06

And there you have it, folks. Today we explored Place-Conscious and Public Sphere Pedagogies. For more information, explore the resources associated with this episode on our FDEV podcast web page. I'd like to thank our guests Drs. Ann Schulte and Amy Magnus, as well as Sue Peterson for contributing to this episode, and for their hard work in providing engaging and expansive learning opportunities for our campus. A big thank you to you for listening and until next time, we got this Wildcats!