

Philosophy Bakes Bread, Episode Fifteen, With
Dr. Bertha Alvarez Manninen and Dr. Jackie Kegley

“Teaching Philosophy to First-Generation College Students, Part 2 of 2”

Transcribed by Drake Boling, June 29, 2017.



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[Intro music]

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[Theme music]

Dr. Weber: Hey everybody. This is Dr. Eric Thomas Weber here in the studio with WRFL Lexington, 88.1 FM. What we have got for you today is Philosophy Bakes Bread. On this episode, we are concluding with part 2 of a 2-part series. We had four people scheduled to be giving presentations at the last meeting of the American Philosophical Association, we had a panel for the Society of Philosophers in America get together to talk about the challenges and impediments to teaching philosophy to first-generation college students. We had an episode on that already with Dr. Daniel Brunson and Dr. Seth Vanatta. I didn't know how that would go over as far as listenership, and I don't know how it goes over as far as broadcasting on the airwaves, but I can tell you that for whatever reason, that was the most, by far, the most downloaded episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread on our radio podcast show, which by the way you can go listen to anytime or subscribe via iTunes, Google Play, or with an RSS address that you put into your iPod or reader program or whatever. If that's of interest to you, go over to philosophybakesbread.com. We have also got an archive of all of the episodes that we have done so far. This is part two of that series that I was just talking to you about, and this time we're going to have back on the show Dr. Bertha Alvarez Manninen, and we're going to have Dr. Jackie Kegley for the first time on the show. She's over at University of California Bakersfield. We have pre-recorded these interviews that we did with them. I'll let the show speak for itself now without much further ado, but I do want to emphasize again that this is part 2 of that series. I hope you all enjoy. Thanks everybody for listening to Philosophy Bakes Bread.

[Theme Music]

Dr. Weber: Hello and welcome to *Philosophy Bakes Bread: food for thought about life and leadership*, a production of the Society of Philosophers in America, AKA SOPHIA. I'm Dr. Eric Thomas Weber.

Dr. Cashio: And I'm Dr. Anthony Cashio. A famous phrase says that philosophy bakes no bread, that it's not practical. We here at SOPHIA and on this show aim to correct that misperception.

Dr. Weber: Philosophy Bakes Bread airs on WRFL Lexington 88.1 FM, and is recorded and distributed as a podcast next, so if you can't catch us live on the air, subscribe and be sure to reach out to us. You can find us online at philosophybakesbread.com. We hope you'll reach out to us on any of the topics we raise, or on any topics you want us to bring up. Plus, we have a segment called "You Tell Me!" Listen for it, and let us know what you think.

Dr. Cashio: You can reach us in a number of ways. We are on twitter as @PhilosophyBB, which, stands for Philosophy Bakes Bread as always. We're also on Facebook at Philosophy Bakes Bread, and while you're there check out SOPHIA's Facebook page at Philosophers in America.

Dr. Weber: You can also email us at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com, or you can call and leave a short recorded message with a question, or a comment that we may be able to play on the show at 859-257-1849. That number is 859-257-1849.

Dr. Cashio: Hey Eric. We've got a really special episode today. We have two guests with us, Dr. Jackie Kegley and Dr. Bertha Manninen and we are all together in the same room at a conference in Birmingham, Alabama. The Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, also known as SAAP. Jackie and Bertha are here to talk to us about the value and impediments of studying philosophy for first-generation students.

Dr. Weber: Yeah, this is pretty cool. This is the internet age, so the three of you have all traveled elsewhere from home and I'm sitting actually having traveled to Ohio and the powers of the internet have let us get together nonetheless. I'm excited to talk about this. For what its worth, the first part of this two-part series on the topic that we'll be talking about today, philosophy for first-generation college students. We didn't know what to expect from the response but it turns out that the first part has been so far the most downloaded of our episodes, which is kind of exciting. I'm eager to give folks more on this subject because people seem very interested in it. Let me jump in and introduce the first of our guests. Dr. Bertha Manninen is an associate professor of philosophy in the school of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies at the Arizona State University's new College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. Among her scholarly interests, Dr. Manninen lists applied ethics, biomedical ethics, normative and medical ethics, philosophy of religion, social and political philosophy. We spoke with Dr. Manninen in episode 4 of this show on shared values in the abortion debates. Go check that out if you haven't yet. Her 2014 book is titled *Pro-Life, Pro-Choice: Shared Values in the Abortion Debate* and was published in Vanderbilt University Press. In 2014, furthermore, she received a faculty teaching award at Arizona State University and she is a decorated scholar and teacher and we're really glad to have you here.

Dr. Cashio: How are you doing today, Bertha?

Dr. Manninen: Good! Tired still from flying yesterday. It's really good to be here. Thank you, all three of you.

Dr. Cashio: Early morning here. We also have with us Dr. Kegley. How are you doing today, Jackie?

Dr. Kegley: I'm doing great. Thanks.

Dr. Cashio: Dr. Kegley is the California State University Outstanding Professor of Philosophy and the director of the Helen Hawk Honors Program at CSU in Bakersfield. Impressive. She works in the areas of philosophy of science, philosophy of technology, bioethics, philosophy of medicine, American philosophy, and philosophy and literature. Some of Jackie's recent publications includes: *Josiah Royce and Focus*, which was published with the Indiana University Press and *The "Ethical Subject/Agent" as "Rational Individual" but Also Much More!* In the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Dr. Kegley is also the very well-deserved recipient of many awards. The 2006 Herbert W. Schneider Award from the Society of the Advancement of American Philosophy, which is the conference we are at right now, and the California State University Weng Family Excellence Award for Excellent in Teaching, Research and Service. If you guys ever get a chance to meet Dr. Kegley, you are in for a treat. She's really impressive and you're very lucky.

Dr. Weber: Both Jackie and Bertha, we're so glad to have you on the show. Bertha has been on before, but some people may not have gotten a chance to listen to that episode. We'll ask you both some questions for our first segment called "Know Thyself!" That's the important philosophical maxim. We ask you both please to tell us a little bit about yourself, about how you got into philosophy, and what therefore philosophy means for you. Let's start with Jackie, if you don't mind.

Dr. Kegley: Thanks Eric. I got into philosophy in sort of a roundabout way. You won't believe me when I tell you that I never took a course in philosophy in the undergraduate when I was an undergraduate.

Dr. Cashio: Are you serious?

Dr. Kegley: I didn't. I was actually an English, History, and Political Science major. I think I actually got the philosophy bug early on because in high school we had to write a senior thesis about Edgar Allen Poe. Then in college I wrote on Aldous Huxley. Both of those artists have philosophical issues that they deal with.

Dr. Weber: Certainly. You're absolutely right.

Dr. Kegley: When I graduated from Allegheny College, I thought I was going to pursue a degree in English, which, and my university had the great luck of meeting Charles Hartshorne, who was a well-known philosopher at the time. I thought, "Why am I in English? It's not that interesting. I'm really excited about some of these philosophies dealing with...so then I went on to get a masters at Rice and really pursued a number of interests. There I also did work in genetics and that's where I got interested in philosophy of science. I really came at it in a roundabout way. The thing that attracted me is dealing with really important questions. Literature does that too, but not in quite the same way.

Dr. Weber: Given the way you came to philosophy and the interests you have, how would you describe it to someone who hasn't studied any philosophy? Who may not be in college but happens to be listening to this on the radio or having downloaded it as a podcast? How would you, in simple terms, explain what philosophy is to such folks?

Dr. Kegley: Philosophy asks several basic questions that everyone asks. One is: What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of life? What am I doing here? What are my goals? It also pursues ethical questions: Is this the right thing to do? Good grief, what is going on? This doesn't seem right!

Dr. Cashio: Did you ever figure out the meaning of life?

Dr. Kegley: No but I think philosophy encourages you to keep looking. You learn that you keep looking for goals and keep moving forward and changing goals.

Dr. Weber: Very nice. Thank you so much, Jackie. Bertha, can you remind folks who a while back heard your episode, or haven't, about yourself a little bit? How you got into philosophy and what it means to you?

Dr. Manninen: Sure! Jackie and I have similar starting points. I actually entered college as an English major as well. I remember in high school, in my AP English courses, we did Camus' *the Stranger*. I think I was the only student in the class who liked that book.

Dr. Cashio: Really? What's not to like? A man walks on the beach, commits a murder? That's exciting. Spoiler alert!

Dr. Manninen: I was 16 years old and I remember I would sit in the front row but only for that book. When that book was over I sat in the back again. I think I always had philosophical leanings, I just didn't know what it was called, that there was a thing called philosophy. I went to college as an English major but I took intro to philosophy and had a really spectacular professor and I just kept taking philosophy classes after that class. I took an intro class and fell in love and added philosophy as a major and switched to a dual major, English and Philosophy and then added a Religious Studies minor, because I got into philosophy of religion.

Dr. Weber: Bertha, in light of your background, how would you describe philosophy to someone who has not encountered it before in the academy?

Dr. Manninen: I was hoping Jackie's answer was going to be enough. (laughter)

Dr. Cashio: We like this question, it's one of our favorite questions we do on the show. Everyone gets a different angle.

Dr. Manninen: Philosophy is about studying what it means to be a human being. I know that sounds really general, but questions about "How do you know you have knowledge? Does God Exist? What's the right thing to do? What's the good life to live?" Those are all uniquely human questions. Only human beings ask those kind of questions. It's all encompassed in "What does it mean to be human?" to me. That's the best way I can describe it in a very short way.

Dr. Weber: That's until the software becomes sophisticated enough for computers to start asking these questions.

Dr. Manninen: That's part of philosophy. Do computers have minds? How would we know? If they did would they be moral subjects or not? Those are awfully philosophical questions.

Dr. Weber: Would we call them persons?

Dr. Cashio: Would they have souls? Would we try to save their souls and make them religious?

Dr. Weber: Robot heaven? I have a question for Jackie. You were interested in certain questions and in English and philosophy. Do you have a recollection, anything in particular that really drew you over to the philosophers? What was it if you can remember anything in particular?

Dr. Kegley: I remember being really fascinated with Edgar Allen Poe and the issue of evil and what life was all about. Aldous Huxley raised a lot of questions about where I ended. Up, technology and ethical questions. He raised a lot of questions in his books about where we were going and our technology and all that is important in life. That was one of the questions I was really interested in all along. Even in political philosophy, political science, which was my other major after all, Why do we have a government? What is government all about? What are the values that society ought to be pursuing? It was all there, whether I knew it or not.

Dr. Manninen: I have a less glamorous story about how I got into ethics. It's not unlike your interest in Huxley. I really love the very first *Jurassic Park*. Out of the original three, it's the only one I acknowledge.

Dr. Cashio: The other two are not canon?

Dr. Manninen: The other two don't exist. But there is the question of the movie, that the scientists are so preoccupied in whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should. I was like 15 when I saw that movie. I thought that was so true. It's not Huxley.

Dr. Kegley: It's similar. I think science fiction has a lot of philosophical questions in its field.

Dr. Cashio: Eric, I got an idea for another episode.

Dr. Weber: I got two or three right about now.

Dr. Manninen: All of my favorite literature pieces have philosophical issues, particularly related to issues of virtue. For me, those are the pieces of literature that stand out to me, that I like that most.

Dr. Cashio: do you have some suggestions? Some ones that I could go out with...

Dr. Manninen: The immediate one that comes to mind, I was 13 years old when I first read it, and now I'm almost 40, I love *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Atticus Finch as the virtuous man, an Aristotelian virtuous man.

Dr. Cashio: Do we acknowledge the sequel to that?

Dr. Manninen: I do not. I'll tell you a quick story. I bought *Go set a Watchman*, and I stopped reading in the penultimate chapter. I didn't finish it, because the idea of Atticus changing so much, I had an emotionally distraught reaction to it. I put it away. This book does not exist for me.

Dr. Weber: No more spoilers...

Dr. Kegley: I remember reading *The Scarlet Letter* by Hawthorne and *Moby Dick*. Both of those, I have always thought were great novels.

Dr. Manninen: I wish they would teach Hobbes with *Lord of the Flies*.

Dr. Cashio: There you go guys. There is your reading list, if you haven't read them yet. All great books.

Dr. Eric: It's always a good sign when we want to keep going. We actually have to take a break briefly, and we're going to come right back with *Philosophy Bakes Bread*, talking with Dr. Jackie Kegley and Dr. Bertha Manninen with my co-host Dr. Anthony Cashio and I'm Dr. Eric Thomas Weber. Thanks everybody for listening. We'll be right back in segment two.

Dr. Cashio: Welcome back to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. This is Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber and we are here today with Dr. Jackie Kegley and Dr. Bertha Manninen. We are at the meeting for the society of the Advancement of American Philosophy, and this year they are meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, so I am in the room with Dr. Kegley and Dr. Manninen. Today we are going to talk about the value and impediments of studying philosophy for first-generation college students. Very important topic. Let's get right to it. You were both first-generation college students. Given that, what did you learn from your experience as a first-generation college student that then informs how you approach when you teach first-generation college students and philosophers? How does that help form and inform how you think about these problems?

Dr. Kegley: You told me, since I came to philosophy through literature and through the big questions that one way to attract students, and I find this true for my first-generation students, that if you deal with some of these fundamental questions, it doesn't have to be in a philosophical venue. It can be through literature or it can be through discussion of a movie. They begin to get really hooked by the fact that here is something really meaningful. Some of their other courses, they know they are studying for a career or they are studying content. All of a sudden they get a chance to say, "Hey these are questions that I have been wondering about for a long time and now I get to explore them." I think that's the way to get them hooked, through different venues. It doesn't have to be a philosophical text. It can be. It can be *Lord of the Flies*. Using Plato's dialogues, I think, are also very attractive.

Dr. Manninen: That's where I start, with Plato's dialogues. I think for me, I can connect with my first-gen students at the campus I am at tend to be minority students, given where we are situated, and tend to be students that come from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Both of those apply to me as well. I think I am able to relate to their unique experiences that way. This is something we'll probably get into later, but how to make philosophy, given philosophy's stereotype about philosophy majors going to flip burgers, which is not true but it's a stereotype, how do you make students who justifiably, understandably want to escape poverty, attracted to a major that is stereotypically associated with poverty? That's been particularly challenging. But because I have come from that background, I can make philosophy more attractive and accessible to students with that kind of background.

Dr. Cashio: Do you approach it with a salesperson mentality, like "I need to sell philosophy to these students"?

Dr. Manninen: I didn't used to, but I kind of think you can't avoid it in this day and age. I think that's sad. But we are living in times where anything that isn't perceived to have that kind of benefit is cut or is eradicated completely. I think we have to face that reality and sell it. I don't think it's that hard to sell. I think that's the stereotype, but I think once people get really into philosophy, they start seeing the value of it in and of itself. It's not hard to sell philosophy.

Dr. Kegley: I would say you don't have to persuade them to be a philosophy major. Very often it's a wonderful supplement to whatever their career goals are. Many of my students end up double-majoring or minoring in philosophy, whether they are going into biology or medicine or engineering. I was telling somebody the other day that I'm director of the honors program, and they said, "Oh you work with all these elite students." I said not a single one of our honor students is elite. They are all first-generation. Many of them come from poor backgrounds. They are high-achieving students and they find philosophy very attractive and end up double-majoring or taking it as a minor even though they may as I said, be engineers or biology majors.

Dr. Weber: It's true that at a lot of colleges and universities, honor students tend to be the more elite students or students from upper-class backgrounds, but I happen to have seen a New York Times article that Jackie is aware of, where her university, California State University Bakersfield was seen in one of the top three universities in the country as far as improving socio-economic status for students who are in the first quintile in the socio-economic status...or second to the top two. It is usually the case that people will be these elite or upper-class students, but in Bakersfield, where Jackie is, for those who aren't aware of that, that helps explain what Jackie was just telling us, that there are some universities out there that are helping people achieve in terms of social mobility. My goodness, I wish more did that. That's part of the story behind what Jackie was saying.

Dr. Kegley: It is our goal as a university.

Dr. Manninen: My university makes it a point, that's part of their mission statement, upwards social mobility for students.

Dr. Weber: There was a piece not that long ago from Fareed Zakaria as troubled as his story became in the last few years. But it was nicely titled *The Downward Spiral of Upward Mobility*, about how there is less and less upward mobility these days. It's so important for institutions to have that kind of mission. I want to follow up with another question, because we mentioned that you both have some special knowledge in terms of you experience, about students that will go through being first-generation college students. A wonder I have, maybe you haven't really seen much that was unexpected because of your background, but I wonder. Have you seen unexpected barriers that you didn't quite have that experience, but you can imagine other first-generation college students having, as far as either just succeeding in college or in particular as far as learning and teaching philosophy to such students. Have you seen unexpected barriers?

Dr. Kegley: One particular one that I deal with even with my honors students is for them to believe that they can succeed. In believing "I can't really do something, and philosophy is supposed to be a very hard majors and I'm not sure if I can tackle these questions...", some of them do have deficiencies because of their school backgrounds, elementary and high school backgrounds in writing and critical thinking. I think they are able to pick that up.

Dr. Cashio: Kind of less unexpected. Like alright, you're not going know how to take a test now.

Dr. Kegley: The big one for me is believing they can't really succeed. I'm amazed all the time about how they say, "Wow, I did that? I'm moving forward."

Dr. Cashio: How do you encourage them?

Dr. Kegley: One student came into me, I mentor students too, and I said, “What are your career goals?” She said “I don’t know. I don’t think I can be a professional. There’s no one in my family that has ever been a professional. They’ve never been in college. I can’t do anything.” So then I said, “What are you interested in?” “Well,” she said, “I like to write plays and I like to produce films and I’m a pretty good writer. I’m interested in neural science.” I said, “For goodness sake, you could become a science writer for neural science.” I put her in touch with some people and now she’s all interested in pursuing that. I think you have to move the log and show them where you do have some capabilities that you’ve never thought about.

Dr. Manninen: There’s a lot of studies, all of the studies I’ve read about first-gen students repeatedly point to crippling self-doubt. I encounter that as well. A lot of my students I had, but to a less extent, I didn’t realize how many of them are working 40-50 hour jobs. I worked as a student too, but not 50 hours a week. Trying to balance their work life and impressively do it very well most of the time. I have students who work 50 hours a week, are parents, and are still straight-A students.

Dr. Kegely: And are also helping at home with children and so on. One of the things that our university has done which I think helps, is provide employment on campus so that they can work on campus so that they can be closer to their...they don’t have to run off someplace else for work. They can do their work and still be on campus.

Dr. Cashio: My experience, I also have a lot of first-generation students at UVA Wise. Maybe 60-70% first-generation students. It’s mostly first-generation students. I’m more surprised by the barrier that families create to their education even more than that. It’s always a family problem at home. If they fail, it’s almost always a family issue. Maybe it’s just a regional problem. Have you guys encountered this?

Dr. Kegley: I think it’s paradoxical and it makes it really difficult, because most of the time the parents really want them to succeed. I really do think that if you asked them, they would say, “Of course they do.” A lot of them see college as a way to increase social and economic stability, but also because they are simultaneously unaware of what it takes to succeed in college, they don’t know how to support their child. They want to support them, they want the child to succeed, but they genuinely don’t know how to do it.

Dr. Cashio: This seems to be important because they don’t understand the workload hugely. What you’re supposed to take to class, and then you have to come home and help out with the family here, your grandmother needs help. A lot of times it’s the family.

Dr. Manninen: A lot of the times my family did not understand, and to this day are not very sympathetic for why I had to leave the state to go to grad school. We had the University of Miami in Miami, but the idea of having to explain to them that certain universities are stronger in certain areas of philosophy, and the University of Miami is not as strong in applied ethics as I would like. That doesn’t register. They didn’t understand: “Why did you have to leave? Why did you have to leave?” They don’t want you to leave. Hispanic women in particular are not taught that you are allowed to leave until you get married. They really do want to support their kids but they just don’t have the tools to know how to do that.

Dr. Cashio: I’m from Birmingham. Last night my grandmother was like, “Just get a job here.” They don’t understand.

Dr. Kegley: We send some of our Honors students overseas, and we find that is a really difficult one, that they can't see their children going out of the country. We work with them, a number of whom have, I think it's trying to sit with the parents and trying to explain to a certain extent. That's right. Families can be a barrier. You have to be prepared to work with them.

Dr. Manninen: One thing, I'm sure you've seen this as well, is preparing students for a lifetime of not separation physically, but once you get into life as an academic, as a professional, and you're the only one in the family that does that, there is going to be this permanent distance now between you and the rest of your family. Because they typically come from such close-knit families, that is psychologically very difficult for them, that there is this whole incredible part of their life that they can't share with their family. I've had a lot of students that find that really difficult.

Dr. Cashio: Is this similar to your experience?

Dr. Manninen: Absolutely.

Dr. Kegley: I think that's right. My father never did understand what I was doing. My mother was more on top of it. He came and visited the university and to him it was a strange world. He couldn't understand what I was doing.

Dr. Manninen: When you publish something in a top-tier journal or something and you tell your parents you published something, they're like, "Oh that's nice." They mean it completely, but the importance of it doesn't register and it's painful because it's something that is important to you and you want to share it with the people you love and you really can't. I have had students come back year after year saying, "How do I bridge this distance now?" The best I can tell them is that you can't. You have to learn with it but realize that you can still share a ton of other important things with them.

Dr. Weber: One thing I suspect is very likely for the both of you is that you're probably remarkably powerful examples for people insofar as you have shared with your students some of these experiences. That's pretty powerful. We're going to come right back for one more segment with Dr. Jackie Kegley and Dr. Bertha Manninen and my co-host Dr. Anthony Cashio and myself Eric Weber. Thank you everybody for listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. We'll be back in just a moment.

[Theme Music]

Announcer: Who listens to the radio anymore? We do. WRFL Lexington.

Dr. Cashio: Welcome back everyone. This is *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. I am Dr. Anthony Cashio with my co-host Dr. Eric Weber and today I am in the room speaking with Dr. Jackie Kegley and Dr. Bertha Manninen on teaching and encountering and working with first-generation college students and teaching first-generation students philosophy. We are down in Birmingham, Alabama. Eric is in a closet in Ohio. (laughter). Technology is great. In my experience, college students, and we have kind of touched on this already, but it's worth getting into. First-generation college students come to college and they want upward-mobility. Part of that upward mobility is getting a job. Often they are concerned about the practicality of their studies. It's very reasonable. Sometimes philosophy doesn't bake bread. If you just do philosophy, are you going to get to eat? Are you going to get a job? How do you begin to address

those concerns? We have kind of touched on that a little bit. Maybe you could say a little bit more?

Dr. Kegley: One thing I do with my students is talk about careers, find out what they are interested in. I find, for example, they come in thinking that they are going to make a lot of money. So they choose a major like computer science or engineering, and after the first year they come to me and say “I can’t stand this subject. I want to do something else.” It’s helping them to realize that making money is not the issue and that philosophy can be very valuable, as I said earlier, in any career you choose, because we have business people tell us all the time and people out in the world, “We want people who can write well, think well, solve problems.” That’s what philosophy helps you do. Wherever you finally end up in a career, philosophy is going to be very valuable. You may not go on and teach philosophy. That may not be something that you really want to pursue. But you will always have those skills and the ability to question and probe and use it in whatever venue you choose for a career. It doesn’t rule out eventually making a lot of money.

Dr. Cashio: Academic philosophy is like a catalyst. Whatever you’re studying, study something else along with it. If you want to be a doctor, you might be a much better doctor. You’re going to be a lawyer, a better lawyer...you’re going to be a plumber, it might help you to be a better plumber.

Dr. Manninen: I have a student who is pre-med. He is a biology major and a philosophy minor and she is just finishing her honors thesis. She just got chosen to be outstanding student for commencement. She took a class on personal identity and narrative identity, which is an abstract course in metaphysics, and she’s using what she learned there combined with her medical classes and her thesis is on how disease affects someone’s narrative identity and someone’s personal identity.

Dr. Cashio: That is really cool.

Dr. Manninen: It is. The idea being that when people survive a potentially lethal disease like cancer, for example, they take on the identity of a cancer survivor, and that infuses how they interact with the world from thereon in and that doctors who understand that become better doctors. Again, I have taught bioethics for years and that’s not anything I ever came up with on my own. How she was able to extrapolate something so deep and so practical from such an abstract class like metaphysics of personal identity. She repeatedly says how much philosophy is going to make her a better physician.

Dr. Kegley: I was mentioning that we have identical twins who are triple majors, believe it or not. They are pre-med, they are English and philosophy majors. They take the same courses, they are straight-A students. They both want to be pediatricians, but they want to work in places where childcare is not offered very often. They also got very interested in a fun program that we have, is that Philosophy for Children, which, we go into the public library and use children’s literature and read to children and introduce them to philosophical question. They really think that’s going to help them be better pediatricians and to deal with children, because they know children actually are natural philosophers who wonder about these questions. They will be able to interact with the children at a different level and that makes them better pediatricians in the long run.

Dr. Manninen: I'm currently writing a chapter for a book on Dr. Seuss and philosophy. I'm looking forward to writing that. That will be great. It's on using Dr. Seuss to teach students about racism.

Dr. Weber: Interesting. We just had Dr. Jana Mohr Lone for an interview. She was great. She works on philosophy for children, as you may know, at the University of Washington. I want to ask you both a question about the particulars of teaching first-generation college students, because whenever you are a teacher and you're a little older than your students, you can pull out a reference that seems so natural and intuitive to you but that they have never heard of or thought about. I remember in a previous episode, for some reason I was reaching to think of a silly talk show TV show and I mentioned Maury Povich, which is probably not the best reference for people today. I was in class. Philosophers like the movie *The Matrix* often, but almost none of my students had seen it this semester. My point is that just by being a little bit older, you can very easily not share common references, which can often be so useful or important for making or teaching a point. My question is whether you find that there is even more of that kind of challenge because of socio-economic differences or because of educational background differences of parents, do you find that there is more difficulty or just about the same? Or is it just a different kind but not harder in any way, when you are trying to have different references with first-generation students?

Dr. Kegley: It always is. As we become older, we come up with examples that the younger generation doesn't know what we're talking about. I think what I've tried in my class is that I do reflective journals but I also ask them: "You're working with this question. Have you seen a movie, tell me about a book you have read, that you identify with this." I'm not likely to come up with the examples, but you're right, Eric. Very often we're outdated when it comes to using examples in class, so you really have to follow on them to provide examples and then they begin to share and get interested in movies. I have them write up the movies that they have watched and tell me what they got out of it.

Dr. Manninen: That's what I do too, actually.

Dr. Weber: I hadn't thought of that. That's cool. To give myself homework of watching some movies. I like that.

Dr. Manninen: They don't know who Data is anymore, either. When I want to talk about personhood, I'm like "You know, like Data", and they are like "what?"

Dr. Cashio: I make a lot of references to Monty Python. There's always like two kids that laugh, and everyone else is like, "What are you talking about?"

Dr. Weber: To folks listening, Data is the beloved android on the Next Generation version of *Star Trek*. For those of you saying, "What trek?", I'm sad.

Dr. Kegley: It's not that bad yet.

Dr. Cashio: Back to the conversation we had earlier, is he alive? Is he a person? Is he a machine? *Star Trek* is full of good philosophy.

Dr. Weber: Now it's the Alexa in your kitchen that answers your questions and tells us what time it is and so forth might come to have rights one day. The Amazon voice computer that you can ask questions.

Dr. Manninen: The one that is always listening to you.

Dr. Kegley: For some of these students, there are new movies out about robots and things very similar to Data. You have to really be on top of that.

Dr. Weber: I love the idea of basically giving myself homework to find examples that the students give me. That's a really clever thought for anybody, but especially for first-generation college students. That's a really good insight.

Dr. Manninen: A lot of the TV shows that I watch more recently have come because students are so excited about them. I'll walk into class and they are talking about *Black Mirror*. I had never heard of *Black Mirror* but I started watching because my students love it.

Dr. Weber: I've never heard of it.

Dr. Cashio: You need to watch it. It's like a modern day *Twilight Zone*. It's great. Our listeners are probably going, "Why are they talking about TV shows?" This is how we teach, encounter students, you've got to meet them. This technique maybe wasn't just for first-generation students, but for all students. Is there something in particular that you see that is specific to first-generation students, something that you have to do or you find is helpful in dealing with first-generation students in a philosophy class that you don't have to do with maybe a second or third generation student? IS there anything that stands out, jumps out at you?

Dr. Manninen: I don't know. I teach all of them.

Dr. Kegley: I guess we have so many first-generation students that we don't know the distinctions. Earlier on, I had to make teaching changes for the first-gen students, but now I just teach them all like that.

Dr. Weber: Maybe you've already mentioned your examples, but can you give us a couple of examples?

Dr. Manninen: I don't know what came first, but I think my interest in applied philosophy either came from or has been influenced by the fact that I have to reach these students. I don't think I can reach someone who is genuinely worried about not living and difficult financial situations anymore. I don't think I could reach somebody by going in and talking about symbolic logic from the get-go. That doesn't mean I won't talk about symbolic logic with them later. I have to reel them in first. I do that by showing them that philosophy is everywhere. It's quite the opposite of what people say, "Philosophy is useless." It infuses everything like TV shows, like music. It's everywhere. Once you start seeing it everywhere and they start realizing the value of it, then you can go into more abstract things.

Dr. Weber: It's interesting that you say that about logic, Bertha, because I got really lucky in a sense because my first semester ever teaching anything, which was a logic course, I had a first-generation college student whose mother was denied the health insurance reimbursement she was supposed to get. The student wrote an analysis of the arguments that the insurance company gave and sent it to them, and they called him two weeks later and said, "Who is your lawyer?" and he said he doesn't have a lawyer. Then she got the rest of the money. He told me this story.

Dr. Cashio: There is philosophy baking some bread.

Dr. Weber: I wasn't so thrilled at first to be teaching logic, but that story motivated every other time I've ever taught it. It's a true story. We have got one more segment to talk with Dr. Jackie Kegley and Dr. Bertha Manninen with my co-host Dr. Anthony Cashio. Thank you so much everybody for listening. Thanks to our guests for being here with us. We'll be right back with one more segment of *Philosophy Bakes Bread*.

Dr. Cashio: Welcome back everyone. It is your privilege today to be listening to *Philosophy Bakes Bread*. I am Dr. Anthony Cashio and I'm with my co-host Dr. Eric Weber, who is hiding out in the closet in Ohio.

Dr. Weber: Thanks Anthony.

Dr. Cashio: The thought of it cracks me up. I am in a room with Dr. Jackie Kegley and Dr. Bertha Manninen. It's our last little segment here, we're going to do some final thoughts, we're going to some philosophy bakes bread, and a joke or two, and we'll leave you with some info about how to get a hold of us again with questions or comments and so on.

Dr. Weber: Jackie and Bertha, in this last segment we want to ask you whether you have any final concluding thoughts for today that you want to leave people to mull over the value of and impediments to teaching philosophy to first-generation college students.

Dr. Kegley: I think philosophy is valuable for whoever you are because it gives you a set of skills and entices you to raise the right kinds of questions no matter what your status in life is. I think my first-generation students get really intrigued by that ability and the chance to raise some of the questions that they have had for a long time about: the meaning of life, what is right, how can I move ahead. As I have said, it's wonderful, even if you don't go on to major in philosophy and teach philosophy, it's a great supplement to any career you choose. As Bertha said, whether you're going to be a doctor, an engineer, or a lawyer, it makes you better at that than if you hadn't taken philosophy,

Dr. Manninen: I want to say something about teaching first-generation students and the value of that. Going back to our love for literature, one of my favorite films is *Dead Poet's Society*. It probably infused my idea of what I thought teaching would be like. I thought I was going to go into college and inspire all of these kids, stand on their desks...

Dr. Manninen: I probably spent a couple years being thoroughly disappointed and frustrated that it turn out that's not like that at all. But teaching first-gen students in particular has helped me see that there is more than one way to have a valuable teaching experience. I may not be teaching elite rich boys that are all into the stuff from the beginning, but there is an incredible amount of satisfaction in seeing a student grow from a very self-doubting, "I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I'm good enough," to an honors student graduating with a 4.0 ready to see the world and essentially see that student's generational tree change because they are the first professional in their family. That actually, now that I'm older, that is much more rewarding than anything that I think society could show me could be more rewarding.

Dr. Kegley: Absolutely. I agree entirely. Our students, to go on, they come in and they don't think they can do anything really great or important, and to see them go on and achieve great things, and to watch them grow. Even their family grows with them. Then they bring their

brothers and sisters along. That's what teaching is all about—helping students to fulfill their own dreams and succeed in life.

Dr. Manninen: For any first-generation student that might listen to this, I will tell you with completely sincerity with all my heart, that your progress gives meaning to my job.

Dr. Cashio: This is some really great insight, the idea that the first-generation college student, the first professional does change the entire family tree. It opens up new possibilities. I can even just think back to my own brief family tree, you can pick it out right where my grandfather, who had the GI Bill so he was able to go to college. You can see how that has wound up with me ending up here right now.

Dr. Kegley: I see brothers and sisters follow and come and grow too in the same way.

Dr. Manninen: For me, it's how radically different my children's childhood is from my own childhood.

Dr. Cashio: I have to tell you. The very first introduction to philosophy class I ever taught, I was still a graduate student. I had a student in their with a wheelchair, so he always sat right next to me when I was lecturing. Everyday he would come in and say "Oh captain, my captain." I loved it so much. It made my day every time.

Dr. Weber: Anybody listening who hasn't watched the movie *Dead Poet's society*, you're strongly encouraged to add that to your list. That's a classic, and I was going to mention actually, funny enough, Bertha last semester I did stand on the table in my classes and it mostly made my students nervous about the structural integrity of the table. (laughter)

Dr. Manninen: If I stood up on a desk now, my worry would be how do I get down?

Dr. Weber: I was making a point about expectations and business ethics. When you buy a table, it's the kind of thing...anyway. We don't need to get into it. But the expectations about the products we buy, that you can be able to stand on the table. They just looked nervous. No one yelled, "Oh captain, my captain" to me though. I hear you. That is deeply moving. One of the things we haven't mentioned, we haven't focused on today, is the fact that in the field of philosophy, we still have a significant majority of men teaching the field and we have two great examples and leaders of philosophy on our interview radio show today who are strong women who are great examples of men and women. That's one element that we haven't asked about, the way in which you find gender factoring in, although I guess someone mentioned that in certain families, I think you mentioned Hispanic families, Bertha, some differences. But I really appreciate both of you for what you do, the examples you offer and the lessons that I and others will be able to take away from what we have talked about today. In another moment of this last segment we want to ask you about the inspiration for this show. The saying goes that philosophy bakes no bread. We want to ask you, what do you say to that? Do you say anything in particular to people in first-generation, or just anybody? How do you respond to people? Do you say philosophy bakes bread? How do you answer the people who doubt it?

Dr. Kegley: Philosophy bakes bread but it's a rich bread. It gives you a life that gives you great nourishment. Fortified.

Dr. Weber: I like that. Enriched bread.

Dr. Manninen: I can't imagine a part of life in which philosophy would not bake bread. I always feel bad in saying that because everybody thinks that what they teach is the best. In a sense, it's true. I'm sure that historians see things in history that I don't I'm sure that they are right. I can't imagine a part of my life that has not been touched by philosophy. That's just not in the classroom. That's in the movies I watch, the TV I watch, and the way I parent and the kind of friend I am and the kind of wife I am. I can't imagine philosophy not baking bread anywhere.

Dr. Weber: Enriched bread. Go ahead, Jackie.

Dr. Kegley: I can tell a quick story. My youngest son always wanted to go out and do a career in business and make money. He did get a career in management and rose to the vice-president. Came home one day and said "Mom, I'm quitting. I don't like the way ...treats people, and I don't like the ethics. I guess ethics is in my genes."

Dr. Weber: That's right, and that's wonderful. That actually is one of the stories we might have asked you for, Jackie and Bertha, for our penultimate moment in this segment called 'philosophunnies'. As you know, we want to make sure that people see not only the serious side of philosophy, which we have focused on, but also the lighter side. I have a little recording of my son saying the word 'philosophunnies'.

Dr. Weber: Say 'philosophunnies'

Sam: Philosophunnies!

(laughter)

Dr. Weber: Say 'philosophunnies'

Sam: Philosophunnies!

(child's laughter)

Dr. Weber: I wonder, do you have any funny stories or jokes that you can tell us? Do you want us to use the ones they have prepared?

Dr. Cashio: They are pointing at me, shaking their heads violently! Philosophers telling jokes is maybe...

Dr. Weber: Well Anthony I know you've got one for us.

Dr. Cashio: Dad always thought laughter was the best medicine. Which is why several of us died of tuberculosis. (laughter)

Dr. Kegley: I think *Peanuts* is better.

Dr. Weber: Here's What's in a name: A man walks into a pharmacy. "I'm looking for some acetylsalicylic acid," he tells the druggist. "You mean aspirin?" "Thank you. I can never remember that word!" (laughter)

(rimshot, applause)

Dr. Cashio: Last but not least, we do like to take advantage of the fact that we today have very powerful social media that allow for two-way communications for programs like podcasts, radio shows, which is another way of saying that we want to hear from you guys. We really do. We

want to encourage our listeners to send us their thoughts about these big questions that we raise on the show.

Dr. Weber: Exactly. Given that, Bertha and Jackie, do you have any big-picture questions that you propose for our listeners that we may incorporate into our segment that we call “You tell me!” Have you got a question you propose for our listeners?

Dr. Kegley: What legacy do you want to hand on to your children?

Dr. Cashio: Beautiful. Sweet and to the point.

Dr. Manninen: I’m teaching applied ethics this semester, and when we talk about things like global poverty, for example, understand that a lot of students will say things like, “What’s the motivation to actually do the things that these articles do these things that we do when it’s likely that they are going to have very minimal impact?” I will end with what I tell them, which is that it’s probably not likely that you’re going to solve global poverty. But the very last time that you close your eyes in this world, are you going to be happy with the human that you were?” That is actually what I tell them.

Dr. Weber: Wow. Both of you, those are deep questions. Thank you so much. Everybody, we want you to send us your thoughts. We’re about to tell you how to do that.

Dr. Cashio: Thanks everyone for listening to this episode of Philosophy Bakes Bread, a very special episode. We your hosts, Dr. Anthony Cashio and Dr. Eric Weber, are so lucky today to have been joined today by Dr. Bertha Manninen and Jackie Kegley. It’s been a real pleasure. Thank you for joining us. Consider sending your thought about anything that you’ve heard today that you would like to hear about in the future, or about the specific questions that we have raised for you. Talk to us, and the more you talk to us, the more we’ll talk to you.

Dr. Weber: Thank you Jackie and thank you Bertha.

Dr. Manninen: Thank you very much.

Dr. Weber: Once again, you can reach us in a number of ways. We’re on twitter @PhilosophyBB, which surprisingly stands for Philosophy Bakes Bread. We’re also on Facebook at Philosophy Bakes Bread, and check out our SOPHIA’s Facebook page while you’re there, at Philosophers in America.

Dr. Cashio: You can of course, email us at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com, and you can also call us and leave a short recorded message with a question or a comment that we may be able to play on the show, reach us at 859-257-1849. That’s 859-257-1849. Join us again next time on *Philosophy Bakes Bread*: food for thought about life and leadership.

[Outro music]