

*LIS Pedagogy Chat is a discussion series for library and information science instructors. Our goal is to provide an informal space to ask questions and share ideas about online pedagogy, and to build a community of practice. Each session focuses on a different topic and features a short presentation on best practices followed by a facilitated discussion and a collaborative document of ideas to share. Slides and notes from each session are available in a shared folder. For more information, see <https://www.lispedagogychat.org/>*

## Do I Share My Cat Stories? Whether to Curate or Hide Our Background When Teaching

February 23, 2024

Moderator: Anthony Bernier and Lisa Hussey

Link to [Presentation Slides](#)

### Presentation Notes

- It's not all or nothing, but the degree to which we share our personal lives with students:
- Pros and cons-- there are different kinds of interactions, as well as how we advise and mentor students
- We have different voices- our styles, including if we are colloquial or casual, anecdotal or someone who tends to share stories, professional/professorial that is more formal, and academic that tends to be more objectives
- We might explicitly differentiate between our scholarship and practical media

Anthony differentiates between scholarship and practitioner media through icons on the course site so that students can see that these are different types of media and that there is a different expectation in how you weigh these for authority, etc.

Anthony is faculty advisor to the Student Research Journal at SJSU. There is a pin for the journal and the folks who work on the journal will share pictures of the pin in different places when they travel. This helps to build a team feeling.

Lisa curates her online her presence based on weekly topics. Wants to make this as much like in person as possible. For example: doesn't always correct little mistakes or slips of the tongue in a recorded lecture.

When talking about organizational culture, invites students to talk about their personal culture first-- only as much as they want. But Lisa shares as well, so not asking them to do anything she wouldn't do themselves. But also only shares in class the same types of things she'd share on FB-- so personal but up to a line.

Lisa is a sports fan and loves pop culture so "warns" students they will be hearing about these topics in class- and this gives some insight into her as a person

Curates zoom camera background based on weekly topics, for principles of management course. For instance, sports memorabilia and travel trinkets to show culture; dolls of characters on a show arranged in their organizational structure, etc. In Information Sources and Services, added different little toys to the background each week so there was a growing collection-- not related to the course, just a fun thing. Engages students-- they will reach out to ask about the trinkets, mention them in course evaluations, etc. It gets them talking. For reader's advisory, curates background to align with the genre for the week. It is all Lisa's personal "stuff" so it aligns with the topic but gives the students some insight into who Lisa is.

Tries to be honest and open in responses to questions students pose. Acknowledge when she doesn't have all of the answers or when her own positionality might impact her. Demonstrates that she is willing to be questioned, too. This shows them who she is as a professor and professional, as well as a person.

This is what works for these individuals-- not the "right" way to do it.

## Discussion Notes

Some concern about sharing pop culture references. Have had pop culture references "blow up" when students don't know the references, or ideas have changed-- but still a way to engage with the students by talking through points of reference. Can also be an issue for New Americans/International students who don't have the same frame of references-- but this can put the onus on the students to speak up to say that they don't understand-- or we have to be able to read their reactions.

If our examples don't resonate, It can be a great moment to ask students to share their own examples, which can both illustrate a class concept and also help students make connections with one another. It's fun to see them find common interests.

Best advice on incorporating pop culture into class was from Joe Dante (a director)-- if you embed it into class as with a movie, if people get it it's an extra, but have to do it in a way that works for those that don't get it.

Sharing stories of times we failed and then overcame a challenge.

Talking about a potential shared background with students-- for instance having been a first-generation student.

Age is an issue. Some people are worried that their references are "dated" while others worry about being perceived as very young, which can be a barrier to professionals just starting out.

Sharing enough to be interesting but also setting boundaries-- not sharing so much that students think "we're all friends"

Success story: in an intro discussion at the beginning of the semester was to share your new favorite thing. Professor started by talking about a new set of pens they had-- to show this was low stakes and didn't have to be overly personal. Started a great discussion.

Sharing complaints can be community-building. For example "Talk about the worst comment you ever got back from a prof/teacher..."

I start classes with a few minutes of "who has good news to share?" And emphasizing we take big news and small news. Sometimes we celebrate folks getting interviews or jobs, but we also celebrate having had a good salad at lunch or the sun being out.

Keep in mind that we are preparing people to take on professional roles-- how much should we be sharing with our patrons, for instance? Want to model that for students.

It's nuanced-- often tell students that they should take their cues from the patrons.

Open zoom classroom early and play "low-fi" music or meditation... students can join early or not but helps to center them.

Course content can impact what and how we share.

Resources