

Anthony Comegna ([00:23](#)):

Folks, here we are at our second episode in the series of shows on faculty and staff's IHS stories. Last time we spoke with Josh Ammons, a PhD candidate at George Mason University. But this week we move on to former guests of the show, philosopher, Bill Glod and legal scholar, Jeanne Hoffman. And you know, let's just go right ahead and get straight to it.

Bill Glod ([00:47](#)):

Okay. when I was a graduate student for most of the two thousands, and I was aware of IHS as an organization, but I never actually did anything with IHS. I never went to a seminar. I never applied for funding. And in retrospect, I can ask myself, "Why didn't I?" It's kind of funny. It's kind of serendipitous how I ended up actually getting involved with IHS. I defended my dissertation in the summer of 2008 and then the financial crisis hit, which may be kind of relevant given current circumstances. And we might actually look back with fondness on those days, relatively speaking, but that's neither here nor there.

Heading into a pretty brutal job market in 2008, the fall of 2008, the academic job market for philosophers did not look good. I come from a small program so we often are not terribly competitive. People who get academic jobs out of Tulane, typically get small liberal arts college jobs, things like that. It wasn't looking too great for me. And then sometime I think around November or maybe October of that year, my dissertation advisor, who is Eric Mack, suggested that I apply for this position for this newly created position, program officer of philosophy at the Institute for Humane Studies. Again, I was aware of IHS at the time, but not that knowledgeable of what all they did. But I had the good fortune of having Eric as my dissertation advisor.

As many people know, Eric Mack is a sort of leading light in terms of natural law theory. Sorry, not natural law, natural rights theory, Lockean, Nozickian sorts of views. And he being my chair and my advisor, he thought maybe I'd be a competitive candidate for this position. I applied just at some sort of entry phone interviews, intro phone interviews, things like that and sort of apparently made those cuts and then ended up, I was going to be going to the APA Eastern, the American Philosophical Association meeting in Philadelphia that year, the last week of December. And so fortunately I had the opportunity to meet people in person from IHS and interview with them there at the conference.

I'm thinking, okay, well, they don't really know me from Adam so I'll try to present myself as best I can as somebody who's really passionate about the ideas of liberty and sort of very interested and trying to fulfill the role that they are looking for in this particular position. Which at the time was largely focused on mentoring other graduate students, giving them all kinds of career advice, connecting them to resources that IHS might be able to provide, connecting them to the network as needed.

And that sounded like a great job. I was very much interested in that. I interviewed for it. It seemed to go well. And then later that night at the conference, we sort of a bunch of us hung out in the sort of hotel lobby. Eric Mack was there. I got to meet and sit down and chat with Hillel Steiner who was actually one of the leadings of left libertarians and very well known for his sort of theories of rights. And so that was a really sort of fun experience. And I just, I felt sort of laid back. I felt at home sort of in the little community that we were already felt like we were forming there, but I thought, okay, I'm realistic here. Probably a long shot for the position.

Fly back from the conference the next day. And then the day after that I get a call and I get an offer and I'm like, wow. Yeah, I'll take it. I took it right then and there, I wasn't like, let me wait and see. Because I was striking out on the academic job market. That was actually a really sort of cool moment in

my life. And just sort of unusual, I guess, because I had never actually did anything with IHS before that. And now I've been there since 2009.

Anthony Comegna (04:52):

Now, did you enjoy, I presume that while you were in grad school, you taught. Did you enjoy teaching while you were doing that?

Bill Glod (05:00):

I did. I enjoyed it to a fault, in fact, at the expense of Mike Hinsberg.

Anthony Comegna (05:04):

That seems to be a pretty common story, enjoying teaching people.

Bill Glod (05:08):

And if I could go back, I might say, "Hey Bill, take all the publishing you did after you started at IHS and maybe push some of that back to when you were still in grad school and maybe things would be different." But yeah, I did enjoy teaching. I taught, I think a total of 16 classes during my tenure there at Tulane, but I did put too much time into prepping for teaching at the expense of doing my own writing. And so I like to joke that part of my role as a sort of advisor to students and a program officer is to tell them to do what I didn't do and to not to do what a lot of what I did. I have a lot of experience in mistakes that I can now share this sort of, I think confirms John Stuart Mill in his discussion on liberty about how we learn from other people's mistakes and others learn from our mistakes. And I think this is an example of that.

Anthony Comegna (06:02):

Now, but that makes me think though, that I was in a very similar case. I loved teaching in graduate school and yet fresh out of grad school almost immediately when I went on the job market, I just happened to cross a job opening at Cato. And of course I snatched it up as quickly as I could and happened to be hired. And I was perfectly happy with that, even though it meant I wouldn't be able to teach anymore. And eventually I discovered that you can have the same sort of experience in a variety of different ways if you go down different types of career paths. And so for example, folks like you and I right now, you've had probably hundreds of graduate students in a sense. Just in the same powerful ways that professors in departments across the country might have graduate students, you've had dozens and hundreds of them. I wonder if you could speak to how you've managed to find those kinds of connections with students that you do in teaching in this kind of a career path at IHS.

Bill Glod (07:07):

Yeah. Well, I should just start out. I should preface this by saying I am lucky. I am really, really lucky because it could have turned out differently. I could have ended up actually doing okay on the academic market, but then I'd probably be teaching a four four at some maybe mid level liberal arts school. And I honestly could say, I probably would not enjoy that nearly as much as the current job that I have. I get to engage lots of, as you say, lots of graduate students who there may be a selection bias here. They're interested in the ideas. And so I get to see sort of the best as it were. I don't have to motivate people like I sometimes maybe had to do back when I was teaching and not everybody wanted to be in the classroom necessarily.

Yes, my job is made much easier by the fact that I deal with people who are motivated, who are curious just by their own interests. And then I get to look at their research. I get to comment on papers. I get to see what sort of the cutting edge is in research. And that's all something that I probably wouldn't have had the time or the opportunity to do if I were teaching a four four load. I'm very lucky in that regard.

Anthony Comegna ([08:19](#)):

In a sense, we get to see the sort of impact of IHS on the landscape of ideas every day. But could you comment on some of the major trends that you've seen definitively change within academia since you've been working at IHS and a part of this community here?

Bill Glod ([08:41](#)):

Right. I'm seeing, I think a lot more in the last, maybe 10 years, plus a lot more emphasis on, especially in philosophy, on being less combative. Now that's not to say that there is a combativeness or certain personalities who are combative, but I feel like there's an increasing trend toward people of different diverse viewpoints who don't necessarily agree on a lot, or they agree on a certain strand of things. Being able to come together and discuss each other's ideas constructively and strengthen each other's arguments. But sometimes that involves, dialectically, okay, well you disagree with me about this, but given your own premises I actually think you could strengthen your argument. And if you strengthen your argument, you might see that you actually should come over to my side.

And that works both ways, depending on what viewpoint you're coming from. I feel like that has been becoming an increasing sort of mode of discussion, a discourse within at least what I've seen in philosophy. And I find that refreshing. Rather than trying to destroy your opponent's argument, or even see somebody as an opponent, you see them as somebody who maybe doesn't see the world the same way you do, but the process is still collaborative in a sense. We may never come to a consensus on something, but even if our disagreement remains, we are coming at each other with the strongest arguments possible.

And again, I think that lives up the sort of John Stewart Mills' ideal of the sort of communities of discussion, things like that. Where we're trying to find the strongest arguments against our position. Maybe we'll change our mind then because of that. Or maybe it'll at least make our own view stronger, our own argument stronger. And I think we're seeing more of that and I think IHS is playing a key role in that.

Anthony Comegna ([10:47](#)):

Okay so yeah, let's start out. What was your first contact with IHS? And what did you think about it when you first, for example, heard the name? Because I definitely thought, oh, this is going to be some left wing organization that will have no tolerance for my college student libertarianism. What was your first contact?

Jeanne Hoffman ([11:09](#)):

Sure. Well, I actually read what IHS was about before I even looked at the name. I got a bit of context for it first.

Anthony Comegna ([11:18](#)):

Gold star right there. That's better than me.

Jeanne Hoffman ([11:21](#)):

Yeah. I saw an ad and the ad said something like, "Are you for private property? Are you for free enterprise? Are you for a social freedoms? Are you for the free exchange of ideas?" It was a whole list of principles. And it said, "If so, apply for a summer seminar." And I was like, well, I follow rules. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Okay, so I applied and that's when I saw the name of the organization. And that was, I think back when IHS did paper applications. I had to fill out, I had to print it out and fill it out and mail it in. I didn't register the Institute for Humane Studies until I read what it was about. I assumed it had to do something with the humanities, which was 50% of the way there. I guess a little bit closer than your first impression.

Anthony Comegna ([12:12](#)):

And were you a law student at the time? Or were you planning on going to law school while you heard about IHS?

Jeanne Hoffman ([12:18](#)):

No, I was an undergraduate at the time and it was about half my life ago so I've been involved with IHS for half my life. And at that time I was an engineering student and I did fine at engineering, but I didn't find it incredibly fulfilling, I guess, is the best way to put it. And after I went to my IHS summer seminar, that was the first time I realized that you can get paid for thinking about things and coming up with ideas. I grew up in the Bronx. I knew generally what jobs people had. People were lawyers, people were electricians, people were doctors, but I had this, I had zero conception for careers in ideas as being a thing. And I learned that from the Institute for Humane Studies. I ended up changing my major after that.

Anthony Comegna ([13:10](#)):

Do you remember any particular faculty who were at the summer seminar? Or what some of the lecture topics were?

Jeanne Hoffman ([13:16](#)):

Yes, James Stacey Taylor was one of the professors at my seminar and he talked about people's rights to do things when they don't hurt other beings and where is that line drawn? And that lecture really challenged your norms about society because it really made you think, why do I believe the things I believe? And are they consistent with the other things that I believe? I remember being, especially on the edge of my seat during that lecture.

Anthony Comegna ([13:50](#)):

But I take it he didn't have any commentary on Joe Exotic the Tiger King yet, right?

Jeanne Hoffman ([13:57](#)):

Not yet. He had some commentary on sheep herders, but I'm not sure now is the time for that story.

Anthony Comegna ([14:04](#)):

Okay. Now what different roles have you had at IHS? And by the way, when did you start working here? And how did that happen?

Jeanne Hoffman ([14:11](#)):

I started working at IHS in 2008. I've been there for 12 years. I went to law school and I was interested in going into something in nonprofit work. And my first foray was into asylum law, which I've learned is very much in awful shape and there needs to be a lot of evolution in the ideas behind it and thinking on the academic side and on the policy side before any advocacy can really work. Just because of all the limitations in place and the sort of mindset people have about asylum law. I had been talking an IHS employee and they told me about this fellowship program going on, where you could work somewhere in DC. I applied to the fellowship program and then saw in the fellowship program, there were positions available at IHS and they were looking for someone to work with graduate students at the time. They were looking for someone to work on law programs. And I thought, hey, this would be a really great way to contribute to the evolution of ideas.

Anthony Comegna ([15:17](#)):

You've worked with grad students, you've worked with faculty. Do you have any kind of preference there? Did you ever teach while you were in graduate school, for example?

Jeanne Hoffman ([15:25](#)):

I didn't teach anything other than things like logic remedial classes so not real classes. It doesn't count. But yeah, I worked with graduate students and then I moved on to working with faculty. Both are really fulfilling. The part about working with graduate students that was really great is now that I'm working with faculty, looking back because I've been there for 12 years, that's a long time, especially for the academic life cycle. People are in graduate school four, well, I guess depending on the discipline, sometimes up to 10 years. But I saw a lot of people graduate and become professors and now they have their own graduate students and they're really building big programs.

It's hard to say which one I prefer because I really like watching graduate students succeed. And I don't mean this in a demeaning way. I mean this just the way that my personality is, it almost feels like children going on to succeed. You get to watch them all grow up. And now they're professors doing impressive things. But I also really do love to see the professors working with their undergraduates, for example. Different things they're doing there, being able to help them get funding for their research. I can't really choose because it would be like choosing a child.

Anthony Comegna ([16:44](#)):

Yeah. I know what you mean. I was just saying to our colleague, Bill Glod, that I love teaching and the only time I got to do it was when I was in graduate school, but I absolutely loved it. And it's almost, it's a pretty charmed life. We get to live now here at IHS because it's like you get to have hundreds of graduate students instead of just a few in a seminar over a few years. You can touch on dozens and hundreds of different little budding careers. It's pretty amazing.

Jeanne Hoffman ([17:14](#)):

I agree. And it's especially cool on Facebook just to see people who've become friends that I've worked with in the past and see what they're up to. It's just so exciting.

Anthony Comegna ([17:28](#)):

Now, academically speaking, what do you think are some of the more important trends that you've noticed during your time at IHS? The way that either the organization has helped move the needle or just some of the more important ways for folks in the IHS network that academia has changed?

Jeanne Hoffman ([17:46](#)):

Sure. First of all, there's a lot more people that we work with now in that I would say apply to our programs and that I see at conferences attending our programs. Going outside of the ideas themselves, but just the size of the community has really grown over the last, I would say 18 years since I've been involved with IHS for that long. Seeing it just grow like that has been a great thing. I think also getting involved more in the academic research seminars that we've been doing has been a great thing. For example, we're working on one with the Pacific Legal Foundation on the rise of the administrative state, and that's the sort of thing that people talk about the administrative state and how it's too big and there's too many powers, but a lot of times it's not very solution oriented.

And I find the academic conversation around it is great because it talks about, okay, what were they originally trying to accomplish by making the administrative state so big? What are other ways we can accomplish that? And how can we put those solutions forward to solve this problem? I think it adds a huge amount to the conversation where we're able to bring academics together, to talk about these items that maybe get talked about a lot by policymakers and talking heads, but not so much the people who are able to do the actual research.

Anthony Comegna ([19:16](#)):

Bill Glod is a philosopher and senior program officer here at IHS and Jeanne Hoffman is a legal scholar and senior faculty liaison also here at IHS. I very much hope you've been enjoying our little series of IHS stories shows. And if you have, let us know. Make sure to subscribe to the show on your favorite podcatcher and toss us a rating and review while you're at it. It definitely is the single best way to help promote the show and therefore keep the progress coming.