

Dr. Brian Van Brunt Interview Transcript

Dusty Harrington Case, October 2025

00:00:00 Brian: Dusty, Professor Harrington. Do you have a preference between the two?

00:00:03 Dusty: Dusty is fine.

00:00:04 Brian: Excellent. My name is Brian.

00:00:05 Dusty: Students can call me Dusty. My colleagues can call me Dusty. There's no problem there.

00:00:09 Brian: I appreciate that. I remind my students whenever they use doctor, I don't want to be reminded of the trauma of my doctoral program. So I also do Brian as way to connect, right?

00:00:18 Dusty: Nice to meet you, Brian. Pleasure.

00:00:19 Brian: You too. So it's unfortunate how we're meeting. I've been at the school with you here for a while. I know that we've passed perhaps paths, but this role is to talk about you after this leave. And leave, I guess I want to start there. This has been, what, how many days now that you've been asked to be away.

00:00:35 Dusty: We're at, I don't have the exact date on me right now, but we're at about two weeks right now, I think. Maybe three weeks. I'm forgetting exactly how long now. But I'd just rather have this over with and get back to teaching. So that's the reason why I'm here. I was told that that's how I can move this along.

00:00:49 Brian: Yeah, absolutely. Can you tell me, like, from your perspective, and this is important for me because I think there's what the school does and what everything else is going on. And I want to hear from you. just in terms of... what happened from your perspective and I can fill in some gaps but yeah.

00:01:07 Dusty: No no I honestly think maybe you can fill in some gaps for me because they haven't really given me full information. Um I was told that they've received multiple complaints from my colleagues and from students and that I needed to come in here to meet in order to get back to teaching. And they were very non-responsive to that and the colleagues I've tried to speak to and communicate with have not communicated back. And I know there's been stuff online but kids have been posting stuff online for years when they don't like a teacher and when they've been saying something. So I don't know what's going on I don't know the details about it other than, "well he's not acting normal," and I think that is completely inappropriate and I'm in here to get back into the classroom.

00:01:49 Brian: Yeah no, I think I'd probably go back with you age-wise to like ratemyprofessor.com and how many jalapenos you have.

00:01:54 Dusty: Yep no, and my yearly reviews are spectacular, top 25% if I remember correctly last year. So I don't understand why this is coming up now. It makes absolutely no

sense to me. So I would just like to move this along as quickly as possible. Get back in the classroom.

00:02:10 Brian: Same here. And I think that's a good goal for us. So that's kind of where we're coming from. And I'll be very authentic with you about the process. If I don't know something, I'll tell you that. I think having, I'd like to almost say an ally in this approach to help figure out what's going on, how we fix it. You teach biology, right? Is that correct.

00:02:26 Dusty: No, political science.

00:02:28 Brian: Political science. Okay, I don't know why I had biology in my mind. So that can be a topic that has with it a lot of, especially in this political climate, some of those charged issues, not like they're new.

00:02:39 Dusty: No, no, that's part of the problem. And I think that's going on is they don't like me expressing my opinion in the classroom and they're attempting to censor me. And that lack of academic freedom, and everybody wanting to duck and cover during these times is inappropriate and they don't like me speaking out. So that, I think, is probably what's going on. But because everybody is staying quiet and not responding to me, I don't know.

00:03:07 Brian: You've mentioned that twice now, and I know for me it's also a frustration when you're trying to figure something out and you get, like, crickets back. You're asking a question. People aren't getting back to you. You ask something. You're trying to figure things out. No response. Is that what, this has been your perspective?

00:03:23 Dusty: That's what I just said.

00:03:25 Brian: Yeah, that's what I'm kind of..

00:03:26 Dusty: Yeah, no, I heard what you said, and I just said that.

00:03:29 Brian: Gotcha. Is that annoying, not getting that response? That's something that's, like, a particular, like, frustration for you? It is for me.

00:03:36 Dusty: Okay, well, then I think that would be appropriate to say that it was for me as well.

00:03:40 Brian: Fair enough. I don't like to make assumptions. That's part of it, too.

00:03:43 Dusty: Yeah, no, I said I'm not getting a response, and I want one. That sounds pretty annoying.

00:03:50 Brian: Yeah, absolutely.

00:03:51 Dusty: Yes, I would like to get back into the classroom and teach.

00:03:53 Brian: So it sounds like you haven't been to therapy before. Let me warn you, I've been a therapist for 20 years.

00:03:58 Dusty: I wasn't coming here for therapy.

00:03:59 Brian: Absolutely not. No, so I'm not...

00:04:02 Dusty: Am I being forced to therapy here?

00:04:05 Brian: Same way people look like they're dogs after a while, sometimes you get used to doing things a certain way in therapy. So if I'm asking you a question about how you're feeling about something, I realize because I've trained my whole life as a therapist, now I'm doing some threat stuff, trying to figure out what's going on. It can feel...

00:04:20 Dusty: I'm not a threat, and I am here to get back in the classroom.

00:04:25 Brian: Fair enough.

00:04:25 Dusty: I understand I approach things as a... Doctor, as a teacher, as a college professor. So I understand that that's going to be how you ask questions and answer questions, in terms of how you approach that. But at the same time, I'm going to respond to you as a professor who's trying to get back to teaching, not necessarily somebody who's in here for therapy.

00:04:46 Brian: Yeah, and it's not about me, so let me shift gears.

00:04:48 Dusty: No, I'm aware this is about me.

Brian: Yeah, that's why I want to shift gears.

Dusty: No, I get that. No, so.

00:04:53 Brian: No, so. Shift gears. Tell me this. You're an intelligent guy, you're a doctor, you're teaching, well-liked, you gave me some statistics about feedback and evaluation things, 100%.

00:05:06 Dusty: You have reflected all of those perfectly.

00:05:07 Brian: Yeah. What is it that you think that they're upset about.

00:05:12 Dusty: The fact that I'm speaking the truth and I'm telling them what's going on, I'm telling the students what's going on in the world, and they don't like that. Specifically what's going on in the Middle East, what's going on in Gaza, in terms of the genocide that's occurring over there, the censorship that's occurring in the educational system across the United States, and how that is rolling into how they're trying to censor me now in the classroom in terms of speaking these truths. And... I'm making people uncomfortable that's the closest I've come to getting an answer to any of these problems is that I'm making people uncomfortable I think the world is making people uncomfortable and I'm talking about what's going on in the world I'm not just ducking my head and not speaking, about what's going on my job is to talk about what's going on in the world and help people dig get deeper, think deeper, help those kids actually learn something. I'm not here to just fix their grammar or shove something through an AI machine in order to do that.

I'm here to educate them and to help them learn how to think yeah and that that involves challenging yourself and challenging your ideas and also being morally responsible, to what's going on in the world and taking action when needed in order to adjust that,

Brian: So what do you think is going on? Use that intellect on yourself. Help me understand what do you –

Dusty: Use that intellect on myself? I think I am being censored. I think my my academic freedom is being censored by the administration here. And I'm being told I need to go in order to talk to a counselor to get back into the classroom. That is what I think is going on. And I am trying to publish. I am trying to get the word out there about what's going. And I'm trying to approach my colleagues and ask them if they want to be a part of this. And I'm receiving nothing but silence, as we already discussed. And it's extremely frustrating, as you said, Dr. Van Brunt, in terms of how that feels.

00:07:15 Brian: We shifted to Dr. No Brian for me? I prefer Brian. But, you do you.

00:07:22 Dusty: Brian. It is very. frustrating and it feels very frustrating so if we can move this along and get me back into the classroom, that'd be very valuable.

00:07:29 Brian: Yeah I guess I'm stuck on this logical issue maybe you, given your ability and how you think about things can help me understand this. I don't talk to a lot of the professors. There's not this process that I've been involved in before. There seems to be something unique about the speaking of the truth or the way that it's being spoken to that's pulling you into here. We've had some reports of disruptive behaviors.

Dusty: Such as?

00:08:00 Brian: Yeah I think the engagement with the students, taking a very firm political stance and sharing that more directly with them.

00:08:06 Dusty: Having a firm political stance? That, that is, that is a problem in the university?

00:08:11 Brian: Absolutely. Because you want to really be creating – this is my opinion and we can debate this – but really a critical thinking ability in the student. When you, in a position of power and control, suggest that –

00:08:22 Dusty: So I'm not allowed to have an opinion as an educator in this in this university is what I'm being told?

Brian: No, no you can't. No opinions.

Dusty: So, so and so you're telling that sounds like what you're saying that I need to be more um, I need to see the other side for the genocide that's occurring?

Brian: Does that really sound like that's what I'm saying, though?

Dusty: No that, that's what it sounded like you were saying, in terms of telling me that I need to be more open-minded.

00:08:50 Brian: No, let me give it back to you again. Like for me, again it's my perspective that's all I got, creating students who can think critically about issues, and I think the way that happens most frequently is when they're given those opportunities to have their beliefs challenged back and forth. But with someone who has a sense of impartiality, equality, like a professor who's

helping them think, and maybe even letting the students kind of, I'm sure you've done those before too.

00:09:19 Dusty: I appreciate you as a professor, that you apparently have your own technique for teaching, and I have my own as well, so thank you very much for sharing that technique with me, Brian. I disagree, and I'm going to have my opinions, and I've always expressed my opinions to the students. My opinions.

00:09:42 Brian: Well, not directly exactly all your opinions, but what's your theory on the teaching? How do you approach this?

00:09:48 Dusty: You need to push people and sometimes make them uncomfortable. You need to make sure that they, and if they want to defend themselves, and if they think something differently than me. They need to express that, and they need to tell me that, and then perhaps argue their opinion with me if they think there's something different. I'd be happy to explain why they're wrong, but I have my opinion as well, and I am hired here in order to express my opinion and to help educate the students here. And when I'm not in the classroom, I cannot do that. They're allowed to have their opinions. The students are absolutely allowed to have their opinions, Brian.

00:10:25 Brian: Well, it's kind of you to let them have their opinions. Is there only one way to teach, though? I mean, it's surprising to me.

00:10:31 Dusty: No, but it sounds like you're telling me I need to teach differently.

00:10:35 Brian: Yeah.

00:10:35 Dusty: I've been teaching for approximately 25 years, Brian. I am more than comfortable with my teaching style.

00:10:41 Brian: But here you are in my office on administrative leave because of your teaching style.

00:10:47 Dusty: I've been teaching this way for a long time, Brian. What am I doing that is different, that is offensive at this point? Yeah. Other than expressing my opinion, other than telling the students that they need to defend. People are feeling uncomfortable with what I'm telling them is going on in the world. That is the only thing that is different right now. What is going on in the world is different, not how I teach. I've been teaching the exact same way for a long time. But now I'm expressing things that are being censored by a larger nation that is making academia on large scared. And they want to duck their head and not make noise. And I don't believe that you should stay silent when a genocide is occurring. So I'm speaking up about that in the classroom. I'm letting students know what is going on, what is not being shared out there.

00:11:42 Brian: You feel like that's your job. To educate students. No, to tell them what's going on out there and to argue with them about that if they disagree. That's your job at the university. That's the way you see your job at the university.

00:11:55 Dusty: I see my job as a teacher who educates them to what's going on in the world, political science-wise, and part of that is to challenge their beliefs and make them reflect upon their beliefs and maybe open up their eyes to what else is going on in the world.

00:12:13 Brian: What part of that? Part of what? You said part of that is helping them challenge their beliefs. Is that 100%? Is it 20%? When you're teaching in your methodology, just curious.

00:12:25 Dusty: You want me to mathematically analyze, how much of my job involves what.

00:12:33 Brian: I mean, you're a political science professor. I feel like we analyze statistics all the time.

00:12:38 Dusty: So 100% political science. There you go.

00:12:41 Brian: So 100% of your way of approaching teaching is to take a point where they have to preview –

00:12:46 Dusty: Are we going to analyze my teaching style? Is that where we're going with this?

00:12:49 Brian: Yeah. Okay, so what do you want to know? Because you're here in this meeting with me because the university has taken pause at the way you're interacting with the students.

00:12:57 Dusty: I haven't changed how I've ever interacted with the students.

00:13:00 Brian: What do you think's changed?

00:13:02 Dusty: What's going on in the world.

00:13:03 Brian: And do you feel like that your stance now is to, this is, again, your personal stance is to kind of push back on that?

00:13:12 Dusty: I've always pushed back on what's going on in the world. But right now, the world is pushing back on academia and trying to keep us quiet. So I am speaking out about what's going on in the world. Academia, our bosses, do not like hearing what I am saying. It goes against what the administration wants me to say. And I am not going to stay. Stay quiet. That's called academic freedom.

00:13:37 Brian: Well, you're able to share things, but I think the way the university sees your job, and this is from HR, is not just as 100% taking a stance and getting students to argue with you. That teaching in its profession is broader than that. Maybe it's not always been that way, but the way it is now.

00:13:55 Dusty: Have my reviews in the past ever been bad?

Brian: I have not done an analysis.

Dusty: Okay well I'll tell you right off the bat no no they have.

00:14:03 Brian: There's a lot of bad ones now about students complaining about how you're teaching in class and you wanted specifics things like mentioning your situation with your ex-wife which is unrelated to Gaza. I would assume talking about things with the students that –

00:14:19 Dusty: Using examples of what's going on in my life telling them about what the real world is like.

00:14:24 Brian: Yeah boundaries, man, right? So I mean you've been teaching for a long time, what they don't understand –

00:14:28 Dusty: That people have divorces so that's not a part of what have I shared. I haven't talked about my sex life with my ex. I haven't talked about anything. I've mentioned that I've been divorced and they're upset about that. Yeah okay, well good for them, that they're upset at hearing somebody's divorce. That's 50 percent of the population of the United States so they're going to be upset for a long time if they're upset with me telling them, about my sex life with my ex-wife, I'm telling them that I'm divorced.

00:14:59 Brian: I think it's just trying to tie it into why that's coming up. If it's somehow tied to a point related to the topic or the political debate, it's oftentimes pretty scary.

00:15:10 Dusty: I have been told that there is a transcript, there is a recording of me that one of my students made that I put online. Maybe you can listen to that and you can see what the connection was that I was making that day.

00:15:20 Brian: I've listened to it, for sure.

00:15:21 Dusty: Okay, well then you know the point I was trying to make.

00:15:23 Brian: I did not see the point you were trying to make.

00:15:25 Dusty: Well, then I think you should listen to that again, perhaps, if you want.

00:15:28 Brian: That's fair. Reasonable people can disagree about things. I guess what my concern is that if things just continue in this direction, they're eventually going to let you go from the university. And I'm trying to understand if you want that.

00:15:41 Dusty: I'm a tenured professor. If they want to do that, there's a lot of hoops that need to get gone through in order to do that.

00:15:46 Brian: That's what's happening, though. I mean, I look around at the news.

00:15:49 Dusty: Yes, silencing a professor who is speaking up against a national policy that's coming down from the government about something that is going on. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Bring that to the news. Absolutely.

00:16:04 Brian: Is this your, I don't know, it just feels like a bit of a crusade for you. Like, is this something that important to you.

00:16:11 Dusty: What, speaking out about genocide? Absolutely. I think that the more people should speak out about genocide. Because staying silent leads to nothing. Leads to nothing but more deaths. And who's going to be on the right side of that argument when it comes out of all of the stuff that's going on and the stuff that's coming out now that's being buried, that's being hidden, that people aren't paying attention to? Yeah. So do you think you should stay silent? Is this like Nazi Germany in terms of this, the people who stayed silent? I'm not going to be the one who ducks my head and is afraid to say what's really going on and to educate the students to what's really going on so that they can make informed decisions.

00:16:51 Brian: Yeah, I think that's what the university would like to have.

00:16:53 Dusty: Yes, they're uncomfortable about me sharing that knowledge.

00:16:57 Brian: I think they're more uncomfortable with the singularity at which you push it and that your approach to teaching, if I'm understanding it, is pretty much putting together one idea and having them challenge it. It needs to be more egalitarian, debate-oriented, conversational.

00:17:13 Dusty: Well, thank you for telling me how to manage my classroom.

00:17:15 Brian: I'm just calling it the way I see it, man. That's where you're headed is separation, and I don't want to see that happen. But you seem, for a very smart, intelligent guy, disconnected from the idea that you're now been suspended for two weeks from teaching. You're in a threat assessment meeting with, with me.

00:17:33 Dusty: What do they think is going to occur? What are they afraid of?

00:17:37 Brian: Well, I think... Right now, what they're, I don't think it's fear-based. I think right now what they're concerned about is you're not doing your job. And there's a disagreement.

00:17:47 Dusty: I'm not doing my job because they told me I can't do my job. What are they afraid of me? What are they afraid I'm going to do when I get back in there to do my job? That I'm going to mention something about my ex? You don't want me to talk about my ex? Okay, I won't talk about my ex. There you go. That's covered. Am I not going to educate students to what's going on in the world? Absolutely not. I am going to tell them what's going on in the world. You can't control what I'm going to say in the classroom about the world that is related to the topic I'm supposed to teach.

00:18:14 Brian: Yeah, they totally can. Like, time, place, manner. Like, I can't come into the classroom and talk about how to make crawfish etouffee for a class.

00:18:22 Dusty: But Gaza does relate to political science.

00:18:24 Brian: No, I actually share your beliefs on the Gaza piece. I just, it's a time and place. I can't go into work and just, like, right now, instead of doing a threat assessment, I'm educating you about what I feel about Gaza. It's not the same connection. So it's a time-place piece, man.

00:18:39 Dusty: Educating them to what's going on in the world. Great word. I like the education piece.

00:18:43 Brian: It feels though like what you're not doing is the full education part. And I don't know if there's room for like...

00:18:50 Dusty: I've been educating for a while just like you, Brian. Yeah. And I feel that there is education going on and all of the reviews that I've gotten up to this point have said that education is occurring, has said that I have been one of the most thought-provoking instructors that they have ever encountered.

00:19:06 Brian: Is that your goal, to be a firebrand?

00:19:12 Dusty: My goal is to educate students. I'm not trying to be a firebrand. I'm trying to educate students and get them to listen and get them to dig deeper within themselves and find that depth and find out what's going on in the world.

00:19:25 Brian: We have a shared goal then. I'd like that too. So how do we get there? Like, I think that's good. Like, and I'm not even going to apologize for being a little argumentative with you because that's, we're professors. We've taught. That's what we do. It's actually your whole premise is that arguing is good.

00:19:40 Dusty: Yes, but one can also, arguing from a point of quality is a little different than arguing with somebody who can determine whether I go back to the classroom or not. So you're coming at it from a point of power just like the administration in terms of trying to decide whether I get back into the classroom. But I am not going to back down from that.

00:19:58 Brian: Yeah. I'm really stuck on the power piece because you're –

00:20:01 Dusty: What? You keep on telling me within this that. You don't want them to, and you're the one who's here to decide this. You're the one who's here in order to tell me whether I can get back into the classroom or not.

00:20:12 Brian: Part of the process.

00:20:13 Dusty: So this is not just an argument about Gaza, about teaching styles, about two guys sitting at a bar in order to have a conversation about what's going on, about how to actually approach things. That would be different, and that would also be ignoring what is in front of us right now, which is you are in control of this situation to determine whether I can get back into the classroom. So to do otherwise would be disingenuous.

00:20:32 Brian: Yeah, but isn't that my larger point that I started with, that you're in a power-privileged position teaching the students, and that should be done.

00:20:40 Dusty: Yes, but that's different.

00:20:42 Brian: How so? How is this the same? Well, there's the power being applied unfairly. Through a process like that.

00:20:49 Dusty: For people that pay to sign up for the class. I did not pay for this therapy session, Brian. I did not pay for this assessment. I did not voluntarily come here. I actually came here because the administration told me I needed to if I wanted to go back. Those students pay for that class. My class is filled every single semester. All of those classes, whether it's required, whether it's elective, it is filled. It is filled based on my reviews. It is filled based on what I teach. And they come. And they listen. And they learn. And they get challenged.

00:21:23 Brian: Do you want to keep doing that, I guess, is the question.

00:21:27 Dusty: Brian, you listened to, how long was that recording of me in the class.

00:21:31 Brian: Five minutes and 12 seconds.

00:21:33 Dusty: You listened to five minutes of an entire semester's worth of education. And you're judging everything based on that one five minute lecture that I gave there you don't think

that there's other stuff that goes on in my class you don't think that there is conversation that goes on that I don't ask questions that that I'm just sitting up there I want to hear that I just told you there is there is a conversations that go on on a regular you've taught before you know I'm not just sitting there monologuing for a semester's worth of classes, Brian. Do you do that? No. What other teaching approaches do you use?

00:22:11 Brian: Well I think, again i'd see myself, which I think we agreed upon the idea of education helping people kind of develop new minds.

00:22:17 Dusty: Yes as professors at a university I, I hope you believe in education. I do as well. That's really good that we're on the same page for that.

00:22:25 Brian: I guess it just comes back to, Dusty, if you want to go back.

00:22:28 Dusty: Yes, I want to go back. I've said that.

00:22:30 Brian: Here's the door, and they're saying you need to approach this problem differently.

00:22:34 Dusty: Approach what problem?

00:22:35 Brian: The way students are hearing what you're saying, a singular way of kind of teaching, talking about personal issues in the classroom.

00:22:42 Dusty: I won't talk about my ex-wife in the classroom.

00:22:43 Brian: Excellent. Good. I would hope it doesn't need to be that binary.

00:22:49 Dusty: You're saying that's an issue, and I shouldn't talk about my personal issues. So, the binary of... So do you want me to talk about some of my personal issues in the classroom?

00:22:59 Brian: I mean, you're just being argumentative to be argumentative.

00:23:02 Dusty: I think you're being argumentative at this point because you keep on challenging me and challenge me. I'm agreeing to what you're saying, and now you're saying, oh, you don't have to agree, but you just told me I had to agree if I wanted to get back into the classroom. So I said I'm not talking. So which is it?

00:23:19 Brian: Well, it sounds like you're stuck because on one hand, you're being told to go back in the classroom. On the other hand, you're being told not to go back in the classroom, and you don't know which one to do, and do you want me to be here, do you not want me to be here? They want you to be in the classroom. Where we can get to a place where you're nurturing that kind of educational space and in some of your in this one recording Which listen, I'm perhaps with you on this that I don't think it's particularly fair, students are recording a five minute and 12 second snapshot of what you said. Having your whole life judged upon that and it's not what my business is to do. But it's a starting place for a conversation So if you're like this doesn't represent me –

00:23:57 Dusty: Brian, then let's talk about that represents that idea of that five minutes where I went with that discussion. That's what that represents. Does that represent an entire semester's worth of educational process? Absolutely not. That is a ridiculous concept to even suggest that.

How am I going to test students? How am I going to evaluate them? They're given assignments. Tell me what's going on in the world. There are various assignments, Brian, that I'm not going to spend giving you. If you wish, I'll have my syllabus sent over to you so you can see what my approach is in terms of what they're required to read, what they're required to digest. How they're required to approach it. I follow all of those procedures as well, so if you want to know what those are, then that will be sent over to you when we get out of here. I have no problem doing that if you want to know what my teaching style is.

00:24:45 Brian: I think mostly it's just coming up with a list of things that the school is concerned with, and for whatever reason, they don't seem to be...

00:24:52 Dusty: So what is the school concerned with? Discussing my ex-wife. We got that. Okay, next.

00:24:58 Brian: Okay, that's a broader concept, so it's not only discussing your ex-wife, but any type of tie-ins personally. Is that related to the lesson plan? Is it related to the conversation? That's one thing, for sure.

00:25:07 Dusty: Students shouldn't know about... Continue.

00:25:14 Brian: Students shouldn't know about what.

00:25:15 Dusty: Just continue. Go.

00:25:16 Brian: I'm curious what your last thought was.

00:25:19 Dusty: Shouldn't know about that teachers are real. Is it like a child going into the grocery store and seeing their teacher for the first time and thinking, oh my God, they really eat? Is that the type of situation? I need to be some ethereal, above things messiah that they don't think that I have an outside life. But I won't share anything about my private life in terms of anything that has happened before or in the future. There you go. Next.

00:25:48 Brian: I just feel like you're a little conflicted about whether you want to keep being here teaching. Like they're putting these rules down and it feels like you're –

00:25:54 Dusty: You telling me that you're telling me what I need to do.

00:25:57 Brian: Yeah.

00:25:58 Dusty: How am I conflicted about agreeing with you that I'm going to do what you say?

00:26:01 Brian: Awesome. So yeah, watching personal issues in class beyond just your wife, but sharing things personally that might be considered a boundary violation. We can talk about that more specifically if you'd like. But yeah, that's, I think professionalism is an important aspect of the teaching process. So like we want to be in a place, there's no part of me that doesn't want you here. And my job is to make sure that you can follow these simple things. You've said, great, tell me what they are. Let's follow them. Being more aware of your boundaries in that space.

00:26:32 Dusty: You've said that about three, four times and I agreed to it at least twice so far. If you want me to agree to it more, we can continue to rehash that one. But as far as I'm concerned, that one's already been addressed and is off the table.

00:26:43 Brian: Sounds good. The larger one that we started talking about, was this issue of at what point do you feel comfortable? sharing personally strongly held beliefs this could be anything from –

00:26:57 Dusty: I have always shared my beliefs with my students I think that people should have beliefs and they should be shared. That is the whole thing about getting published you're publishing your thoughts you're publishing all your beliefs, no exception.

Brian: So if you were I'm talking about beliefs about certain topics and –

00:27:14 Dusty: That's what we're talking about right now is I'm being censored about some of those beliefs and being told not to discuss those.

00:27:22 Brian: It's not so much the belief, it is this idea of the one-sided view of it and having them respond simply to argue with you about it. Like I think there's part of that that is setting up an adversarial relationship now we have a number of students coming forward, a number, a number, just there's seven separate reports that were received and there's several different social media seven, six students, seven reports, And, you know, like I think when you started off saying I had all of these really positive ones, which I would believe I would actually like to be in one of your classes myself, I find you a thought-provoking person.

00:28:03 Dusty: I think we can avoid that at this point. There's no need to fluff anybody's ego here, Brian.

00:28:06 Brian: I see. So it's only good for the goose and gander.

00:28:10 Dusty: What? That you're trying to say that you'd love to take one of my classes.

00:28:14 Brian: I find you intellectually challenging. It's surprising at times the things that you believe to me, and then other parts you're kind of, I don't know, I think you like to argue, and I like to argue too.

00:28:25 Dusty: Yes. But the thing is, we are equal. I think there is education. We're not going to go down that road again. We already had that discussion about equality.

00:28:33 Brian: When it's to the students, though, there's a different privilege piece that I'd be concerned about.

00:28:37 Dusty: We've discussed that.

00:28:38 Brian: Good. So that's number two. So being careful about a one-sided... adversarial, aggressive stance on one issue, not looking at other parts of the issue.

00:28:47 Dusty: I am very passionate about what I believe in the classroom. In fact, that's one of the things that I've been complimented about before. I believe that stifling that passion, that, belief, leads to if children want to listen to audiobooks or go about their education that way, that's fine. They can read the cliff notes. They can listen to audiobooks. And they can just hear

somebody teach them a nice soft story that will help them get to bed at night. But hearing about difficult things sometimes takes a difficult conversation. And that needs to be pressed. So if a conversation that's occurring makes them feel uncomfortable, maybe they have to sit with that for a while.

00:29:33 Brian: I think where the university is is putting this line in the sand.

00:29:37 Dusty: What's that line? That I can't express my opinion about these situations?

00:29:41 Brian: Not any opinion all the time you want, no.

00:29:44 Dusty: No, no, about something related to my area of expertise that I am teaching. I'm not teaching something else that is horrible in this university. I'm not teaching something outside of my, of my bailiwick. I am, I am not teaching mathematics and going on about Gaza. I'm teaching political science. What's going on in the world is part of what I am supposed to teach.

00:30:12 Brian: Critically thinking about what's going on in the world is a very important part of what you should be teaching. I think the disagreement here is the critical thinking part. That you're equating a singular this is what it is. Rather than what we see in an academic program and I mean we've been going I feel like you maybe we've been going around this a couple times, It's really I'm the deliverer of this news from the university and I apologize if you haven't heard it before. I'm trying to be straight with you.

00:30:39 Dusty: I haven't heard you apologize. Is that what what but what? No, the university has not communicated with me They've been silent for quite a while about what their problem is with me Other than the fact that I know that there's a video out there of me teaching that they find offensive that my colleagues do not Respond to me and my emails and won't tell me to my face as to what their problem is So there's that stuff that's going on as well that apparently my colleagues are filing problem problems with me as well as the students now.

00:31:08 Brian: Yeah, you rub people the wrong way, rub ,rub people. What does that mean? You rub people the wrong way. You're argumentative for the sake of it. I don't know, man. Like I didn't really have a play one way or the other here, but I started with trying to understand and right off the bat, It was just this big argument. So I don't know what to tell you. At one point, I'd like to see you go back to the classroom. I would like to go back to the classroom. Yeah, I mean, part of my threat stuff, which we've talked about, I don't see you getting an Uzi and coming and shooting up the school. I don't see that as any part of this piece. What I see is this pedagogical problem of assuming that the way you're going to teach and get kids to learn is by just saying the one thing.

00:31:49 Dusty: So you disagree with my pedagogy. And so as a result, so it's not about threat. So the threat is I am not a threat other than the fact that I am not willing to toe the line to somebody else's pedagogy.

00:32:03 Brian: Yes. Yeah, that's it. So the threat part can be pretty simple. We can clear this for you, and I can tell back to HR.

00:32:10 Dusty: I think that we can go then. The threat is not a threat. It is about listening to the pedagogy, which I believe should be addressed at a higher level.

00:32:18 Brian: Yeah.

00:32:19 Dusty: You're here to assess the threat.

00:32:20 Brian: So let's do that.

00:32:21 Dusty: So at this point, you're here to assess this threat.

00:32:24 Brian: So let's do it.

00:32:24 Dusty: And I'm not threatening anybody other than through my educating the people who come here. So sign up for my class voluntarily.

00:32:35 Brian: Let me assess the threat. That's what we're doing. And then we can get you back to HR. And quite frankly, if the problem is they have a disagreement in how you're interacting with the students, they'll put you on a leave again. And you'll not be back here because I'm going to tell them I already met with him once. Didn't seem like he was a threat. Seems like there's some disagreements about how he's teaching.

Dusty: Thank you.

Brian: And I'm really not trying to be a dick about this, man. I promise you this isn't my goal. I do truly like people who have interesting minds and can look at different things. It's probably why we both, I don't know if it is or not. It's why I got into this and hire it. I think it's a good place to be to. challenge minds. I just think there's some different ways to get there.

00:33:18 Dusty: There are different ways. And as educators, we have different approaches.

00:33:21 Brian: Absolutely. And you're right. Let me just say this right off the bat. You've probably known this since you sat down. Your teaching and how you're doing that really is more tied to your academic program and HR. If they feel like at that stage, it's not fitting within the conduct, becoming of a tenured faculty member. That's not really what I do. I'm trying to see if you're going to come back and have a violent episode. And I don't see any indication of that. I mean, the pen, you're kind of working that pretty hard, but I don't think you're going to stab me with it. Like I, you know, you have because I have a frustration. You have like a frustration thing going with that.

Dusty: Yeah. I'm a little frustrated.

Brian: Yeah, that's fine. Yeah.

00:34:02 Dusty: Would you like is the pen feeling threatening to you? Would you like me to put my pen aside?

00:34:06 Brian: I kind of like it. It's like, copper or something. I actually think it's a cool pen.

Dusty: Thank you.

Brian: Yeah. I just, I don't know, man, like, I feel you, and this is going to feel psychobabbly, but, like, I feel, like, some of the things you're telling me are, you feel people aren't getting back to you, maybe some of your colleagues are complaining, it used to not be a problem, now it is, what's changed, that's, that's part of where I'm trying to help, but, like, I don't want to disrespect you and say, all right, this is a threat assessment, I'm going to ask you all these, like, secret little questions, and kind of, it's as simple as this, I don't see any imminent threat right now from you that you're going to hurt somebody but, what has changed is –

00:34:42 Dusty: What's going on in the world, yeah, that has been what has changed, yeah, and I am, and they do not like that, because, when did this change, about a year ago, in terms of the current election, so, now everybody wants to duck their head, and I'm not ducking, I am not ducking, I'm not hiding under a table from an earthquake, I am out there speaking like I believe we are morally and ethically obligated to. That everybody else won't respond to, won't talk to me about. That's the problem that's going on with my colleague.

00:35:22 Brian: There's a nobility in that, that I hear you saying.

00:35:26 Dusty: I'm not here to be nobility. I'm here to educate kids. That's what I'm here to do. I'm not here to be somebody sitting in a high horse trying to be noble. I'm here to just be on the front lines with everybody else, sharing this knowledge with everybody that's going on out there.

00:35:41 Brian: That's good to hear.

00:35:42 Dusty: In my bailiwick, within my section of the world that I am supposed to. I'm not here teaching a counseling class and going off about Gaza. I am talking about something that is appropriate to my subject and to my expertise.

00:35:57 Brian: What are you doing next Tuesday at 6? Do you want to jump in my class as a guest speaker? I'm just kidding with you.

00:36:04 Dusty: Yeah, let me have my own class back first.

00:36:06 Brian: You're a smart guy, man. Like, I'm trying to pull together, like, someone who's giving a lecture. Like, there's two options, right? You don't remember or you're just totally disconnected with this, but you don't see the reference to the razor and the sharpening of the strop being something that might, in this generation, offend some kid who's, like, he's talking about razors and cutting things and not being disposable. And I'm a disposable man, like my wife has left me to. Like, it's worrisome, and it's so out of character for someone who's having these higher arguments with me.

00:36:43 Dusty: So we're going back to the five minutes of my lecture. And is this related to threat assessment? Because you're going back to that five minutes of lecture and then addressing it and trying to tie it back into my entire, are we going back to my pedagogy? Where are we going with this? Because you've gone, you just made a left turn.

00:37:03 Brian: I just feel like you're playing dumb a little bit, man. Not that you are dumb, but do you not see as an intelligent man when you reference a razor and sharpening it in a classroom, that might make someone...

00:37:16 Dusty: Sharpening your wit, sharpening things, honing it, honing your beliefs. That's what we're here to do. Because people don't like to talk about razors. Because people don't like to talk about history. Because people, you don't learn from what occurred in terms of understanding. So I'm making analogies. I'm making comparisons. I'm making, I'm educating them through comparison. You're making a modest proposal.

00:37:37 Brian: Listen, Jonathan Swift, you're making a good point, but he paid for that too. So if you're going to take a political stance... in a university job, like and I get the nobility and I think it is noble it's a high integrity it's not nobility and like, bourgeoisie but it's like giving a shit.

00:37:57 Dusty: People will take five minutes out of this lecture right now.

00:38:00 Brian: You're really hung up on that huh?

00:38:01 Dusty: Yeah, five minutes that you're judging me on in terms of the recording.

00:38:07 Brian: So yes let me ask you then. Let me ask you a question is that five minutes at all, different, than the totality of the lectures? Is it way off? Is it a one-time event, one blue moon? Or is that representative? What do you think?

00:38:21 Dusty: And it's a stupid question. It is a piece of the puzzle, Brian, just like everything else. It needs to be connected to the larger world. It needs to be connected to the students' lives. It needs to be connected to my life, which apparently I can't do anymore in terms of connecting that to my life. So I won't do that anymore. You want me to connect it to the students' lives, to what's going on in the world, to what's going on at this university, to what's going on in the administration? I will be happy to do that. My personal life, I will not connect that puzzle piece anymore. We've already made that agreement. I'm not going to do that. So, in terms of that, percentage-wise, what does that represent?

I don't know, Brian. If you wish to record an entire lecture, an entire two to three hours of one of my lectures, please do, and review it completely, and then analyze it, and then we could talk in depth about what it is and what you disagree with. Then we can perhaps have something as professors having a discussion about what's going on in the world, about the topic of conversation, not coming at it from a point of deciding whether I can get back into the classroom or not. So, that's the inequality that is occurring, that talking about the percentage of my discussion and what I am doing in that five minutes that was recorded. Taken out of context, taken out of, again.

00:39:40 Brian: What do you want, again? You want to go back, but they're asking you to do these things differently. You've said yes.

00:39:45 Dusty: You've said I'm not a threat.

00:39:47 Brian: Well, so we need to do the threat assessment. I have a couple other questions, but I don't see a current threat, no.

00:39:52 Dusty: Okay.

00:39:53 Brian: But I'd like to ask some more questions.

Dusty: Go ahead. We were talking about other things. Go ahead.

00:39:57 Brian: So what? I can ask some other questions now about threat.

00:40:01 Dusty: Can you?

00:40:02 Brian: I would like to.

Dusty: You may.

Brian: Thank you. So we talked about there is a lack of presence of a direct threat. And this is my area of expertise, in the same way politics is yours. So that doesn't seem to be there, but there's things that you say. that have caused concern. We call this feeling threatened, right? And the issue here is that a lot of times...

00:40:26 Dusty: Students nowadays feel threatened by a lot of things.

00:40:27 Brian: Yeah, that's what I was about to say. So feeling threatened is not our rule. There's criminal threatening...

00:40:32 Dusty: By discussing razors and discussing genocide, they feel threatened.

00:40:35 Brian: And your wife and feeling disposable and, yeah. And then again, it's a five-minute...

00:40:40 Dusty: Disposable culture and discussing culture. We've discussed that I'm not going to discuss my wife anymore, so if we want to keep on going back to that, we can. But I think we've discussed that a lot.

00:40:52 Brian: You're very frustrating to talk with, and I'd imagine we probably share that opinion of each other. Is that fair?

00:40:59 Dusty: I would agree with you, Brian. We share that opinion of each other.

00:41:02 Brian: Can reasonable people just be there? Is that all right.

00:41:05 Dusty: Sure. Okay. So tell me about your ex-wife, Brian. Do you have one?

00:41:12 Brian: I really wouldn't talk about that.

00:41:13 Dusty: How about the last time you were fired? So we want to talk and have a reasonable conversation. I think it should come from a place of equality.

00:41:19 Brian: Yeah. Again, like it's just not quite sure I'm following your train of thought here because we, I thought just had a point of agreement where professionalism and not talking about those things would be good. And now you're asking me.

00:41:32 Dusty: You keep on bringing mine up at the same time and saying that I'm bringing it up. So I figure if you're bringing my personal issues up, even though I say I don't want to talk about it anymore, I'm not going to talk about it anymore. You keep on bringing it up and saying, well, why do you think this is appropriate? I'm not discussing it anymore. And then you're like, but you discussed it, but I'm not going to discuss it anymore because you told me not to discuss it. So again, we're going around in circles on that one. Do we want to move on to a different point?

00:41:58 Brian: Nice. Yeah. All right. So in the threat space, the other things that we ask about are around social connections with other people. Curious about who. I don't need like their names, but what's a typical social connection with friends, colleagues, intimate partners? What's your level of connection in that space.

00:42:35 Dusty: Yeah. I appreciate that. Thank you.

00:43:00 Brian: In terms of eating, sleeping, are there questions that we talk about with threat trying to look at what we call catalyst events, things that lump up? So has those areas been satisfactory for you lately.

00:43:14 Dusty: For me, I am satisfied with what is going on.

00:43:17 Brian: With your eating and sleeping, are you sleeping well?

00:43:20 Dusty: I'm sleeping how I think I've slept historically.

00:43:24 Brian: Has that historically been well?

00:43:27 Dusty: I think everybody has their times when they sleep more and times when they sleep less. I'm eating fine. My sleep is sufficient for me to function. I think and I write later at night. That is not a problem for me. That is how I usually plan my lessons. That is usually how I plan my lectures. That is when I do my best work. At night, I go out, and I actually think about what's going on. Like, I think other people should be thinking about what's going on in the world.

00:44:05 Brian: Do you do that Hemingway – writing, typewriter, shotgun, in case it gets too serious?

00:44:10 Dusty: I'm not going to kill myself, Brian. Great threat assessment right there, but no, that's not going to occur.

00:44:14 Brian: Saw through my ruse.

00:44:15 Dusty: I don't know if it was a ruse. One of your least subtle comments you've made here today, Brian.

00:44:21 Brian: I feel like I've been fairly direct. Probably too much so.

00:44:24 Dusty: You have been very direct at times. Sometimes, repeatedly.

00:44:29 Brian: More often than not. What's that coin? That's it? It's a coin. Nice. I like it. A little order, a little chaos. Yeah. Thanks for sharing that. Have it for a while?

00:44:51 Dusty: Long enough, I think that we've all had Order and Chaos for a very long time, Brian.

00:44:55 Brian: See? This is why I think we'd be friends, because that's funny. That's a nice layered piece there. Eating, sleeping. Gun access.

00:45:09 Dusty: Yes, I own guns.

00:45:11 Brian: What you got?

00:45:12 Dusty: I have a handgun. I have a 1911 pistol that I like to fire at the range. Do I bring it to school? Absolutely not. I know the boundaries for that.

00:45:20 Brian: I knew that.

00:45:21 Dusty: No, you didn't know that. That's why you asked about it.

00:45:23 Brian: You think you brought it to school? No, I didn't think. I'm just checking my list. I don't think someone's going to bring a gun to school. No.

00:45:30 Dusty: We all have weapons, Brian. Everybody has weapons all around us right now.

00:45:35 Brian: The world is a weapon.

00:45:36 Dusty: Yes.

00:45:36 Brian: And a vampire.

00:45:37 Dusty: And a car. And anything is a weapon at this point in front of us. And that's what's going on right now is the discussion about weapons and how they're being used against people in other places in the world.

00:45:51 Brian: There's no disagreement I got. In fact, we probably line up pretty evenly on divestment, on the current political dumpster fire that's going on. And I also really align with the challenge and the kiddos that we got here at the college. I think that's what we need. I'm a John Houseman, paper chase kind of guy.

I think the most powerful professors I remember from my college, this is a personal story so you're going to have to deal with it, were not always the easiest to get along with. It was Dr. Stein. And he would go, "Van Brunt, what does this mean to you?" Like, not a guy that made me feel at ease.

My hope is... I almost feel like even the way I say it's going to be rough. My hope is you find a way to tone down the parts you can and feel comfortable with and stay here and shape the minds. Because I think that's a noble, and I know that wasn't your favorite word, but it's an integrity piece for yourself. I would truly want my own kids to take a class with you.

00:46:51 Dusty: Good. I hope they sign up and that they sign up for my classes, Brian. And I would love for you to write that in your evaluation about me when you are submitting that to...

00:47:01 Brian: Oh, yeah. No, I will...

00:47:02 Dusty: Please, please tell them that I am okay to go back and you would love for your children to sign up for my class.

00:47:10 Brian: Oh, no, I think you'd go back for like three weeks and we'd be not back here, but I think they'd start moving towards termination. It's a bummer, but like that's your free choice. And I hope it doesn't play out that way. Truly, I'll be rooting for you, but like...

00:47:25 Dusty: Don't you want your children to be educated by me, Brian? Absolutely. Good, good. Then please write that in your assessment.

00:47:32 Brian: I will include that. What we do with the assessment, too, I wanted to kind of let you know this, is when I write it, I send it back to the person I just talked with, and I'd love to get some of your feedback on it, parts that you agree with, parts that you don't.

00:47:44 Dusty: I have no problem giving you my feedback about what you write about me. That's true. I would be happy to grade that paper for you, Brian.

00:47:51 Brian: No red pen, I feel like.

00:47:53 Dusty: If you want one, I have one. I am more than happy to use it.

00:48:00 Brian: Let me think in my head about any other questions I have that I need to ask. Impatient psychiatric history?

Dusty: None.

Brian: Medications for psychiatric reasons?

Dusty: None.

Brian: Talked about, no, we didn't really ask that. I guess it was kind of hinted at a bit. Alcohol use, what's your average, what would you tell your doctor? You know, they're like. Couple beers a week, couple drinks a week, not a whole bunch of nothing.

00:48:24 Dusty: I don't keep track. I am an adult. I drink. I will have beverages. I will go out to the bar. And that is where I sometimes do my schoolwork. That is sometimes where I grade my papers. I go out and I sit at the bar and I sit there and I actually grade the papers while sitting there. I have a table at the local bar where I usually go and do at the local pub, tavern, establishment, where I will often go have dinner and a drink as an adult and have a beverage. I used to go out with my colleagues after work in order to do that. They no longer join me. But now I go out and I drink.

00:49:08 Brian: Sorry that they don't join you anymore.

00:49:11 Dusty: I am sorry as well, Brian. It is a little disappointing.

Brian: Drugs?

Dusty: But are you offering them to me? No, I do not do drugs, Brian.

00:49:27 Brian: I wasn't. Weed, edibles, nothing like that? Okay. These are part of the threat assessment questions.

00:49:33 Dusty: I had a feeling. No, you're being very concrete about this. You're being very clear, and I appreciate that.

00:49:38 Brian: Yeah, no. I think we have a lot of similar goals. I just want to make sure you get where you want to be. And what I can do to help, I think the threat part, I'm not seeing it. And I know you were joking a bit, maybe, about me putting that in with my kids. But when I write these reports, a lot of it is just what I'm seeing. And I'm seeing someone who, as I've said, I think we get into some disagreeable spots. It probably happens with others. But where does that cross a behavioral line for HR and what they expect from a teacher at the university?

That's not my call. I'm the threat assessment guy. I'm looking at this from, are you a danger to hurting someone else? And I didn't see that from the very moment I sat down with you, you know? Like, and I see someone who I think could use some people in their corner, but...

00:50:23 Dusty: In the future, I suggest that perhaps you start with that. If that's what you see from the moment that you sit down with me, perhaps telling me that the second I sit down might be a little bit more disarming to having a conversation with me in terms of where you want to discuss things. Or we could have just ended it there and you said I could have gone home as well.

00:50:43 Brian: Well, I would have missed you during that time.

00:50:44 Dusty: I have a feeling that you're missing me, might be slightly overstated. Yeah.

00:50:52 Brian: I think the map is not the territory. I think sometimes the problem is not so simply stated. And if I could have ended this interview by just saying, hey, man, you all right? That's not how it works. I had to spend some time with you, and I'm sorry if it was longer than it needed to be, but... I'm glad that we had the chance to talk. So next steps here, get you back over to HR. I'm going to write my report. I will send that to you in the next 24 hours. If email's okay, send it that way. Whatever you're comfortable with, you can track change, you can redline. I can't promise I'm going to take all the changes, but I want to hear them. And if I'm not taking a change, I would be happy to grade that paper for you.

00:51:38 Dusty: I would give you my opinion on your writing. Thank you. I think that that would be an academic collaboration I could participate in.

00:51:49 Brian: I appreciate that. There's a lot of em-dashes in there with the whole AI stuff, so if you're all right with that, too. I'm just kidding.

00:51:55 Dusty: I'm not a fan of AI, Brian.

00:51:58 Brian: Why is that? That's surprising to me. Is it just not something you're into?

00:52:04 Dusty: Brian, we were wrapping things up.

00:52:07 Brian: Oh, I was just starting.

00:52:09 Dusty: Oh, oh, we're getting to that, aren't we?

00:52:11 Brian: No, you're right. We're wrapping things up. I really appreciate you coming in, Dusty. I wish I could have been more help. And the help that I can give you is not treating you like an infant and going through this assessment. You've answered the questions I've asked. I believe you. I think you're very truthful. I think there's some challenges in the classroom, but that's not for me to say. As you've pointed out a couple times, like, I've listened to that. I'm like, yeah, you know, he's kind of right. Like, that's a university issue. So if I can be an assistant in the future with something, my door is open. And, you know, if you need someone on the space, I wish we could go out and get a drink. Can't do that.

00:52:51 Dusty: Maybe once everything has settled, we can have a discussion outside. I'd like that.

00:52:56 Brian: Legit, you've been at it 30 years, and you do have a lot of really good evals.

00:53:00 Dusty: Thank you very much, Brian.

00:53:03 Brian: Well, thank you for spending the time, and we'll talk again.