

# Transcript

**Derek Bruff: [0:00]** This is leading lines. I'm Derek Bruff, the shift to remote teaching and learning in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to some unusual experiences with digital technologies for higher education faculty. On the one hand for many of us, our interactions with students were mediated by a zoom video country. Experiencing our students as disembodied heads on a screen, or perhaps just a series of black boxes. If the students kept their cameras off. On the other hand, with students participating in class from dorm rooms and parents' houses, and McDonald's parking lots for the free wifi, many of us paid more attention to our students' physical experiences as learners than we had in the past. Ironically, the digital technologies that are often criticized for helping us avoid embodied experiences. We're making us more aware of the roles our bodies play in learning. Today, we start a new miniseries on leading lines, exploring those roles. And this mini-series on bodies and embodiment Leah Marion Roberts, senior graduate teaching fellow at the Vanderbilt center for teaching interviews, experts who can help us understand why paying attention to bodies in teaching and learning spaces is important. The episodes explore how theories of the body make sense of social life and inequity. How learning is sensory, experiential, physical and emotional. How educators can incorporate embodied practices into their classrooms to enhance learning and the relationships between bodies and technology. This is Leah's third year in our graduate teaching fellow program, and she brings so much consideration and intentionality to her work here at the center for teaching. She's currently a PhD candidate in Vanderbilt's community research and action program outside of her graduate studies, she coordinates an affinity group on queer identity. She helps run a youth research and advocacy project on racial justice and facilitates sex positive workshops for adults and youth. Embodied learning is somewhat new terrain for her professionally. And she's using this mini-series to explore that terrain by talking with a range of experts and educators. On today's episode, Leah talks with Aimi Hamraie, associate professor of medicine, health, and society, and of American studies here at Vanderbilt University. Aimi directs the critical design lab and hosts the Contra podcast on disability, design justice and the life world. They are also the author of building access, university design, and the politics of disability from the University of

Minnesota Press. Aimi is trained as an intersectional feminist scholar and their work focuses on disability, accessibility, and design. In the interview, Aimi shares some key conceptions on embodied learning from their interdisciplinary perspective, discusses the intersection of bodies and learning and technology, and provide some very interesting examples of teaching practices that tap into embodied learning.

**Leah Roberts:** [3:13] I'm so excited today to be talking to Dr. Aimi Hamraie. Thanks for being here, Aimi. **Aimi Hamraie:** [3:21] Thanks Leah. It's so nice to talk. **Leah:** [3:23] so I wanted to start this interview just to kind of get us going in. And the, in a topic with a reflection on an embodied experience and our own lives. So, we'll both answer this question. Is there an embodied experience that you've had recently that you'd be willing to share with us, maybe an embodied experience that taught you something or something that brought you joy or made you feel openness or aliveness? **Aimi:** [3:45] I love that question. Thanks for asking it. Well, you know, today is November 8th and we just had daylight savings and so the days are getting very short and yesterday which was the day that daylight savings ended. And we. Change the clocks. I just tried to spend as much time as possible outside in the sun earlier in the day, because I knew that the sunset was going to come at like four 30. And so, I went for a really long walk with a friend and had a picnic and just like sat outside. And I noticed myself feeling so. Which is not a way I'm usually feeling at this point in the semester. And I would just felt the, kind of the ease of being in the sun and being kind of slow on a Sunday. Even though I have a lot to do this week, so thanks for the opportunity to reflect on that. **Leah:** [4:41] Yeah. Thank you. And I love that intentionality that you're bringing in SFA. You know, I know that we both reflect on in our own lives and friendship too, is just sort of intentional intentionality about how we shape our day and how our bodies experience that day. So, I love that. And for me, yeah, I had a, sort of a similar experience. So, my dad is visiting me right now, which is really exciting. I'm really nice to spend some time with him. And we also went on a long walk out to a lake that's here where we both live in Nashville, Tennessee, and got to see all of the fall colors and the sparkles across the lake, the lake, which was really exciting. Yeah. And, and I too have been waking up with early and savoring all of the bits of light that we have at this time of year.

**Aimi:** [5:25] I love that so much. **Leah:** [5:26] Yeah. So, thanks. Thanks for indulging in that part. I want to move now into just getting to know you a little bit as a scholar and having you Share with listeners your perspectives on some of your ways of knowing and core understandings of bodies and embodiment. As we dive into this, both incredibly practical topic and potentially theoretical and abstract topic about what our bodies and what does

embodiment and why does any of that matter? So, I want to start with a question that relates to your own discipline. So, what core understandings about body does your research and, or your discipline maintain? In other words, if you were teaching others about bodies from your discipline, like what core understandings would you want students to leave? **Aimi: [6:10]**

That's such a good question. So, I'll say that I'm an interdisciplinary scholar and I work in a few different fields. And so, I'll answer this kind of broadly across those fields. My training is as a feminist scholar. And I would say that the body has been really central to the field of gender studies and feminist and sexuality studies. Pretty much since that field emerged in the 1980s. An outgrowth of second wave feminism. And so, second wave feminism had, you know, some deep flaws, but one of its important contributions was a focus on the body as a locus of knowledge and kind of body politics. So, controversy around who knows. And as an expert about bodily experience. So, if we think about projects, like, you know, the book, *Our Bodies Ourselves*, Women we're kind of compiling biomedical knowledge. That was not being made available to them and sharing it through informal networks. But of course, in feminist theory, starting in the nineties, there was a kind of post-structuralists turn and a lot more emphasis on the social and discursive construction of the body. And then, you know, when I was in graduate school, something else was happening, which was new materialism and kind of a different set of approaches to thinking about materiality. I also work primarily as a disability studies scholar, and so where I entered into these conversations within. Very often had to do with an historical understanding of the emergence of a concept of the normal body and also the legacy of eugenics and how that shapes so much of how we think about bodies in terms of health worthiness, beauty, all sorts of things. And then, you know, in my work on accessibility, there's a lot of emphasis on the relationships between bodies and environments and bodies and technologies. I also teach a course here at Vanderbilt, in the department of medicine, health, and society, which is where I'm based that is called theories of the body. And the approach that I take in that course is that. We have a unit that starts with phenomenology or the philosophical study of experience. And this, the reason I do that, and it's really important to do that is that I want students to be attuned to their own bodies as a site. Learning and exploration and as a technology of learning. And to be able to think about that critically in addition to tuning, to sensation and feeling and things like that. And then we move into a unit on histories of the body, where we look at really like the representations of the body from the classical era through the present. So, it's very wide-ranging history, but quite a bit of focus on the enlightenment through the. And thinking about you know, depictions of bodies and medicine and art and the emergence of norms and all those kinds of things. And then we end, we're about to start the unit now on bodies and

care. And that's where we study things like you know, the ethical relationships of bodies, caring for other bodies. We study things like mutual aid and the way that marginalized people have critiqued systems of care, for example, mental health care or medical care. So, I would say that the structure of that class is also reflective of the different ways that I have come to think about bodies and find useful to teach to students.

**Leah: [9:53]** Wow. I want to take that class. I know that we've talked about it many times and I've seen your syllabus and it looks really exciting. Your students are lucky to have you I have so many follow-up questions to that. I think the, where I want to start though, is kind of getting into some of your practices with your students and what that looks like. You said that one of your goals of the many goals that you have in the, in the topics that you cover is to have. Think about, and sort of be attuned to their own bodies. And you thought about that, or you sort of named that's both through sensation and also think critically about what that means. Could you say a little bit more about a, your sort of goals there and what that looks like, and then maybe some of the ways that you get there and some of the activities that you do, some of the uses or some of the practices that you have to get students.

**Aimi: [10:44]** Yeah, great questions. So, you know, most of my students are pre-med or pre-health and they take a lot of science classes where their own bodies and perspectives are not the focus of study. And that makes sense. There's a kind of objective. World view that says, you know, we're observers and we're observing things outside of ourselves. And so, I think that there's pedagogical value in turning our gaze and word and our understanding and word, and, you know, that value extends to our self-awareness and other kinds of personal growth as well. But in the case of the body, you know, being able to think about like, why do I feel the way that I do about my body? What social conditions led to that? How is that different from how someone else experiences their body? How is identity related to the body? Things like that. And I think that those are equally important questions to ask. Equally important to studying anatomy and physiology, for example. And so, I've taken a variety of tactics and I really learned a lot from observing. You know, I knew someone who had started out teaching and higher education and then transitioned to being a kindergarten teacher and was using feminist pedagogy. And you also know this person, Leah using feminist pedagogy in the kindergarten classroom and really CA you know, teaching young children is deeply embodied. And so, they. As a break or they sit on the floor, they get up and walk around. And, and, you know, I was thinking about the deeply disciplined norms that we've inherited, where we sit at desks and face word in the classroom and stuff. And, and what happens when we disrupt that slightly, what opportunities for learning emerge, because it signals to

students that there's something different happening here. And we have to pay attention to that. In the phenomenology unit of my course we read a very old essay from Iris Marion, young called throwing like a girl it's like older than I am. And it's, you know, it's like a, it was published in 1980. About the idea that you know, if you observe a girl and a boy and it's kind of, you know, using those terms historically here, like if you observe people have these two binary gender, Throwing a ball they're going to, one is going to take up a lot more space as a kind of masculine compartment. And when it's going to take up less space as a kind of feminine compartment, and she says that this isn't because of biology, it's because of social conditioning and she's drawing on Simone de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty and other people. And so, I was trying to think about like, what's a version of this experience that we could have that would. Kind of reinforce the lesson, but also open us up to new forms of understanding that aren't just within this kind of binary gender. Construction. And so, I just went to the grocery store and looked for bubbles, you know, like bubbles, the children's book. And I found all sorts of things. There are ones that you blow into. There are these like long kind of sword looking things that are like bubble wands and they produce giant bubbles from moving your arm really rapidly through the air. So, you know, after reading an intensely philosophical texts, that is like 60 pages long. And that everyone's like, wow, this is really hard. I'm like, okay, now we're going outside. And then we go outside and everyone plays with the bubble ones and observes their own and each other's compartment. And then we come back and talk about it. And so, the body becomes a kind of moment of pause and also disruption in the classroom. And then there are. Like giddy about it, you know, because they are exhausted. It's the third week of classes. They're like, who's going to recognize my humanity. And then we're like playing with bubble ones and. And it communicates that we're going to have a sense of humor about learning too. And so, you know, that's just one practice, but I've found it really useful to do that. It sets the tone for yeah, your body is part of learning and why hasn't it felt that way for, so.

**Leah: [15:19]** Yes. I love that sort of signaling of bubbles being a technology of teaching the body and teaching and like a way into what you're saying and that you're there. Our bodies are part of our experiences. And how do we tune into them as part of a learning experience? You, you already addressed this a little bit, but I wonder if I'd love to hear a little bit more about how students react to that. Whether specifically the bubble. Technology tool as a teaching tool or just generally. Being asked to turn towards their body and sort of gaze at bodies and think about bodies. What are some of the ranges of student reactions and experiences and or what does that sort of gaze of the body do?

**Aimi: [16:02]** Yeah, that's a really good question. So, there's a lot of wonder and enchantment and curiosity. They start to ask questions. They start like, you know, their assumptions start to get unraveled. So, they start to ask questions. Like when I write the essay about this later, do I get to write in the first person or not? And that's not something they typically do in a scientific paper where they not only don't write in the first person, but they write in the passive voice. So, their self is, is not of. They giggle and laugh. They watch me to see like, what's the vibe here? Like how can we both be so serious? How can we be reading these very difficult texts that, you know, we had to reread five or six times just to understand, and also playing with bubbles outside. And it, it just sort of expands what becomes possible. And I see their compartment opening up to like when we go outside and do the bubble thing, you know, they go from being shy with each other to being playful and That's a good space to be in. If you're trying to absorb knowledge, I think better than feeling scared or you know, reserved. So yeah, it just kind of sets a different tone. I've been in classrooms where, when it was possible, people would start, like they would ask. Sit differently. Or two sometimes like sit on the floor with their backs against the wall or something like that. And you know, that isn't always possible or desirable, but sometimes it is. And if they're learning, then you know, what am I going to do about it? Like, that's what I would want for them. So, body awareness asking for needs, things like that.

**Leah: [17:48]** Yeah. That's, that's really fascinating. Do you find Is there, do you find much moments of resistance or is there a, how do you navigate when students resist or do they at all these kind of different ways in different pedagogies, different approaches to, to thinking and knowing, and being in a classroom? **Aimi: [18:09]** You know, I haven't had a lot of resistance. I see shyness or reservation sometimes, but it always becomes an opportunity to get curious and to say, why am I feeling like that? You know? And we talk about it. Like, if you didn't want to use the bubble wand or you didn't want to do this other activity, why was that? What was holding you back? And then they start to be able to say, like, in my family, I was told that based on my gender, I shouldn't do that. Or I was told that it was not respectful or I. At worry about taking up too much space. And then that's like the whole point of what we're talking about. And so, then we get to reinforce it you know, with anything that is participatory pedagogy, like you do have to account for how you. Stage the invitation, like how you invite students into learning with you in that way. And it, it sometimes works, and it sometimes doesn't like I can share, I taught a graduate course last spring. On mutual aid and you know, COVID, and the rise of kind of like community led interventions and services. And I gave the students the opportunity to either do it as a traditional seminar or the course itself

would be, we have a mutual aid collective, and we're going. Do all the activities that would go with like community organizing and the readings will help us like figure out how to do that and support that. And they chose that option. And then, you know, they became very uncomfortable with it. Like some students. Being like, we really wish that we had chosen the more traditional option, because this is really hard to do. It's hard to collaborate or have the fate of your grade wrapped up with someone else's or to lead and facilitate a meeting or to not have a course website that looks like a traditional course website. And so You know, I, my job in that relationship became to give them the skills and tools they needed to navigate doing a hard thing that usually they would. Not want to do or hadn't really been at the position of having to do before. And that had to do with the invitation and reminding them like you chose this option and these are the consequences of that. And we're adults and we're going to own that and we're going to help each other get through it and not treat it as like you know, something that like an individual person is just going to like to give up on and then everybody else is going to get bad grades. So, yeah. **Leah: [20:55]** Yeah. What a cool practice in sort of being together and having the classroom space as a microcosm of our social relationships and worlds. I'm in, since you brought up the pandemic, that leads really well. And so, one of my other questions, which is what is one element of embodied learning that came clear during the pandemic, especially with it shift to remote and online teaching and learning. And of course, just the, the state of fear and crisis and. Trying to think of the specific word that I want to use. Just the clear politics of disposability of people and people's lives being front and center in ways that were not new to this moment of the pandemic, but certainly in our faces as such.

**Aimi: [21:46]** That's a good question. And it really is. There's such a current. There you know, like here at Vanderbilt, during the pandemic last year, as opposed to this year, many of us had remote teaching and learning accommodations and like much of the world, there were people who were in the privileged position of getting to work remotely if they worked in a sort of knowledge sector. And then of course, people who were not able to do that if they were like farm workers or factory workers or. Working and living in congregate settings like prisons or nursing homes. And the spread of COVID reflected that as well. You know, a lot of people were very worried when we suddenly had to go online very quickly. And you know, I wrote a blog post early on in the pandemic. It was kind of like the day before I entered into lockdown, that was sort of like, hey disabled people have been doing this for a long time. So here are some practices that you can adopt very easily. And for me personally, shifting to online learning, wasn't very complicated because my courses were already built out

accessibly online. It just got on zoom instead of being in the classroom. But you know, there are challenges there around we're far away from each other. People are trying to be on their computer at their house with like all these people around or there's like children running around or whatever. And so, you know, one challenge as we all felt so far away from each other and disembodied in certain ways, but there were also these opportunities for care and for comfort, you know, like people. Would in a very negative ways be like, oh, I don't think students should just be like joining class from bed or wearing sweatpants or whatever. And it's like, yeah. But you know, the fact that they could meant that someone who usually can't get out of bed. I could still come to class. Or we all just were kind of like why our pants, like, why do we wear stiff Denna when we could wear soft textiles? And that's a very valid question. It's definitely something I've thought about a lot, like this year as we go back into the classroom and in person work. And I can also say that now that we are back teaching in the classroom, 100% about a third of my students are actually. Each day. People report having a really hard time to transitioning, to being back in person, just the demands of like time and attention and everything. And so, for those of us who are very privileged, like we had time to think about like comfort and what our bodies needed and how we needed to sit. What kinds of environments were more conducive to focusing? And. That is very different than the sort of like quote unquote returns to normal. So, you know, like there was one day when I had to get a COVID test this semester. And so, we had class online and I was like, oh yeah, like faces, you know, like, like we can see each other's faces. We can, like, everyone seems at ease they're in their own space. Like drinking their coffee, like whatever. And these that's just like a different embodied space to be in than in a classroom.

**Leah:** [25:10] Yeah. Thank you. There's so much reflection there on the different ways that we inhabit space in our bodies and navigate the various different social interactions and or technology which is a great segue into another section of questions that I wanted to ask you about related to bodies and embodiment and technology. This is a PA a technology podcast. And a lot of our listeners may not be familiar with the fields and core issues and bodies and embodiment related fields, such as, as you said, feminist studies, critical race theory disability studies. So, I'd love if you could share with us a little background on what the relationship is between technology and bodies in a really broad sense. However, you want to answer that.

**Aimi:** [25:55] Yeah, that is, it's a very good and very broad question. I can answer it from the perspective of disability studies and the history of technology. So, you know, one conception. The technology in relation to bodies is that technologies are these tools that extend or



enable bodies to do things that they wouldn't ordinarily be able to do. In the field of disability studies, there's also the category of like assistive or adaptive technologies. These are things that like you know, help us do stuff that they could be like prosthetics or mobility devices, like wheelchair. But also, you know, it's like things that we may take for granted, like glasses. That you know, you and I are both wearing glasses right now. We don't really think of those in the same categories, a wheelchair, but they are they are deeply enabling and certain ways. And in terms of like critical theories of bodies and technology, philosophers and technological users for a long time have pointed out the kind of like ambivalences around the relationship between the body and technology that there's. No technology that is completely comfortable and does exactly what it says is going to do. That we're often negotiating and making certain sacrifices in order to have access to certain things. And you know, that may mean that sometimes we reject the use of technologies that other people would think of as very useful for us. And one example of that. You know, soldiers in the civil war, they would sometimes choose not to wear an artificial limb because it hurt, and it was really just aesthetic. It didn't really do anything. It, it got in the way of them like trying to live their lives. And so, You know, we can think about technological narratives and how they're constructed. There's a lot of saviorism and how tech companies and stuff like describe what technologies can do for disabled people and my colleague, Ashley shoe. S H E w M N Virginia tech calls this techno able us because it's the idea that technology is here to just like cure and correct us. And that doesn't mean that people don't find freedom in technology. Like a lot of folks who are wheelchair users or power wheelchair users, like it enables them to be in the world. In a very different way. But there are things that people bring up to them. There isn't a lot of advancement in terms of like how long a wheelchair battery could last or what to do if it's raining or what to do about like mud or snow, you know, all of these things. And so those ambivalences still exist. And this comes up in the context of learning technologies too. Because you know, one lesson. Our intensive online learning last year was we were all like, Ooh, shiny all these new tools. And then for each of them, we also had to figure out, okay, how do we make it accessible? How do we make a Miro board accessible for blind students? Or how do we. Avoid overwhelming people with all of the options and the extra work that is created from learning all of these options. So, you know, technology can also can at the same time that it enables possibilities, it can also create these frictions that we have to navigate.

**Leah: [29:29]** Yeah. Can you say anything more about in your own practices? What you gave us a couple of really concrete examples, but how did you navigate the sort of needs of technology and also making sure that it was accessible to people and not overwhelming to people? What were some of your practices in navigating?

**Aimi: [29:48]** So, for me, whenever I was presented with an option of a new technology, the first question I asked was what are the accessibility features? And I would be like, is it screen reader accessible? Is it colorblindness accessible? Like just kind of going down a basic list and then thinking about and this is hard to do. But thinking about the user experience, the student experience and what it's like for them to take like six classes. Where everything has been turned into all of these new tools and just to think about how to simplify it and think about, is it really needed? Is it enhancing something or is it just possible to use it? And if it's not really adding anything, then just kind of taking a more minimalist approach, I think can be useful at the same time. I think that there are certain practices and technologies that if we just adopted and built them in it can create a better experience across the board. You know, like a lot of people learned how to caption videos last year. And there are so many good things about that because of course videos should always be captioned for deaf and hard of hearing people. And also having captioning like burned into a video means that like, if I'm in a, in a room with like four other people who are all taking classes online I can be like, I can have the sound off and I can read the captions and still be like, you know, In the room with other people. And it, it just enables a lot of different kinds of use. And so those sorts of things are essential skills and technologies. They facilitate access for lots of people. Some other things are like fun and can be kind of useful sometimes. And sometimes they're not. And you just never know until you meet your particular group of students.

**Leah: [31:40]** Great. Thank you so much. I think that's, that's really helpful and some really practical tips and questions, I guess, to, to think through. I'm wondering specifically how technology might shape the practices that you engage with in your teaching. And I mean, technology really broadly, we already heard one example from you of an analog, techno technology of bubbles. We talked through a lot of digital technologies and the relationships between those technologies and access. But is there anything else that you can think of that you'd like to share about how, how tech, how technology shapes your practices and engagement in teaching? **Aimi: [32:21]** You know, one thing I think a lot about that my colleague, Gentry Sayers, S a Y E R S who teaches at the university of Victoria. Like he has really like taught me a lot about this is that there are certain ways that the technologies of learning that we have available to us. And this goes back to the issues of ambivalence and friction. There's certain ways that learning management systems, for example Put us on the path to a certain kind of teaching and that may or may not be appropriate for what we're trying to do. Those, those learning management systems are often based on a banking model of education. They're more set up for. Kind of depositing information then really like

deep and active learning. And so sometimes we need to use different tools in creative ways. And so, in that mutual aid class, I was talking about, for example, I didn't set up a Brightspace page for it. I built out. What looks kind of like Brightspace, but in a syllabus on a Google doc. So, it was like, it had a bunch of integrations in it to like make that feasible. But it was, it was basically the same thing. It just wasn't through the login kind of thing with Brightspace, but the very fact that it was in a different format. Change the whole vibe of the class. And, you know, it's like, functionally, it doesn't matter if you're clicking on the link to the reading in a Google doc versus on Brightspace, but in terms of like how students engage with it and perceived it and where it's centered power and learning. All of those things are different. And so, you know, Gentry who I mentioned earlier, like he builds out his course websites and get hub. And I know a few other people who do that kind of thing, like really beautifully and effectively. And you know, there are reasons why you might not want it to do that. Like copyright, et cetera, but like, Just it makes us think about, you know, what are these technologies for? And it can be very tempting to be like, I'm going to set it up this way and I'm going to do these like quizzes and whatever, without really like, stepping back to say, but like what objectives are all of these things meeting? And it may completely meet someone's objectives too. I don't want to like poopoo on it, but like, There's like more weird and cool stuff that we can do by just shifting or frame a little bit and simplifying, using different tools, et cetera. Leah: [35:09] Yeah. Thank you for that. And It relates to another question that I have for you. I'm wondering if you would share with us a little bit about your I I've heard from you about your class. I don't know which class this is in, but you have a section on gender when you teach people about gender and you have a sort of like gender reveal party as part of sort of deconstructing what that whole concept even is. Not quite sure if that, I mean, I think that that could include various different types of technologies, but it certainly a pedagogical move towards reframing this thing that exists in the world and using it as a teaching and experiential learning tool. Could you share with us a little bit about that?

Aimi: [35:53] Totally. So the gender reveal party is a cultural practice that emerged, I think. Last 10, 15 years. And people kind of make fun of it a lot are, or talk about like, you know, the weirdness of this sort of thing where you're like saying what sex your baby is and calling it a gender reveal party. And you have like a balloon that explodes blue glitter or whatever. But to me, it's also like celebrations and, you know, anthropologists also study celebrations as important cultural rituals were meeting. Crafted and reproduced and we repeat them over and over again, and it makes it like a real thing. And so, I was thinking about that with the

gender reveal party, which is very different than, you know, when I was a baby, my parents had a baby naming party for me. I'm sure there was some sort of guests about my gender and that too, but like a very different vibe. And so, what we do in our party is we reveal the idea of gender itself. And there are all these committees, and the students work on different ones. So, some of them do some sort of like performative. Theatrical reveal. So they may open a box and be like, surprise. Gender is fluid, and there's like a pitcher of water or something in there. They do really creative and interesting ones each time. And it's really they're picking up on what are different theories of gender that we have studied and how do you represent them materially and sometimes technologically there's a group that makes a playlist or group that makes the party invitations. There are groups that make party games kind of like you would play at like a baby shower. And in doing all of that and that interaction with the material world, they're thinking about like, Oh, yeah. I never thought before about why we play this game or why, you know, we say this particular thing. And then we also, you know, everyone comes, dressed up as their most like gender euphoric self, which is usually exactly how they look every day, which I love. And they explain parts of their outfits and stuff. And before COVID we would eat snacks and dance and, you know, things like that. And I started doing this a few years ago, because I was just like, where are the opportunities for joy and surprise and anticipation and things like that in the classroom. And so, we do it kind of around Halloween and there's a lot of serious content in all of it. You know, they're like quoting and citing philosophers and theorists. And at the same time, like opening a box and showing us something that is interesting and funny. So yeah. That's-

**Leah:** [38:47] I, yeah. Thank you so much. I just love that example. Both. I wish, I want to be part of that someday. I think it would be so fun to be part of that experience as a student or just a participant in some way. And I just love it as an example of an embodied and experiential, the embodied and experiential possibility. About bodies, about learning about bodies and all the things attached to bodies in our social world. **Aimi:** [39:12] So, thank you. You're welcome any time. **Leah:** [39:16] Yeah, we haven't made it happen yet, but one of these days I want to be there. So, we're coming to a close here and we've talked about a lot of really great, exciting, juicy political and emotional. Moments in your teaching and your approach to teaching bodies and embodiment. But I'm wondering if there's one kind of take-home point that you would like listeners to hang on to from this conversation, what might it be and why? **Aimi:** [39:43] I think that for me, one takeaway could be that sometimes we think that there are ways that we have to do things. That no one has ever actually told us we have to do it that way, but we kind of cling to it because we're afraid that other people are

going to judge us or whatever. And sometimes just playing with. Edge a little bit and figuring out what else we can do. That is what captures our students' attention and makes them invested and learning. And also helps them feel like we're recognizing their humanity and their capacities and things like that. And so, whatever that thing is, like, if you're worried that people aren't going to take you seriously, if you do a certain thing, Just doing it and seeing what happens, I think, is a worthwhile risk to take. And it makes us happier and more satisfied with our jobs. **Leah: [40:41]** Wow, what a beautiful way to close. Thank you so much for all of your insight and sharing here. I've learned so much from you. Thank you so much for your time.

**Aimi: [40:51]** Thanks Leah for these wonderful questions. It was really great to be in conversation with you. **Derek: [41:00]** That was Aimi, associate professor of medicine, health, and society, and of American studies here at Vanderbilt university. Thanks to Aimi for taking the time to talk about. And thanks to my center for teaching colleague lay on Marion Roberts for the interview and for this new miniseries on bodies and embodiment. Listening to the interview. I heard a couple of connections to our recent episode on the farm in Aerie at Princeton theological seminary. The farming area is a working on campus farm that's incorporated in the curriculum at the seminary, just as working on the farm. And Aerie provides seminary students with experiences that inform their individual reflection in class discussions. Aimi, how summarize activities with bubbles provide their students and embodied experience that helps the students grapple with critical questions and perspectives. The technology of bubble making like the agrarian technology at the formulary is analog technology give a new purpose in creating times for telling for students. I really love it. Aimi also mentioned that blog post they wrote during the pivot to remote teaching in the spring of 20. That post was a touch stone for our work at the center for teaching that spring and summer. And we shared it far and wide. I'll put a link in the show notes to that blog post, as well as links to places, you can find out more about Aimi Hamraie and their work. Aimi shares so many concrete strategies for making our teaching more accessible to more students. And the ways these accessibility moves can be beneficial to so many students. That's an example of what sometimes called the curb cuts phenomenon. Cities might install sloping curves to make it easier for those in wheelchairs to navigate street intersections. But those curb cuts make moving easier for people with all kinds of mobility differences from people who walk with canes to parents, traveling with kids in strollers. I'll also put a link in the show notes to a fantastic episode of the 99% invisible podcast. All about curb. You can find those show notes wherever you're listening to this podcast. And on the leading lines website,

leading lines, pod.com leading lines is produced by the Vanderbilt center for teaching and the gene and Alexander herd libraries. You can find us on Twitter at leading lines pot and on our website. This episode was edited by Rhett McDaniel. Look for new episodes the first and third, Monday of each month, and stay tuned for more episodes in our series on bodies and embodiment from layup. I'm your host, Derek Bruff. Thanks for listening and be safe.