

Episode 11: Mitzi Carter on Perspective Consciousness and Cultural Discomfort

[music}

>>STEPHANIE DOSCHER: You are listening to Making Global Learning Universal— conversations about engaging diverse perspectives, collaboration and complex problem solving and higher education on campus, online, in local communities and abroad. I'm your host Stephanie Doscher, Director of Global Learning Initiatives at Florida International University and coauthor of *Making Global Learning Universal: Promoting Inclusion and Success for All*.

[music]

>>MITZI CARTER: The ways that we make sense of the world around us has always been kind of-- it stays with me and it's something that I definitely want to share with students that they can also see this is, this could be, I could explore this more. And my voice is important. A lot of these students have incredible stories and if they use those stories as a way to kind of lead them academically to exploring bigger questions, they just, I think they just sometimes need an encouragement of realizing that my story is really striking.

>>STEPHANIE: That's Mitzi Carter. She's a cultural anthropologist and visiting lecturer in FIU's Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies. In global learning courses like the "Anthropology of Race and Ethnicity" and "World Ethnographies," Mitzi and her students study borderlands. How different people can talk about the same place so differently and how cultural forms interact. Even interactions among diverse influences on one's own identity. This was Mitzi's experience. She felt cultural discomfort growing up, trying to make sense of her combined African American and Japanese ancestry. She talks about this in our conversation, how she invites cultural discomfort into the classroom, how she brings her personal story to the courses and how she creates spaces for students to share and reflect on their own stories, some of which are profound and painful. She describes how she helps students process this through personal, scholarly, and civic expression. Mitzi is really an expert in these kinds of mashups and she describes them best. So here she is.

I remember first meeting you at the global learning course design workshop.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: And you came because you are teaching a course that was already GL designated.

>>MITZI: Right. Yes.

>>STEPHANIE: So do you remember which course that was, because you teach so many courses?

>>MITZI: Yeah, I think it was for the Intro to Anthro, to Intro to Anthropology course. Yes, and it was already a GL designated course. So.

>>STEPHANIE: And were there any big takeaways from that experience?

>>MITZI: A lot. You know, I think part of when you go to a big research like an R1 school and you finish your PhD at those kinds of schools, there's a lot of emphasis on theory and not as much on, you know, what, how, you know, best practices in the classroom. And you know, even if I finished my PhD in anthropology program, but it's so, you know, there's a lot of emphasis on how to, you know, think about the world around us, right? But how do you teach that? How does that translate in a way that makes sense to students who are really new to it, to the subject? And so that professional development workshop was really helpful in breaking down, you know, the defining these different parts, different components of global learning. And then also the exercises that we learned were so useful for me to take into the, into this kind of introductory courses. So for example, the one I still use to this day is the Why Chain that you taught us about. And I love that. When I talk about arranged marriages in India, I talk about, you know, I put the main question up, 'Why do women, many women in India today still prefer, you know, these arranged marriages over, you know, what is quote unquote called a love match?' And so then they work together. I'm using the article that we read and then the documentary we watched and then they do this why chain and it always works. And so it always generates a lot of discussion. So that was incredibly helpful for me.

>>STEPHANIE: Oh Wow. I'm definitely going to link to that in the show notes and see that's why I said it's so great for us to be able to reminisce because I actually haven't used the Why Chain in a while in a workshop and so I'm going to bring that back.

>>MITZI: You should. I love it.

>>STEPHANIE: And I'll definitely link to it in the show notes. So you had big takeaways from the workshop, but I'll tell you I had big takeaways from when we met in a completely different context. And that was at the Japanese consulate here in Miami. If I remember correctly, it was an event to welcome back JET volunteers and also to see off JET volunteers. These are our students—they're graduates from university who then go to Japan to teach English. And the JET program is global. I believe. Sponsored by the Japanese government. And we had a chance to talk a little bit about our personal lives.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: Because we were at a cocktail party.

>>MITZZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: And you told me a little bit about your story and your identity and I over the years have, have witnessed how your personal story has been kind of a way into global learning, if you will. Would you share a little bit about who you are and how you came to be because it's cool story.

>>MITZI: [laughter]. Okay. Yeah, I think, well, I think we were talking about the, you know, why I even went on the JET program, you know, many, many, many years ago in the first place. So and I think I'd mentioned that moment that I was I was trying to find a way back to my home more or less and home being this kind of, you know, more of this concept of that's kind of ambiguous still for me. I was still trying to figure out what Japan meant to me because my mother is from Okinawa, Japan and my father is black American from Texas. And I think I always, I grew up hearing these stories about Japan for my mother. And her stories always were so colorful and beautiful and also painful because she grew up, she was a war survivor during World War II. She's quite old now. And my father was an American soldier who was stationed there and she worked on the base in Okinawa making ID cards and couldn't

communicate with him. Right? And so I grew up watching these, my parents, who I love very much, have these intense kinds of cultural clashes sometimes. And so that was something that was always interesting to me, kind of growing up with these two different kinds of worldviews. And then I'm taking an anthropology class later on and then having that Aha moment and then wanting more. And so that's kind of why I went, eventually went back to Japan to teach and then later on back to Okinawa to live and to kind of understand some of these cultural practices of my mother and to understand these sometimes what would emerge as clashes, you know, just misunderstandings of like how people understand the world around them, how they make sense of things-- things that you grow up with that are norms. And they sometimes didn't see those. For example, when by, you know, I know my father didn't understand this and I didn't understand this until I took a course in Japanese anthropology. But women when men get their paycheck, they give – they handover the entire paycheck to the wife. She manages the household and she doles out an allowance to the husband. My father is a very macho Texas man. He did not get that. And he used to get so annoyed. But so, you know, these are the kinds of things that I kind of grew up with and later on really fully understood, Aha, this is, this is why they would get annoyed with each other sometimes. So I think, yeah, I've always just really been interested in really trying to understand both sides, you know, with this kind of hindsight and with this stronger academic perspective to make sense of all of these things I've grown up with and all these different stories that they would tell about a same place. My father's stories about Okinawa or were like, you know, very military like stories. There were some stations and tours of duty and you know, you know, the names didn't match the names, the same places my mother talked about, you know, discussed. And so there was this, you know, this very different sensibility of the same place. And so I was always interested in these kinds of borderlands of like how you could talk about the same place so differently.

>>STEPHANIE: Oh, that's so interesting. So when we think about how we define the approach to global learning as diverse people collaboratively analyzing and addressing complex problems that transcend borders. So, right, so here I hear you talking about diversity even within you and we talk a lot about global learning is being a process that involves multiple people, that you really can't do it alone.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: But in a way, you are calling forth your parents and other perspectives that you have gained from your reading to analyze this dilemma or this dynamic, if you will, of their being clashes.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: You know, cultural clashes. And to me that's so interesting because in many of your courses or in your courses and you teach many courses, and maybe you could talk a little bit about which courses you teach, you do a lot of mashing up that in ways that bring those different perspectives together in a way to produce a whole new perspective. You're creating new knowledge about things. So would you tell us a little bit about the courses you teach?

>>MITZI: Okay.

>>STEPHANIE: And maybe some of the cool mashups that you've done in those courses to help students bring together different perspectives to analyze that single point of analysis.

>>MITZI: Okay. Yeah, one of the things that well, okay, so first of all, I teach mostly Introduction to Anthropology, Intro to East Asia, World Ethnographies, and Introduction to, I think it's called

the technical term is a name for it is Anthropology of Race and Ethnicity, which is also a very big intro survey course. So for my World Ethnographies course I use quite a few speakers, some locally, but also I access-- I reached out to speakers of friends sometimes who I've known throughout for many years who are in academia, some who are not and reach out to them and ask them to Skype into my course. And that's worked out really well because sometimes students don't get a chance to interact with people from Japan. So for example, I had in my, this wasn't in my World Ethnographies class, but in my Introduction to Anthropology course, I had Akiko Urasaki, whose stage name is Awich. She's a fabulous Japanese rapper. She's just -- I think she just released her album a few months ago and she Skyped into the course. She was one of my, like, close, close consultants when I was doing my own dissertation work. I met her in Okinawa and stayed in touch. And so she was so grateful to be asked to kind of talk about her music and what it means to use this kind of black urban cultural form in a place like Okinawa. And you know, how she was thinking about Tupac in his lyrics and how she could kind of translate that culturally to what was happening there. And so the students really loved that. And she was actually here for Art Basel and was performing a few years ago. And she came and she surprised the students and gave them a final exam. She handed out the final.

[laughter]

>>MITZI: And so it was really and she's Skyped in several times. We've had other speakers like Baye McNeil who's a writer for the Japan Times and he's been writing a lot about black face in Japan and what it means. And so students love talking to him because he's such a character. And he's able to like really help them think about these different kinds of these forms, these, again these kinds of black cultural forms and that emerge usually like in one particular space of the United States or in Europe. And what does it mean when those travel across the ocean? Right. And so the students were really able to kind of engage with him and think about this in a different way. Think about what does race mean now? And that was really, really that turned out to be an amazing class. I'm working with, I worked with the speakers when I did my section on farm working. So we were reading *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies* by anthropologist Seth Holmes. And we had a farm worker, organizer from Homestead come up to the class and my World Ethnography course, and he talked to the students about seasonal farm work in Miami and what that, what that means for people who are down there and why they're leaving their countries. And then that was really impactful for a lot of students to hear what's happening in their own backyards. And actually one of my students ended up going to work-- they need a translation help because a lot of these people don't even speak Spanish. They're speaking indigenous, you know, languages from Central America, parts of Mexico. And so she's down there now helping them to even learn Spanish. And so it's been, it's been really impactful for the students and for myself to have these speakers come and Skype into the class.

>>STEPHANIE: Fantastic. So that's—it's so interesting to me that you have the bravery to do that. And I do think it's, it may feel very natural to you, but it's somewhat brave to invite sometimes a speaker to come in to talk about issues that you don't have any, you don't have any control over, you don't know what's going to happen and what that will release for students. Especially when we're talking about identity, when we're talking about in this current millieu we're talking about immigration. These are difficult concepts to, that students are grappling with, especially in Miami.

>>MITZI: Yes.

>>STEPHANIE: Immigration and identity are part of everything that we do. So does that, how-- does it happen in a classroom that when you open it up to these issues that sometimes conversations or things get personal?

>>MITZI: Oh, absolutely.

>>STEPHANIE: How do you handle that.

>>MITZI: For the students, you mean?

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah. For the students. And also do you share your personal story with your students?

>>MITZI: Oh yeah. Oh, I start off the class talking about my personal story, especially when we get to-- for culture and for my race and ethnicity wars, actually for all of them. And I find that it's a great way for me to open up to them because we're going to be sharing these kind of intense intimate conversations. For example, when we talk about *The Color of Love*, there's this wonderful book by Hordge-Freeman who writes about what happens in Brazil and this kind of northeast town of Brazil in Salvador – Bahia, where people are, where families tend to give more kind of affection towards their lighter skinned children because well there's a lot of reasons why, but that seems to trigger a lot of really deep, profound, and painful conversations with many students who may not have been able to articulate that as well for themselves until they read this material. And so, what I try, I know these things are going to come up for students and that sometimes they're the reflecting in ways that they've never reflected on these things because we don't like to talk about race. People get very uncomfortable, right? And so I, you know, I tell them, yes, my mother did the same thing. She would pinch my nose that, you know, there's a passage in the story about how the-- a lot of parents would, you know, pinch their nose, their children's noses to make them look less flared out, right?

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah, wow.

>>MITZI: And so I tell them, I said, yes, this was a thing, right? This is very common out and even for, you know, for Latinos but for, you know, Asians as well. And then the stories pour out a little bit more people are a little bit more willing to share and reflect on it using the academic material. So they have that, it's not just, you know, out there in this kind of unsafe way, but they are able to kind of look at the social science behind how it is that people are putting, you know, these meanings onto these actions, right? Why is it that they do this? And so when they have that why and they can understand it in a larger historical context of white supremacy, right? They can understand, okay, well it's because they want me to look less black and why is that? And so then we can go into all of these things in a-- and it turns out every class, it's very respectful. We have very respectful conversations because we really spend a lot of time laying the ground rules. You have to do that in a class that's going to bring up these kinds of personal stories. And so yeah, I use I tell them a lot of --I share a lot with them and then they are also in turn willing to share with me or the classmates and I give them various opportunities to do that either in class or you know, in their writing. And so, in their assignments.

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah, I want to ask you to pull back the curtain a little bit more on the ground rules and then the opportunities that you give students to express themselves and to connect with the scholarly material in a personal way.

>>MITZI: Okay. So right in the syllabus I have, you know, we have a set of ground rules that I write out, you know you may not, you may not agree with a lot of the things that are said here in

class. You may not agree with me, but we have to create these, the way of talking to each other so that we can respectfully disagree. And then I tell them all the time, you know, I had the student, I give them examples of how I've had students in the past who didn't agree with the readings and, but they were able to frame their disagreement academically and respectfully and it was a brilliant paper. And so I tell them, I'm not going to, you know, if you scared to write these things because you think I'm going to mark you down, don't be, you know. And so they feel a little bit more comfortable when I tell them that.

>>STEPHANIE: So you're explicit with your students.

>>MITZI: Oh absolutely.

>>STEPHANIE: That their beliefs, their practices, their opinions. You won't mark them down?

>>MITZI: No.

>>STEPHANIE: Because of what they think.

>>MITZI: No, no. You can't. I had one student who wrote this beautiful paper and it stands out for me over the years because he, it was the section on implicit bias. And the first paragraph just kind of blew me away and I know it was hard for him to write, but he said, I know that I am racist. And I was like, wow. And I know and he wrote me, because I knew he was nervous, and he was explaining why he was raised the way he was raised and he was nervous because he wrote me, he was like, I need to talk to you in office hours and you know, I hope you're not upset. And I'm like, no, not, I'm not at all. I think it was, it was such a good paper because of the way he used the material in the class to describe his own kind of biases and you know, the values and the traditions and the stories that he was raised with and was able to analyze those. And the fact that he was working towards how to change that was, it was just brilliant.

>>STEPHANIE: And I can imagine that you open the door for that kind of analysis and that kind of self reflection and perspective consciousness because you said, I'm not going to grade you on what you think, but more on how you think about the process that you use to tie the personal to the scholarly. So that's fantastic. That's, I think that's an important point. And then the flip side of that is actually giving students ample opportunities in the classroom.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: Multiple venues to communicate -- that meet their needs. So what are those?

>>MITZI: Okay, so for example, I had an assignment in my Race and Ethnicity course where they had, it was on our unit on race and crime, which is a big unit. And they had to write to their congressperson. They had to find out who it was. A lot of students don't know it all. So they had to find out who their congressperson was, write, research what their stance was on, you know, I had a list of things that they had to research and then they had this chance then to say whether they agreed with them or didn't, but in both cases, they had to use the academic material to say why they agreed with them or why they didn't. And so it gives them this chance like, okay, well maybe I didn't agree with the readings, but here's my chance where I can kind of couch my disagreement with-- in this way academically. Right? And so it gives them that outlet, right? It doesn't have to be my way. Right? And so, and I try to give them a variety of readings so that it's not all like bent towards my point of view, but they can, they are able to kind of, you know, bounce their-- these different viewpoints against the readings themselves. They can just juxtapose the readings against each other so they can try to make their own decision, right,

about a certain topic. And I find that when you do that, students are much more they kind of come to really incredible conclusions about anthropology and how the world works on their own. And in not a forceful, not such a top down way. Right?

>>STEPHANIE: Right. You're placing before students conflicting or apparently conflicting ideas and inviting them to make those connections. Right. So connect what your congressperson is thinking about this to how you think about it and how the scholarship connect these two very contrasting points of view about this topic these two authors are putting down. And then do you also offer students personal reflection? I think you said that you offer students opportunities to do some personal self reflection.

>>MITZI: Yeah. So, they have lots of chances to do that in various ways. So like in my actually I learned this activity from Sarah Mahler who is amazing. She is, she's been the biggest mentor to me and she doesn't even realize like the extent of her mentorship. So she he came up with this activity and I've kind of put a little spin on it, but it's really her genius activity that she's built into her course, which is called a discomforting project. And I love it. And it's basically a project where students have to pair up with someone who they think is culturally different from themselves. And it can be, and they can define culture however, it doesn't have to be race and ethnicity or nationality. That's the first thing people are always going to go to. But it could be much more than that. And then they will take that person on an activity. And usually a lot of students go to their parents' house and they have dinner with their families together and it's beautiful and then vice versa, they have to change off. And in that paper that they write up, they have this chance to describe that experience, you know, think about it anthropologically, but then reflect on it personally. Like, what did it mean to you? And that is such a powerful assignment because we tend to live in these little bubbles in our world. And so students, for a lot of the students, this is the first time they're really breaking out of that bubble and digging deep and thinking about it again academically, but also, you know, having this ample time to really reflect and think about what it means to engage with someone who is really culturally different from themselves.

>>STEPHANIE: And to experience cultural discomfort.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: There are a lot of spaces for discomfort in your courses, in that, you know, you're asking students to make those connections and that's hard and it's uncomfortable.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: You know, your brain is working really hard and sweating. My professor isn't telling me how to think about this.

>>MITZI: Exactly.

>>STEPHANIE: I've got to figure out this for myself.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: And you're honoring the struggle.

>>MITZI: Yeah. It's hard. Some students, they get very uncomfortable with it at first when I tell them and they're like, oh, especially my students who are a little bit more anxious or introverts

they hated at first, but then they get to know their partners and I read these evaluations afterwards and they love it. They love that.

>>STEPHANIE: Okay, Now that's really interesting that you just mentioned that because a lot of faculty with whom I work may feel a little bit of trepidation to do some of these kinds of activities because they do worry that it will show up in their evaluations. That when students are asked to do things outside of class, when they're asked to do service, when they're asked to do volunteering, faculty worry. But you're telling me that your students are loving it.

>>MITZI: Well I tell, I mean I tell them it's an anthropology class and I say, look, there's going to be a lot of topic segments we're going to read that will make you uncomfortable. We don't get to talk about sex and race and you know, in our other kinds of classes that we take. So these are the topics might be uncomfortable, but also this project is going to be uncomfortable. And I tell them that on the very first day when I'm introducing the syllabus. And I'm like, but please stick with it.

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah.

>>MITZI: You, you may not like it at first, but I guarantee you if you try it, it'll be really, I had the student, for instance he was – I have so many stories from this, but this one student who is, he's, I think he was from Venezuela, grew up mostly here, went with his partner. He, they chose each other. Right? They really went out of their way to choose somebody who was really different from themselves. He chose this guy who was from like Miami Gardens and this guy chose him because he never really hung out--growing up in Miami, he never really hung out with a Latino person.

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah.

>>MITZI: And this other guy, that's Venezuelan, it's like, you know, I've never really socially hung out with a black person if they're, I've never picked up a phone to call a black friend over. I've never had black person over to my house. My parents don't hang out with black people like, and so he like was very conscious of this choice. He went up to play basketball with -- just play hoops with his friends. This guy, friends and neighbors.

>>STEPHANIE: In the Gardens, which is a black neighborhood.

>>MITZI: And his parents were really mad, he said. They didn't want him to do this project. They were worried about his safety. They didn't want him driving up there, but he did it. And he said, he told me afterwards, this was like the most life transforming project ever because in that single day, so many of my stereotypes were totally blown out of the water. And, and I know it sounds so corny to some people to do this kind of project, but it's that little kind of that, that little bit of like hanging out with someone that makes them, that humanizes them, that you know, you see, okay, people fart. They laugh, they laugh at the same kind of jokes we do [laughter]. You know, it really breaks down a lot of I-- I've had so many, so many wonderful stories. I had one parent who was more excited about doing this project, then his daughter was, she was Korean and he was so happy that somebody was learning about Korean culture, that he bought food for the entire class.

>>STEPHANIE: Oh my gosh.

>>MITZI: And it was, it was really, it was really great. I mean, it's, so, it moves beyond the student themselves because so many of our students are, you know, they live with their families

that it really impacts, especially when they do these family dinners, right? And the families are meeting somebody for the first time who is really different. So, and then students write these brilliant papers about like kinship and like, you know, when I was going to this person's house, I thought we, I was just having dinner with their family and it was their Tia, that the there Primo, the, you know, like the, all the whole extended family. And it made me realize, oh, we have very different ideas of what family means and you know, and so these kinds of activities are, and that Sarah Mahler, I tell her all the time that she, that, you know, kind of teaching me what works was incredibly helpful and I think everybody needs a strong mentor who will share successful activities and then you can really put your own spin on them. But you know, having somebody kind of give you this, got guidelines for what global, how students are understanding global learning because it's, it can be a very vague concept.

>>STEPHANIE: Yes.

>>MITZI: And if you don't know how to put it into practice, it can be really tough when you're first starting out.

>>STEPHANIE: And Sarah was one of the first faculty members to develop a global learning course. She did it with a team in the very first summer workshop that we had. It was six weeks long. That six-week long workshop has over the years we've peeled away the unnecessary aspects of it and honed it into this diamond that is a four-and-a-half-hour workshop now.

>>MITZI: Wow.

>>STEPHANIE: And, but Sarah's work has had impacts far reaching across the university. We do share teaching practices and pedagogies across the institution. I'll definitely link in the show notes to some, to her book, to a video that she did for us on how to have students create Wikis.

>>MITZI: Oh yeah. Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: That's a very powerful collaborative activity that students do. And also I'm thinking about how Sarah pushed the envelope in terms of giving credit for discomfort. So often as teachers, we are, we feel a little trepidation around inviting discomfort right into the class room.

>>MITZI: Right. Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: Because we don't necessarily know how we'll deal with our, well, we don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it's a terrible feeling to walk into a classroom unprepared or students aren't responding. Our own discomfort is something that we avoid.

>>MITZI: Right. Right.

>>STEPHANIE: And then there is inviting student's discomfort. How do we choreograph or orchestrate these difficult dialogues in our classrooms? So discomfort amongst our students and discomfort within a student can become a negative thing if it comes out in those, in those teaching at reviews.

>>MITZI: Yes.

>>STEPHANIE: So what you are talking about is inviting discomfort into the classroom, setting ground rules around it, making it safe to be uncomfortable and then also giving students credit

form discomfort. And discomfort it seems to me is not only an essential component of global learning and of transformation, but of scholarship and of just life.

>>MITZI: Right, right.

>>STEPHANIE: Just being a person. And the other thing I'm hearing you talk about are the far reaching, kind of unintended positive consequences of inviting personal connections with scholarship. And one of the things that I hear about you all the time, Mitzi, I hear from you, I hear from your students, I hear around [laughter] is that, you know, these mashups that you're doing in the classroom with content and with speakers, they're causing students to come to you with ideas for mashups. So tell me a little bit about ideas for pedagogy in course design that may have come from your students because you seem to invite that and be open to it.

>>MITZI: Yeah. One--when I was teaching my Race and Ethnicity course last semester, I had students, we were on our race and housing unit and one of the, several of the students were taking Dr. Scott's class who's a GIS teaches GIS in the department. And he apparently was talking a lot about mapping and mapping residential areas in Miami. And my students said, oh my God, you two need to collaborate because your lessons go hand in hand and it would be so fabulous if you could like join together. And so I approached him and he said, yeah, I've heard the same thing.

>>STEPHANIE: Oh really?

>>MITZI: Let's do this. And so we're going to do a whole unit together this semester that looks at, brings together this GIS technology.

>>STEPHANIE: Could you talk-- not Everybody knows what GIS is. In fact that it took me a little bit of learning about GIS. What really is it?

>>MITZI: I will be learning along with my students. But it's-- he uses these kind of special maps to really kind of zoom in on certain geographic spaces and is able to kind of use that technology to look at changes over time. And so we'll be able to kind of map out what areas, you know, using census data, look at what areas have remained kind of static racially or ethnically, and then look at, you know, we can map on top of that, you know, maybe what kind of laws were in place, what kind of laws that were in place like, let's say in 1980s versus 1945 and see, okay, who is allowed to get these kind of home loans at this time? And then what happens when these laws change? And did this neighborhood change because of that? What happens with, you know, certain kind of, what is it called incorporations when neighborhoods incorporate?

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah.

>>MITZI: And then what happens when new freeways are built? Which neighborhoods did they tend to cut through? And then you could look at those patterns. And it's really about like, kind of focusing on the patterns across. And what we'll be doing is focusing on Miami in particular. So looking at, you know, our own place. And for example, when we look at, you know I'm trying to think of an example that really struck students. Virginia Key, right? Students don't realize that was like one of the only places where black people could swim. You couldn't swim up until almost like the 1970s, there was no place where you could legally go swimming on the beaches. People would try to sneak in down near Homestead if they could, but it was like very difficult for people to, and so when they realize, oh my God, this happened here. And then they go to Virginia Key and they see that little plaque that, oh, you know, this was historic.

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah.

>>MITZI: This was the only place.

>>STEPHANIE: So, I gotta ask you a question.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: So do you have students in your World Ethnographies course look at Urban Beach Weekend?

>>MITZI: Ooh, that is a great idea!

>>STEPHANIE: Right, to tie in?

>>MITZI: Oh my God, I'm totally going to do that.

>>STEPHANIE: Right? Like you could tie it to the work with Virginia Key.

>>MITZI: Yes.

>>STEPHANIE: So students could do,

>>MITZI: Oh my God, I'm totally going to do that.

>>STEPHANIE: Interviews and observation thinking about that. And we'll link to the show notes about Virginia Key and Urban Beach Weekend. [laughter] And then I have to ask you another question. So when you're talking about this mashup of GIS using the satellite data to make maps and then you're talking about using census data, do you know Moses Shumo in journalism?

>>MITZI: I've heard that name but I don't know him.

>>STEPHANIE: So he is also a founding global learning faculty member and he received one of our global learning fellowships. So this is -- these are seed monies if you will, up to \$4,000 for a faculty member to do undergraduate research mentorship and to do primary research of a global intercultural international bent and to publish it. And to the extent that it's possible, even bring that data back into a course for students to mess around with that data and the way that you're talking about doing. And he did something a little bit similar and I'll connect the two of you because what they did was they use the census data to map specific census tracks just to find out who's living where.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: So for instance, if you look at Calle Ocho, which everybody thinks, oh, that's the heart of, everybody thinks that's the heart of little Havana.

>>MITZI: Right. Right.

>>STEPHANIE: If you look at one side of Calle Ocho, it's all Cuban.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: If you look at the other side, I believe it's Nicaraguan.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE So, and then looking at Doral which is a neighborhood that's very close to FIU. And we think, oh well this whole area is also very Cuban. We think of Miami is very Cuban.

>>MITZI: Right. Right.

>>STEPHANIE: Well there's so many Venezuelan neighborhoods, but then there are also Jamaican, Bohemian, little, little neighborhoods.

>>MITZI: Right, Little pockets. Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: Little pockets. Little pockets. And local people will look at that data and say, Oh yeah, I know. Because that restaurant has those colors on the outside, which align with the Jamaican flag and that restaurant across the street has colors that aligned with the Nicaraguan flag.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: So, so this work is interesting that you're doing the work in anthropology and we have someone in journalism doing the work, doing similar work in another discipline because he also applies it to perioditas which are little newspapers that are kind of transcending borders and that they have local Miami News. They have the news that's local to that community and then also connections.

>>MITZI: Yes, fascinating.

>>STEPHANIE: So what's going on in the US that impacts Venezuela and vice versa. What are the relationships?

>>MITZI: Right, Amazing. Wow.

>>STEPHANIE: So I just wanted you to know about this, and I guess the folks that are listening to this podcast are hearing how we work in global learning. [laughter] And know why I exist, which is to help to make these connections. But research mentorship, that's another connection that you've got. You've had students come to you to be their mentor.

>>MITZI: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: So you got to talk about that because that's incredible when a student will come to come to you and ask for that kind of guidance.

>>MITZI: Yeah, no, it's been, it's been great. I love when, first of all, I love when students even come to my office, you know, then I think are, this is changing for a lot of professors that you get a lot more emails than people actually coming in person, but when they come in person, I love it because then you, you can engage with them in a different way. I can show them books on my bookshelf and say, look, you need to read this. And, but I, I have students who've come over to me and one student who was working on her master's in her master's thesis and she wanted me to mentor her and her project on Black Koreans, she was really into K pop and really was interested in this kind of popularization of black music in Korea and black hip hop in Korea and or now like, it's actually their own hybrid form of hip hop. But and so she knew that about my

work on blackness in Japan. And so she said, well, can you help me think through these issues for my project? And I did that and that was really fun. And I learned a lot from reading her stuff. But the right now we've got a student who is like one of the curators at the Museum of Sex.

>>STEPHANIE: Yes!

>>MITZI: She was, which I didn't even know there was this Museum of Sex here in Miami, but she's an amazing, brilliant student. She was in my Intro to Anthro course and she said, hey, I want to work with you on, you know, thinking, doing an independent study, kind of thinking through these questions about like the evolution of sex and sexuality and you know, because this is the work that I do and I want to think about it anthropologically. And so I'm so excited because I'm reading all the stuff that I haven't, I haven't read all of the material that she's proposed. And I'm going to help her to put together an annotated bibliography. And yeah, that's been really, it's been really fun actually working with students with undergrads because they come from have such, you know, they have their own passions and then they bring material that I've never come across and so, and I just kind of help guide them.

>>STEPHANIE: Yeah. I just can't help but think that that your story is so interesting because you had a problem if you will, as a child, which was making sense of the cultural mashup of your parents and you've navigated that space personally.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: And then you've allowed yourself to be vulnerable and share your story and model what can be like to make sense of a complex racial and cultural identity, which so many of our students have and will only become more so hopefully as our nation becomes more diverse and you've brought scholarship, you know, into that space and that opens students up to sharing, not only making, making sense of these things for themselves and engaging with the scholarship, but creating new knowledge that we need in the world. And, and that's really the essence of what Global Learning is all about. But it's interesting to me that your way into Global Learning was a highly personal, was a highly personal way in.

>>MITZI: Yeah. Yeah, for sure. I keep, I mean even in took my undergrad major, that's what drew me in was my first Intro to Anthropology course on Japan and I'm like, oh, that's why. But I mean it's, that story is always kind of that kind of yearning for learning about these kinds of, the ways that we make sense of the world around us has always been kind of, it stays with me and it's something that I definitely want to share with students that they can also say this is, this could be, I can explore this more and I, my voice is important. A lot of these students have incredible stories and if they use those stories as a way to kind of lead them academically to exploring bigger questions, I think they just, I think they just sometimes need an encouragement of to realize like that's my stories and really striking. You know, when I tell students about sometimes they think segregation was so far back, you know, and then I'm like, no, my parents and my dad brought my mom back from Okinawa. He got a list from the military. These are the states that you can't go to as an interracial couple. Right? You can't bring your Okinawan wife to Arizona. You can bring her to, you know, like he had a list. He told me about this list. So Texas was-- my mother, you know, arrives in Texas and they're in a totally segregated neighborhood. They could live together. Of course, they could, that wasn't on the list, but they lived in a black neighborhood and people didn't know what to make. You know, even back then, you know, there was just, it was a, there were so many. And when I tell students about like what it was like for them to live together as an interracial couple in this segregated place, they're like, wow. You know, that wasn't that long ago if that was your parents. Right. You know? And so I think using those kinds of stories also, our stories can be helpful in making students realize that was just

one generation back. You know, when I tell them my grandmother, my black grandmother adopted my uncle and aunt who were half Korean half black. And I use that story to talk with my East Asian Studies class to talk about, yeah, there are all these soldiers who were in Korea and you know, so these are the kinds of policies that happened around, you know, mixed race kids who were there. And I use that as a vehicle for understanding war in a different way. I talk about changing identity of Asians when I, and I use my story and to talk about what it means to be black and Japanese. I have them, you know, I have them talk to filmmaker Megumi Nishikura, who put together a beautiful film called *Hafu*. We sit on a board together, in Hapa Japan executive board. So she-- and her film is really one of these kinds of helpful ways for our students to understand, okay, Asia is changing, right?

>>STEPHANIE: Yes.

>>MITZI: It's not this totally homogenous place that people immediately say when they talk about Asia. Right? It's homogenous. It's a very -- it's a dynamic place. The world is a dynamic place. And so I try to use these stories as a way, again, to kind of frame what global learning can be about. And...

>>STEPHANIE: And it's very important to note that these kinds of topics that you're bringing up about identity and how they shape the world around us. What's possible, where you can live, what kinds of jobs you can have, where you can go to school,

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: These apply not just to the social sciences, but to the humanities and the sciences, especially in the stem fields. So, you know, in our university, we have a new program "SUCCEED" and we also have programs in modern languages that are focused on who gets to learn this stuff, who is comfortable in the classroom? Who are we reaching out to? Who or which perspectives are we not inviting into the classroom?

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: And we are all the poorer for it, right? So, it's very important that our students make these connections. This is why we haven't put the brakes on global learning in terms of the number of courses that can get the designation and why we did not choose as a university just say, well all students will just take this World Ethnographies course and then we'll be done with it. Because so many science majors, engineering majors, biology majors, physics, chemistry, math majors our students that are going into the health professions, they may just take World Ethnographies or Intro to Anthropology or Intro to East Asia just to fulfill that Global Learning credit.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: But in so doing, they're having the opportunity to get these experiences to this perspective consciousness to build their understanding of how race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, all these different aspects of identity shape the world around us and what we think we're capable of doing.

>>MITZI: Yeah. Absolutely.

>>STEPHANIE: And we want those our students to make those connections to their major, whatever their major is.

>>MITZI: Yes.

>>STEPHANIE: So I don't care if that's just the one social science class that a science major takes in her whole career. It could actually help with their persistence and their success and their personal and professional lives.

>>MITZI: Yup. That's, that's one of the things I learned from Sarah Majler's blog. She writes on how to teach a big Intro to Anthro class to a bunch of non Anthro majors. And it was so helpful for me to kind of, to throw out the textbook. I mean I still use a textbook, but I use it kind of as just a foundation that's, I am really more interested in how am I going to make this applicable to their own majors, to their future career in international trade or their future career as a criminologist. Right? And so, and her blog was really helping, helped me to kind of think about how to get rid of that jargony part of anthropology, which can be, you know, nobody cares about, you know, a lot of those things that we attend to teach about. And then if we go straight

>>STEPHANIE: With all due respect to the anthropologists.

[laughter]

>>MITZI: No, I know. And I know a lot of people will probably be upset that, you know, you don't teach everything that Clifford Geertz wrote about. You know, I've learned and this is why I'm so thankful for Sarah Mahler because she left me so much information to kind of help me shape the course, which is to think about how, what are the tools that anthropology is really, that can be used, can be applicable to their lives? What are those important tools in our field that we could really help students develop? And so when I approached it that way, instead of, you know, what are the theories, what are the, you know, what are the, who are the, you know, what's the genealogy of our anthropology, you know, the big anthropologists. If, and then just kind of thinking again around, you know these tools of how to analyze discomfort, how it is that we come to find comfort in the first place around people who are like us. How that can be used, you know, as a way to divide people. If we were really conscious of those things then that's what's really important that they get out of our class and right? And not the Clifford Geertz said this and you know.

>>STEPHANIE: You have to be, if you're teaching a Global Learning course, especially at the introductory level. What I hear you saying is you've really got to do a couple of things. One, you have to be a systems thinker. You have to think, you know, how can the student apply this knowledge in the different system, in the complex system of their life, like to different professions, to their personal life, to their civic life.

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: And then you also need to dial it back to your own personal story to the very beginning. What lit your fire?

>>MITZI: Right. Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: Right? Because as academics, it is our, it's our bread and butter to become super, super specialized and to carve out and protect, to build a wall around, if you will, our area of expertise. And, but if we teach from that point of view, then what we're teaching becomes so distant and so unapproachable, so specialized that how can we possibly, we need, how can we possibly kindle a love for this except in the most, in the tiniest, tiniest minority of our students who are just kind of like born to be anthropologists, right?

>>MITZI: Right.

>>STEPHANIE: So we're at an all comers. We're not in an all comers university, but we're at a very, a very open access institution. And so what you're saying is you want to bring that same kind of open access to your Intro to Anthropology class.

>>MITZI: Yeah, and it took me a while to learn because when I first started, I didn't teach that way. You know, I was like teaching in the way that I was taught and that's, you know, I realize it's a very different way of learning today. It's a different way of, you know, expert, there's different expectations. And in a kind of commuter university and there's like, there's, I just have to rethink how to teach and it just, it took time to kind of get out of that mold. You know, it's a,

>>STEPHANIE: I love it. So, I like to end the podcast by asking if there are any experiences or any resources, anything that people should read or, or watch or listen to that might help to kind of expand their global awareness, perspective, engagement, any, any cool recommendations you have for people?

>>MITZI: Specifically on teaching or?

>>STEPHANIE: It could be on anything in your whole life. Just something to kind of blow people's mind, to have them think, to help people think, oh, the world is more complex and interrelated than I realized, or, wow, that's a cool perspective that I never realized even was.

>>MITZI: Wow. Let's see.

>>STEPHANIE: You've mentioned a few things. So far.

>>MITZI: Yeah, you know, what book that I'm really, I love for my students is it's an anthropology book, but it, it reads, so, you know, it's a very easy read. It's kind of jargon free and but it's a great way to kind of think about what we do as anthropologists. It's called, *How to Think Like an Anthropologist* by Matthew Engelke. And it's a cheap little paperback book and my students love it. And I think it's a, you know, for people who are interested generally in anthropology, it's a good one. Lee Baker's book, he's an anthropologist on *From Savage to Negro*, which looks at this kind of this construction of blackness. It's something that people don't tend to think about, like how is race, but not only how race, but how the disciplines of academia have shaped these, fueled these ideas, which then fueled policy.

>>STEPHANIE: And I think that might be a particularly good reading for our colleagues across disciplines.

>>MITZI: Yeah, for sure.

>>STEPHANIE: Working with students of color.

>>MITZI: Yeah. My students recommend this book as well. And think it would be helpful for some of their own instructors just to have that in their back pocket when they are shaping their syllabus for instance.

>>STEPHANIE: And to become more comfortable perhaps with the discomfort that, more empathetic with the discomfort that students might be feeling inside the classroom, outside of the classroom. And also maybe even more comfortable with the discomfort of having discussions about race.

>>MITZI: Yeah.

>>STEPHANIE: Even in the science classroom. And I think that would be a really helpful book to become more empathetic with the discomfort that our students might be feeling in our classroom as well as our own discomfort. Perhaps talking about issues of race that might be impacting the study of whatever topic that we're having on the table in the classroom or even the kinds of current events that might be influencing how we teach, when we teach, who we're teaching, how students are learning.

>>MITZI: Yeah, you know, actually, another one that just came to mind, I'm sorry, is *The Spirit Catches You and You fall Down*. I know it's an older book, but it's, and there, there are some critiques about it, but there's, it's a really wonderful book for students not just in --who are taking a social science course, but for medical students. So I was asked to teach a class in the medical school here at FIU on cross-cultural communication and looking at like things like body language and how medical students can even approach this idea of 'what is culture?'. And so, and how they can bring it into their own work. And so and I raised, you know, I talked about this book and I think they were really, I think some of them asked me after I gave that talk, you know, can you tell me who wrote this? And I want to read this book because that book was so impactful—it was an ethnography, really about, you know, different ways of understanding health, disease, illness and healing from these two different perspectives of these California doctors and this Hmong family from Laos and how now they have new policies where they bring in shamans into these hospitals. And so that book was so impactful. I know one of my students who read it in my World Ethnography class, really thought that was such an incredible book, that he ended up going, he was like a, he's a motorcyclist. He went to Laos last summer and he wrote on this the how, I forget the name of this very famous motorcycle loop. And he met a lot of Hmong people on his trip. It was actually in Vietnam. And he said, Oh my God, because I read this book, I knew like a little bit about their history and that trip was so much more impactful to me. And now he's telling the students the other day, he's in my other class now this year about this Go Fund Me project from one of the students, the, Hmong person he met on this trip. And I'm like, it's-- those kinds of books are so powerful. It can be really life transformative and in small ways and sometimes big ways. But – and they cross disciplines. You don't have to be an anthropologist to read ethnography.

[laughter]

>>STEPHANIE: Mitzi, you are the queen of mashups [laughter] and I thank you so much for pulling back the curtain on how you make them, why you make them, and some examples of them. I think they're just going to be so inspirational for so many people.

>>MITZI: Thank you for having me.

>>STEPHANIE: Sure thing. Thanks for listening to this episode of making Global Learning Universal. This podcast is brought to you by FIU's office of Global Learning initiatives, media technology services, and our disability resource center. You can find all our episodes, show notes, transcripts, and discussion guides on our webpage, globallearningpodcast.fiu.edu and if this episode was meaningful to you, please share it with colleagues, friends, and students. You can even give it a rating on iTunes. Thanks again for tuning in and for all you do to make Global Learning universal.

“Making Global Learning Universal” is a collection of conversations about engaging diverse perspectives, collaboration, and complex problem solving in higher education—on campus, online, in local communities, and abroad. Episodes are posted seasonally. Guests are from a wide variety of institutions, geographies, and areas of teaching, research, and practice. All episodes are accompanied by show notes, transcripts, and discussion guides to enhance global learning professional development, leadership, and teacher preparation.

The podcast is hosted by [Stephanie Doscher](#), Director of Global Learning Initiatives at Florida International University and co-author of *Making Global Learning Universal: Promoting Inclusion and Success for All*.

The “Making Global Learning Universal” podcast is produced through a partnership between Florida International University’s Office of Global Learning Initiatives, Media Technology Services, and Disability Resource Center.

Episodes, show notes, transcripts, and discussion guides are available at <http://globallearningpodcast.fiu.edu>.

You may subscribe to the “Making Global Learning Universal” [RSS feed](#) or access the podcast via iTunes, Spotify, or [Stitcher](#). “Making Global Learning Universal” is also listed on [MERLOT](#).

Listener recommendations

“Making Global Learning Universal” is always looking for new guests to join the show and interesting topics to cover. [Email us](#) to make a suggestion!

Contact

Office of Global Learning Initiatives
Florida International University
11200 SW 8th Street
305-348-4145
goglobal@fiu.edu