

Dr. Brian Van Brunt Interview Transcript

Ella Moreau Case, October 2025

00:00:00 Brian: Hello, my name is Brian. I work with the university, and they asked me to talk to you a little bit about some of the social media posts and things that have been going on. I know you talked with a couple other folks earlier, I think maybe from Conduct, the CARE team, but my role as working with the university, I do what's called threat assessment. So in these times where people see something that bothers them, or I think the technical term is like freaks them out, like they kind of end up over here. And the last thing I'll say about it just to kind of start us off is I always start from a position that when I see something or someone's coming into my office, it's, I don't make like an assumption about these things. So there's times where people get worried about things that they really shouldn't be worried about. And other times where people maybe should worry about something more that they're ignoring. So I just don't want you to feel like I've made any decisions or anything as we go forward. This is, I've read some of the social media, they took some screen caps and sent them to me, but I really want to kind of hear from you Where that all was going. And that's kind of where we're at. So I'll throw it out and just kind of maybe you can describe to me what what, What your take is on what's happened with the university, what your feelings are, what played out if we could start there?

00:01:04 Ella: Yeah, I guess there's some confusion, about why I'm being assessed as a threat. Like I feel like I have an assertive personality. I feel like I've been outspoken and not necessarily like minced my words, but I don't feel like I've said or done anything that's like actively threatening or a call to violence. So it's a little confusing to be in this situation right now.

00:01:27 Brian: Definitely, and it can feel almost sometimes like it's the masses. Like I make this maybe inappropriate joke about like the Frankenstein mob chart. Like this is a problem, we almost destroy it. So I think there's, especially in this day and age with like campus attacks and shootings and things where we're paying attention more to things early, but that has this negative piece of it, which I think you're experiencing where you're getting called in, you don't really know what's going on. It's like a free speech issue, academic issue. So yeah, that's part of it too.

So you're a mortuary science student. Okay. And then this, there was some, I guess, I'm gonna use the word tension between you and the faculty, but help me understand the tension better. It's probably not the best word.

00:02:08 Ella: Yeah, I feel like I've been in kind of maybe a building conflict with my professor for a minute. I feel like he's been really dismissive, really condescending towards me. I do feel kind of targeted by him. It's gotten to the point where I feel like it's affecting my grading at this point. So I feel like tension is not a bad way to put it, sure.

00:02:32 Brian: Yeah. And let me break down the words because dismissed, I think, feels different than maybe like condescending was another one. That stood out in my mind. Can you talk about dismissed? Like how does it feel like what part of dismissed, like just not paid attention to, like not respected?

00:02:47 Ella: I mean, both, to be perfectly honest. I mean, as an example, I challenged his opinion during a class fairly recently. And he just called me naive and then moved on rather than

really contributing to the conversation or exchanging ideas. with me, so that felt dismissive and condescending, like I definitely felt talked down to.

00:03:13 Brian: Yeah, and I'm sorry for that, because that should not be, like one of the core elements of an education, is critical thinking, like the ability to invoke that from students. So when you have a professor, she had a case recently with this, where a professor feels very strongly about something, but doesn't actually create an environment for the students to actually learn and talk about it, but just wants to, so that's what I feel when he says that you were naive, like that's wrong on so many levels, because it's embarrassing, shame isn't the way that we help people learn, so that, sorry for that, that's rough.

00:03:47 Ella: Yeah, no, I mean, that's a really good way to put that, I mean, I definitely did feel shamed.

00:03:54 Brian: And not that you can't handle that. Like, I think the other part of it is, like, when I struggle, you can tell I've been a therapist for a while. This role is a little different. I'm doing, like, a threat assessment. But you can see the therapist training in me. And I think some of it's, like, it's not that you can't handle it, because clearly you come in with a presence. You're well-spoken. You're very tied into, I think, what's going on. But I also find that you shouldn't, I think about it this way. What could you have achieved? What could you have done if you didn't have to deal with these daily hassles of being called naive or having that, like, extra? This image of like a barnacle, like on a whale or like just slows you down in other ways that keeps you from achieving what you want to achieve.

00:04:33 Ella: Right. And I mean, I definitely feel like it has started affecting me in more prevalent ways. Like I feel a lot more withdrawn, less motivated to go to class. I'm still going. I'm still participating. My grades are good. But, you know, it's definitely been harder.

00:04:48 Brian: Yeah. And this is a bit of I don't know much about mortuary science, but I think it's like a certification program. So it's not like a. You've got to take all of them and get certified to be able to do the work. So it's almost like nursing. It's like an all or nothing. You've got to pass this thing. So if he's a barrier, that's...

00:05:04 Ella: Yeah, no, I mean, that's been part of the concern as well because, I mean, like you're saying, this is not an elective choice for me. Like, I have to complete and succeed in this program to be certified. And I also, I don't remember if I mentioned that there was an issue with a paper I was graded on recently. I tried to reach out to him about, for clarity on that. I was never given a response. And this is what I mean by feeling personal at this point and also actively affecting my grading and my ability to succeed in this class.

00:05:34 Brian: Yeah, those are both really valid points that would piss me off. The power differential when someone's teaching and, like, and this feels a little philosophical, but it's important. Like, it's part of our school's mission is to develop people in their program, to think critically, to feel supported. Not to make it easy, but challenged all the way through. And that's something that you didn't experience. And, in fact, it's almost worse than that. You've experienced the negative where you're being criticized and not giving opportunities to move forward. So that's.

00:06:03 Ella: Yeah, no, I mean, that's completely accurate. Yeah.

00:06:07 Brian: I read, this is always awkward, sort of like the threat assessment thing. Like, it's such a big word. Like, it's essentially a triage assessment, if you will, and having some medical background. You appreciate that. It's a first pass to try to decide if there's something bigger here. Sure. I'll tell you this up front. I didn't see anything huge here in what I saw. And I think this is one of those times where the college is gathering some information protectively. And part of it's. I think making sure there's not a threat that's always you know part of it but the other part is this often turn into opportunities to make sure you have the support you need to do what you need to do and if we need to talk to professors and instructors who are calling their students naive in class these are not good instructional qualities so it's not your job to have to fix, instructors they went to school for that but when these things come up to us I take it personally as a member of the staff yeah to address those within so it's not just you that's being like called in for the conversation that we're also looking at the professor's way of interacting with you that's part of it too.

00:07:08 Ella: Yeah I mean I appreciate that I haven't really known what other channels to go to or resources to try and access to go about this up to this point I know that there's other students in the program who have felt similarly maybe less targeted than me because they're less outspoken but have also felt dismissed and like dissenting opinions about, different, topics he's covered and his opinions and I've tried to motivate other people to maybe talk to the dean with me to address that but they are afraid of creating waves they don't want to be targeted they're more conflict avoidant than I am and I'm also honestly kind of afraid as an individual being targeted further if I do make that jump at this point right so I don't I don't really know what else to do.

00:07:59 Brian: Yeah so while it's an odd way to come into our office with threat assessment and having both those packets around the printouts and things no one would like that in their past that I can't imagine but it's also like this opportunity like more realistically to try to, Just smooth things over, but like to go back to the idea that you should be in an academic environment that's free of harassment, discrimination, all of these things so that you can learn. And there's times where maybe people have misses.

Maybe it's just it sounds, again, my mortuary science knowledge, not great, but I did a little research. It sounds like you're arguing for this kind of naturalistic process and more in line with holistic and love it. More traditional, like a little older, a little, and that maybe is a bit of a clash in the science as well, right.

00:08:48 Ella: I mean, yeah.

00:08:49 Brian: Or the business, either way. Oh, I'm sorry. Sorry, I don't have mine, too.

00:08:52 Ella: No, I mean, I definitely think that is the clash, you know, but he seems to be more traditional just for the sake of tradition and not willing to really argue his point as to why or have a dialogue about it, like exchange ideas. And it's just, you know, as I've been saying, really dismissive towards me. Absolutely. And I do challenge that. But yeah, I mean, I think that I think that's a fair way to describe the conflict that we have with each other. Yeah. Differences in ideas.

00:09:22 Brian: And it's also this other layer, like you started off with like dismissive, but also like condescending, which doesn't have to be like a semantic diagram, the sandwich diagram, the sandwich diagram, the sentence. But like they're different to me a little bit. Like the dismissive is like sort of ignoring naive, whatever. And the condescending just has, I guess they overlap a bit here. But like it feels like there might be other things with being like, like, you don't know what you're doing. This is you just need to kind of listen to me, share information with you, which isn't really the best teaching approach. Is that part of it, too? Tell me more about that.

00:09:57 Ella: Sure. Yeah. I mean, I felt like being called naive was very condescending. Yeah, for sure. I mean, that definitely was rude and condescension to me. But there's been times where, like, I've been graded on things and just been told. Like, I'm not accepting the realities of the industry. Yeah. And that feels very vague and also just kind of like talking down to me because I've spent a lot of time also researching these things on my own. And, you know, I can I feel like very concisely explain the ideals that I have and why I have them. And I'm not even being given an opportunity to do that. I'm just being told right out the door that I don't know what I'm talking about.

00:10:37 Brian: Yeah. No, that makes sense. And it's not, again, ideal what we should be dealing with. It's like it's yeah, I just I almost want to say when like or. Like maybe we just have a disagreement and the field's not static and is evolving constantly and I'm kind of newer in it and have new ideas. Like as someone who was trained as a therapist, the systems and the ways of thinking back when I was trained, like there's been new innovations, new ways of talking to people, new techniques, new training to say in a dismissive way, this is just how we do it. It's not really teaching anyone anything like the why and the maybe we want to do it differently now, right.

00:11:12 Ella: Yeah, no, I would agree with that for sure.

00:11:14 Brian: So I'm sorry that's how it got you in here. My hope is this can be, if you're open to it, a bit of a pivot to like how do we help you move forward in your space, have the support that you need, and if there's some instruction that we need to do with the faculty to make sure that they're approaching this in the ways that are in line with the university, we want to do that too.

00:11:34 Ella: Yeah, I mean, my goal is not necessarily for him to be reprimanded for more than anything. I would just like accountability and changed behavior. Yeah, you know, like that's I would just like to feel respected and my class environment, you know, I mean, all of us would write like it's such a basic human desire to be in a safe. I mean, it's kind of where we get title nine and title six and threat protections and conduct code. It's we want the college to be a safe place for people to learn and not have to worry about all this other stuff.

00:12:04 Brian: We want to focus on our studies. Yeah. Yeah. Your coffee is a little further from you. Can I hand it to you? Would you like it? Yeah, I feel like every time I had a sip of coffee, I'm like, I'm going to drink this and you can't have any. So I will pass that over. Thank you. No, we definitely have that in common, like coffee, good.

Are there things with the instructor, like I absolutely hear what you're saying, we stop here with the reprimand, like A, not what I'm hearing you ask for, and B, not something that you personally,

on top of everything else going on, have to worry about. It's just something when stuff like this comes up, when we find a professor saying someone's naive or how this might play out, like it sometimes can be indicative of other teaching pieces that we want to think about how to present this differently. So that part, I want to tackle that on our own and have you be an ally in that space. But the part I'm really concerned about is like how do we get you back to where you need to be. So from our perspective, there's some questions that I'll have just to make sure, that whole threat thing. I already said reading what I heard in the reports and things, I'm not seeing that screaming at me. But I want to just be thorough and have some of those questions that you feel comfortable answering.

00:13:15 Ella: Yeah, yeah, sure.

00:13:17 Brian: But more important than that. Uh-huh. Like truly, more important. important than that is that when you leave here even though the way you came in might have been it's a mandated assessment you got a letter from our office that doesn't feel good. I'm guessing intimidating yeah right like no matter how we write it it's on our letterhead and it's scary and the word threat assessment's somewhere in there so it's absolutely and I don't want to assume this but you probably have other things going on in your life right like studying and work and friends yeah so like to have to take time out of your day to come in and have to do this for your social media I'd be annoyed you're actually less annoyed than I might be in this situation I'm like why am I being called in so just appreciate you coming in and talking with me about it so sure um.

I can say if it's useful like when I look at some of the posts that were made and these were you know I think you have the same packet I do um the first thing that struck me is I love the like icon avatar I think it's super cute with the skull and like matches your hair I'm guessing obviously uh at least today I don't know but like it just it evokes to me right off the bat a, to me, a little bit of a playfulness with it, and this gets into how other people might read it differently. Like, if someone described this to me and I didn't see it, and they said, there's a picture of a skull with red, bloody colored hair. Like people are like, oh my God, we have to go find, and then you look at it and you're like, oh no, this is not really that at all. So I'm seeing you posting things about your opinions primarily around pushing against kind of the older version of how moratory services works and you're kind of bringing some new ideas, the pod thing with the tree, like those are cool. Is that like a fair assessment, like where your headspace was or is there more like behind those? I know there's a bunch, but.

00:15:00 Ella: No, I mean, I think so. I mean, you know, one of the central ideals, that I really do believe is that the death industry is really predatory on grieving people and ultimately unsustainable, like for socially and for the earth, you know, and that these are things that should be addressed and talked about more. So I kind of use my social media as a platform to do that.

00:15:23 Brian: Yeah, which is sort of, I think, one of the higher reasons it exists, right? If we can possibly say that's why the gram is good. Like it's elevating some of our voices that maybe weren't elevated before on important topics. So I like that. I actually really love the predatory part. Let me not assume I have, I think I know what it means. But when you talk about it being predatory, can you break that down for me a little bit.

00:15:44 Ella: Financially exploitative on grieving people. That's where it was going.

00:15:47 Brian: Yeah, right. Someone at a point in pain would be like, hey, you can buy this.

00:15:51 Ella: It's very vulnerable, yeah.

00:15:52 Brian: Right. Here's this lovely coffin with gold accents and trim. Exactly. Didn't you love them so much to buy them something wonderful? Or this piece of crap coffin that, obviously, like, hyperbole, but, like, that's the feeling. Yeah, absolutely. The financial. Are there other parts to it? You mentioned kind of the environmental piece, too.

00:16:09 Ella: Yeah, I mean, the process of embalming is really harmful for the earth. And for our health as living people, too. Like, those chemicals are very caustic. They get into water systems. They get into, like, food supplies. Yeah. So it really comes full circle and, like, affecting us and our living state as well. Yeah.

00:16:30 Brian: For sure. Does he, I don't know if it's fair to ask this, but did, like, I'm guessing you've maybe shared some of the ideas with him in class or in group discussions. Is there a receptiveness to it or it's immediate pushback or?

00:16:40 Ella: It feels like immediate pushback and dismissal. You know, like I, like I was saying, like being called naive and then just moving on without any conversation.

00:16:48 Brian: Condescending.

00:16:49 Ella: Yeah, absolutely.

00:16:50 Brian: Which, I mean, the part I hate most about that, I get a little philosophical sometimes until my coffee fully kicks in. But, like, it's so much, like, no one likes that. Like, you'd put this professor and a training thing and a conference and if the instructor teaching him a new concept was condescending like no one would respond well that's not a good teaching metaphor so it's it's unfortunate that happened but also like it's not really what our school's about. So right and it's you know.

00:17:20 Ella: I know that I have an assertive personality and I know that that can be intimidating to some people or possibly bring up defensiveness but I also as a student don't really feel like it's my responsibility to gentle parent somebody in a position of power over me professionally.

00:17:37 Brian: Yeah for sure. Like and there's so many parallels to like tokenism with people of color being asked to sort of rectify a situation that they're in right space for I like to think myself even though I'm a staff here that allyship part that when we see something it just doesn't track you know there's a responsibility to address it like these things are often more complicated than than they might first appear.

00:17:58 Ella: So yeah I agree with that.

00:18:00 Brian: Are there other students in class that maybe share some of your perspective with him? You mentioned there were maybe some others with some reports and things. They would echo what you're saying, is that?

00:18:10 Ella: Yeah, a little bit. Like, I've been in a group chat with other students in my program who have also, you know, spoken within the chat into me about disagreeing with his

opinions, not liking his attitude, feeling pushback about that. But all of them, like I was discussing with wanting to go to the dean and put these things into statements, they haven't felt as comfortable making waves. Yeah. So, you know, I don't feel like necessarily other people are feeling targeted in the way that I am just because I'm more outspoken about it. So I'm kind of putting myself out there to be targeted whereas they not they're necessarily not.

00:18:54 Brian: Part of the work I do as well as around Title VI, which is around protected class, like so I always like in these threat assessments where there's a tension with like a faculty member, do you have a feeling any of this is related to being female maybe being younger maybe other protected class issues?

00:19:10 Ella: I don't know honestly I don't know I mean I I really think it's just a difference of opinion the traditionalism, traditionalism versus um trying to bring a more, newer innovative idea to the space um I guess I wouldn't be surprised if it was easier to invalidate me or shut my voice out for being a woman but I'm not necessarily. quick to claim that just because I'm not sure yeah like I wouldn't be surprised I don't know, I don't want to attach that assumption without you know having really clear evidence of it.

00:19:46 Brian: That's a really good answer and I hope it doesn't come across like I'm surprised I think yeah it's a good answer like you're putting it as maybe a factor, but not a primary, like it's something that we wouldn't be surprised it's there, but it's might not be the main reason. And a lot of our cases play out that way that it's an escalating piece of it.

Ella: Like, yeah, he hasn't used like misogynistic language or anything towards me. So like, you know, that's the thing. It's never been based in me being like a woman or being whatever, you know, it's always been just an attack of my ideas or dismissal of my ideas rather than anything.

00:20:24 Brian: Right. Which is like there's never been character like defamation or attached to it. Yeah, exactly. Those adjectives and adverbs that get like added on to the assault. Like, yeah. But I mean, even to that point, one of the text threads here that struck me is. I don't know, just moved me, where you were texting and you did it again, that fake smile when I asked the question, and then that little lecture about respecting tradition. I swear, he talks to me, and this was actually beautiful. He talks to me like a kid who wandered into the wrong class.

It gets to that feeling that you were just talking about, that condescending. This is what frustrates me, because you're trying to learn a task and be a career. What you want to do, something that's been maybe on your mind for a while, and not only is it not... happening, I think, in the way it should be that you're getting this pushback from him that feels, in some ways, you know, fake smile. Like, it's not as overt as making a comment about you as a person or saying, oh, you're wearing, it's like a Ouija board, like, thing on your shirt. Like, those are the things that might be the easy kind of insults. It's not that problem, but it's almost more insidious that, like, fake smile, not really listening is hurtful as well.

00:21:38 Ella: Yeah, no, I think that's accurate. And it's infantilizing, you know.

00:21:42 Brian: Good term, yeah. When I asked the other students in the class some of these tensions, you said there's some overlap. Are these also friends that you have in connection?

What's your social group like in terms of connection and support for you going through school and life.

00:22:00 Ella: Yeah, I mean, I would call them more just like colleagues and friends. These are just people in the program with me. I don't necessarily have intimate relationships with them outside of that. Most of my social life is online at this point. My online community. I don't really have a lot of in-real-life support, to be honest. Those are mainly the places I've been accessing support.

00:22:23 Brian: That makes sense. But it feels good, or it feels maybe, let's put a name on it, like sufficient, good, could use some more.

00:22:30 Ella: A little isolated. I do feel a little isolated, to be honest. I mean, I am coping to the best of my ability. Like, I don't feel like I'm in crisis, but, you know, maybe I do wish I had a little bit more support in my life.

00:22:45 Brian: Have you done, and these are the questions, right? So you're going to start feeling me kind of go down. Have you done, like, therapy before to talk with someone?

00:22:52 Ella: Yeah, I have. I have. I'm not currently seeing anybody right now. Counseling resources would be something I would be open to, honestly.

00:22:59 Brian: Was that a good experience or one that was like?

00:23:02 Ella: It was a fairly good experience for the time that I needed it, yeah. I mean, it's always hard to find, you know, a therapist that works for you.

00:23:10 Brian: Absolutely. Like, and that's, I was chuckling a bit as we're getting to know each other, the fairly good, like, hit me. Like, yeah, more often than not. But, you know, I think with therapists, there's that challenge of where it becomes more about their stuff to teach you versus listening and sure yeah the application part's hard sometimes for especially new therapists so yeah was it online or in person or um I've done both okay.

00:23:33 Ella: I've had experience with both um I prefer in person but I mean online still it was beneficial.

00:23:38 Brian: It's access and time right? Like sometimes it's a little easier especially if you have a busy schedule with things. Do you have a job that you're working in addition to school?

00:23:48 Ella: No, right now I'm really just focusing on this.

Brian: It's enough right?

Ella: Yeah, I'm pretty much a full-time student.

00:23:52 Brian: Awesome. What do you do for, when you're not full-time student and just for fun to kind of blow off steam? It sounds like just it feels a lot sometimes so just being quiet in a happy space is nice but yeah.

00:24:06 Ella: I mean I've definitely you know I've felt a little shut down lately so um I maybe haven't been as active with hobbies and things as I would be otherwise um I have a lot of interest in the occult and like you know the paranormal things of that nature like I read tarot um but yeah I mean honestly in my life is pretty just tied up in school right now and online activism and that's pretty much been it's just I haven't had a lot of excess energy for anything else.

00:24:39 Brian: Only so many spoons in the pile of the drawer right?

Ella: Yeah.

Brian: I really like that's um a lot of questions that that revoked from the activism is that around some of the mortuary stuff or other things too.

00:24:49 Ella: Yeah I mean, like the posts that you've seen, like that I could see in here they also gave me a copy of. You know, just a lot of stuff about, like, eco-burials and, like, you know, the commodification of the funeral business. That's a lot of what most of my activist work at the moment is because it's relevant to my studies. It's relevant to the career I want to pursue.

00:25:11 Brian: Absolutely. No, and I mean, I kind of look through them. I mean, I'm always hesitant with these kind of because they're like snapshots, like Polaroid pictures in time and context sometimes is lost. Like, heaven forbid someone just pulled my stuff and, like, what do you think about all this? Like, it's to not have the context to it. And as I said, I read through it and. The parts that stood out to me were some of the things that you're saying, the lack of responsiveness, almost like you're left to vent. And I asked these philosophical questions to me, like if he had been a different kind of professor and was open to your ideas, even if he didn't agree with them, even if you weren't in agreement, but he could pitch like alignment and say, yeah, let's just, you know, that might be a new way that the field is going.

I don't know. We'll see. That's a very the fact that you're interested in it and thinking about it. Cool. Like, I wonder if you would have made as many of these posts like you wouldn't. I would think maybe not as much. Certainly the ones where you're making stances on. the um more uh environmentally friendly kind of funeral pieces but the the ones where I think that come from a place of frustration if that wasn't there yeah there might be other things.

00:26:19 Ella: Yeah I mean I do feel like a lot of these are just me venting yeah and you know I can understand how maybe some of the language could be construed as aggressive um I mean people say things that they don't necessarily mean when they're angry you know it's just a means of getting it out absolutely um and I like I said don't have a lot of in real life support so this has kind of been my coping mechanism lately.

00:26:41 Brian: Sure no that makes total sense to me I mean as much as it can I haven't lived your experience but it all kind of tracks. And the tarot is cool. It's an interest of mine, too. In the psychology world, we look at, they're called projective tests. So, like, the thematic apperception test and the Rorschach. So, I've always been fascinated by the overlap. Are you, like, a Rider-Waite person? Do you have your favorite deck.

00:27:08 Ella: I use Hermetic Tarot primarily. I have a few others I switch in and out of. But I'm familiar with Rider-Waite. Like, I started on Rider-Waite.

00:27:18 Brian: Yeah, for sure. Excellent. Do you do, like, Aura work, too? Or is it just the...

Ella: Do I do what?

Brian: Like, Oracle kind of stuff? Or are you just kind of sick straight tarot?

00:27:26 Ella: Not particularly. Not really. Yeah. Like, I've played around with some mediumship stuff. Like, you know, using Ouija boards. Stuff of that nature.

00:27:34 Brian: Do you have a favorite card in the Major Arcana that you draw? There's always the death card, right? The tower.

00:27:40 Ella: The last of the tower.

00:27:40 Brian: Yeah. The last of the tower. That feels accurate sometimes. Right. The touring. Nice. Well, thank you for sharing that, that's cool. Do you think that some of it, like that draw, like you are, you say assertive, which I think is cool, but also that piece of like, I don't know if contrary is even fair, like it's such a reductionistic term, but do you think that's part of it? Like your vibe, the tattoos, the dress, like is that something that stands out, do you think, from the professor's standpoint in class? Like might that be some of it too? Or am I totally off on that? Is that pretty normal for the class.

00:28:19 Ella: I don't know, I mean, yeah, I do feel like I maybe stand out a little bit in that class. I don't know if that is part of why I'm treated the way that I am, or if it literally is just ideological differences, and poor communication. You know, I mean, in the funeral business, there is a certain standard, I think, of, like, aesthetic that you expect to maintain. And when I am not in the classroom, like, I do, you know, be mindful of that and try and, like, put professionalism first.

But I don't know if maybe there's some biases attached to me because of the way that I present and also have posted things about, like, witchcraft, the occult, things of that nature that also interest me. I think that was also cited as concern, if I remember correctly, and that felt a little discriminatory, to be honest.

00:29:13 Brian: Yeah, for sure. I mean, in some ways, protected class against Wiccan and religious beliefs. And I think there's this odd parallel with mortuary science, and I actually love your description. It's almost... Very traditional, right? I almost evoke, like, the funeral director is that three-piece suit put together, like, and I don't know that it's ever updated as much to what modern-day process is like. Yeah, I just wonder if that was part of the tension, too, like, where you're pulled into that bias against something new.

00:29:43 Ella: Yeah, I'm not sure. I'm not really sure how to answer that one.

00:29:47 Brian: That was more my wandery thought there, for sure. So, other questions I have, I really am not getting the sense of the concern, like, you came in here, you're taking the time to meet with me, really appreciate that. As I go through my list of questions, you've talked a lot about the context, how you're sharing things in that way. Some of the other questions are a little odd to ask, but just in terms of, like, appetite and eating, has that been pretty healthy for you? And then sleep, are you a pretty good sleeper, or do you wake up a lot or go to sleep early.

00:30:22 Ella: Yeah, I think my sleep has been impacted by the stress, to be honest. Maybe also my eating habits to some extent. Like, I think that might be part of, like, the shutdown I was talking about. I don't necessarily feel in crisis, but I do feel overwhelmed. You know, like, it's definitely affecting me.

00:30:41 Brian: You have a really nice kind of read that gauge of, like, knowing where you're at, like, and that doesn't maybe take away from feeling, ah, but to be able to say, you know where crisis is, I'm not there, but what I'm hearing a little bit is, like, this keeps going on, maybe I do wander over there, like, it's not here yet.

00:31:00 Ella: I don't feel at risk of hurting myself or hurting anybody else, like, I don't, you know, it's hard for me to imagine that, um, which is more how I identify crisis, I guess, is, you know, immediate, like, risk or harm, um, but yeah, I mean, I have had depressive spells in the past, and I can tell that that is starting to come back and escalate a little bit, so that's concerning, that's still concerning to me.

00:31:29 Brian: Yeah, for sure. What do you... What do you do, like, what are your, like... general coping mechanisms when you feel like depressed or sad? I mean, some people sleep some TV, music, whatever.

00:31:37 Ella: Um, I don't know that I have a lot of really established coping mechanisms at the moment. Um, that's, that's also part of why counseling services could possibly be helpful.

00:31:57 Brian: Um, was it easier for you to connect with both your online and other counselors before? What is the, did you have to shop around a little bit, I guess is what I'm asking, or did you find a pretty, pretty quick connection with a therapist?

00:32:04 Ella: No, I would say that I had to shop around a little bit, you know, especially because like, you know, the things that we're talking about that are central to my life and that are part of these issues in school are not necessarily things that people talk about very often or very informed on. So finding like a therapist who is open minded or at least has the capacity to try to be open minded for that is also a little bit more difficult.

00:32:31 Brian: Yeah, agreed. And I think even worse than that, there's that bias piece again, too, right, where people I. I guess it's the Wednesday Addams kind of vibe, right? They reduce these ideas to a very simplistic piece. Do you drive a hearse as well? You almost become a caricature in an HBO series, Six Feet Under.

00:32:52 Ella: You become Claire somehow. It's just very reductionistic. Right, and then when you attach depression to that, too, I feel like that adds into the bias and the stereotype.

00:33:02 Brian: The part that frustrates me, I think, the most is just that your core thing that you're coming here for is to be able to bring a more environmentally friendly, caring human experience around death. Yeah. And that, yeah, the fact that that's been detracted from with you being, I mean, I can't get over the naive part. Like, just, it's not someone yelling. It's not. insults related to you being a woman or the way you dress or anything like that but it's still like a I don't know it just hits me like it's just so dismissive of the student-teacher relationship that you're there to learn in an ideal way so it's I really want to try to address that with him as well.

00:33:43 Ella: I appreciate that I mean I feel like that's what I've been trying to convey consistently for a while.

00:33:46 Brian: Yeah yeah, the fact that you have to do that is rough too that the people who experience the pain then become in some ways responsible and I'm glad there's other students who, feel the same way or feel connected so that's that's good have you tried any of the I don't know if you've done like the evals or things if you've had him for more than one class or this is the first class but have you given feedback in like either anonymous or to someone else's.

00:34:11 Ella: Well I haven't I mean I have in emails directly to him when I've tried to call out these behaviors and concerns of mine have reminded him that I also get the opportunity to evaluate him just like he evaluates me right and I feel like that was taken to be a threat which it really wasn't it was really just a reminder of like you know I'm also in this with you like you know does that make sense?

00:34:40 Brian: Yeah like it's an equity statement right like we're we're we both have rules and expectations it's a relationship that we're both bringing things to and you're supposed to be teaching and helping me and I'm supposed to be asking questions and challenge it like that's how it's supposed to work.

00:34:56 Ella: Uh-huh. It's like I wasn't. It wasn't like a, or like you know me or like a blackmail, saying it was just me being like if you're gonna be a shitty professor I'm gonna tell people you're a shitty professor yeah you know like it was f around and find out right?

00:35:08 Brian: Like I mean that is sort of watching some of these behaviors come back to him. Um cool, So, I mean, I think in terms of like the go forward, my next step is I do a write up and I just kind of explain our conversation.

00:35:25 Ella: Write up as in like I'm being?

00:35:28 Brian: That's a bad phrase. I'm going to put pen to paper and do an evaluation. Thank you. Yeah, I'm going to write you up. You're in trouble. No, no. I'll write an assessment, usually about three or four pages that just describes our conversation. And what I'd like to do, I don't do this in all cases, but I think in particular where there's this power differential. And I want to kind of make sure I get things right. I'd love to put that in front of you. Like if you have the time to look at it, no pressure to do it. But let me send you that copy if you want to, if you find some phrasing or words that don't quite capture what you were trying to say to me.

And I think what you'll see from me is, again, this idea of maybe a connection to counseling as a recommendation. No one's going to force that. And then the other parts is just some of the systems conversations behind the scenes that I think we always are having with institutions. But how to teach better.

00:36:17 Ella: Yeah, I mean, that's the main thing is that I really would just like to see accountability and change behavior in some way going forward from this. You know, otherwise it's just, like I was saying, not a sustainable situation.

00:36:31 Brian: Definitely. With the other part of this, and I don't know if you've gone to accommodation services before, that because of sometimes mental illness, things like autism

spectrum disorder, things like physical mobility issues, hearing, vision impairment, that there's permission that students have, there's rights that they have to get, like, longer test time or different processes. Have you talked to anyone in accommodation services about anything, either 504 or ADA kind of stuff.

00:37:00 Ella: No. No, I haven't. I mean, I'm not sure that I really need those services, honestly, specifically. Like, you know, maybe. I don't know if counseling falls into that. Like, I really just need support systems and coping mechanisms, you know? The environment in the classroom to change like I feel like that just meets my needs, you know?

00:37:20 Brian: Absolutely and the retaliation part. I think you use that word as directly but like there shouldn't be an opportunity that he has to make your life harder so. And also this is a stressful experience. So in the accommodations world, you don't need to like know this directly, but we have like accommodations that are typically offered for folks who have something like a way they process or an issue. There's also modifications that we can do that when someone's going through like a threat assessment or a Title VI or XI investigation there's some protections that you have so a little extra time on a test maybe a little less stringent if you miss a class or those things it's out there if you need it and we can keep chatting about it I don't think you need no to file right now with anything but yeah if the stress continues and –

00:38:08 Ella: Oh okay, I see what you're saying. If it continues to impact me in a way that is impeding my work –

Brian: There's some support for you.

Ella: Okay okay. Yeah, I don't feel like I'm there right now but it's helpful to know that that, that's available for the future if I need it.

00:38:18 Brian: Absolutely, definitely, and we'll keep offering that. Same with the counseling referral. Would you feel comfortable trying to see someone on campus? You said in person was preferable, have you?

00:38:27 Ella: Yeah, I live on campus also, so being able to do that on campus is a lot more convenient for me as far as just time, commuting, energy.

00:38:38 Brian: And that, I can make sure you have the intake information if you'd like, I work with the counseling center a lot. They have five clinicians at our school. If there's certain ones that I think might work better with you. So whatever you need, I want to also be a resource for you. So if you had, that shopping around is not an uncommon experience. So I like that you could stick with it. So if you don't find what you need from the first person, please, hopefully we'll get lucky and they'll find someone good.

00:39:05 Ella: For sure, okay.

00:39:07 Brian: Yeah, I guess other things. There's maybe two or three just kind of questions related to the threat stuff that feel weird, but it's around weapons access. There's nothing that I'm seeing in here that's like you're going to get a gun and hurt people, but I'd be remiss not to ask. Do you have access to firearms yourself?

00:39:25 Ella: No, I don't, nor do I have interest in them, so that's not a threat.

00:39:30 Brian: Absolutely, and I have firearms myself, so I think just having interest or having them is not this direct jump to you're dangerous.

00:39:37 Ella: Sure, but it's just not relevant to my life or something that I see changing any time in the near future. I've never made any threats or statements about a gun, so I understand what you're asking, but yeah, it's not an issue.

00:39:52 Brian: Definitely. Well, I'll throw this question into the mix, too. I'll respect you enough just to ask it directly instead of dancing around it, but substance use is another piece, or alcohol. And the reason behind the question is that sometimes when people get upset or frustrated, if they're also under the influence, the impulsivity can turn into something else. Is that something that you've had happen before? What's your?

00:40:13 Ella: I mean, I'm in college, so I drink. And I've done things opportunistically, but not with any kind of regularity. I don't feel like I'm struggling with an addiction, or an unhealthy coping mechanism. I don't feel like that's really a factor in all of this for me.

00:40:31 Brian: Yeah, that makes sense. Other classes, other problems that you're having, is it mostly just with this one professor?

00:40:39 Ella: It's mostly just with this one. Like I said, I'm aware enough to know I can have an abrasive personality to some people. So sure, it's not like I've never, had that kind of be tense before in other professional environments and other classrooms. But it's never escalated to quite this point. It's never really been a problem, if that makes sense.

00:41:01 Brian: Yeah. And my read on it, and I'd love to get your take on this and make sure I capture this well. And there might be things in the report that you're going to agree with, things that maybe you don't agree with, and then things that we can change and things we can't. But I want to get your read and start from that. But thinking about, like, I don't know, just the connection to how you're going to move forward.

And I want to make sure that there's not that retaliation, that you feel comfortable, and that you're able to express yourself. The things I'm seeing here are expressions of... your career what you're interested in and um you know they feel like they're being contextually kind of captured as a danger piece and yeah I feel like it's misconstrued yeah that's um it feels like it doesn't line up for me like that's part of it but I see why from like the frankenstein mob you know the on face value there's a picture with the skull and uh like when you actually look at it and have this conversation you're like oh no this is ella like she's fine like she's in fact it's she's not really the problem here like that other piece is something we need to. attach so yeah okay um any questions for me anything that would be useful.

00:42:12 Ella: No, not specifically other than resources I've requested and just, you know, like I said, my expectation is just for some form of accountability and change of action, change of behavior going forward, you know, and if I need a follow up in any way for that, you know, let me know.

00:42:33 Brian: So I would say next step, I'm going to send you the write up. You can take a peek at it. I do want to chat, I think, either, I don't know if it would be me directly chatting with him, but I do think someone in the department having some conversations about methodology,

teaching pedagogy all that and I don't want your name pulled into it but there is a I'm sure he'll might make a connection.

00:42:57 Ella: I think it's probably pretty obvious. I mean, that's fine I get it.

00:43:02 Brian: If there's any, we call it retaliation, if there's any negative experiences even something like the naive comment that was happening already those things please let me know like you have my email because I also feel like there's so many departments and places and things around campus it's nice to not have to repeat your story a ton of time so I don't mind I can only imagine like you and I'll do the same with the counseling referral send you an email I'll actually send you a little thought, about which the therapist might connect better with you just to maybe move forward quicker but you find the person who's available that you feel good and that's all confidential and separate from what we're doing here so there's no connection other than just making sure you have some support. Yeah, I think those are the main questions I had, so I just wanted to thank you.

00:43:47 Ella: I appreciate that. Thank you.

00:43:49 Brian: Yeah, absolutely. It was good chatting with you, and thanks for coming in.