

**[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak:** Today on episode number 308 of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast, Dr. Ryan Straight is here to share about Ed Tech's role and helping students feel engaged, safe and productive.

**[00:00:14] Production Credit:** Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

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**[00:00:25] Bonni:** Hello, and welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'm Bonni Stachowiak, and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches, so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Today, I am joined by Dr. Ryan Straight. He's an award-winning educator, writer, and researcher. He currently serves as an assistant professor in the College of Applied Science and Technology at the University of Arizona. He is co-program director of Educational Technology and teaches in the Applied Computing and Cyber Operations undergraduate programs.

He also teaches an annual freshman seminar, Cyborgs and Transhumanism in the Honors College. Ryan has many hobbies but his main interests are photography and body modification. He lives in Tucson, Arizona, with his wife, Adriana, and their three dogs, Sofie, Menchi, and Chewie. Ryan, welcome to *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

**[00:01:39] Ryan Straight:** Thank you for having me.

**[00:01:40] Bonni:** I have a confession to make, and that is that when I first saw in your bio-- This was actually-- We've been planning this for a while, haven't we? It feels like six years. How long have we been planning on you coming on?

**[00:01:52] Ryan:** Been days or a few years long now. It could have been last week for all I know.

**[00:01:56] Bonni:** This has been going on for a while. I've seen your bio and it said body modification. I discovered through the magic of the Google body modification has nothing to do I think with any of those things.

**[00:02:08] Ryan:** I think it depends on how tight you want to define it.

**[00:02:13] Bonni:** How would you define it?

**[00:02:14] Ryan:** Typically, having tattoos and piercings and things like that. Again, this is just a thing that I'm interested in because I have a number of tattoos and whatnot. One could argue that gastric bypass surgery or any kind of cosmetic surgery would fall under that category, even though you don't go to a tattoo parlor to get your band installed.

**[00:02:36] Bonni:** That maybe butterflies on our ankles don't possibly-- I don't know, I think what implies from the art that I looked at from both your website that you have on the topic and also other googling is that it's more than decoration. There's a deeper meaning. Is that a fair interpretation?

**[00:02:56] Ryan:** I don't really want to gatekeep that. I think if you want to get a fairy tattooed on your ankle, you are more than welcome and that counts. If you get a full body blackout, that also counts. I'm less interested in, "I got this tattoo to remind me of so and so," and more interested in how does it work? What are the deeper meanings behind why we do this in the first place? Not necessarily the meaning but as humans, why do we want to do these things? What do they mean ultimately? What do they mean now versus what do they mean 25 years from now? It's just a passion project. Totally, that kind of thing.

**[00:03:34] Bonni:** Well, I enjoyed seeing that and people will be able to access the link in the show notes to go learn more about it too. I think it's worth a click as-

**[00:03:42] Ryan:** Thank you.

**[00:03:42] Bonni:** -someone who knows very little about this other than what my students tell me because, of course, a lot of my students have tattoos. I like to have conversations when they invite me to have them in my very clumsy ways.

[laughter]

**[00:03:54] Bonni:** I've been thinking about and I know you have too, we've been working with a lot of faculty during this pandemic, and one of the analogies that's coming to mind is just that people don't feel like they have their sea legs yet for this medium or channel of communication of teaching and just yearning for something that they feel like they lost and could never get back again in any way, shape, or form. I'm excited to talk to you today. We're going to look at the approaches we can use to get our students who are meeting us in online places and how to help them feel engaged, safe, and productive. Let's start out with what might be possibly the hardest one. I don't know if you have a feeling on it.

I certainly hear from my faculty colleagues how difficult of a time they're having getting students to both feel engaged and therefore be engaged. What are some of the things that come to mind for you, Ryan, in that whole domain?

**[00:04:48] Ryan:** I think a lot of it just-- At least for me, and I can really only speak for myself, but I think it's a matter of presence. I know that you talked about this before but also the humanization of you as an aspect of that educational ecosystem. The other part is the rest of that ecosystem. If you have a classroom, call it "classroom" and it's really just a skeleton LMS thing where you have your syllabus, and you have a couple quizzes and things like that and everything else is being done via e-mail, and really formal e-mails and maybe the announcements option on the LMS. That I think inherently has a distance, that transactional distance between you and your students.

One of the ways to get around that I've found is to leave the LMS to deal with the management portion of things and bring the community elsewhere because that's where the engagement comes from. There is a certain amount I think that students will be engaged with the content if you are exciting, you're excited and the students are excited about it. That comes from a variety of different ways, different variables that play into that, but you have to be engaged first I've found. Part of the problem, at least right now with the giant--I hate to say the word pivot, but the giant move to having to do everything remotely, is that that's something that comes with time, that has to be worked at and massaged and curated and thought of from the ground up as opposed to just, "Here I have my PowerPoint and my lecture notes that I would normally do on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 to 12:00, and I can just do those using my iPhone or something and the students will have the same experience."

It's just absolutely not true. Part of that is the fact that you don't get to be there. I love teaching in-person but I teach 99% of the time online. Whatever the word teach there means because it doesn't just mean that transaction of instructor to student, it's the entirety of the experience. When you're just doing triage, which I know is-- I've been working with a faculty learning community over the past few weeks to help people get over this transition. That's a word that I hear a lot, triage. They say, "We're not teaching, we're just triaging because we have 600 students in this class, and they're based on this, this, this, this and this." It's really, really difficult to make that switch.

Let's say once you can figure out how to do that, whatever that may look like, then you can start focusing, I think on having that engagement there that maybe you wouldn't have beforehand and that, again, a lot of it just comes from being you, being present.

**[00:07:44] Bonni:** I'm hearing two things. I'm actually hearing more than two things, but I don't trust myself to list more than two things for about whatever but especially in recent days. I'm hearing let the LMS do what it does reasonably well. I know we have complaints but let it do the job of managing things, which we can get more into. Then a second thing is presence. Let's start back a little bit with the

conversation around the learning management system. What does it do reasonably well that you use in your classes that wouldn't likely be done outside the LMS, it wouldn't be the best choice for people?

**[00:08:20] Ryan:** Well, I think that LMS is a bit of a misnomer generally speaking, because I think the one thing that they typically don't do very well is manage learning. I tend to see it as an organizational tool and an administrative tool to make sure that it's a system of record, the grades are there, the assignments are there, the quizzes are there. I don't think, at least with my style, which maybe is not typical, but I don't think that you can really effectively teach through an LMS. Maybe the LMS will change. Maybe the next generation will be much more comprehensive and cohesive and human-focused. Right now, I just don't see that happening. Like I said, it's more of a place to organize things and point to other experiences rather than having everything right there.

**[00:09:12] Bonni:** You just used for me, if I were to think of a word that's coming up more than any that I really try to encapsulate into my guidance that I'm providing right now, is helping people see learning as through experience. When I think about the courses that I've taken online that have just captivated me, they're wrapped around experiences, and the educators that I admire so much, they helped us have shared experiences together. What are some of the ways that you help your students outside of the learning management, what are the approaches you use and then how do we create a sense of experience versus attendance, participation, et cetera?

**[00:09:58] Ryan:** Well, part of what I do is use a variety of tools to help build that community. The number one thing that I want the students to do is be a person rather than just be a username, especially in LMS, it's either your user ID or your e-mail, which is often just your user ID with your school after it. Those aren't people, those are data points. You need them to be people and they need to see each other as people, as individuals, as more than just the content that shows up on the screen with their name before it. Engaging them in discussions, in conversations, using things like emojis and reaction gifs, using what is available to communicate effectively amongst yourselves is incredibly important for that.

It also lends to a much more natural and organic growth in the thought, in the discussions, because things are happening much more naturally. I don't like the way that they typically will do just-- the discussion forums are usually had, I'm not a big fan of that. It just doesn't feel natural. Nobody actually talks that way. Nobody discusses things that way. If you're going out to a restaurant with some friends, you don't say, "Okay, well, speak for three minutes and I'm going to speak for a minute." People don't change minds and have good ideas that way, organically in person, so why try to replicate that on the screen?

**[00:11:26] Bonni:** What tools specifically are you using to do that? I know that this will vary depending on what someone's university supports, et cetera, but what are you using?

**[00:11:35] Ryan:** We mainly use Slack. I'm a big proponent of using tools in the classroom, that if it's a field, particular thing-- I teach design in some of my classes. I want them to know the Adobe Creative Cloud software. If we're talking about making videos then, you have access to Premiere Pro. You should try to use that because if you go out in the real world after school, and you get a job as a designer, you're making things, or you're becoming a YouTuber, whatever the case may be, that is the industry standard for that, and whatever the fields and the topic may be. We use Slack because a lot of companies, big companies, small companies, whatever, use it, and I think that will give you a much less friction transitioning from this school environment into a business, or whatever kind of environment.

I've had the good luck to have it funded. It's a paid thing, so we have something like 300,000 messages in our Slack team that we can go back through and search. All the classes or the discussions that we're having are there, we can always go back and see, "What was that great idea that I had two months ago?" You can actually easily go back and find it, but more importantly, it's a way to have a home base. I've had students mention before that when they jump on a Slack team and they see a little dot next to my name, they say that that's very much like looking down the hallway, where all the professor's offices are, and seeing my office door

cracked open, and they know that I'm probably available. They can poke their head in, and we can have a discussion. They really appreciate that.

Again, it's a friction thing. We have it pretty tightly integrated with the other systems, it's really easy to jump in and start using, but, as I understand, that that's not maybe typical. Maybe. There are other tools to use instead. I think this was 2016 that we started doing that, and it's just grown and grown.

**[00:13:50] Bonni:** I'll post a link in the show notes about teaching outside the LMS, specifically how to organize one's Slack channels, and you could use that on other tools. I'm thinking about it now, there's been an increase in the use of Microsoft Teams, and well, if I were going to do a showcase showdown, I'm going to enjoy what Slack has to offer feature for feature. There's things I wish I could bend to the will of Teams to make it do, but if that's what your university uses, and if it's already baked in, it's going to reduce friction for you, it's definitely an avenue you could consider, and would bring some of the elements of something like Slack. You also could take this advice from, ironically, the episode about how to organize a Slack-like tool, and then use it in another one that you might already know, or you might already be using, or just to experiment a little bit in terms of that.

Thinking about what are the strengths of a learning management system? Then what are the weaknesses? I couldn't echo more what you say around discussions. It is not natural. That is not naturally how we talk. They're completely not excited when you see a prompt of "discussion board". It just brings up back all this bitterness from prior times when this has been used. I have mentioned previously on the podcast about taking a course for professional development, that I took because I wanted to be professionally development and paid it out of my department's budget to take it. Then they have a 300-word count minimum, and I had to reply to three other people. It just completely made me just want to stop taking the class right there and ask for my money back.

That's how strongly I felt about it, because, could we go into these things, imagining what it would look like if we thought that people actually wanted to learn in our classes? If we didn't just think they were trying to jump through every hoop they

possibly could, but actually might be excited to learn. I was so pleased with my class, that we just had our last official live meeting together, and they wanted it to keep going. "Could we get together over the summer and continue some of these conversations that we're genuinely going to miss each other?" What a wonderful thing to experience and just be reminded of during this time.

**[00:16:02] Ryan:** That's a great feeling too.

**[00:16:03] Bonni:** Yes. The second thing, by the way, was this sense of presence. Beyond the approach of thinking about what we might want to do outside the learning management system, what are some ways that we can be present for our students in online classes?

**[00:16:19] Ryan:** Talking with them instead of at them is helpful. Instead of the e-mail blast that is very impersonal, but actually engaging with them personally which, in a move to online, that can be difficult, especially if you have one of those giant 400-student lectures. I don't have a good answer for that. I wish I did, but part of it is just good pedagogy, just good teaching practice. Just less focus on the minutiae of, "Do you get five points on this or five and a half points on that?" Focusing more on the feedback in the engagement, and starting a conversation when students turn in work that they're proud of, or maybe not that proud of. I've said this before, and I don't want it to sound like anyone should encourage their students to fail, but I think it's important that students understand that failure is a learning experience, probably the most powerful learning experience.

While nobody wants to fail, it can be huge and focusing on making the classroom, whatever that may look like, a place where that is a positive thing. I always struggle with how to put that. I've said it before and I thought, "God, I think someone just thinks that I'm saying I want students to fail." It's not that, but it needs to be a safe place for experimenting, taking chances and having bigger ideas that maybe don't work, ultimately. [laughs]

**[00:18:04] Bonni:** I keep going back to Ken Bain's book, *What the Greatest College Teachers Do*, and he actually has been on the podcast a couple of times before



too, but that whole process of, in your classes, if there's not an opportunity to fail, receive feedback, try again. We're not modeling what learning actually looks like. We're not challenging them if they're succeeding on every try that they have, and if there aren't opportunities where we can take those risks, that's really not a very good model for learning for sure.

**[00:18:33] Ryan:** Yes. I often think of learning as a co-constructed state of being. That, it's not just like the traditional transactional model where it's, "Look, I did this thing." "Great," learning has occurred, but between the student, the content and the instructor or the guide, or whatever you want to call them, but then also the experiences, the tools that are being used, and the technological ecosystem that all this is occurring in. All of that comes together, and none of that can be discounted. I do think that the technological mediation of experience cannot be understated, the importance of that.

**[00:19:13] Bonni:** I know we have to look at safety and productivity, but before we do, I just wanted to mention about discussion boards. I wanted to share one other idea, that's a much smaller step than going outside the learning management system, which I've experimented with and really enjoyed, but if you're going to stay in the learning management system, one way that I use discussion boards is not as discussion boards. It's like a grown-up version of show and tell. If we're in the technology and leadership class that I teach, they've developed a personal knowledge management model, and they can base it off of an expert's Herald's jerkin. I've got a little PowerPoint template that try to smooth out all the friction for them, "Just download this and then customize it."

Some people really come up with the most amazing analogies and then I teach them how to save it as a gif. No, sorry, not as a gif, as a JPEG. I just wanted to go back and affirm your choice of pronunciation or PDF or whatever and then show them how they can embed that in the discussion board, how do you embed an image? Then it really is like a whole thread that they can go through and see each other's work that they've been doing. I don't have any points assigned to comment on anyone's but if they're a decent percentage of them do and you can tell if

they're getting something out of that experience and they're a cohort system so they already have these relationships.

More than occasionally, I will regularly see people commenting on each other's work even though they don't have to and gleaning ideas from it and I just like that freedom of just assume that they enjoy being in community, assume that they see some value in learning from each other and open up a discussion board to be more of like, "Hey here's what I did, what do you think?" They'll post links and stuff and I teach them how to save digital bookmarks and all that. It works really well. I'd encourage even just experimenting with what does a discussion board mean?

For me, it's one way of a tiny opening, a window where normally I'd be the only person that would see their submission, this is like a mini-open education in terms of if you didn't want to go all the way and actually have that in a public space, which in the class it does entail that as well. For some of their assignments to get them used to that experience of sharing their work, that works great.

**[00:21:26] Ryan:** I think it lends itself to something that we-- I think we all believe in our practice maybe consciously or maybe without even knowing it but that the pedagogy comes first. The tool is just a tool. It's what you're doing with it and how you're using it that's most important. I like that. I'd try to mirror something like that in my little ecosystem as well. You see students just run with it and they're like. "There's no points," and I'm like, "Oh, yes, so?" This is where this is cool, this is fun.

**[00:22:00] Bonni:** That is what actual discussion sounds like. How do we keep our online students safe? We have two minutes to do this sentence, so no pressure.

[laughter]

**Bonni:** As the episode winds down.

**[00:22:14] Ryan:** It's an issue of literacy, genuinely. It just really it's understanding how to read the internet, understanding how to read different applications and know when something maybe seems a little bit dodgy. Even almost technically understanding how to read a privacy policy and then there's others out there that

are way better at talking about this than I am. I think of Chris Gilliard for example. For me, it's telling students, "This is what I tell you and where I tell you to go, what I tell you to look at," for the content for this course, I vet at that. I will put my stamp of approval on that. Understand that the internet is a wild place. There's going to be a lot out there that maybe isn't associated with this or that I would not approve of and you need to take your time, pay attention, and don't take unnecessary risks which is maybe easier said than done.

**[00:23:08] Bonni:** I also have evolved my thinking really through the podcast just to have options for people who don't feel safe. As a white woman, my experience on Twitter has been just incredibly tame. That is not everyone's experience there and so I now will always make sure that there are alternatives for people who are not experiencing that same feeling of safety that I am but also, I also realize that could turn on a dime. That could definitely change for me too. I'm wanting to lift up the practices that we can do to have a healthier experience online but that's tough. How about productivity, helping your students be productive online?

**[00:23:52] Ryan:** Again, I think it really comes down to the excitement. If you are there and you are excited and you are engaging with them but most of all, staying in communication with them. Not ever letting it come down to, "Well, here's my one e-mail check in every week," but constantly being there and being involved. Not to say that students should always be on or that you need to always be on but it is a ride that you need a ride to the end if that makes sense.

**[00:24:22] Ryan:** For me when I think about people moving online and helping students stay productive, even more than usual, we need to break down assignments into smaller chunks. That's the technical term for it. If you've got a capstone-ish looking assignment, a signature assignment, something at the end of your course, then what are these small things, small stakes that you can assign throughout the term and then those opportunities to give feedback but that's going to help with them being able to be more productive?

Especially because many of our students now are moving from the in-person to the online, perhaps they've relied on us as a literal physical presence to help with some of that motivation, encouragement, and communication.

We're making a big shift but so are our students so we can think about our deadlines. Also not having things do just once a week but having some more check-ins along the way. I also am much more flexible about deadlines and online courses within reason by the way because it becomes a snowball otherwise if you're just completely like, "Oh, whenever you feel like getting it done." It can't be like that but we need to have a different thought in terms of deadlines for online classes as well.

**[00:25:32] Ryan:** I couldn't agree more. One thing that I've been experimenting with is instead of deadlines, having cool down periods. Instead of saying, "This is due every Friday at midnight," you would say, "You can turn in up to 10 of these throughout the class." Whatever that thing may be. Then saying, "You need to wait five days between submissions." You can do as many or as few as you like but you have a period of time where that has to cool down until you can do it. Then again, the due dates are nonexistent. They decide what works best for them. It's been an interesting experiment. Some students like it, some students feel like they need a bit more structure than that. I'm dialing that in.

**[00:26:21] Bonni:** I would think that the students in the undergraduate environment,-- Actually I'm going to go with doctoral as well but just the deadlines help but then I think you could maybe combine a cool-down period with the idea of a deadline. Sometimes learning management systems have where this is the due date but then this is the date I'll expect something. The unfortunate thing though is that that date doesn't show up. It's like you set it in the assignment but it doesn't show up but there's ways that you can within your learning management system add to a calendar so you could just-- You have to make that more visible unfortunately in both the two that I teach in currently.

**[00:26:57] Ryan:** Like I said, the tools that we have, unfortunately, we probably have to work within those constraints. That doesn't mean that we can't get as creative as

we want within those constraints. If you can think of it, there's probably a way to make it happen.

**[00:27:15] Bonni:** I feel so much like we're just limited more by our lack of imagination. I feel this very much from myself and I feel it for others as well as opposed to that the tool couldn't be bended to make something work or get yourself another tool. As you said, it starts with the pedagogy and to me, it starts with that spark of imagination. Before we get to the recommendations part of today's episode, I wanted to thank today's sponsor and that is TextExpander. We are living in interesting times, are we not? My thoughts about productivity have shifted quite a bit since all this happened down to really some of just the core basics.

I'm not going to go into too much of that now because that's not the purpose of this message but I do want to say that TextExpander was with me prior to all this going down and is still with me now and saving me time on a daily, hourly, minute by minute basis. TextExpander is technology that allows you to really easily create what they call snippets. You type in a few characters, you press the space bar and before you know it, it expands out to whatever you've told it to expand into. It can be something as simple as a phone number that you forget or an e-mail address just so you don't have to type it in over and over. It can be something as complicated as a letter of recommendation or a reference for a student where you tell it in advance, "Here's where I type in the name, here's where I type in who I'm recommending it to."

Fill in the personalization, really spend the time on the personal part and less of the time on the administration and formatting, et cetera. If you go to [textexpander.com/podcast](http://textexpander.com/podcast), you can get 20% off your first year. Let them know that you heard about TextExpander from *Teaching in Higher Ed*. Again it has just been an essential productivity tool for me. Saves me a bunch of time and any time I spend even just a few minutes creating a new snippet, thinking of another way that I can use TextExpander, it continues to save me time. By the way, I don't even have to come up with those ideas myself, they have a whole community, lots of sample snippets that you can download and incorporate and start using right away. It

really is that easy. I want to again thank TextExpander for sponsoring today's episode and encourage you to visit [textexpander.com/podcast](http://textexpander.com/podcast).

This is the point in the show where we each get to give our recommendations. I have a couple of light-hearted ones that involve some audio. It starts out with a family who I have just become completely captivated with, I'm going to admit. Some of it I'm going to have to explain this to you because this is an entire family with a husband and a wife and three children. I don't know their ages, but they appeared to be around five or six, and eight or nine, and possibly 12. I could be totally off on this. A range of ages. They are in lockdown. They're over in the UK. They have put together a performance of *Les Mis*. I'm just going to play a little bit of it for us to get today.

[music]

One day more

Another day, another destiny

Shopping for online delivery

I tried again, only to find,

There's nothing 'til September time

One day more

I had no football match today

How can I play, when we all parted?

One day more

Our grandparents are miles away

They can't work Skype! We're brokenhearted.

**[00:31:03] Bonni:** That's just a little look at some of the lyrics, and I'm laughing at my lack of powers of observation because there are four children pictured here. Let's just say, hypothetically, I may or may not have gone and done some in-depth research. It turns out that the father, Dr. Ben Marsh, teaches at a University, the University of Kent. He's a historian. I may or may not have, speaking of imagination, Ryan, created a whole imaginary relationship that I have, not just with him, but because we can get there through the *Higher Ed* connection, but I really want to be friends with his wife because she's hysterical in the video. The kids are priceless. I've created an imaginary friendship.

I want to invite him to be on the podcast, but I have absolutely no way of knowing if he has [laughs] any-- I think there's a way. I think there's a way we could do this. Anyway, I've gone a while with this. I love it. You can't watch that video and not walk away feeling very warmhearted. That's my first recommendation is to watch the family's version of *Les Mis* the parody. It is spectacular. The second one is quick. I don't even have her name. I was following the guidance, which, by the way, is going to be one of my recommendations, so I might as well weave my way in here now, from Mike Caulfield.

He has been on the podcast before. He is an expert in misinformation. His, *Sifting Through the Pandemic*. Sift is an acronym. One of the things he recommends that we do, the experts recommend is you go back to the primary source. I first saw this next video on Twitter. It became just totally viral, but the guy is apologizing because it's not his video. I guess this originally showed up from this woman's account on TikTok. I was not willing, through my research, to actually go on to-- I'm not currently a member on TikTok. I didn't create an account yet, but I got to the closest primary source that I could.

She has a YouTube account called makeshift.macaroni. That's as close as I can get. She says, "I'm from TikTok." Her about says, "I'm from TikTok." If you want to get to the primary source, there you go. She's a music teacher. It's going to be self-explanatory. Here is 27 seconds of the hardest that I've laughed in 10 days. Here you go.

**[00:33:27] Liz:** Hey, as some of you guys might know, I'm a music teacher. I found that one of the best ways that I can process the whole transition to online learning and teaching is to write a song, so I wrote a song. I'd like to share it out with you guys now. Here we go. [music] [screams]

**[00:33:54] Bonni:** Ryan, those are my recommendations. I'm going to pass it over to you now. [laughs] On that note, the floor is yours.

**[00:34:05] Ryan:** I have to say, as someone who grew up actively trying to memorize all of *Les Mis*, I love the first recommendation.

**[00:34:14] Bonni:** Have you seen them before?

**[00:34:15] Ryan:** No.

**[00:34:16] Bonni:** Oh, my gosh.

**[00:34:17] Ryan:** No. I'm definitely going to do it after we're done.

**[00:34:18] Bonni:** Wait until you see the whole thing, seriously.

[laughter]

**[00:34:21] Bonni:** You are in for such a treat. I can't wait. I can't wait. I'm so excited.

**[00:34:26] Ryan:** I actually added a recommendation on to my list once you started saying that because it-- *Philosophy Tube*, a YouTube channel. I just want to say the most recent video that he did, or maybe one previous, focused a lot on pseudo-social relationships. Those kind of imaginary relationships that you have with people that are in media, or celebrities, or whatever. It makes me think of the guy from the film.

**[00:34:49] Bonni:** I can't wait to watch that. That's so fun. That's so fun. I may have gotten a little obsessed with the whole family.

**[00:34:56] Ryan:** Pseudo-social relationships, very interesting stuff. Considering we are in lockdown right now, or at least, supposed to be, I'm just going to go with



three things that I either thoroughly enjoy, or have recently consumed and also thoroughly enjoy. First is the *Final Fantasy VII Remake* for the PS4 that just came out. I grew up playing the first *Final Fantasy VII*. Actually, I think I mowed lawns to buy the very first *Final Fantasy* game. This has been a long time coming. I like it a bit too much, I think. The second thing is actually a pair of Netflix shows. One is *Kingdom* and the other is *The Windsors*. Both very excellent for very different reasons.

*Kingdom* is a zombie, drama, so maybe if you're trying to stick away from, or stay away from pandemics and the apocalypse, maybe not the best choice right now. *The Windsors* is a parody of the British royal family, and it's absolutely brilliant. Finally, one trilogy in one book. Peter Watts wrote a collection of four books, it's actually a trilogy, for weird publication reasons, called the *Rifters Trilogy*. It's a really, really good sci-fi that I try to recommend to everybody. The other is Ted Chiang's, *Exhalation*, which is, again, sci-fi and unbelievably engrossing. Just unreal. It's absolutely amazing. Those could last you a couple of days in quarantine, I guess, all told.

**[00:36:26] Bonni:** Oh, I cannot wait. I'm so enjoying this conversation, but I'm also excited to get started on some of this stuff. I just finished off a show, which I probably won't say because I'll need to save it up for a future recommendation, but I went through the whole sixth season in a day and a half. I'm just looking for something to take my mind off of stuff and this all looks good. The 30-second video, I got such delight out of it, but 30 seconds doesn't last forever. [laughs] This will take up a little more time.

Well, Ryan, I'm so glad to have had this opportunity to talk with you today. It's been a long time. I'm just excited to have this personal connection. I listen to your podcast. I know that you have listened to *Teaching in Higher Ed*, so I feel like we both probably have a little bit of that pseudo-social relationships, but we also engage on Twitter, so it's not completely that it's made up in our minds. [crosstalk]

**[00:37:13] Ryan:** I think it's thoroughly healthy.

**[00:37:16] Bonni:** Thank you so much for being here today and sharing your expertise.

**[00:37:19] Ryan:** Absolutely. My pleasure. Thank you.

[music]

**[00:37:24] Bonni:** Thanks, once again, to Dr. Ryan Straight for joining me on today's episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. Thank you for those fantastic recommendations, that I personally can't wait to get started on. Those of you listening, you'll find those in the show notes. You also can get a look at all of the prior recommendations by going to [teachinginhighered.com/recommendations](http://teachinginhighered.com/recommendations). They're all there wonderfully curated for you, and clickable links and all that good stuff.

Have a look at those, and maybe send me a message on Twitter or an e-mail or however you want to get in touch and let me know what things you're recommending. What are you taking in these days that's really bringing you some joy and some life? I know Ryan and I would both love to hear about that. I'll pass anything that you share on to him as well. Thanks so much for listening. We'll see you next time on *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

[music]

**[00:38:18] [END OF AUDIO]**

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