

[00:00:00.750] - Joe

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[00:00:45.570]

I hate when people say literally, but I just said it.

[00:00:48.060]

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Mushroom Coffee for Stigmatic is a wellness company that's known for their fucking delicious mushroom coffee. It doesn't taste like mushrooms, but it's got mushrooms in it. Nutritional mushrooms like lion's mane, which is my favorite mushroom. It supports productivity and creativity. During the busy day. They also sell a mushroom lion's mane mushroom elixir that I really like I. Poured into a bottle of water and I shook it up. Good for you, great for the brain there.

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Mushroom Coffee also contains Chagga, which is the king of mushrooms, all for stigmatic products are organic. They're vegan and gluten free.

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With up to 50 percent off to claim this deal, you must go to for stigmatic dotcom Rogan. This offers only for Jarry listeners. It's not available on the regular website. Go to EFO. You are Essi GMAT I Dotcom Rogan and get yourself some delicious mushroom coffee. Full discount applied at checkout. All right, my friends. My guest today is an author. He is an associate professor of American Religious History and culture at Emory University. He's the author of Sacred Remains American Attitude Towards Death and several other books.

[00:06:27.020]

He writes about religion and sex and death and drugs. And I really enjoyed talking to him.

[00:06:32.210]

Please welcome Gary Latterman girlfriend podcast, The Joe Rogan Experience Train my day job and podcast my night all day.

[00:06:44.750]

Hello, Gary. Hey, how you doing? What's up, man? Thanks for coming. Appreciate it. I'm happy to be here once. Tell everybody what you do. Well for work.

[00:06:55.340]

Yeah I, I teach at Emory University so I'm a professor. I've been, I've been there for about 25 years and I, I also write, write some, some books and teach a variety of classes.

[00:07:08.360]

But you study like what I've read of your study is some of it is on death and some of it is on drugs. That is correct.

[00:07:19.700]

Those are two very heavy subjects that maybe the heaviest. Yeah, well the other of course I teach is religion and sexuality.

[00:07:27.350]

So I mean, that's another really heavy one. Yeah.

[00:07:30.500]

You look like a guy who would study both death and drugs so.

[00:07:35.450]

Well, this is the pandemic here. I mean, really, I'm usually I'm much more, you know. Well, I'm not really I'm not doing this just doing the fourth. One of my students told me I should do it. Yeah. Before I came in here.

[00:07:48.920]

I'm telling you, man, once once you do it, it's so freeing, not having to go to a barbershop or a hairdresser.

[00:07:55.160]

Well, what's weird is I feel really free with all this hair. Yeah, well, I tend the hair fits the subjects that you study.

[00:08:03.740]

How did you get involved in when you talk about drugs like you, you studied all sorts of psychedelic drugs, but also common drugs like like caffeine, like we were talking about before. I was telling you before that I make some ridiculous French press coffee with far too much coffee and it's become a bit of a problem lately.

[00:08:23.120]

Well, but it's probably keeping you healthy and keeping you go. I don't know if it is.

[00:08:28.460]

I don't know. At the end of the day, I'm really tired and I'm not usually really tired. And I think it's because I've been on speed all day.

[00:08:35.570]

I can tell you. Are you out? That's for sure. Yeah. But yeah, I mean, my interest in studying the connection between religion and drugs I'm in a Department of religion at Emory really spans the spectrum. So I'm interested. Yeah, for sure. In psychedelics. But also, as you're saying, in the more ordinary psychoactive drugs that.

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Bring order to our lives and, you know, allow us to tap into our true identity, maintain some semblance of stability in our lives, you know, things that religion often can do.

[00:09:14.430]

It's the subject of religion and drugs is it's really fascinating to me. But it's something that I never even

really considered until, you know, 10, 15 years ago. And I was introduced to Jack Herer. And he was do you know, is the cannabis advocate recently deceased now? Not so recently anymore.

[00:09:35.400] - Joe

Great guy. But wrote was writing a book about the connection between psychedelics, particularly psilocybin and religion and Christianity. And he had this amazing collection of artwork that connected like ancient Christian artwork with a lot of these dancing naked figures that looked like they were in ecstasy shrouded by this translucent mushroom. Hmm.

[00:10:03.240] - Gary

Yeah. Though that's not uncommon. There are a lot of theories out there that connect early Christianity, especially to different kinds of, you know, hallucinogenic like psychedelic drugs of some form.

[00:10:19.350]

But I think the connections are much more widespread that people have been using psychoactive substances for religious ritual, for religious experience, for forms of transcendence and and journey and all kinds of different cultural settings and through history.

[00:10:40.830]

What got you into this subject? Well, I've been interested in the topic of drugs for for a while, but I think what really, you know, led me to see this would be quite a fruitful topic to pursue in terms of research, was I wrote a short little essay on LSD and religion, talked about my own experience as a young man tripping and talking about the ways in which when I had that experience in the late 70s. And people more and more were, you know, enjoying psychedelics coming out of the decade of the 60s, I started to to see that they would often use words like spiritual or mystical to describe their experiences and to talk about how their religious views are being reoriented.

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And I saw that in my own experience and wrote about that as a way to talk about what is probably the most significant shift in religion in America. And that's the rise of the "nones", those who don't affiliate with any religion and who many who claim to be spiritual but not religious. And I want to tie that back to people's experiences with psychedelics.

[00:12:13.790]

There's a lot of people that are in the nuns that don't have any experience with psychedelic. They just psychedelics.

[00:12:21.740]

They just seem to want to have like a deeper meaning to life, you know, and they'll they'll say, I'm not religious, but I'm spiritual.

[00:12:30.770]

Right. And a lot of people get really annoyed when people talk like that.

[00:12:33.920]

Yeah, well, it can be annoying.

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And also, you know, I think, as you say, is very much becoming quite common for people to identify in that way. And that's also about a very strong kind of negative understanding of traditional religion, institutional religion and so on.

[00:12:55.280]

Yeah, I feel like for a lot of these people that don't have psychedelic experiences, that are spiritual, that sort of dismiss religion, I, I never want to tell people to do psychedelics.

[00:13:11.720]

But I feel like if they did it, they would relax a little with this idea that they really have an understanding of what happens when you die. I think they would really let that go.

[00:13:22.550]

Most people would. Right. You'd go, well, I didn't know this was real.

[00:13:26.930]

And this is around and this has been around for thousands of years, psychedelics. And then you have these experiences that are so profound. Right. And you're like, OK, maybe I'm just full of shit and I've been posing this whole time.

[00:13:38.660]

Right?

[00:13:39.240]

Yeah, right. Well, I think, again, that's it's not just you who have these views. What we're seeing is a lot of medical research around psychedelics.

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Also, we're pointing to the same thing, a decrease in fear of death. People's sense of compassion and love, you know, really can blossom. People's lives are transformed in a lot of these more controlled medical studies with, you know, with people who are taking psilocybin or MDMA. Yeah, but but the main focus of all that, of course, is the therapeutic benefits. But, you know, we're saying it's all it's all about spirituality and those therapeutic benefits can't be separated out from a kind of spiritual sense of of that experience.

[00:14:31.250]

It gives me a little bit of hope that in this time of great strife and struggle, and especially in terms of the way human beings are dealing with each other, you know that this is. This is a time where people are also rediscovering psychedelics and record numbers and they're looking for some sort of a way to make sense of this life because, you know, we're obviously in some strange transitional moment in history where our confidence and systems and government and and even education and certainly news and media is eroding at an unprecedented rate.

[00:15:11.980]

But it's also at the same time, all drugs are now legal in Oregon. All right. You know, look, these things are happening where people go. You know what? Come on. Colorado's like mushrooms. Go ahead, do mushrooms. Right. And, you know, God bless Texas. They fucking need all that shit right here. And Georgia, too. Yeah.

[00:15:28.780]

I mean, all these places, the whole world needs it.

[00:15:31.390]

Well, they need the option. Right.

[00:15:33.760]

You know, because the the idea that human beings are somehow or another are preventing other human beings from having nonlethal experiences that have proven to be incredibly transcendent and change people's lives for the better, just en masse.

[00:15:49.660]

Like if you see the John Hopkins study, the people that one psilocybin experience, they are the majority of musters, the most profound experience of their lives. Right.

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Right. And non-addictive. Yes. I mean, and not lethal.

[00:16:03.850]

I mean, LD 50 is like what you have to eat like two pounds of it or something.

[00:16:07.930]

Right. And we know that the stories of addiction and a lot of the dangers are so overblown. Yeah. But I think, again, this is just a moment, as you're saying. Yeah.

[00:16:19.900]

That's why I feel I'm on to something, I think with this book that I'm writing, which is, you know, going to make the argument that drugs are going to be really the sort of source of spiritual life in America. That's that's the future as well as the past. Yeah. Again, you know, the influence of psychoactive substances in the Americas, you know, pre-columbus' was pervasive and just a part of everyday life. And as you say, we've for whatever historical reasons and changes that have happened in our society have lost touch with those resources of spiritual meaning.

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Yeah. And religious life. And as you're saying, I and I believe it, too. We are in a moment when things are really transforming and drugs will be, I think, quite important in terms of how we come out on the other side.

[00:17:19.630]

I hate the word drugs. It's just such a blanket word. It's so unfortunate that, you know, like heroin and opiates and meth is lumped in with psilocybin all under one blanket.

[00:17:31.810]

Well, yeah, you're not alone. I mean, I'm intentional with drugs. I like to be provocative and try to confuse a lot of the categories that we use and thinking about some of these things that are so central in our lives and so potent, especially in terms of our religious lives. So, yeah, there's and theologians psychedelics and, you know, obviously all different kinds of other kinds of looking substances that we use that have an effect. And for me, that in some cases, in many cases, have religious meanings and connections.

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Have you ever experimented with the tropics breathing or any of the non-psychedelic methods of achieving these certain states of consciousness?

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No, no, no. I mean, no, but I think they're important as well. Yeah.

[00:18:29.710]

People achieving mystical state through non-psychedelic means is another avenue and thinking about the importance of those mystical states and how people get there. But also, I would say, as you said, it's what are the results? What kind of transformations are made in people's lives? And I think what we're seeing is whether it's a psychedelic induced experience or non-psychedelic, it's. There are lots of similarities. Yeah, I mean, a lot of people get it, get there through near-death experience.

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There's a lot of people. Well, this is another thing where the mind is capable of producing psychedelic compounds and in near-death experiences, although it's very difficult to measure. Right. Because you would actually have to open up someone's brain while they're in the middle of a near-death experience, which is probably not the healthiest thing for someone who almost died. Yeah, but that's as far as we know. That's the best way to measure it now. But these people who experience these near-death moments have these incredible, profound visions.

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And many people think that what's happening is some sort of endogenous dump of psychedelic chemicals. We know the brain is capable of making the most potent one psychedelics in terms of like, you know, what happens and how they do it.

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It's still a bit of a mystery they're trying to solve.

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But, yeah, that connection is fascinating. Yeah. And as I mentioned or you may know, I teach a death and dying course as well. And so near-death experiences are pretty much an important part of that class. And the kinds of research and findings that are beginning to appear in terms of looking at those connections are fascinating. And tie in to this question of of. What is our relationship to death, how do we understand, you know, the reality of death in our lives and you know what you what are our thoughts about the afterlife?

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Or if there is one that gets tied into, you know, how people respond to this research, you know, how they are engaged with it and how they're compelled by it?

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There's a lot of folks that apparently can reach like some pretty intense states of consciousness through yoga, through different styles of yoga and different styles of breathing. But there's a really funny quote by Terence McKenna where the Buddha met this monk. Who who said, I practiced the city of levitation for the last 20 years and I've achieved the ability to walk on water and the Buddha says you have the fairies only a nickel. Mm hmm.

[00:21:18.460]

Yeah, right. So what you can he can really meditate alone in darkness forever.

[00:21:24.520]

Or you can just take mushrooms. You get there in an hour. Right.

[00:21:28.900]

Well, yeah, I think for many of us we take the quicker route. Yeah. But again, there are like with the monk or people who meditate, you know, all kinds of important will set and setting, thinking about, you know, what is the context in which this is taking place. And that's critical.

[00:21:50.830]

Do you ever get pushback about the the connection between psychedelics and religion? Has anybody ever challenged you on this or debated you on it?

[00:22:01.660]

Oh, I mean, I teach. I mean, my students don't sometimes they challenge.

[00:22:07.210]

But no, I mean, I try to not directly. And I don't really give a shit, you know. I mean, I'm at that stage of my career, I'm I'm I'm convinced about, again, the sort of great research possibilities and thinking across the board about the connection between drugs and religion.

[00:22:28.360]

Now, when you're teaching these classes, and I'm assuming that for a lot of these kids is the first time you're exposing them to these ideas.

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Absolutely. Because, yeah, they many of them don't know what the study of religion is. Right. And, well, we have a pretty nice, diverse mix of students in terms of their background. But most don't have a religion course other than something they've done and they were in Catholic school or if they

studied, you know, the Bible in some form. But no, they never seen anything like me.

[00:23:03.130]

It's funny because that's I mean, that's a heavy responsibility, I would imagine, too, because you're introducing to these kids this these ideas that have really the potential for a very profound impact on the rest of their lives.

[00:23:19.840]

Yeah, and that's been something I've worried about my entire career. You know, I actually care quite a bit about how these ideas are transmitted and received. And as we said, a lot of them are quite sensitive, the topics that I'm trying to teach.

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But it's an essential part, I think, of being a young adult and. Learning how to not just think for yourself, but to sort of reimagine the world and try to understand some of the forces that are at work in.

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In your life and what's going to be coming in terms of your future career, and I try to make religion relevant, you know, in those terms. But I also, as I like to say to them, you know, I mean, I wouldn't say this before I have tenure. But, you know, my goal, I tell them the straight out is to confuse the hell out of them.

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You know, what they think is religion is not the only game in town.

[00:24:28.930]

And so I'm very upfront about this sort of being an intellectual exercise, you know? You know, why are students taking my death and dying class? Well, I don't want to know. I want it just to be purely academic for them to encounter different understandings of death, different death rituals, different cultures and and shake them up. But not necessarily, you know, kind of turn them away from what they've been taught, the end result may kind of reinforce their own sort of cultural background and outlook.

[00:25:06.070]

But but I'm I'm for myself. I'm very gratified in the work that I do, if you could call it work, and, you know, I get a great response from students and I'm just, you know, really pleased that I'm able to be a part of that educational process because not to go on that.

[00:25:28.810]

Yeah, I mean, because my classes are often not like their other classes, which are, you know, political science or economics or biology. And, you know, I just want them to be able to reflect and think about some of these deep things that sooner or later, you know, are going to bite them in the butt. Yeah, I like how you describe it to that.

[00:25:49.960]

It's not the only game in town. The way I try to describe it to people is like I'm not not a religious person, but I'm not opposed to it. And I probably was when I was younger. But I think I was just arrogant.

[00:26:00.100]

And I think that the best way to look at religion is it's not the whole thing, but you shouldn't throw it out. I think it's a piece. Yeah, I think it's a piece of something that's a giant puzzle. And the idea of throwing it out, I don't think that's the way to do it.

[00:26:16.480]

I think I think those people in the problem obviously is translation's translation's a giant issue when

you're taking something from ancient Hebrew and you're translating it to Latin and Greek and Aramaic and all these different languages, it's like the lot is probably lost in terms of the way they express. If you ever read Russian to English. Hmm. There's a lot of like Russian people that I follow on Twitter and I get a huge kick out of or excuse me on Instagram and I get a huge kick out of pressing the translate button.

[00:26:49.180]

Oh yeah.

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I like to try to break down the way they communicate now when you're dealing with, like, super ancient languages that we don't even use anymore, like ancient Hebrew, like who knows how accurate.

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And what if the the intent is clearly expressed through an English translation, right? Probably not.

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Well, a lot gets lost. Yeah, a lot gets invented also.

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Also, it's just these ideas have been passed down through thousands and thousands of years.

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And I feel like if you could just not be too literal with it and just listen to what these people are saying, what they were trying to get across.

[00:27:28.930]

Obviously, there's some awful shit in the Bible in particular and many religions in terms of condoning slavery, treating women as second class citizens. There's there's a lot that's probably just some cultural artifact of the time where they've embedded their own beliefs on how human beings should act with each other and then and then attributed that to God. Right.

[00:27:52.390]

Right. But if you can get past that and just not take it, you know, no pun intended as gospel. Right. And just.

[00:28:01.130]

These people were trying to lay down their experiences and the lessons that they've learned in some sort of a way to live your life book, right?

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Right. And and, yeah, I mean, I agree with you from my point of view, too much literalism, you know, is really counterproductive, if not destructive. Yeah. As societies change over time. So, you know, the act of interpretation is very much obviously a part of the study of religion and looking at how religions change and transform for me.

[00:28:42.320]

I'll just I'll say I'm so not interested in Christianity or Judaism or Buddhism or Islam, you know, the conventional containers of what we think are the world's religions. You know, very problematic, to say the least, but my my interested my interest is more in the sort of intersections of religion and culture where people might not recognize their being religious, even though I would try to make the argument that they are so.

[00:29:11.740]

Well, I mean, I I've written a book called Sacred Matters that looks at these different kind of arenas where where religious life can be found in cultural forms of activity. So like celebrity worship.

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I would call a religious culture that has systems of meaning, different kinds of rituals, possibilities for discovering your true self, a whole kind of value system that can be tied up.

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That's interesting. Celebrity worship as a form of religion. I've always thought of it as just hijacking the human reward system, because if we lived in a tribe of people, a small tribe, and there was one great leader, you know, battle scarred leader who's seen it all and can give us the information, and he was the one talking, we would listen.

[00:30:07.650]

That would be a person of great importance. And we all gather round and listen.

[00:30:12.390]

But when you see Brad Pitt in a movie screen and his face is 30 feet high and this music playing when he talks and a team of writers have carefully constructed all of his words in this perfect sentence. And, you know, it's just like it's so moving and inspiring. And then we see him in real life. Oh, my God, it's really you. But meanwhile, he hasn't really done anything other than pretend. Right?

[00:30:33.060]

I mean, he's been pretty well, I mean, the great entertainer, but he's given us some wonderful distractions. But it's not that he's led us through battle. It's not that he's he's figured out how to find the food in the water. You know, this is not what it is. But in our our hijacked human reward system, we treat him as though he is the great leader.

[00:30:53.610]

Yeah. Or even someone like Oprah. I mean, who's more clearly, you know, in that sort of strange middle ground between celebrity and spiritual leader of some kind. So, you know, obviously it's going to vary depending on what celebrity you're talking about. But, you know, just in terms of projections or imagination where we invest, you know, our energies. Yeah. You know, celebrities big. But again, I'd like to talk about other things.

[00:31:23.640]

You know as well that we're talking about politics or consumer culture or things around medicine, that their religious qualities that don't have to do with the Bible or with Muhammad or something.

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Right. There's religious qualities in that. There's these very rigid ideologies that are treated like religions they have to follow.

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And there's also signs that people will hold up, that they're complying and they're along with this ideology. One of them that I talk about, a lot of people taking photos with masks on on Twitter for their profile picture. Right. Like, I know what you're doing. Right? Right. We all know. What are you doing?

[00:32:08.670]

Yeah, well, I mean, you know, that's, again, messaging and thinking about, you know, bizarre values, you know?

[00:32:14.160]

Yeah, it's it's bizarre when you see these patterns sort of repeated over and over again.

[00:32:18.660]

Right. Well, in social media to whittle down the future of religion and in terms of how it transforms and sure moves forward is an important kind of site for religious activity and investments. And you know, where we're really going to see the action, what's happening on Instagram?

[00:32:40.010]

Twitter and so on, yeah, so when you say like religion, that these things fall into sort of religious behaviors or religious ideas, you're not meaning like as handed down from a higher power, you're meaning as in people fall in with the same sort of compliant behavior and patterns.

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And not necessarily I mean, it's not it's not all just sort of compliance. And it's one aspect. Right. Or conformity or something.

[00:33:11.650]

It's just meaning making. It's how we try to live our lives in ways that can carry us on when we have to confront suffering and death and as well as, you know, issues around health and what are the sources that are available to people. And, you know, as I've said in my class many times, I think popular culture is much more of an important kind of teacher about religious ideas and values than, you know, the local preacher.

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How so? Because people pay more attention to it.

[00:33:44.210]

Absolutely. And because they're more swayed by it, you know, because it has more of an impact and resonance.

[00:33:50.060]

But it's a dangerous way to sway things coming from someone who's involved in distributing popular culture because there's so little thought put into the actual impact of of what it is and so much thought putting into it.

[00:34:05.120]

Just what pops. Yeah.

[00:34:06.620]

What gets people to pay attention. Right. Well, and money talks and money is sacred. You know what what's the more, you know, sacred in our society than making some money? Yeah. And that's, you know, again, so there too we can talk about other religious qualities to capitalism. Well, you know, there have been a number of scholars who've written on that topic and made those connections. So, again, you know, the action isn't taken place in the church that's taken place in, you know, music festivals.

[00:34:36.500]

Burning Man. Yeah. You know, it's this is where, again, not making it. I'm not trying to kind of overgeneralize, but I think very much for especially younger people. But baby boomers as well. You know, where where you know, where does where do I get my spiritual juices?

[00:34:55.970]

You know, there are churches now that are incorporating psilocybin into their rituals. I think one particular in Oregon City could find that there's a church in Oregon that is doing one of my Oregon spokesperson today.

[00:35:11.000]

Well, it's a big you know, that's big news and big changes for sure. Yeah, we're all going to be watching that.

[00:35:16.460]

Well, the idea is that that's what it used to be all about.

[00:35:20.450]

You know, if you go back to it's a very controversial book, but John Marco Allegro grows the sacred mushroom and the cross is all about consumption of psychedelic mushrooms and that he believes that that was really what the Bible was about, was about hiding these stories from the Romans when they were captured.

[00:35:40.460]

Yeah, lots of theories. Yeah. Even with Judaism to Moses, you know, there's just all all kinds of ways people have tried to make the connection. Oh, yeah.

[00:35:50.030]

They're legally offering psilocybin mushroom therapy through ceremony.

[00:35:53.780]

Oh, but look, there's mint. That's what is the name of this place. Well, Sacred Heart Medicine taught us, is that the name of the church, no organ. Yeah, Oregon State, non-profit, domestic, got to go non-profit if you want to sell mushrooms and not get locked out. Well, that's right, donated all charity kids will stay out of the pokey.

[00:36:19.270]

Well, and there are wide churches, too, that are starting to crack. Sure. So, yeah, cannabis and religion also beyond, again, just the psychedelics. Yeah. And and that's just sort of the surface.

[00:36:32.650]

My sense is there's a big underground and I know that there's one here in Austin because I did some research here, but the research I do my research on made before the pandemic, I was able to get out and do some research around and talk to people who, yeah, who are, you know, running these kinds of, you know, psychedelic religious communities or, you know, sacred plants. Yeah. Different communities that are cropping up Washington, D.C..

[00:36:58.780]

Right.

[00:36:59.060]

They just also decriminalize. Yes. Silverside bit. Yeah. And there, too is a thriving underground. So these are I think we're going to see that underground. These subcultures really begin to surface and I think so.

[00:37:14.440]

And with the war on drugs now basically almost over, how are we going to think about drugs? How are we going to respond to them?

[00:37:23.860]

The war on drugs almost over. What a crazy war and drugs one.

[00:37:28.280]

Well, yeah. I mean, I've been saying this a lot lately, but like my whole life has been lived under the war on drugs. Yeah, no, I mean, yeah. 60S 58. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So it's. I missed out.

[00:37:43.820]

It's like all of a sudden changing and like, what is the society going to be like to be around late 50s, early 60s before everything was illegal, when people were just freaking out and, you know, after Hoffman had synthesized LSD and when, you know, basically all of the schedule and compounds were free and legal, I mean, free to consume you, you got to wonder the only thing that was illegal was marijuana.

[00:38:10.280]

Yeah, well, which is kind of hilarious. Yeah. That boggles the mind. Yeah, it's full of hypocrisy, but yeah, that was a crazy time. I don't know if you saw that great documentary, Wormwood Know by Errol Morris. I've heard of it though.

[00:38:24.410]

Yeah. It's crazy about, again, the sort of 50s and psychedelics and LSD and the CIA and all that. Yeah.

[00:38:30.680]

So that's a very rich part of the history that Timothy Leary that, you know, Rock Hudson was on the psychiatrist's couch taking LSD and experiment out and, you know, what was that doing it again, the notion was a miracle drug medicine to help people with their depression.

[00:38:51.500]

You know, all of that. And again, what we don't know, although we're beginning to see this more and more and some of this research is what are the religious implications in a person's life after they trip?

[00:39:04.850]

Yeah, there's a great book that I've mentioned many times in this podcast because I have the guest on the author on rather, Tom O'Neil wrote a book called Chaos, and it's about the Manson family. And he was writing a book on the Manson family.

[00:39:22.250]

Excuse me, he was writing an article 20 years ago on the Manson family, just supposed to be a real quick article, writing it. And then in the middle of his research, writing, writing the book, he started finding all these problems and weird inconsistencies and weird connections.

[00:39:36.140]

20 years later, he finishes this book and it's all about the CIA and LSD and that the Manson family, Charles Manson in particular, was involved with CIA experiments they did with LSD, on on LSD, with prisoners, and that they were most likely dosing him up when he was in jail and then giving him access to LSD and these psychological techniques that he used on the family when he was released.

[00:40:06.920]

And then also all this evidence that every time they would arrest him, even though he's on parole, they would let him go because the CIA was encouraging his use of LSD, his promoting it to the family, and they're committing crimes. And the whole idea was to discredit the anti-war movement and to disrupt the civil rights movement.

[00:40:28.460]

There was a lot of shit involved with the CIA and LSD and they were running they were running a clinic, a free clinic in Haight Ashbury until for 50 years, until three months after this book was released.

[00:40:41.330]

And then mysteriously, our work is done. Yeah, it's over.

[00:40:45.260]

They closed it down. Right. But there's amazing connections that Tom O'Neil makes in this book to Jolli West, who is in the CIA, who was a part of their LSD program.

[00:40:56.480]

To Jack Ruby.

[00:40:59.120]

I've heard some of this. Yeah. Oh, my God.

[00:41:01.760]

It's it's amazing. He's Tom is great. And his book is I can't recommend it. And I know I'll check it out.

It's a mind blower. Yeah.

[00:41:08.990]

Because you as you get into the book, you like, what the fuck does meticulously researched over twenty years.

[00:41:15.800]

I mean it was this man's life. Right. And they succeeded, right.

[00:41:19.910]

Yeah. Oh yeah. Manson that was. Oh yeah. Out of it. Or you know, a lot of people are kind of mark that as being sure.

[00:41:26.390]

And they think of LSD as something that makes you go crazy and want to murder people and kill people.

[00:41:31.520]

And they change the idea of what a hippie was. Right, right. Right.

[00:41:34.970]

Because of these psychological techniques that he learned when he was in jail and all the mind control experiments that he learned and the way they did it, like he would pretend to take acid and he would give it acid to the family and then he would mindfuck them. Right. And then have them go out and commit murder and tell them that they were freeing people and.

[00:41:52.430]

Yeah, well, oh, no, no doubt. I mean, wild times. Yeah, absolutely. And there was a lot of interest. Yeah. For sure. Among the CIA for, you know, what the potential would be for LSD. Yeah.

[00:42:08.720]

He also went over the Operation Midnight Climax, which is a part of MK Ultra. Do you know about that, that Operation Midnight Climax. They ran whorehouses around brothels in San Francisco and I think a couple other cities and they would have two way mirrors and they would have the prostitutes dose up these johns with LSD and their drinks. And they had no idea. And then they would have sex and they would watch them and observe them. And this went on for years.

[00:42:36.260]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're they're just giving people LSD like American.

[00:42:40.910]

Right, right, right, right. This is a law enforcement agency. I mean, really bizarre. Well, you know, I mean, what don't we know? Yeah, exactly. What don't we know? Right.

[00:42:49.970]

Well well, they only found this out sort of accidentally through research into these files that had been left behind and some Freedom of Information Act.

[00:43:00.490]

Right. Right, right. Well, that's how people are being able to get access to some of that. Yeah.

[00:43:05.360]

Some of that information.

[00:43:06.710]

But the problem is, for so long, people have had this idea as LSD equals lose your mind, go crazy, jump off buildings right now.

[00:43:18.380]

Well, and then that also gets transferred over to cannabis and other drugs as the war on drugs really picks up with Nixon. And and it does help to demonize certain groups of people.

[00:43:32.180]

Well, the real sad thing, too, is in putting these things in schedule one, we've really missed out on research that would be very helpful for people that do have adverse reactions. There's a lot of people, diverse reactions to psilocybin, to cannabis, to LSD, and we don't know why. Right, right. Particularly people that have schizophrenic breaks while on cannabis. It's very common, right? Not very common, but it might be like, you know, one out of 100 or something crazy like that.

[00:44:04.670]

Right.

[00:44:04.910]

Right, right.

[00:44:05.430]

It's not huge, but it's enough that we really should be concerned and we don't know what the fuck's going on because they've kept people from doing research.

[00:44:12.260]

Right. Right. Well, who knows if that is going to change. Yeah, it's already starting to change quite dramatically. And with the results that are coming out of some of these experiments and research studies that are going on, I think, you know, it's convincing. Yeah. And when you're helping, you know, war veterans with PTSD, you know, I mean I mean, come on.

[00:44:34.910]

MDMA seems to be particularly helpful in that, right?

[00:44:37.280]

Well, that's right. And I know doing some some of those studies at Emory, but a lot of places. Again, this is what is being referred to as the mainstreaming of psychedelics. It's just, you know, they're going to be more and more a part of our resources. Yeah. In terms of where to go. Yeah.

[00:44:57.380]

A mild dose of MDMA for the whole world might fix everything. Yeah, well, it's a real mild where everybody together three to one go. We'd all just like. I'm sorry man.

[00:45:08.690]

Let's love interrupted. What are we doing. It would be amazing.

[00:45:11.810]

Yeah. I've only done it once but it was incredibly found and but the next day I couldn't read. You're were pretty fogged out or something. Oh, so dumb. And then I had to go on stage. I was terrible. I did stand up the next night and I just couldn't get it together. My brain was so worn out. Right.

[00:45:30.250]

I was going to ask you, I think I saw your tour was called Sacred Clown. Yeah. So, you know, sacred is my I like to kind of go after that, but I like that title.

[00:45:42.610]

And so I was curious how you came up with that or what it's Lakota term of Kayoko is sacred clown.

[00:45:51.450]

OK, Lakotas had a term for a very important part of their culture, which was someone who mocks all

the things that are deemed sacred and important.

[00:46:03.460]

Right. And sort of finds holes in all of these dogmatic ideas.

[00:46:09.940]

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Well, that's I mean, again, that's what religion can do or.

[00:46:15.790]

Yeah, I would have called it of snake notions of the sacred can really, you know, help you to see what's really going on in the world.

[00:46:21.640]

I would have called it Hilco, but it seems like that would have caused more problems than well, first of all, people like what the fuck does that mean?

[00:46:28.630]

And then second of all, people like your country appropriating, which is helpful.

[00:46:32.980]

But still, you know, you really I'm not sure you do it well. Well, that's certainly think that, Ralph.

[00:46:38.500]

Yeah. I mean, certainly. Yeah. In terms of it's more overweighting. Yeah. Yeah but but I got you. Yeah.

[00:46:45.250]

So that's what I'm going to call one Socotra again. Right. I'm sorry.

[00:46:48.070]

It'll be even more important now after the pandemic. You really need to make fun of it. Absolutely. Because people are more on edge.

[00:46:57.280]

And then also unfortunately or fortunately, people have embedded themselves so deeply into social media that they believe that this really bizarre way of communicating which forms these echo chambers and these really non empathetic ways of expressing your disdain or anger or hate or disagreement with people, that this is a common standard.

[00:47:23.710]

It's the most non psychedelic thing. Right. The way people communicate on Twitter is like a bunch of mental patients throwing shit at each other.

[00:47:31.150]

Yes, I understand. Yeah. And you've gotten off of Twitter social media.

[00:47:37.240]

Well, I'm on Twitter, but I don't use it. Right, right, right. I'll read other people's stuff sometimes just to go what is going on? But if someone's trying to get my attention, good luck.

[00:47:45.460]

Good luck. Well, I don't read anything about me. Yeah. But I don't read anything about me in general. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:47:52.480]

Because Instagram is basically just a giant distraction for me. Right.

[00:47:56.500]

I just find it fun to a lot of good images and things and but I agree. You know, I think that the social media is one of the more powerful forces and the changes that we are seeing. Yeah. And the political divisions clearly are kind of the one of the consequences of of how embedded, you know, these platforms have become in our lives.

[00:48:21.690]

It's almost like like it's all I mean, it hasn't all been planned out, but it's almost like it has been in order to really deteriorate our confidence and all of these structures and systems. If you if you thought about what what would be the perfect way to deteriorate it? Well, you have a guy who's clearly unqualified for the job, who is famous for just kind of being an asshole on television, firing people and being like a bombastic sort of, you know, braggadocios rich guy with his name on giant buildings and you're fired.

[00:48:53.500]

Fuck you and grab them by the pussy. And then you have that that guy be the president. Yeah.

[00:48:58.210]

And then have everybody, like, we got to get him out of here. He's the problem.

[00:49:01.630]

He's the problem. And then I think they're going to realize once he is out. No, no, no, he's not the problem. He's he's just a problem. Right. The problem is human beings. Right. And the problem is the political system is just deeply embedded with corruption. And you're going to realize that with this next guy who's supposed to be your savior, it's not going to work out.

[00:49:19.990]

Well, to bring it back to your earlier point, I think we all could use some MDMA.

[00:49:25.360]

Yeah, everybody. Everybody microdoses on mushrooms for sure.

[00:49:31.420]

OK, well, OK, we're we're going to think we're heading in that direction. I think, too, you know, I believe in the young people. Yeah, I do too.

[00:49:39.550]

I do too. Well, that's why this podcast works, you know, because I think you can't have the systems that are in place that are bullshitting people and then they're out on the streets talking to their friends and communicating in a totally different way than they're seeing in the media.

[00:49:54.610]

And they're like, what? This doesn't represent me, right? This is not how I think and feel. And my experiences with life and with particularly if they've had any psychedelic experiences, these aren't represented right. Why aren't they represented when I know they're so common and I know they're so profound and I know they've meant so much to me and my friends. Why, why? Why do I see this? Right. So then they find things like this on the Internet and they go, OK.

[00:50:19.400]

I'm not crazy, right?

[00:50:21.380]

There's other people out there, so right, and then the other side of that would be the notion that we really have lost any sense of of powerful authority structures, you know, sort of cultural authorities that really can unite people or kind of help people understand the importance of common cause of some kind. And yeah. And, you know, that's again, partly to bring it back to religion has to do with the the conflicts around the church and Christianity, especially in American politics, that is being diminished.

[00:51:04.250]

I like to write about sort of the de Christianisation, you know, as the dominant sort of religious structure begins to erode and you begin to see, again, spiritual but not religious and other kinds of challenges that are coming from different communities or different kinds of spiritual experiences to, you know, the the authority structures that are in society. You know, that is part of the the context of all of this. Yeah, there are a lot of these battles are going on and people don't know where to turn or, you know, wondering where am I represented in all of this?

[00:51:41.960]

And it's not coming from religion or the church and political leaders, Republicans or Democrats. So it all becomes so focused, you know, we're all just about self promotion and self, you know, identity becomes the the main, you know, force in our lives, I think, for too many people. Yeah.

[00:52:03.240]

And hence the celebrity and then the chasing celebrity. Yeah, right. This becomes the ultimate, you know, level of this stupid game we're all playing. Right.

[00:52:13.860]

Well, for me, as someone who studies this, I try not to be judgmental, but I see again, it's a it's a religious system. There's a religious culture. Yeah.

[00:52:22.560]

And it's you know, it's just as interesting and legitimate in my mind as Christianity.

[00:52:31.200]

I don't I, I wish there was a structure that was in place that mimic the positive aspects of church, that didn't contain the dogmatic religious ideas that a lot of people find problematic.

[00:52:49.350]

You know, like I think there's something great about the whole community aspect of church. You know, my friends that do go to church, I have a lot of friends that are Christian, that are really good people. They're really good people, like admirable people.

[00:53:05.430]

And I think one of the things that's very admirable about their pursuit of Christianity is this community reinforcing aspect of it.

[00:53:19.260]

Right. You know, they get there together with the members of the community. Everybody's real friendly. They know that they're going to sit there and they're going to submit to this experience and they're going to, you know, read the passages and they're going to hear the sermon. And they're going to they're all going to be together. They're going to dress nice.

[00:53:37.140]

They're going to behave well and they're going to feel good about the people that they live near and they're surrounded by.

[00:53:42.840]

And I think we're missing that. There's so many people that I'm friends with that live in cities that don't know the person who lives in the apartment next door to them. They've been there for ten years and they they don't know anybody in their building. Everybody was telling me he lives in a building with a thousand people. He doesn't know any of them. That's crazy.

[00:53:58.350]

Well, that's such a weird modern audience. Yeah. It's a weird way for humans to live. And I think people feel particularly lost when they don't have a real sense of community.

[00:54:10.980]

And I could say as a stand up comedian, one of the things that we all have in common, particularly folks that we're working out of the Comedy Store, was that there was a family aspect to it. There was a real community there. We were very supportive of each other, embracing it, physically embracing like people see people that the had was everybody hugs.

[00:54:33.570]

And so for a lot of these comics who are single, I live alone, maybe don't know their neighbors like that was the place where they could go to.

[00:54:40.410]

That was church. Yeah, right. That's what I mean. I think that's beautiful. Yeah. And right on because you could see in that community of comedians something sacred. Yeah. Something religious that that's meaningful and that is profound in some ways. And as we said, the community aspect, but also, you know, helping people in terms of their own understanding. Self understanding. Yeah.

[00:55:05.250]

You know, and that's people turn to different kinds of communities, you know, and that's part of the modern world, too, that that community feeling the sort of collective togetherness can can be found in a number of different settings. And certainly the church and the congregation is one. But rock concerts or, you know, the comedy clubs, the Grateful Dead, the Grateful Dead, I mean, the Grateful Dead, that whole thing was acid, right?

[00:55:34.410]

Well, it was rimu and acid.

[00:55:37.050]

We're going to turn to that next next week.

[00:55:39.540] - Joe

Oh, are you.

[00:55:40.240] - Gary

Oh, yeah. We we end, of course, with psychedelics and creativity.

[00:55:43.740] - Joe

Oh, fish too. Right. Yeah, that's their deal, too. Right. So a lot of people drop acid and listen to that sort of jam music and.

[00:55:52.380]

Well, my friends usually have. Yes. And certainly meaningful. Yeah. Yeah. My friends who have gone to a lot of dead shows say you don't even really know the dead until you listen to them on acid.

[00:56:04.260]

Right. Right, right. I guess music designed for acid.

[00:56:07.350]

Yeah, well, that's that's something you can find in other musical acts as well. That connection.

[00:56:15.960]

I mean, that's the thing about dimethyltryptamine and the IKAROS.

[00:56:19.870]

If you ever listen to South American IKAROS those, when you hear those songs on psychedelics, the images dance to those songs like they're that they work together like a hand in a glove.

[00:56:34.170]

Well, perfectly. It's amazing.

[00:56:35.950]

Yeah. Well I like I like that connection between music and drugs and religion. So you can also, you know, look at the peyote church and listen to some of the music that comes from those Sarum. Yeah, very much a central part of the experience and how people absorb, receive it and make sense of it.

[00:56:56.000]

I think we're way too comfortable with music. We think of it as like, no big deal. Exactly. Yeah.

[00:57:02.230]

And that's that's what I do in my all my classes. I bring in music. So in the death class at the beginning of the semester, I tell students. I want you to be listening. You know, just in terms of the music that you listen to day to day, if you can identify the theme of death. And of course, they when they hear that at first they think I'm nuts and wait, you know, out of my mind, and they soon realize it's everywhere, right.

[00:57:29.530]

And so, yeah, I mean, I know that aspect of my classes can really be powerful because, again, we don't we take music for granted, but it's so central to our lives. And again, I think you can have more of an impact than just, oh, isn't this fun to listen to. Yeah. And shape our consciousness and our communities. And so so I do that in the sex sexuality class, doing it in the drugs class, and it's great for students to be able to see that as data.

[00:58:03.490]

What do you open up with? What songs you open up with when you for which one? For Death Blue Oyster Cult.

[00:58:09.970]

Fear the Reaper. They were the same. Yeah, they love it. Even though they've never heard of it.

[00:58:15.640]

They never heard of Blue Oyster called these fucking kids out the kids today. How do you not hear of that song?

[00:58:21.850]

I mean, again, their parents may have listened to it. Sometimes I get that, but oh man, there's just a lot of things that can can play be played across different genres.

[00:58:33.490]

So it's not just rock.

[00:58:35.230]

There's a few recordings that are still available of the Lakotas doing the ghost dance.

[00:58:41.530]

Oh yeah. Yeah, I know that. Yeah. And my I teach American religious history and there too, music is the main thread where we learn about religious communities. That is one of the saddest songs in the history of the world, because that's these people that really are at the end.

[00:59:00.620]

I mean, there's very few genocides. There's I mean, there's a few. Right. But.

[00:59:06.910]

There's very few where there's almost nothing left of people that existed in in thriving numbers 300 years ago, but in Native American communities, it's common.

[00:59:20.680]

It's like the most common they like they're all gone. Right, in terms of like what? The way they used to live versus now and that ghost dance. Yes.

[00:59:31.900]

Was them trying to conjure up the spirit of the past and reignite their culture and bring back the old ways and get rid of the white settlers and get rid of the armies and get rid of all all the people that have destroyed their way of life and disease and all the things that had happened to them literally over the course of their life from, you know, there's people that were born in 1850 that were 50 years old at the turn of the 20th century, that were like, what the fuck happened when they were born?

[01:00:03.940]

They they lived on the plains and life was as if it had been for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Right. And then all sudden it was gone. And so this ghost dance was this attempt at reigniting their old culture. And it's it's it's so eerie and sad.

[01:00:19.660]

And it's it's it's so rare to have an actual recording of something. Yeah. That was an attempt to stop genocide.

[01:00:29.140]

Right. Right. And from that period, too, is really valuable, valuable to have as again, that's what's beyond data. Yeah. You know, this is about our memory. And as you said, it's very evocative. Yeah. When people listen to it and it does become an important remnant of that. Of that movement and that experience, but, yeah, the music and those ceremonies are incredible.

[01:00:57.440]

Do you play that for your classes? Yeah, yeah, yeah. I no, in the book I use, there's a whole chapter on the ghost dance. Oh. You know, James Mooney. And really trying to dig into some of the historical forces that led to. This as a potential revitalization form of religious revival that ends tragically, you know. Yes.

[01:01:24.630]

As you say, is something that disconnects a people from their past in ways that are difficult to maintain and and to people.

[01:01:37.590]

And people are still suffering from the momentum of that disconnection today. In 2020, there's massive amounts of strife and huge problems in Native American reservations because of that still today.

[01:01:51.630]

Oh, absolutely. It's crazy. And still, you know, as has been the case in Native American history, incredible signs of resilience, of innovation, of, you know, new forms of community that have have really the getting back at us with the casinos.

[01:02:07.890]

Well, that's what I've heard that before.

[01:02:10.800]

It's not us, I should say. Clearly, I'm a child of immigrants. Well, I mean, you know, this is a development that, you know, kind of ironic in some ways.

[01:02:21.460]

You know, it is it is it's it's bizarre that they're getting wealthy off of this weird vice.

[01:02:26.950]

Well, another addiction. Yeah. Another is gambling a guy. Is it, do you think?

[01:02:32.070]

Well, you know, I we had a great class on addiction. Have you ever been around gambling addicts, like, really gambling? No.

[01:02:39.940]

I mean, I've been around a bunch of times. Well, it's a drug. It's a drug.

[01:02:43.230]

That's what I'm wondering, you know, my God, I just like what's going on in the brain, too. That's going to be, you know, where you're going to be seeing some some kinds of activities that, you know, will lead people to continue on in the behavior.

[01:02:55.230]

Yeah, it's for sure a pattern that people fall into. Like my grandmother was addicted to playing the numbers. Yeah, I remember she was always losing and she was always like saying, oh, I was supposed to get this one. And I bet that one that was the whole deal.

[01:03:09.540]

My grandmother, Italian grandmother in New Jersey, you know, and the numbers were obviously this mob run weird's lottery thing for the neighborhood, but wasn't until I was in my 20s that I started playing pool, that I was around real hard core gambling addicts that would bet on raindrops running down a window.

[01:03:31.380]

They would bet on anything.

[01:03:32.790]

And everything in their life revolved on getting like and getting bets and winning and losing.

[01:03:39.930]

It was it was their whole there was their juice for their life. It was all gambling.

[01:03:45.090]

They'll right the life source or something, but also destructive in its way. It was overbearing, but it's hard to say it was destructive.

[01:03:53.610]

Well, it was definitely destructive in terms of their financial stability. They were always broke.

[01:03:58.560]

But, boy, they were they were engaged and they would call it action. Right? That's what they would call it like try to get some action. Like it was all about this thrill of possibly winning and possibly losing. Right. And you could say that people are doing that when they're playing the stock market. They're just doing a nice, slow version of it. Or if you're gambling on sports, you're certainly participating in it.

[01:04:21.450]

Right. You know. Right. And a lot of different kinds of addictions that people have. I mean, you're talking about religion. I mean about drugs.

[01:04:29.610]

Well, I think religion may maybe an addiction to in some in some ways, but I think so. Yeah. And so do you or some people.

[01:04:36.390]

Yeah. You just again, lifeforce life juicers what you got to keep given yourself if you're going to make it.

[01:04:44.490]

But yeah, I mean, I'm curious to think about what what are the addictions in our society. Right. You know, too much shopping or too much sex or drugs or the obvious one. But we really stretch out that term to mean, you know, and apply to all kinds of different or social media.

[01:05:01.500]

Well, I think that's a brand new addiction.

[01:05:03.990]

Right. That's and that was in that Netflix documentary. Really? Yes. Yeah. I believe Tristan Harris was actually here a couple of weeks ago. Oh, we talked about it. And it's I mean, it's I'm hoping that people recognize that that is not much different than all those other ones. Yeah. Whether it's gambling or masturbation or whatever it is that you're addicted to, it's the same kind of patterns.

[01:05:29.750]

Right. It's just this one is particularly compelling because it's with you all the time.

[01:05:33.330]

Right. You know, it's like gambling. You have to have someone to gamble with, someone you have to go to the casino or there has to be some way that you could like that god damn phone is with you 24/7, no doubt.

[01:05:42.960]

Yeah, well, it becomes all consuming, as you say. And yeah. And yeah, that can lead to all kinds of, you know, ruin.

[01:05:50.190]

We're finding a pattern in all this. Right. It's it's in humans like humans have weird sort of pitfalls that we slip into. We have weird, weird behavior patterns that we can fall prey to.

[01:06:07.140]

Absolutely. I mean I think that's probably part of just the makeup of what it means to be. Human, yeah, as we can get sidetracked and get so consumed by something that you lose sight of the rest of reality in some way and.

[01:06:23.570]

Yeah, I mean, I see that and the things that I study for sure, people obsessed about death or sexuality or drugs or anything or anything at all.

[01:06:34.490]

Yeah, but but how you know, we think about gambling and how that connects to sort of larger social issues and psychological kind of mental issues is important, you know, to make sure you're not just kind of compartmentalizing the behavior.

[01:06:52.460]

Yeah, it's part of a you know, that's part of a larger context and pattern that that that are.

[01:06:58.450]

Worth studying, worth looking at how much how much of a benefit is there in explaining to people the way we fall into these patterns, as much as there is exploring the patterns themselves, like we we have these weird sort of.

[01:07:19.420]

Vulnerabilities that are built into our system because we're. There's benefits to getting obsessed with

certain things because those certain things can lead you to success as a hunter gatherer, as a fisherman, and it's going to help feed your family if your brain can completely lock on to in this tenacious way of succeeding at something.

[01:07:43.400]

Right. If you're a hunter gatherer and you know your feet hurt you like, well, I give up. I can't do this. Obviously, hunting is not for me. You're going to starve to death. Your children are going to cry. Right. It's going to be horrible. Right. So there's this builtin thing.

[01:07:55.820]

But that could be hijacked by Roulet, right? Well, which is so weird. Yeah. That thing of.

[01:08:01.280]

Come on, I got to get this. I got a win. I got to go. That could be hijacked by games. Right. Could be hijacked by by many things that we find ourselves obsessed. Right.

[01:08:11.390]

Hijacked or also motivated by other kinds of inner dynamics. Well, I mean whether you want to talk about Freud or some other primal instincts that are at work, that depending on the individual and the particular social setting there in, you know, and family background can can lead to these. You know, all or nothing pursuits, but psychedelics sort of illuminates that for you, psychedelics are one of the only things that I've ever found that goes, hey, stupid, look at what you're doing.

[01:08:45.420]

Look what that is. Look what the cause of this is. Know like. Oh, yeah, right. Like, why didn't I notice that? Why didn't I see that?

[01:08:51.850]

Well, you don't see it until you see the psychedelic sort of turn the light on for you.

[01:08:56.220]

Yeah, right. And when it does, it's often the case that you don't need to go back right now.

[01:09:01.890]

It's like or at least I've read that people, you know, it's not addictive, but also, you know, once or twice, you know, you get you get it.

[01:09:11.160]

You certainly don't need to do it every day. Right.

[01:09:13.500]

I mean, if you want to have like I think people feel like a little refresher course every year or so, it's not a bad thing to just sort of get like.

[01:09:21.030]

Oh, yeah, well, yeah. Oh, that's right. I almost forgot. Right.

[01:09:24.210]

You know, recalibration kind of. Yeah.

[01:09:27.090]

Resetting the system the way I've described really profound psychedelic experiences like pressing control, alt delete for your brain and for people. Don't know what that means. If you only use a Mac, that's how you reboot a Windows computer when it crashes, control alt, delete your computer reboots and you have a fresh desktop with one folder. And that folder is just labeled my old bullshit.

[01:09:49.520]

And then you have a choice, right? The choice is do I open up my old bullshit, start going through, try to figure out life again through my old memories, or do I try to form a new view and resist my old bullshit, resist opening it up?

[01:10:03.000]

And that's where it gets tricky because your ego will try to convince you, like, listen, man, one cigarette smell bad. You know how you know. Vernon, relax, buddy. Right. You know, let's let's go play some bets.

[01:10:17.620]

There's nothing wrong with that. Okay. Come on, man.

[01:10:20.400]

Let's go do this. Let's go do that and that.

[01:10:22.590]

Next thing you know, you fall right back into the traps that you were avoiding. Right. Well, there you go.

[01:10:26.970]

Can be tricky in that way, leading you astray or making you think it's real or make you feel comfortable with these old patterns.

[01:10:34.380]

You're right. Really familiar with, even if those old patterns are failure. Right.

[01:10:37.860]

Like a lot of people, like fall off Dietze, fall off the wagon with drinking.

[01:10:41.640]

They do it because they're comfortable with the feeling of failure and this the uncertainty of the unknown of the future with these new patterns that you're trying to establish.

[01:10:52.020]

It's very confusing. It's very scary, no doubt.

[01:10:55.800]

And. It's religious, yeah. Is that how you would describe it? Yeah, I mean, in a way and the the for lack of a better term.

[01:11:05.910]

Yeah. And what it does, you know, and just that that whole metaphor is like being born again or something like that. And the shamanic journey, you know, you're not the same. You come back and you've got something to teach, you know, and that's it's not just I would say not necessarily just for the consumer. Yeah. The psychedelic or whatever the substance is. But it's it's also, you know, about connections, I think, and and sharing the knowledge.

[01:11:37.990]

Yeah. Getting it out there.

[01:11:40.440]

What what do you teaching in your sexuality classes that's different than. What people would normally expect. Hmm, well, one thing I try to do is be as a cross-cultural as I can be. So we look at sexuality and Hinduism in terms of Chinese religions, terms of African religions. So I try to really for these students, expand their minds as much as possible to see the varieties of ways in which people understand their sexuality. And so, you know, that's that's where I start the class.

[01:12:28.510]

How long you been teaching this for this class?

[01:12:30.940]

Yeah, and sexuality is another one that's post tenure, but it's probably been about seven or eight years. That's how much this is a really important question.

[01:12:40.960]

Like as a professor, what is it like pre tenure and post tenure? Because it seems to be night and day difference in terms of freedom and. Right.

[01:12:50.200]

I, I overlap that a bit, but everyone does. This is not you everyone, I guess.

[01:12:55.990]

Yeah. It's a strange whole organization, you know, and logic.

[01:13:02.320]

The higher education. I'm opposed to tenure. I think it's bullshit. Yeah.

[01:13:07.380]

I think it protects intellectual freedom.

[01:13:10.480]

No. Anyway, I mean, I think there was a time in which we might make that argument. But, you know, I don't know who else has tenure, what other professions. Good question. It's not insane.

[01:13:24.090]

You know, it's like not the real world. And so you think it's in some ways not good, because then the almost like the intellectual version of being born wealthy like you, you're you're you have no worries. And so you almost become spoiled.

[01:13:44.890]

Well, OK. Yeah, yeah. Well, yes, absolutely. I mean, you know, there there are arguments that after some faculty get tenure, the.

[01:13:54.350]

Shut down or they really aren't doing as much research anymore, and there isn't that drive, right? I mean, it's a whole tiered system. So you move, you get tenure when you move from assistant to associate professor and then, you know, what you want to get to is full professor. Right? Right. And again, that's sort of just a different place in the hierarchy. Yeah.

[01:14:15.080]

But again, it's all the papers you write, books you publish. I mean, yeah. MIT and Humanities, it's getting a couple of books out there. Mm hmm. But but yeah. I mean, I can't deny that I felt.

[01:14:30.620]

Much freer after I got after I got tenure to explore topics that I would be more hesitant to explore, like which topics and drugs, drugs for sure, drugs as again, as a as a as a research area for full force, you know, going to go into it again because there's a legitimate purpose to a scholarly study of the connections between religion and drugs.

[01:15:01.250]

Luckily, I'm not the only one who was pursuing this.

[01:15:03.770]

But but it's it's I believe there are a lot of interesting connections that haven't been made, especially in

contemporary American society. The other the other drug that I'm particularly interested in and seems to get a lot of response is I also include pharmaceuticals and prescription psychoactive drugs as a part of the drugs and religion connection.

[01:15:32.510]

Mm hmm. And so looking at the pharmaceutical industry and pills as sort of religious objects and and structures and cultures, really, how so?

[01:15:44.780]

Well, um, like antianxiety medication or. Yeah, I mean that as just, you know, it's ritualized. So you put it, you know, you've got to make sure, you know, you take it and take it when you're supposed to take it. You put faith in this little magic pill that is effective and can bring you to a better place.

[01:16:05.750]

It has importance in terms of community and who you are connected with and how the drug allows you to to have certain kinds of community.

[01:16:17.060]

So a lot of this is obviously kind of message. Do you see the messages in pharmaceutical commercials, which are, for me, dripping with kind of religious sentiments and sensibilities? You can be saved. You know, where you saved you? Well, you saved with a pill.

[01:16:33.930]

So this is a subject in particular that like Prytania would be I'd have to be walking on eggshells against the drugs more generally.

[01:16:43.550]

I would be I would I yeah. I would not be necessarily going there. But, you know, I mean, I'm not sure the other professors share your perspective on tenure that that's kind of nonsense.

[01:16:57.170]

Or bullshit, I should say, I would say, yeah, there are some, but most of us enjoy it, though I think most people would like to keep it and think it serves some function in terms of, as you're saying, sort of sort of legitimacy of academic freedom.

[01:17:12.410]

Some people are internally motivated. Some people are motivated just by whatever drives them, whatever intellectual curiosity, their their goals, whatever it is, has nothing to do with financial stability or job stability. But not not most.

[01:17:32.390]

Yeah. Most people, if you give them 100 percent job security, they're going to get fat.

[01:17:39.110]

Yeah, I'm afraid I, I would agree. Absolutely. It's weird. And you're right, some people are just, you know, just motivated. They want to succeed and pursue their interests sort of no matter what. And and there are certainly a number of scholars who are like that. Sure.

[01:18:02.810]

They're make their way to the top.

[01:18:04.370]

The path is what interests them. Right. The the destination is not real. Right, exactly.

[01:18:10.580]

I think that's exactly right. And, you know, but as I sort of joked earlier, I joke that I you know, this is called work. And I don't feel I really work. Right. I have a great, great job. I just I love what I do. Well,

you nailed it, right?

[01:18:23.990]

You figured out what actually interests you. And for some people, that what you do would be work, but not for, you know.

[01:18:31.670]

Well, right. Exactly. Yeah. Again, I'm very fortunate, especially being at Emory. So it's a different kind of professional life that I know. I've been really fortunate and it wasn't planned. You know, I was a fuck up. And as I write about in this new book, you know, *Don't Think About Death*, which is a memoir on mortality. I was directionless and just fucking around at high school and getting high and taking all kinds of drugs.

[01:19:00.410]

How dare you. Yeah.

[01:19:01.520]

Can you believe that in the San Fernando Valley. That's weird.

[01:19:05.390]

You were doing that in the San Fernando Valley. No one does that.

[01:19:08.270]

No, you must be terrible. Yeah, right. I talk about conformity, but. Oh my God. Well, part of the valley. Did you live in Van Nuys?

[01:19:17.270]

Oh, okay. Are old studios in Woodland Hills. Right. And one of your guys grew up in the valley, so I gotta talk to him. Yeah, it's fun.

[01:19:25.220]

I used to work on Venice. It's where Benny the Jets Jet Center was. Oh right. Right. No, that was funny. Well, famous kickboxing. Oh yeah. In the first place I came to when I came to California. Couldn't wait to go to the Jets. Ah.

[01:19:36.830]

Because you had heard about it. Oh my God.

[01:19:38.240]

I was legendary Benny Akitas like a legendary kickboxer in the early days of kickboxing and he came out of Los Angeles.

[01:19:46.010]

Yeah. It's so funny how many people come out of San Fernando Valley or connected.

[01:19:50.360]

I mean, but yeah, that's like it's not that funny. Well, a lot of people out there.

[01:19:53.990]

Yeah, well, but in any case, I was I was on a different path and luckily came around. Yeah.

[01:20:00.230]

For sure. So what, what led you out of the fog of adolescent craziness and fuck up a woman.

[01:20:10.070]

Oh a beautiful story. Yeah.

[01:20:13.340]

No my my my current wife has really helped to bring me into another direction, although, you know, not I wouldn't not only her, but, you know, it was just all of a sudden I started really liking to learn.

[01:20:29.780]

And I really you know, I went I dropped out of college a couple of times and you meeting her, settling down all of a sudden, thinking more critically and more kind of more deeply and taking classes more seriously. So I moved from usually I sitting in the back of the room to, you know, the front as I became a junior and senior and in college.

[01:20:56.870]

So it was essentially just a natural course of progression. You just became naturally more interested in things naturally, more curious, naturally, more dedicated to learning. Absolutely.

[01:21:09.050]

But but for some strange reason, I was back then very interested in death. So was it the subject as I was doing my undergraduate work, you know? Well, I guess well, that's that's the memoir.

[01:21:24.770]

I have no idea. But I'll say the memoir starts with me as a young kid, maybe eight or nine.

[01:21:34.040]

And, you know, waking up in the middle of the night with all this commotion in our house, the small San Fernando Valley house, three bedrooms and one bath, and then looking down the hallway and seeing, you know, what seemed to be like fifty firemen, but there couldn't have been fifty firemen. So I'm sure there were only a few who.

[01:21:55.760]

We're rushing into our bathroom where my grandfather was, and when he was going into the bath, he had a heart attack and died.

[01:22:03.710]

And I kind of witnessed that and they took them out of the bathroom and that was that, but what really what's really vivid as a memory associated with this was after the death of the family, rabbi came to our house.

[01:22:22.220]

And I just remember very vividly being in the backyard with him. And he asked me. Do you know what the meaning of death is? Again, eight or nine, like, I have no idea, no idea, and, you know, he must have said some things, but the thing that really stood out and is the title of the book is him saying, don't think about death. Just think about the living and trying to help your father cope with his grief and, you know, I mean, when people ask, you know, when did you start?

[01:22:57.430]

How did you get onto the topic of death? This early memory seems to stand out. And I utterly failed in the rabbi's advice. And I think at that point really started thinking a lot about death.

[01:23:11.470]

Well, I don't know if the rabbi's advice was so good. Well, I don't think anybody should ever tell you. Don't think about anything. Absolutely.

[01:23:18.860]

I mean, don't think about the elephant in the room. You don't think about the elephant.

[01:23:23.650]

You know, it's I just don't think it's ever good advice. Well, I've.

[01:23:28.510]

Come around, yeah. Yeah, again, I had a lovely rabbi, you know, a lovely experience in the temple, even though after my bar mitzvah I never looked back.

[01:23:38.990]

How old were you when your grandfather died? I was about eight or so.

[01:23:42.040]

Yeah, well, that's something you would say to an eight year old.

[01:23:45.040]

But again, it's just it's not how people how people's brains work well.

[01:23:50.860]

And it's not, you know, being fair to the to the reality. Well, we're all going to have to find out for sure what death is just integrated and a part of life.

[01:24:00.220]

And I think thinking about it and trying to figure it out is is is valuable.

[01:24:06.730]

I think ultimately we've been given a bunch of crude tools to deal with an insanely complex issue, this finite life form that we find ourselves inhabiting. Our consciousness is trapped in this finite thing.

[01:24:22.600]

And and we've been given these very crude tools for navigating.

[01:24:28.960]

Right.

[01:24:29.410]

And for coping and for just this the way we interact with each other about these these very complex subjects. We've get be very simplistic, very just empty phrases that don't provide any real comfort. Right.

[01:24:47.470]

And that. Right. And that are in some sense traditions that are handed down sort of as part of the law on how you're supposed to deal with death. Yeah, but for me and what was clear as I was studying more and more in terms of what you were saying, is that that is what religion is all about. You know, I think, you know, religion is very much a. A response to death, you know, and religious life is sort of required if you're going to be human, to deal with death.

[01:25:22.760]

Now, what are the sources that give you the right tools?

[01:25:27.670]

Again, traditional religion has been the primary resource, you know, for people, and that's fading. And now people are have all kinds of ideas about death and what happens after death.

[01:25:42.350]

And again, don't necessarily follow the so-called or traditional authorities. Yeah. Who want to teach us about death.

[01:25:50.570]

I had Richard Dawkins in the podcast once. There was a really weird moment where. We were talking about death and he was saying that he thinks that when it's over, there's nothing and then he sort of like semi aggressively said, you don't think that like, what do you think?

[01:26:09.500]

I'm like, I don't know. Right. I'm like, I don't know. But I know that I've tripped balls and you have it right. You're the one who's scared to do an acid.

[01:26:16.860]

You've already had strokes and stuff, buddy. Like when are you going to what are you going to dive into the pool? Right.

[01:26:21.540]

And I think he's brilliant and I've loved a lot of his takes on religion.

[01:26:28.140]

And I think in many ways he's been aggressive because of the pushback of, you know, his perspective as an atheist.

[01:26:35.790]

But I think that I think people that have had profound psychedelic experiences are not that they're not that confident because you didn't know that that could exist until you had it.

[01:26:49.500]

And then once you've had it, you're like, wow, I don't know what this is all about.

[01:26:53.610]

I think anybody who says I know what it's all about when you die, it's blank, it's dark, and that's it. You shut off and it's over.

[01:27:00.790]

Might maybe right. Or maybe you come with me and I'll take you to a place and we're going to do some stuff and you're going to meet all kinds of gods. Right. And it doesn't last that long. Like you got a couple hours. Yeah.

[01:27:15.870]

Like we could we could change everything for you in a couple hours. Yeah.

[01:27:20.580]

Right. It'll completely disrupt and challenge all of your assumptions that you also evaporate though. Yeah. Well I think that, you know, that's what gets me in trouble more than anything. Why is it in trouble.

[01:27:33.810]

Well I mean when, when, when we talk about atheism, because I take this approach again, much more to be provocative that there are no atheists, we're all religious.

[01:27:42.690]

OK, if you're if if you're willing to entertain my very broad understanding of religion and religious life, then I would say, yeah, OK, so that's a very broad because we're not talking about.

[01:27:55.090]

Right. When you're talking about religion in terms of like taking Xanax, you're not talking about a higher power, really. You're not talking about faith in a grand creator that has had some master plan for every single living thing. And they're all interconnected and the entire universe is all part of his master project.

[01:28:11.940]

That's well, I don't think you need the creator to be religious right or some divine power.

[01:28:18.480]

I mean, what do I mean? You need some access to transcendence. You need some way of understanding your own self and identity. You need to have a system of values that will guide you and through your life. Yeah, I'm a way of being you need to have community in some form. So, you know, I'm a more anthropological than theological is one way you might put it. So if you're talking about religion in Native American cultures where you know and you no doubt know and there's no word for religion in any of those languages.

[01:29:01.920]

Yeah. So when you think about, well, what's religion pre Columbian, you know, native cultures? Well, it's what they do with the crops. You know, it's, you know, how they set up their sort of ritual ceremonies. It is their relationship to the whether it's, you know, the price of things and then where it's not necessarily a higher power.

[01:29:27.540]

But, you know, it is about seeing that there's more than just materialism.

[01:29:32.340]

Yeah. Or something like that is the problem, the word because the word religion, like we have like a very narrow definition for it fits into our society in our culture, like religion. Oh, yeah, I know what that is. That's you're a Buddhist. You're a Muslim. You're a Christian. You're. Yeah, that's a religion. Dude, you've got to take my class.

[01:29:53.160]

Oh. Maybe you should come home. I want to. Can I win. When can I ask for a guest lecturer. That would be.

[01:29:59.850]

So what am I going to say. Well, come in on the psychedelics. We do it this week but um. But yeah. No, I mean. I mean, I just.

[01:30:07.890]

I think that. The word sucks. Yeah, you know, the religion, as I like to say, is an invention. It's a word that we have invented to label a lot of different kinds of behaviors.

[01:30:20.760]

It's a very clunky word in a lot of ways, isn't it? Just like you say, oh, he's religious. Like, Oh, got it.

[01:30:26.830]

You know? Right. Yeah. All of a sudden you think, you know, the person there was a guy that we've made fun of a bunch on the show who was a pastor to a lot of famous people. He was like the hip young pastor. We just got busted.

[01:30:40.030]

They just got busted banging some chick. Yeah. And we made fun of them because I'm like these guys, there's no way this guy's religious. This is what I was saying. Well, because he was wearing these shorts that showed what I called his dick root, like he wears shorts that go way low, which you just don't wear your shorts like that unless you want someone to think about your penis.

[01:31:00.970]

Right. That's that's why you wear your shorts like that. Or maybe in the 70s.

[01:31:04.450]

It would be.

[01:31:05.200]

But I mean, there's no reason to boycott you guys who wear their shorts that low right there. They're

being overtly sexual to people they don't even necessarily know.

[01:31:15.550]

Right. You're trying to and you want everyone to look at your chiseled body. You know, like this is not a there's a reason why monks dress in these, like, very modest clothes that cover everything.

[01:31:28.240]

They don't even want to think about their body. Right.

[01:31:30.580]

And that is a part of the religion of both celebrity and social media. Right.

[01:31:38.950]

That this guy has got these traditional Christian ideas fused in with the religion of celebrity, in with the religion of social media.

[01:31:50.080]

And then you're seeing that it doesn't really work because, you know, like what's the reward for those those behaviors?

[01:31:56.590]

The reward is he wants to fuck like that one guy wants people. That's that guy wants people to lust after him. And it wound up sabotaging him ultimately. Absolutely.

[01:32:09.040]

I think. Yeah. That's now a morality story of some kind of sale. Yes. You know, this is kind of celebrity fame.

[01:32:20.110]

Yeah. Kind of pursuing the that goes along.

[01:32:23.140]

It was it's a trap because if you achieve what what do you what if you're you're lusting after this this attention and this sexual praise and you want people to lust after you. You also want them to think of you as being someone who is more enlightened than everyone else, which is why you're willing to stand in front of them and give these emotional, profound sermons in the first place that resonates with all these lost young people. Right?

[01:32:50.620]

Well, right. And yeah, historically, there's a lot of overlap between sort of celebrity and religious preaching, people like Billy Sunday or.

[01:33:03.100]

Sure, you know, others that, you know, the the the religious leader becomes a celebrity and those lines get blurred and it all becomes entertainment, which, you know, for celebrities, there's a need for that because they feel very lost and disconnected, because they've achieved the thing that they've always desired and they still feel lost, like everyone's looks at certain celebrities and go, oh, my God, you've made it.

[01:33:29.170]

Your life must be heaven. And they're depressed and all fucked up. And we don't have any sympathy for that. Right.

[01:33:35.230]

There's no one is going to be sympathy sympathetic to Justin Bieber with no fucking 300 million dollars in the bank and having sex with anybody who wants to write fuck you for being depressed, you little piece of shit been famous your whole life.

[01:33:46.780]

But for him, it's probably very confusing because first of all, particularly like the really young people who became famous while they were young, like I and Miley Cyrus on who I think is incredibly talented, brilliant, brilliantly talented. Her voice is fantastic.

[01:34:05.050]

I mean, so soulful. But she got famous when she was twelve. I have a twelve year old man. I can't even imagine I can't imagine being the boss and filling arenas when you're twelve. It's madness, right. And no one survives it. They don't. I mean, maybe a few have gotten through it and they're saying, right. But most of them don't. And that's where celebrity preachers come in. Or someone can harness your your celebrity and it boosts them up.

[01:34:34.360]

And they can also provide you maybe even a member of is disingenuous, but some sort of a structure that makes you feel like there's more that you you can you can cling to something that's going to make sense of this all and that something is Jesus or Mohammed or whatever it is, whatever it is that you you cling to whatever structure that you cling to. Right. Buddha, whatever it is.

[01:35:00.520]

Right. And they can. And that can be exploited. Yeah. Especially in those situations, I think because of what you were saying, the gap or absence.

[01:35:09.580]

You know, oh, God, I got here. Yeah, and, you know, is this all there is, I think with the children in particular, because there's not oh God, I got there. It's I've never been normal. Well, that especially it's like having cement. But you've never added water like it's never there's something missing. Yeah.

[01:35:26.440]

Well, you didn't grow up right. And many of them don't they don't survive.

[01:35:32.470]

You don't survive. And, you know, obviously drugs can be one way to it's the most common way to to deal.

[01:35:40.570]

Yeah. You know, try to try to deal. Yeah.

[01:35:43.030]

I'm, I'm well aware of a lot of people in the whole Hollywood show business world that grew up famous and almost none of them survive. Yeah, yeah.

[01:35:54.250]

Rob Lowe did, though. Rob Lowe got famous, real young. He's super right. He might be like one of the only ones I've ever met. And I've hung out with him. Right. And I've hung out also, more importantly, with him and his son, who's also really normal, really well adjusted. But he also got clean and sober right. Early on. Right.

[01:36:11.650]

Right, right. Yeah. So, yeah, I mean, he made it he made it off. But but there's very few.

[01:36:16.900]

It's also very beautiful. Yeah. It's probably easy to be Rob Lowe. Right.

[01:36:21.730]

And he's got to be what. He's forty thirty.

[01:36:24.400]

No he's older than that because believe me I'm 53 I believe Rob five.

[01:36:29.320]

Yeah. OK, well anyway, there you go.

[01:36:31.630]

He's one of the few that got famous, very young and has navigated it through with grace.

[01:36:37.780]

But I think the ones that are children that grow up, child stars, the you know, the ones on the Mickey Mouse show and that kind of show. Yeah.

[01:36:46.720]

Good luck.

[01:36:47.320]

No, I mean, that's so they find these celebrity preachers. This is often what happens. They find gurus. They find celebrity preachers. Right. Right. Yeah. Someone who tries to make sense of things.

[01:36:58.930]

Who do we look forward to put our faith in? You know, and that's that there, too, is a pretty common universal aspect of human life. And the people have something to believe in.

[01:37:10.000]

Those poor gurus, they fall into the trap, too, because now they can leech off the success of these famous people and become famous themselves. Right.

[01:37:17.290]

And maybe they haven't really. Immunize themselves, inoculated themselves to the power of celebrity.

[01:37:27.130]

Sure, it's a very intoxicating drug like you got to understand how to how to avoid it. Right, and avoid the pitfalls of it. It's not easy.

[01:37:35.710]

Yeah, well, again, that's that's the life that everyone wants. I mean, that's that's part of the pressure, I assume, for a lot of people is.

[01:37:45.370]

Yes, you know, the American public, the global audience is going to be transfixed on on on you and and also, you know what what you have.

[01:37:55.570]

But I think we could really learn from those those preachers, those preachers that only go after the like really like not not only go after, but attract celebrities. Like there's something to that weird sort of parasitic genre of, you know, a preacher, right?

[01:38:15.220]

No, I agree. I think it's ripe for study. Yeah, sure. There's been any kinds of.

[01:38:19.900]

They should. Well, I'm certainly I mean, maybe you're right, but we've seen.

[01:38:23.210]

Well, I'm sticking with drugs and for now, celebrities are drug intoxication. Yeah, this is. Yeah.

[01:38:30.340]

Sort of what we're after in some form celebrity.

[01:38:34.360]

I think there's a drug and there's several drugs that are mixed together and sort of a concoction. There's a drug of celebrity which you know for sure is a drug, and then there's also a drug, it being the person who has the answers. Definitely.

[01:38:47.770]

And there's something that people do when they convince other people that they have the answers, that it elevates their mood and their perspective.

[01:38:57.250]

That's like some weird guru drug. Yeah. So there's the guru drug and then there's a celebrity drug we're named.

[01:39:04.390]

We're identifying a whole nexus with that guy was the sex drug because he's a beautiful man. He's a handsome, tall riped now.

[01:39:12.940]

Shredded preacher guy.

[01:39:14.660]

Right, right, right. A lot of drugs going on there.

[01:39:16.570]

Well, and I wonder how extensive it all was. Extensive. Well, in terms of his, you know, whatever kinds of activities he was engaged in that got him into this trouble.

[01:39:27.490]

And I think with people like them, this is where it's I'm going to give a simplistic perspective. I think he could have benefited from real drugs.

[01:39:38.350]

So I think a person who's involved in those three weird drugs could have they've really, really could have benefited from psychedelics because psychedelics would have let you say, hey, hey, hey, hey, do you see what you're doing?

[01:39:49.750]

Because I see what you're doing right. Psychedelics. Listen, I know what you're doing. You're pretending. You're pretending to be profound. You're pretending to be pious. You're pretending to be enlightened. You're pretending to be above it all.

[01:40:02.560]

But you're not. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You're just one of us. Right.

[01:40:07.270]

And that can be pretty destabilizing, you know, for someone like that. But also transformative.

[01:40:14.290]

That's where there's real benefit in those destabilizing.

[01:40:17.890]

I think so too. Well, I tell people I like getting paranoid from pot. It's one of my favorite parts because when it's over I feel good.

[01:40:24.790]

It's like a near-death experience that you always survived didn't happen and now you're OK. But also there's a lesson in it that that fear comes with a lesson and that that insecurity comes with the lesson. And I think part of the lesson is appreciate the moment of life, appreciate life.

[01:40:41.980]

Appreciate this. Right.

[01:40:43.600]

You know, and when you're all fucked up on on pot, you know, everything's crazy.

[01:40:48.580]

Like when it's over, you can like. Right. You relax and you can appreciate things in a different way.

[01:40:54.310]

Right. Well, and that's having that new awareness. Yeah. You know, it can be rejuvenating.

[01:41:04.210]

It's also a hypersensitivity, right. Yeah. You mean of an appreciation. Yeah.

[01:41:10.660]

You know how things are or you know.

[01:41:12.970]

Well in the sense of security of some kind, the paranoia itself is a hypersensitivity of the reality of your finite existence back to death. Yeah.

[01:41:21.550]

Because that's that's really we were living life like I mean this is right.

[01:41:28.210]

Here's another religion, right. The religion of materialism. Yes. It's the most ridiculous one. And this is like the Bible telling you not to worship false idols. Like part of that is this worship of a thing.

[01:41:39.970]

Right. Of of an object of of things that you're trying to acquire. They're difficult to acquire. But then once you get them, you just want to acquire the next one.

[01:41:48.310]

Right? Well, that's there's no consumerism. Right. Right. There's no object.

[01:41:53.470]

Or you like if I just get this one purse, I'm going to be all settled. It's going to be I'm going to feel so good. I'm going to be calm and normal. Right.

[01:42:03.070]

No need more. Yeah. Well, yeah, I'm you know, there too. I'm as a scholar, not judgmental. You know, materialism is a religion and it's, you know, it's got some heft and and validity in terms of how people.

[01:42:20.640]

Orient themselves in the world, but again, isn't it sort of hijacking the same sort of human reward systems in that it's difficult to acquire like, say, if you want a Mercedes, like a new Mercedes coupe, but they're hard to get.

[01:42:34.740]

Like, you got to have a lot of money to get one of them, AMG, Mercedes, Koops, those are beautiful

and engineer.

[01:42:41.160]

And they come from Germany and they sound great.

[01:42:42.990]

And God, you have to have a lot of money to get that. So you've got to it's hard to see when drive down the street.

[01:42:48.650]

That guy got one. Where do you get it. Right. Right. How did he get that? I want to be like I want to be that guy. Make my life. It's going to be my life.

[01:42:56.470]

But got a gold watch to watch while he's driving.

[01:43:00.370]

Yeah. All these things. I mean, that's where I get philosophical. And and that's highlighted by social media as well. Right. Because people will pose in front of their beautiful Mercedes with their gold watch.

[01:43:10.950]

Like, look at me. Right. Look at me balling out of control over here.

[01:43:14.790]

That's oh, don't you wish you were like me? You know, they say, oh yeah, projection. Yeah, it's all image. And it's really responsible for a lot of depression, too. Exactly.

[01:43:25.350]

Yeah. No, absolutely. That's what that's what they're finding, you know, in terms of how people more engaged and immersed in their social media just lose themselves, especially young, I think to find them.

[01:43:36.540]

You know, they think they're going to be able to find themselves or at least, you know, kind of attempt to project a certain image of the self that they would like you to be.

[01:43:45.810]

Right.

[01:43:46.080]

And that's you know, that's just living by that, I think is is debilitating in terms of your personal sense of ego, confidence, who they are, you know, in real life. Do you think that.

[01:44:02.550]

There's. A religion or not, not a religion, but a framework or a structure that maybe someone could develop in order to successfully like.

[01:44:17.080]

Classes in the pitfalls of all these things, we're talking about materialism, social media, that there's maybe a religion that can be developed to deal with the modern time, the modern times, pitfalls of the primes and trials and tribulations that we're dealing with today. They're not worse than famine.

[01:44:35.860]

I mean, I'm in the middle of.

[01:44:39.820]

How do you say his name? Noel. Yuval Harari. How do you say his name?

[01:44:44.620]

You know, the guy who wrote sapiens, Yuval Noah Harari, Harare, Homo Díaz is this book that I'm in the middle of now.

[01:44:53.770]

And it's.

[01:44:57.100]

Stunning, he starts the book off with all of these examples of famine, plague and famine, where the vast majority of cultures have experienced one of those two things, plague or famine or both plague and famine throughout history. And it's talking about how many decades they went on where people starve to death and how many how many times in history people lost 30 percent of the population, 20 percent of the population to starvation.

[01:45:28.930]

Right. I mean, it's madness. Yes. The things that people had to deal with today. So in terms of like what we have to our trials and tribulations, our biology survives far easier today. Yes, but maybe our consciousness is just as vulnerable now as it's ever been before, if not more.

[01:45:45.790]

Right. But the problems aren't as big, but we think they are because of the only problems we know.

[01:45:50.260]

Right. Right. Well, and consciousness is just trying to, you know, understand its surroundings. And the surroundings are pretty complex. You know, it's not just a matter of food for survival or writing or shelter.

[01:46:05.380]

The weird problems. Yeah, it's yeah. It's you know, what we think are real problems but are inconveniences or some difficulties and some obviously lots of serious problems.

[01:46:16.300]

But I mean, I think, you know, we don't have the tools, the intellectual, religious, spiritual, mental tools in terms of dealing with all of all of these so-called problems that surround us.

[01:46:35.910]

Yeah, please. Well, I was just thinking. But, you know, we're in the middle of this pandemic and whatever, we're getting close to 300000 dead. And that has the feel. I mean, you know, of some kind of mass death event as well. And how how that will affect our consciousness as the deaths continue will be interesting.

[01:46:56.830]

Have more people died from cigarettes during this pandemic than have died from covid? That I don't know. Well, don't like a half million people die every year from cigarettes, and aren't we about eight months in? We're about eight months in. Yeah. So, I mean, we're probably neck and neck with cigarettes.

[01:47:16.590]

Well, I mean, there are a lot of different causes of death. Sure. You can point to this. This seems to be a above a of a different kind of order, certainly because it's not involuntary.

[01:47:26.980]

Right. Right. It's not of your own decision to smoke something that is clearly labeled a carcinogen.

[01:47:33.030]

Right. And it's mysterious. And we're not sure what the virus is or how it's going. But again, you know, in terms of going off what you were saying, I just sort of wondering how consciousness our collective consciousness is going to be, you know, dealing with our ideas about death and sort of questions around sort of social, you know, social responses and in the face of this kind of event.

[01:48:01.710]

Yeah, well, we this is a an issue that we haven't overcome before. It's a new thing. It's novel.

[01:48:09.540]

One of the weird things about people, it doesn't help to tell people that well, compared to other times and other generations, we have it easy because as hard as you have it to, the worst that happens to you today is still the worst that happens to you.

[01:48:29.850]

And that's all that we understand, right? We don't really understand, like I'm telling people about famine, like when I was explaining the Harare book, no one is. That's not going. No one is going. Oh, my God. Now I get it. Now I'm going to not think about social media and I'm going to be happy that I can just go to in and out and get a burger for like they're not going to think that way.

[01:48:49.300]

No, that's not that has worked on zero people for me saying that to these people hearing it, no one. Right.

[01:48:56.190]

Has had a light bulb go off. Like, of course, there's no famine now. I feel much better.

[01:49:01.560]

All right. Thank you. It doesn't work that way, right? It doesn't work.

[01:49:04.890]

People only understand what's the worst thing to happen to them.

[01:49:08.850]

Right. That's why spoiled people scream and yell over nothing like, oh, my God, you're so spoiled.

[01:49:14.910]

But we're looking at the wrong way. That's just the worst thing that's ever happened to them. Right.

[01:49:20.250]

You know, and that's what the only thing they know. And yes. How do you break people out of that very insular understanding of. The difficulties of life in the 21st century. Yeah, you know what it's like when kids are young and they think it's the end of the world, like one of my daughters is 10. The other one's 12, the 12 year old eight. A couple of pieces of the ten year old's Halloween candy and. Oh, my God, was there chaos in my house yesterday?

[01:49:44.400]

Yeah, chaos and screaming. My 10 year old, she doesn't take any bullshit. She gets mad and she starts screaming. I'm like, Jesus Christ, it's candy. It's just this is not. And it takes a while.

[01:49:55.710]

And I don't think they've really ever understand how good they have it.

[01:50:00.090]

It's it's hard for people if that's the worst thing that's happening. They think it's the worst thing. They think it's like a real bad thing. Right. The perspective is so difficult to achieve, like to achieve like and like to lift above and look at it from.

[01:50:16.740]

Yeah, yeah, exactly. And a parent isn't necessarily going to help but barely I mean maybe in the long run that can that can turn out.

[01:50:24.330]

But you really need to talk to them and then let them blow off steam. But that's. Oh look, that's kids. Yeah. And as I was saying, you know, when they start transitioning into adulthood, you know, that's when things really come to the fore and start thinking about who they are and and how how they are. Yeah.

[01:50:46.110]

And, you know, the difficulties get greater and weirder and and then with time, those seem minuscule.

[01:50:54.390]

Like I remember when I was 18, my girlfriend broke up with me. I thought it was the end of the world. I couldn't believe it. Oh, my God. I've never been so sad, so depressed. Right. You know, and then like a couple of years later, I'm like, thank God she's so crazy.

[01:51:07.950]

Like, what was I thinking?

[01:51:09.060]

Like, right. I was in the middle of this terrible relationship and I don't even understand it.

[01:51:13.830]

Right. Well, and it sort of goes back to something you said earlier about, you know, how we don't know how to deal with our own struggles or.

[01:51:21.830]

Yes, you know, we just we can't until we hit on the the other side. Right. And even then, you know, it's where do you turn for community or for sort of buffering. Yeah. Of support. And and that's, I think, hard for I think especially a lot of younger people.

[01:51:39.180]

Yes. And people coming of age into adulthood.

[01:51:43.230]

Well, that's why I try to preach the religion of physical struggle, because I think the one thing that's helped me through all sorts of things is to make my physical workouts so much more difficult than anything else I'll have to deal with in my life.

[01:51:56.980]

OK, so it's so hard to do and so fucking exhausting and and I don't want to do it. And then when it's over, other things are just like whatever. Yeah.

[01:52:06.600]

Because I make my own bullshit is basically what I do right. In order to not get spoiled by life. And I think there's some there's a real there's a real lesson to learn. And then I've learned from other people it's not like something I figured out on my own, but I've pieced it together in a way that works for me.

[01:52:23.790]

And I think that whether it's yoga or even mental things, whether it's playing chess or meditation or something more difficult than regular difficulties.

[01:52:34.800]

Right, right. I was always going to follow up. You said, you know, talk about, you know, the religion of exercising and working out. And for me, I would say my religion is learning, you know, and knowledge

and just trying, you know, to intellectually kind of absorb as much as I can.

[01:52:57.660]

And that's that's not like working out, but it's more on the mental stuff that you're talking about, where it's but it's even in the darkest of times, you know, it's just I've got to sort of go back to the books and and try to try to learn as much as I can on on whatever topic we're talking about.

[01:53:17.310]

But again, it's a it's you're doing something difficult.

[01:53:20.910]

And I think, like, there's there was a study they did on chess players and they were trying to figure out what chess players lose so much weight during these big tournaments. And they realized that they're burning thousands and thousands of calories a day playing chess at a very high level. Right. And like these guys would lose tremendous amount of weight.

[01:53:38.370]

Yeah, I think I wonder how that works. Yeah.

[01:53:41.420]

A crazy number of calories. I forget the exact number was maybe Jamie could fund the study, but they were trying to figure out what was happening to these chess players.

[01:53:50.730]

And then they realized like, oh, when they're playing at this incredible high level world championship caliber, their their brains are flying here, 6000 calories.

[01:54:02.610]

Robert Sapolsky, who's brilliant.

[01:54:04.440]

So you just sit in there, but you're not you're your brain is firing up at a million fuckin RPM's.

[01:54:10.290]

Robert Sapolsky, who I love, who studies stress in primates at Stanford, says a chess player can burn up to 6000 calories a day while playing in a tournament three times what an average person consumes in a day.

[01:54:21.180]

That's amazing. That's amazing. That's amazing. Yeah, but it makes sense, right?

[01:54:26.580]

When the brain is going. Oh, my. And when you're thinking when yeah, when you're so focused. Well, they're playing at multiple levels, they're playing several different games, right. Because they're not just playing what's in front of them, they're playing right.

[01:54:40.860]

If I do this, he does that. So but if I do this, he does this. If I do that, this happens, then that happens. Then this happens or that happens. If that happens, this happens.

[01:54:51.290]

And so there the brain is going back and then.

[01:54:56.120]

Yeah, yeah. And there are confluences and. Yeah. And how the body is functioning.

[01:55:01.190]

Well that's a weird thing about doing podcasts is like sometimes at the end of the day I'm fucking exhausted. I'm like I haven't done anything. I just been sitting talking so goddamn easy. Like what's wrong with me. Coalminers out there bust their ass working really hard.

[01:55:13.750]

But that's why I remind myself to sit in teaching or reading a book and working.

[01:55:19.520]

But I think these intellectual pursuits. Yeah, I think there's more struggle than we think.

[01:55:27.470]

Yeah, I mean, I'm not going to argue has to be otherwise everybody would do it.

[01:55:33.240]

I think there are lots of factors in terms of why people go on to graduate school and continue in the life of learning. Yeah, but it's it's a weird feeling like that. I've joked, but also been serious. That's my religion. Well, you won't say what what religion are you.

[01:55:49.550]

Well.

[01:55:51.200]

Learning, you know, that's where I get my religious meaning is it feels like teaching sexuality over the last 10 years would have gotten increasingly more mine feel like.

[01:56:06.410]

Oh, definitely. Definitely, and a lot of topics have, I would say, over the last 10 years, sexuality for sure. But I do I mean, I get off getting into the topic and especially in this kind of with this kind of purpose, you know, how can I how can I blow students minds around the topic? And, uh, and, you know, you have to be fully aware of the various sensitivities that might be out there with students.

[01:56:41.610]

And I'm. How do you it? Well, I mean, it's just, you know, I'm going to be covering some very touchy topics and if you aren't able to deal with that, you shouldn't be in the class like what seems to be the most touchy.

[01:56:55.200]

Or what's an example of a particularly touchy subject? Well, in the fourth, for sure, the death class would be suicide. Hmm. You know, that's just one that I have really tiptoed around until recently, tiptoed out.

[01:57:09.240]

So because I don't want to talk about suicide, that's really. Yeah, it's kind of weird, but I've had this aversion to having that really be a topic in my class until until recently.

[01:57:21.330]

And that's I think that had a lot to do, you know, to do with a feeling of I'm not fully prepared or trained. To deal with students who were really struggling with suicide, and I would feel that would open that up. So but I've changed in the last couple of years. It's like, you know, there are too many suicides. The numbers have gone up. And, you know, I mean, I think it's an important topic.

[01:57:46.700]

That's one thing that's ramped up in a huge way during this pandemic. I just read that as terrifying. Yeah.

[01:57:52.280]

And it's an underreported. Summerside, seems like I have a buddy that was talking to a sheriff in L.A.,

and he was saying that they used to get, you know, one suicide a week and now they're often dealing with five a day. That's crazy. It's crazy. I mean, yeah, something and it's not something that people point to as being a side effect of of the pandemic. I mean, maybe give it a cursory.

[01:58:17.540]

Right. Sort of. They talk about it very, very rarely.

[01:58:22.700]

But it's I think it's a huge issue. Right. Right. Despair. And also this feeling that a lot of people have. There's no way out of this. I think that's getting, you know, financial. Yeah. They're losing their businesses, losing their homes, losing their, you know, their ability to feed themselves.

[01:58:38.130]

Yeah, no, I mean, this is unprecedented for so many people, you know, where they find the strength, you know, to carry on and deal with it is not so easy.

[01:58:47.240]

So how did you prepare differently for a subject that you've had such a difficulty in describing and teaching before it was suicide?

[01:58:58.880]

What do you mean? Did you develop when you decided to start talking about it? How much time did you spend sitting down by yourself thinking, OK, how do I do this?

[01:59:07.650]

Um, quite a bit of time, I think with that topic and really trying to again, I want to position myself so I'm not. The school counselor and I'm not the rabbi or the, you know, preacher and I'm not the parent, so, you know, it's carving out this intellectual space of, you know, what is the history of suicide?

[01:59:29.410]

What are the, you know, kind of motivating factors and forces and in patterns of suicide and so on.

[01:59:40.180]

And then I really try to bring in popular culture, you know, songs that are express ideas about suicide or thinking about suicides of celebrities.

[01:59:52.060]

So, you know, I try to.

[01:59:55.170]

Find a way to put those pieces together in a way that's intellectually stimulating, that doesn't just kind of work on the psychological level, if you can think about that as a distinction, the psychological level, I mean, so many different reasons.

[02:00:17.950]

Right. Yeah, I mean, as silly as it sounds, I mean, my my goal is to sort of depersonalize. I try to keep personal experiences and feelings out of the cloud. That doesn't sound silly at all. Well, it's hard to do, obviously. And they do creep in and find expression. But still, it's with these topics that's that's the game plan.

[02:00:45.180]

Yeah. How long have you been doing the suicide discussions? Well, is it really past few years as I've seen these and as I've heard from students who. I mean, this is really a key reason, just the number of students who came into my office telling me about. Someone they knew who committed suicide. I mean, it was just, again, like three or four years ago when I would have more and more students, you know, just talking about it.

[02:01:19.650]

And again, the death class opens up the space where, you know, they can feel they can come in and and want to talk about it.

[02:01:27.390]

Were you worried about not doing it justice? Were you worried about pushback? Like what what what was the fear of not discussing this previously?

[02:01:37.320]

That there were students who might be suicidal and that you might somehow or another regret? Wow.

[02:01:42.900]

Well, I mean, again, maybe an overblown fear, but a responsible fear of thank you. Being very responsible, thinking that way. It's just, you know, for so long, I just I knew it was a topic. I intentionally kind of go there and, uh, but but as I said, it's changed just because of the dynamics of changed with, I think, young people and suicide. Yeah. How has that evolved over the few years that you've been teaching it?

[02:02:12.770]

I think I've grown more comfortable with it most mostly as a important element of the class, and I can see students being willing to engage in the topic, I think, in ways. That, I imagine, would not have been a similar earlier. Hmm.

[02:02:35.040]

I just. I like to. Go after the taboo topics where I know kind of students. Are already considering and reflecting on them, even though they don't have an outlet for really.

[02:02:56.310]

Intellectual kind of consideration, really.

[02:03:02.040]

Removing themselves from whatever they, you know, personally think about suicide or homosexuality or whatever and allow them to kind of, again, learn history, learn about different cultures, and then, you know, and I try to provoke them as much as I can to get them to get them to really think outside the box, but also to sort of dig in to to their own abilities to figure some things out when you're teaching a subject like the first day when you've been thinking about doing it for so long, but not wanting to trigger people the first day you did it, that had to be a very unique kind of class for you.

[02:03:45.300]

Well, it was I mean, I, I think just the hesitancy from before and then bringing it up, this class has two to 300 students. So it's it's not like me and and 12 people. Right.

[02:03:58.480]

You know, it's a part of that setting forces me to kind of think about what this means, OK?

[02:04:08.790]

It forces me to think about delivery, you know, because it's not going to be so interactive. And so that, you know, when I really went in to the class with that topic, I felt like I was able to really convey the points I wanted to get across and get them to, which is the most important thing, even in a class that size, is to feel like they could chill and kind of relax and talk about the topic without feeling, you know, pressures from anyone or feeling anything's taboo and can't be said.

[02:04:45.810]

Do you get questions from students during during your lectures on this?

[02:04:53.040]

Well, generally, yeah. I mean, you open it up to absolutely what? What's a common question that they

have when it comes to suicide?

[02:05:01.890]

Oh, I don't know. There aren't, you know, a lot of common questions. I think, you know, the students have asked a variety of different things that often have to do with. What Christianity say about suicide? Mm hmm. What you know, what do the religions say about suicide? Guess what I'm getting at is do they turn to you for help?

[02:05:23.390]

You know, what can I do?

[02:05:25.190]

What should someone do if someone knows a friend who's suicidal, I give them the resources or people who are trained can really help them with those kinds of more practical, intimate concerns. You know, I play the role up of, you know, a professor who who doesn't want to get personal, doesn't want to hear about my personal experience, whether it's about drugs or grieving or, you know, sexual experiences.

[02:05:57.950]

Yeah, the sexual experience.

[02:05:59.060]

When you were saying also that you have to be very sensitive to the feelings of the people in your class, your students like how do you like what are the particularly difficult subjects to explore when it comes to, well, like sexuality in popular culture or and music where, you know, all kinds of graphic language is used like that.

[02:06:27.160]

Yeah.

[02:06:28.110]

You know, I said, well, maybe I'm teaching a class in the fall that song and teach it.

[02:06:34.640]

Hey, I go I try to go there. But again, it's some students are like, you know, going to be less insulting or this is terrible or you know, I mean, again, I think it's data, but it's data data.

[02:06:47.140]

You know, if you want to take the study of religion seriously, you're going to be encountering things that make you uncomfortable. Yes.

[02:06:54.680]

And if you're going to discuss sexuality, if you're particularly prudish or you have a very difficult time discussing. Yes. The way various people go about it. Right. Yeah.

[02:07:06.630]

I mean, the varieties that we're talking know about, polygamy, polyandry or whatever, you know, it's out there and, you know, all kinds of things.

[02:07:16.610]

Well, there's other than religion, that's probably the most charged subject that you could discuss with people today. People have some really steadfast ideas about what's right and what's wrong.

[02:07:31.850]

And when it comes to sexuality, it seems like at least one place where we're gaining or we're showing some evolution or showing progress is with the acceptance of homosexuality.

[02:07:44.940]

Homosexuality seems to be way less taboo now than any other time in my life.

[02:07:50.490]

Like people are becoming much more comfortable with it. There's a like universally in this country at least, there's very little resistance to gay marriage, very little resistance to gay unions or gay rights. That's all changed.

[02:08:10.670]

That's all changed. Well, when I was a kid, it was a I mean, you were a kid the same time I was a kid. But when we're young, I remember I lived in San Francisco from the time I was seven till I was 11. Oh. So I was around a lot of gay people and my next door neighbors, my aunt used to get naked. They would smoke pot, they would play the bongos at. This gay couple that lived next door was hilarious.

[02:08:31.010]

I was just around it.

[02:08:32.000]

It was normal. And then we moved from there to Gainesville, Florida, which is really like the universe, throw me a curve ball.

[02:08:40.070]

And I had this friend and his dad was really mad at gay people get married and he threw the newspaper down the tables. I can't fucking believe this. And I was like, what is like what is he so upset about? I don't understand it. And he was mad that gay people were going to be allowed to get married. Yeah. And I remember thinking, wow, what a dummy. And I was 11. I was like, this is grown man, 30 years old, freaking out about some stupid shit.

[02:09:03.440]

Right? Like what? I didn't understand. It didn't make sense to me. Like it was normal to me. But I think those people are really rare now, people like him. They're much more rare than they were when I was little. Absolutely, yeah.

[02:09:17.420]

No, there's been a big, huge sea change in attitudes. Yeah. And that's, you know, led to a lot of conflict and I'm sure aspects of the culture wars. But still, I would agree, you know, absolutely. Most people have come around on that.

[02:09:32.140]

Do you discuss that kind of stuff like this, the the evolution of our ideas about sexuality?

[02:09:38.420]

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I try to as a part of it. But for me, sexuality is, you know, it's not just sex. It's about gender and religion and reproduction. Yeah. And religion. So it's a broad gender. It's a broad category. Absolutely. But in America, especially when you start. When you move outside of, you know, the traditional man and woman having sex in the missionary position, you go to death or you go to hell reproduction.

[02:10:07.430]

So I decided that you're going to hell.

[02:10:09.380]

No. Straight to hell. Right. So so, you know, that is the dominant ideal, as you know, has gone by the wayside.

[02:10:20.600]

Wayside. I mean, it is certainly the ideal for many, but sexuality in America today is fast and furious.

Right.

[02:10:27.530]

But if you think that that's the ideal, then you're a freak all of a sudden, right? Well, well, well. I mean, surely that's part of. Yeah. These shifts in attitudes. That's what's interesting to me.

[02:10:36.680]

Who's the authority to tell us. Yeah. What is right or wrong for sure.

[02:10:41.900]

And then also the hypocrites, like there's so many people that we have looked at as these religious leaders.

[02:10:49.730]

And it turns out all these guys are free, perverted. Yeah, well, yeah.

[02:10:53.620]

Well, and where that I've read, I don't know where the study is, but, you know, viewing pornography is kind of, you know, the highest in the Bible Belt. Oh, yeah.

[02:11:03.440]

You know, so again, it's makes sense.

[02:11:05.540]

Well, if you watch what you know, again, that that discrepancy is like, well, what's really sacred to you? Yeah. You know, Jesus on Sunday or you know what you're doing or gangbang though, right? I mean, whatever your job you're going to. Yeah.

[02:11:22.670]

So, you know, people like to project and say who they are and they have other.

[02:11:28.460]

Yes. They like the projects. Yeah. That's a good way of putting it that you like to they like to pretend to make believe.

[02:11:35.390]

Do you discuss the type of pornography that people view and how that has sort of changed?

[02:11:44.540]

Well, I mean, I write about pornography in that book, Sacred Matters. I have a chapter on sexuality and I write about. Deep Throat and just swallow, yeah, Kazaks sound effects, I'm really going to say that Deep Throat.

[02:12:03.550]

Oh yeah. Linda Lovelace.

[02:12:05.110]

Yeah, their dreams and their story is, again, a morality tale. I want to talk about sexuality. We're going to talk about religion.

[02:12:12.830]

Didn't Harry Reems become a politician afterwards? Well, as I remember, it was it became a reality.

[02:12:17.650]

He might. Oh, that's right. That's right. That's right.

[02:12:20.940]

But it became very successful as a realtor, right? Yeah. In Los Angeles.

[02:12:24.340]
Right. Yeah.

[02:12:25.000]
Well, you know, so I mean, do you obviously want to and you have to include that, you know, well beyond reproductive forms of pleasure and sexual activity is not disconnected from religious pursuits.

[02:12:42.850]
Deep Throat was a movie that played in movie theaters for people that don't know. And people went to see that movie and they waited in line like couples would go dressed normal, not wearing raincoats like regular people. In fact, Johnny Carson was in line waiting to see Deep Throat and they interviewed him and talked to him about it because it was it was a movie.

[02:13:07.840]
That was a movie.

[02:13:09.100]
It was it was wasn't just a stag film. And the whole idea was that back then.

[02:13:16.960]
Pornography in terms of like that's what they would call him, stag films, there'd be these films they would play because people didn't have access to a movie projector, for the most part, is a very rare thing to have in your home.

[02:13:28.750]
So for people to play those things, they'd have to get together with a bunch of guys at a party, like when a guy was about to get married. Look at this. This that's what you're going to do. We're going to watch people fuck. Right. And those films, if you're seeing them, they're really weird like variables from the beginning of the 20th century. Yeah, very strange.

[02:13:44.560]
Know the history of pornography is fascinating. And there's I remember watching this thing on Deep Throat and then I just remember very clearly Johnny Carson getting interviewed, talking about.

[02:13:57.520]
I remember that. Yeah. Do you know what I'm talking about?

[02:14:00.040]
I typed in Johnny Carson and I found an article that says Ed McMahon, his sidekick, was such a fan of the movie.

[02:14:05.320]
He showed up with six friends in a case of beer, because that's not fake news. That's a real news. I am sure. I'm sure that's true.

[02:14:14.830]
I'm sure that Frank Sinatra was one of the early audience members, along with Vice President Spiro Agnew, Warren Beatty, Truman Capote, Shirley MacLaine, Nora Ephron on who that is, Bob Woodward, while Woodward and Bernstein and Sammy Davis Jr., who grew so enamored of Linda Lovelace that within the year he and his wife would be having group sex with her and her husband.

[02:14:36.880]
Holy shit, Sammy. I didn't mean Sammy got crazy.

[02:14:41.170]

It was a very wow. It was the was the longest 62 minutes that millions of people would ever sit through. In retrospect, the most inspired decision. Damiano, I guess the person who made it made was to rename the movie Deep Throat. Nothing else could possibly explain its success. Why? What was the original name for it?

[02:15:00.600]

Lovelace was interviewed by Johnny Carson on The Tonight Show while further stoking the interest of socialite students, swingers and the curious sea.

[02:15:09.150]

That's what's interesting is like crazy people didn't think of pornography as being something that was awful that you should hide. Right.

[02:15:17.280]

It seems to me that it's discussed far less now that it's much more accessible. It's like people almost don't want to talk about it in terms of like average decor's association.

[02:15:28.840]

Yeah, right. Because it's so pervasive is everywhere.

[02:15:31.680]

Yeah, it's well, it's not just pervasive. It's also it's too accessible. Yes. You don't it's it's just. Yeah. Yeah.

[02:15:39.000]

It's not taboo like Bodsworth. Right. It's weird.

[02:15:42.060]

It's and I've done research and one of the things I've noticed is there's a lot of stepmother porn lately.

[02:15:49.770]

That's basically all you get. What, what is that. I don't know man. But if you go to porn like that, a lot of it stepmoms stuff, OK, it's like my hot step mom, you know, dad's out of town, that kind of stuff. Weird.

[02:16:01.890]

Well, I will say. I hope my colleague doesn't mind me calling her out, but at university, her name. OK.

[02:16:09.730]

University of California, Santa Barbara in the film studies department, they have a class on pornography or they did about stepmoms.

[02:16:18.010]

Well, not that I don't know if that topic made it in, but as a genre of film, you know, they can teach about it.

[02:16:24.280]

Yeah, well, it's listening to it should be a genre of study because it is a part of human life. It's a weird part of human life. Yeah. That is not very discussed. Right. Enough people get super nervous. Well.

[02:16:36.830]

And people love it. I mean, multiple billions of dollars, you know, not really anymore.

[02:16:42.520]

I don't think they make much money. Well, I don't know.

[02:16:44.470]

It's weird. I don't know the economics. But in terms of the Impacto or in terms of the prevalence of it, it's incredibly prevalent. I think there's something bananas, like 20 plus percent of all Internet traffic is pornography, which is insanity.

[02:17:03.130]

Right. It's an insane, insanely high number. Yet the amount it's discussed in polite company is like less than one percent. Right.

[02:17:13.930]

It's very, very rarely discussed, if not dismissed as a joke.

[02:17:18.190]

Right. Right, and there's something that in itself speaks volumes, you know, that's the weird part about it. Here goes.

[02:17:26.320]

Thirty five percent of all Internet downloads are related to pornography.

[02:17:30.520]

How can I mean, that is amazing. Is that the highest percentage of any topic, I wonder? I don't know. Must be. I must be.

[02:17:38.470]

I mean, listen, this is what's hilarious. About 200000 Americans are classified as porn addicts. And we go there's probably another hundred million that are full of shit, right?

[02:17:51.910]

That's right. To get the fuck out of here. That's such a low number. This is a very low number. Also, 37 pornographic videos are created in the every day, every month or hour.

[02:18:04.420]

That's really that they've never been to the San Fernando Valley. Well, you grew up, right? Yeah, that was the center of it all.

[02:18:13.230]

Well, they passed some sort of wacky rule a few years back where they had to wear condoms in the porn in California.

[02:18:21.880]

Yeah. And then people like, well, we're moving out of California. And they started doing it other places. Right.

[02:18:26.620]

Nobody wants to be in safe fuck out of here by saying, I want you to have sex with your stepmom's. I want to do anything safe.

[02:18:32.830]

I want the dad to be with you pulling into the driveway when you climax.

[02:18:36.610]

That's that's what everybody wants. They want naughtiness. Yes.

[02:18:39.160]

But that's it's weird that when it's so prevalent, it's also so rarely discussed. And just as a topic of a class like that would be a very interesting thing to discuss just in terms of human nature and psychology. Sure.

[02:18:54.310]

And history. Yeah. Thinking about that. Yeah. Yeah. The other thing before we're really going to be talking about this, the other understudied topic that's starting to get more study is the orgasm.

[02:19:06.010]

Right.

[02:19:06.310]

And thinking about some mystical experiences or certain kinds of ego dissolving aspects of human life, it's, um, it's in there. And I teach about that as well, you know, and in both the death class and the sexuality class. Right.

[02:19:23.890]

Do you discuss Tantric? Well, some you know, my my my training as an American religious history. But in these courses, I do try to do very superficially, you know, talk about a different religious cultures and certainly tantric.

[02:19:39.850]

Yeah, that's a weird one when it comes to the orgasm. Right. Because they're trying to internally orgasm. Yes. Is that real? Well, I don't know.

[02:19:47.430]

You know, I'm like, no idea. Seems like but some guru shit to me. Yeah, well, and even in American history, there have been interesting attempts at different kinds of sexual cultures. You know, the Oneida Community. Oh, John Humphrey Noize, you know, wanted didn't want anyone to orgasm. You know, that was you want to hold it in, but you have sex with that, whatever you want.

[02:20:11.390]

You know, marriage that never lasts. That's all part of like, how about this community did fall apart, this sex cult the next.

[02:20:19.660]

How do you say it? Nexium.

[02:20:20.920]

Yes. I have not been following it. I haven't either. And there and I haven't either. But I, I keep making a mental note, too. Eventually there's a documentary apparently is a documentary series or something on it, a Hulu thing or something. But it's apparently pretty fascinating. Yeah. Because it was involved like legitimate celebrities. Right. Like people on television shows and stuff getting branded or something.

[02:20:42.030]

You're right. It's like a documentary show on stars, stars or five episodes.

[02:20:47.530]

Yeah, that's a weird one. Right, right. Well I mean most sex couples are or that that kind of focus on sex as a part of religious trust and religious.

[02:21:04.060]

What is the law against that like? How are they arresting people? Like what did the people do that they're do? You know, Jamie, like people are going to jail for this, the sex cult. Right?

[02:21:14.320]

I don't I believe the thing that sticks out of my head is I know people are getting branded right now. That was like the next the next thing. There's also another show called The Vow that has it's I think it's the same topic that's on HBO. I don't know if that's a direct documentary or like I'd like to find out

what they're going to jail for. I'll look I'll look it up because people are going to jail.

[02:21:32.410]

Yeah, well, that's right and right. Right, right.

[02:21:35.530]

What they did where they said are this is this is where you cross the line. Right. You can't just. Well, did you see wild wild country.

[02:21:44.530]

Is that the documentary, that's the documentary the people that lived in Oregon, going back to Oregon, right. Fucking crazy Oregon. OK, we're all going to Oregon for this conspiracy, conspiracy to commit forced labor, forced labor.

[02:21:57.610]

Who knows what you know, it sounds like a good enough release forms.

[02:22:02.830]

Yeah, well, we'll see about putting it on the syllabus. Yeah, I'm interested in some things. Yeah. You don't need to go, but wild, wild country.

[02:22:14.170]

Whoops.

[02:22:14.470]

Almost fellow monkeys got to bottle this bottle does not want stale wild wild country is the documentary on show that the guru that the Indian guy that had the cult up and right with the girl Shiloh poisoned a bunch of people.

[02:22:31.970]

Right. That is an amazing Netflix documentary. Yeah, I've seen some of it.

[02:22:37.060]

Oh my God. Yeah, but it's one that I always hear about. And, you know, again, it's really well done. But also revealing what is now we're seeing a fairly common story.

[02:22:47.980]

It's so funny because my friend Todd saw the first episode and he's like, it looks like so much fun.

[02:22:55.300]

I get to be here. It looks so great. And he's right. In the beginning, it did look so great, but it combined both these things we're talking about combined sexuality and religion.

[02:23:03.910]

It's like this. Their religion was of love and of peacefulness and sex and and harmony. And it all went terribly wrong, like they always do, like like they often do.

[02:23:15.340]

Right? Always.

[02:23:16.480]

Well, what what Clemens has nailed it. What cult has never gone wrong. Figured out all the traps and pitfalls and made it to the finish line. Yeah. None.

[02:23:27.190]

None, zero. Well, that's I think that I would agree with that statement as a general statement of.

[02:23:34.280]

Yeah, it seems weird, though, that they can't someone can't do it, right.

[02:23:38.100]

Yeah, well, I think that's maybe built into religion. You know, it's just. No way to perfect it. Well, at least religion has figured out a way to achieve tax exempt status and a long, sure illustrious history of success, right?

[02:23:54.520]

Yeah, well, that's the beauty of the country. Yeah, right. Freedom of religion.

[02:24:00.280]

Yeah, supposedly. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[02:24:03.160]

But once you get to a point where you're doing the wild wild country type stuff. Right. It's not.

[02:24:09.430]

Yeah. It's no longer. Yeah. So do you discuss those kind of things in your classes. Sex cults. Some you know that are a part of the longer history. So was Mormonism, you know as an early.

[02:24:24.350]

Cult, you know, kind of marginalized community, had a very different understanding of sexuality and marriage.

[02:24:31.940]

Well, started by a wacky 14 year old. I was completely full of shit.

[02:24:37.370]

I won't exactly characterize them.

[02:24:39.920]

Well, I have to say, it was a little con man anyway. So, yeah, you know, I try to cover a lot of bases on the varieties of ways that sexuality gets, you know, bound up in religious life.

[02:24:54.080]

Yeah, Mormonism is particularly unusual, right. In their their interest in polygamy led them to leave the country.

[02:25:04.580]

Yeah. At the time, yeah. They were heading west while they're still there. Well, no. In Mexico.

[02:25:09.380]

Oh that. Yeah. Well the continuing that. Yes. But that's you know that whole Mitt Romney's family life story. Yeah. They're all down there so that yeah. Mitt Romney's dad was actually born in Mexico. That's why he couldn't be president of the United States. Mitt Romney's dad could not be president of the United States.

[02:25:25.580]

He was born in Mexico. Right. Right, right. Yeah. They lived in this compound. This is the compound, the same kind of compound that was originally in the news because they had been attacked by the cartel and women and children had been murdered. OK, yes. Yeah, I remember.

[02:25:39.050]

Those were I mean, they're not really expats because they've been there for so many generations that they're now Mexican citizens, but they're living in these compounds, these fortified compounds in Mexico. And they originally went there so that they could practice polygamy.

[02:25:54.040]

Well, yeah, right. When it was I mean, outlawed here, of course.

[02:25:57.510]

Well, not only that, when there was no difference really between living in the United States and Mexico, you know, 1812, the difference between the United States and Mexico was not that big a deal. Well, right.

[02:26:07.340]

Take your horse. You go over there, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you bring your eight wives, right?

[02:26:11.270]

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Right there.

[02:26:13.730]

There's a way out and the way in, we'll talk about a subject that's filled with pitfalls like that. Subjects probably particularly the subject of polygamy.

[02:26:24.800]

Yes. Is a particularly touchy one and almost always.

[02:26:28.970]

Yeah. Is a lot of wives.

[02:26:31.620]

Very rarely is one woman who gets the pleasure of 10 husbands.

[02:26:36.690]

Right. Right, right. There are some, you know, I think examples of that. But yeah. Well, I mean, polygamy is for, you know, husbands with multiple wives.

[02:26:46.580]

Right. The other way around. Well, no, I mean not polygamy, but there are I believe there's another term.

[02:26:52.850]

I bet there's a few gals that could pull that off. Well, I'm Jennifer Lopez. Yeah, I imagine. Yeah, but yeah. I mean, so it's it's part of the the story and it is a little it is polyandry is form of polygamy in which a woman takes two or more husbands at the same time.

[02:27:12.920]

For example, the fraternal polyandry is practice among the Tibetans in Nepal, parts of China and parts of northern India, which two or more brothers are married, the same wife with the wife having equal sexual access to them.

[02:27:24.720]

Yeah, so five places where women have more than one husband. All right, there you go.

[02:27:30.650]

I mean, yeah, look at that. Look at that photo. They'll go to that photo. Look, the woman's looking straight ahead. Look. And both guys looking off the side like shit, right?

[02:27:39.260]

I can't believe they're taking my picture here, but she's got her hand on both of their knees like I own these two motherfuckers. Right. But, yeah, they're all looking off in the distance, like, OK, this is one lady with four husbands.

[02:27:52.160]

Hey, hey, hey. You got a lady's balling out of control. Where is she? She's dead.

[02:27:58.190]

And that's all a picture. That's the picture from the eighteen hundreds at that picture. That was like one of them. There was still you know and it was in those pictures.

[02:28:07.040]

Look at that. Whoa. What is that for it. I don't know. That's like from Norman Rockwell. Shit. Yesterday ladies. Google guys. OK. Yeah.

[02:28:16.070]

Yeah well no pun intended Google didn't know.

[02:28:20.240]

Oh well anyway, listen, man, I've really enjoyed talking to you. So fascinating series of subjects we brought up here, love.

[02:28:27.720]

And so you're in the middle of writing a book right now. Yes. What is the book? It's on religion and drugs. Do you have a title for it? Yeah, no, I'm playing around with some things, but.

[02:28:36.680]

But if people want to read your past work, what, what can they read.

[02:28:41.090]

Well, they can read any of the books. They can go to my website. Gary Latterman Dotcom. You see the books, one I mentioned a couple of times called Sacred Matters. And then this new book is on death. And it's called, as I said, Don't Think About Death, a memoir on mortality.

[02:29:01.340]

You can look me up. There'll be other things that I've written that are on the Web.

[02:29:05.780]

But do you have social media? Yeah. What do you have?

[02:29:08.630]

Well, I'm playing around on Facebook and Twitter and do you have an Instagram? Instagram. OK, what is it about Gary Latterman and same as Twitter. Gary Latterman. Yes. As well. OK, all right. Facebook and yeah I'm around.

[02:29:22.190]

Well thank you Gary. I really enjoyed. Talk to you, man. Thank you so much, Joe, it's really fun. Yeah, I had a great time. All right. Beautiful. All right, thanks. Bye, everybody. All right. Thank you. Friends returning to the show. And thank you, too. For stigmatic makers of their delicious and nutritious mushroom coffee for this month for stigmatic is running a special sale. You can stock up on everything you need to support your immune system.

[02:29:44.970]

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[02:30:22.350]

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[02:31:05.280]

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[02:31:33.420]

Then when you are ready to launch, use the offer Cojo to save ten percent off your first purchase of a website or domain. Thank you, my friends, much.

[02:31:43.140]

Love to you all. Bye bye.