[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak: Today on episode number 456 of the Teaching in Higher Ed Podcast, Mobile-Mindful Teaching and Learning with Christina Moore.

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[00:00:16] Bonni: Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

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Today, coming back on Teaching in Higher Ed is Christina Moore. She is the Associate Director for the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Oakland University in Southeast Michigan. She's the editor and regular contributor to a weekly teaching tips series. While she is tech reserved and limits her screen time, her world is continually expanded by learning with others online and she works to bring faculty together online.

She's a doctoral student in educational leadership, researching how faculty use online spaces to expand their teaching practices. Christina's work has been published in Tech Trends, EDUCAUSE, Faculty Focus, and other journals and books. Prior to her current role, she was a special lecturer of writing and rhetoric. Christina enjoys feeding people meal preps like mad and takes occasional excursions into sci-fi, and, as you'll hear about on today's episode, has a new book out, Mobile-Mindful Teaching and Learning. Christina Moore, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

[00:01:57] Christina Moore: Thank you so much for having me.

[00:01:59] Bonni: I'm excited about our conversation today because it's really so much about a topic that is very near and dear to my heart, something I've been fascinated about for years, and that is context. As it relates to our conversation today, looking at Mobile-Mindful Teaching and Learning, I harken back to the opposite of what your book is all about. That was a little sliver of Annie Murphy

Paul's The Extended Mind. In that book, she talks about all the ways in which, among other things, she talks about the ways in which our spaces around us can have really profound effects on how we think, how we feel, and how we learn.

One little sliver that she mentions, it's not a huge part of the book, but some research around when we use large monitors. Christina, it cracked me up because it was a little bit where I go, "Oh, it makes so much more sense to me why I do feel, and I feel like I think better when I have more digital space to move around in." I kept thinking about that throughout reading your book and so I'd just like to begin with having you share a little bit of what do we know about the context for learning on these small devices.

[00:03:21] Christina: I'm glad that you were noticing that the book talks definitely about the small screens that we're carrying with us all the time and how powerful they can be for learning, but also in the larger context of how we are using those devices to engage with the world beyond that small screen. That's why I like the term mobile because mobile learning, of course, does predominantly refer to phones and particularly smartphones but it's also this idea of movement and motion and that we are minds and bodies that are constantly mobile.

Before we hit record, we were talking about our bodies in motion and what we do throughout our day and how our bodies are really meant to be in motion. That's why I refer to her work as well. As far as the small devices that we have, what I've been doing throughout the process of thinking about this book, researching, and writing is, of course, thinking about how we can use phones a bit more intentionally to help engage our students with learning in more times and in more ways but also how we can prompt students to use that phone to take pictures of things that are going on around them that connect with something that's going on in the course or they can use that phone to connect with classmates as an idea comes up.

I think the first and smallest answer that I would give about how we think about context and space and how to best use our phones is that when we think about the type of learning that can happen on a phone, the most significant element has been to just think in smaller chunks. As you said and as talked about in the extended mind, it's about making whatever learning content we work with scale well to the device. More and more web content is automatically designed to be more mobile accessible but that doesn't necessarily mean that every webpage and reading is really going to best fit to be done on a phone.

I think by us as instructors taking more time to think what's the smaller element here, how can I break this really complex and interesting idea and start to break

it down into its smaller pieces and then help students build them together, I think that's been the really interesting and curious question about mobile mindful learning, is finding that little nugget because as experts in our fields, we forget what it was like to not understand how something complex broke down into its main part. I found it to be a really useful strategy.

At a recent keynote that I gave, I used the analogy of a puzzle and how I'm new at puzzling. I'm not very good at it, but it has been something good for my brain. When I first open a puzzle that's 500 pieces or more, I say, "I have the immediate response of there's no way I can do this." [chuckles] I am probably going to give up on this in 20 minutes and be frustrated because all I see is just this jumble of pieces that doesn't seem to fit in any way. There doesn't seem to be any relationship or order. Then I calm down and I say, "I'm just going to start making piles, start doing the edge pieces, all of those strategies that we learned throughout our lives."

Then I try, even if there's three pieces that go together, I'm like, "That is a pattern. I'm going to go with that." Then the more of those smaller chunks that I put together, of course, I start to see how those chunks fit with other ones and then I keep building up and building up and building up, and then before you know it, you have a full picture and you never anticipated to get that far.

That analogy has really resonated with me as an instructor when it comes to thinking about how do I use these phones to really help students. It helps me to try to break it down into the smaller chunks and think about how students can engage with that in a really accessible way on their phones wherever they are. Finding those small little entry points has been really important for me. I find that even if there's only two or three really savvy mobile learning things I'm doing with students each semester that it's still a really powerful step in the right direction that will just keep growing exponentially with every class I teach.

[00:08:44] Bonni: You don't start out by teaching us how to teach. You start out by teaching us or perhaps also inspiring us, trying to ignite within us maybe some things we haven't thought about in terms of our own learning and some of the affordances of these smaller devices. I know you wrote an entire book on the subject so we won't have time for you because you really do such a splendid job of orienting us toward this device that maybe we haven't necessarily thought about in that way.

If you had to, I'm going to force you to just pick two or three where you think might be good places for people to start to ignite their own imagination around these smaller devices that so many of us have in our hands and what they can do for us as learners.

[00:09:28] Christina: I have a section in the book called Start With Self and it's really around the whole idea of before thinking of yourself as this really expert teacher of things that people can do on mobile devices, to just first pay attention to how you try to enhance your work and your personal learning with your phone as just one piece of a larger landscape of how you learn and work and do whatever work is important to you.

That would be the one thing, and that seems really vague, so I can add a couple of those things. Really, paying attention to when do you feel happy and productive? Your phone is really helpful for you in learning something and just noticing it and capturing that and just save it as something you may go back to later as something that can help inform what are your choices. You might notice that you are the type of person who listens to podcasts or you like to watch YouTube videos so similarly, you could also pay attention to where you encounter barriers.

Where you have an idea while you're on a walk, but you realize you would love to record your ideas on the phone that you have with you, but you just don't have a good process for how to do that. For you, that might be, okay, what note-taking app could I use that feels comfortable for me? It could be even sending yourself an email or using your favorite checklist and just write out a quick task. I think trying to notice those barriers and find a way to help your phone get you around that is also really powerful.

Thinking through this process made me think back to something that Flower Darby has said in Small Teaching Online and her conversations about it is that and this is hard to imagine in a semi-post COVID world, that when she wrote that, online teaching was still something very new and not as natural to many college faculty. She helped us understand why we may feel some discomfort around online teaching. That's because we don't have this default context for being online learners.

That really resonated with me because I think it's very much the same case with how we use our mobile devices and in intentional ways to help our learning and our work. I think we do, and we should take that first step of paying attention to ourselves as mobile learners before we even really try to go right into how to be useful as instructors and helping students use their phones to help them learn and engage with the courses.

[00:12:43] Bonni: We started our conversation referencing movement and action. As I think through some of the ideas that you shared, I'm thinking about that. Yes, let's think about the affordances that we are aware of. Let's think about the barriers that we are aware of. It's also fun to think about the surprises

and delights that such devices can still offer us. Then I do think a lot of that like you said, is where we have to be able to shrink the things down.

We're not trying to give the 60-minute lecture [laughs], but is there some small way, and I just wanted to mention that a friend, a colleague, and also he's been on the show before, Jeff Hittenberger, he has been very supportive in the development of what's called the Mendez Freedom Trail and Tribute Monument Park, which is in the city of Westminster in Orange County, California.

I'll put a link to its location in the show notes because if anyone is in the area, it is just a phenomenal thing. It's a park. We actually got to go on a walk. It is to celebrate a court case that was a precursor of Brown versus Board of Education that happened here in Orange County, California, with Sylvia Mendez. She's still alive and she was, at the time, the young girl who they made a case for not having her have to walk to an entirely separate school. We actually got to walk and see, this is the school that she had to walk to as a five and six-year-old. This is the school that was only for white children in the community.

Then it ends with this. We walked the trail and then we ended at the tribute to Monument Park and they talked about their process. The city manager was there and assistant city manager and they spoke about that. They had planned all of these things. Then it was actually through speaking to some of the stakeholders that they're saying, "Wait a minute. Where are we going to use our technology in this park?" They have all of these augmented reality stations that are throughout, and some of these things are analog so children can come and bring paper and actually do, I forget what it's called, it's not tracing, but it's when you rub the crayon and the--

[00:15:03] Christina: Oh, yes, I can't remember either. It's not stencils. I used to love them [laughs] so much.

[00:15:09] Bonni: Someone will be yelling at their podcast player like, "This is what it's called." [laughs]. I'll look it up and find out what it is. It's just this idea that sometimes we want to touch things with our hands and, and do those shadings on with crayons on the little various aspects of the visual things. Then sometimes they could bring the auditory in and actually see videos of people talking, or there was something where you could spin around.

There was a puzzle. You made me think of it when you said puzzle. [laughs] I started to think about that experience, but without thinking about it, you're talking about us shrinking it down, but you also share, it's not an all-or-nothing thing. We're not all mobile learning or all in-the-classroom learning there really are opportunities for fluidity that I think sometimes our imaginations aren't quite as equipped as they could be.

[00:16:06] Christina: Yes, I think that's a beautiful example of two frameworks that were really useful in my thinking. One was fluid learning, which is this idea that we're designing learning in a way that can flow from no tech to desktop, to phones, to other modes as well. That's really how I'm thinking about mobile learning because it's often that pairing these things with phones makes those types of learning opportunities more available. I do discuss some ideas for types of mobile activities, teaching activities, and learning activities. They often have to do with something similar where you are guiding people on tours to certain spots and then they can use a QR code to listen to an audio essay.

You're really thinking about context and place and where people are when they are engaging with their phones and what they're engaging with. I think that's a really beautiful example. It also reminds me of Universal Design for learning too, because that was really core to this and really the way that I thought, okay, if we really care about access to learning, we have to at least see what piece this fits into as far as the whole learning ecology that we're always offering and cultivating for students.

[00:17:46] Bonni: In my experience in reading the book, it felt very much like you not only wrote about that, but you embodied that. I felt myself in a lovely way being distracted in the way all the ways you'd want me to be interrupting the fact that I'm reading a book to now I am, "Oh, my gosh, I want to go look at this." There are QR codes and so many. I'm intrigued by, there's this expression of going down rabbit trails, but the rabbit trails, normally that's said in a bad way, but I find it as like, "What's the word or the phrase for the best rabbit trail possible." You had so many of those in there. Would you just speak about an example that comes to mind? Again, I know you have so many throughout, but an example of what really is emblematic for what universal design for learning and mobile mindful learning makes possible for us?

[00:18:41] Christina: I'll frame this in a way that I hope communicates how practical and approachable I'm hoping my message and suggestions are. That's how we plan for how students engage in the classroom. I know that a lot of the concern, which is totally valid about phones and learning is students being on their phones while in the physical classroom and being distracted. To be totally clear, that is not a problem I solved in this book.

[00:19:19] Bonni: Wait a second.

[laughter]

[00:19:23] Christina: I think that would've been right on the cover and in the title if I had somehow solved that problem. I cannot claim that yet. I hope that comes after me. One practical suggestion I would make is if you have some

handout in the classroom, something that students will need to work on to perhaps work in groups or work individually. As you're alluding to, people may be surprised that I'm still encouraging people to at least make a print-based or offline option available to students. For a variety of reasons, they may not want to be distracted, because I honestly think that's the case with a lot of students, they have a love-hate relationship with the distraction their phone gives them, just like the rest of us.

I'm still a proponent of offering print handouts when possible so that students have that choice to be offline and to work in a tactile way with whatever learning task is in front of them. What I would recommend along with that is at the bottom of that handout, providing a shortened URL to where they could have a digital version of this, because there are plenty of students who will want to take really detailed notes and be able to organize them and see them in a very specific way, so they will want to use their devices.

Then to also put a QR code on there, which, if people still feel like, "Urgh QR codes." We're actually starting to see them a bit more because, one, they're much easier to read with your phones than they used to be. For the most part, you normally only need your phone camera, it will read it automatically and then they're really easy to create as well.

You normally don't need a program anymore. You can just right-click on the web page and it'll say, create a QR code image of this, and then you just pop it in. I think by putting that into certain handouts and this might be trying it out once, then you also have a mobile option. If they know that they just want to look through something and that they're mostly going to be talking, or they may want to write notes in their own notebook, they just need to follow along. Then you have all three of those options available all at once, and students can customize accordingly. You might, depending on the size of your classroom, gauge.

I'm always a fan of giving students certain anonymous surveys at the beginning of a course to get an idea of how often do you use your phone to access course materials. Do you plan on bringing a laptop to class? Because this gives you an idea of how many print handouts you might need or can expect to give out, or whether most of your students will have these technologies and whether they'll want to use them or not. I would say that's one smaller example. That feels like one thing, but it helps you see how a little bit planning ahead makes students feel like they have more choice and agency and how they actually carry out the activity.

[00:22:42] Bonni: I crack up because past me was really wrong about at least two things, although I'm sure many, many more than that.

[00:22:50] Christina: Who to say to?

[00:22:52] Bonni: As it relates to what you were just saying, so one doesn't relate. I was convinced that Starbucks was never going to be a thing like no one-- [laughter] That's just not a good business model. Really wrong about that and also really wrong about QR codes, because I really thought for sure they would have gone away by now. It's pretty wild. I know we both do speaking, so when you're speaking and have a QR code, I started with thinking that would be the least preferred method, but some people-- It's wild [laughs] just to see a sea of people on their phones.

I don't use them-- Well, I use them a lot with students, but they're typically on Zoom, so I'm not able to see that sea of people doing it because they may be choosing to be offscreen or what have you, but I certainly see them land a lot faster than they used to land when all was visible was a link. They really can take us on adventures and as you shared, an ability to very seamlessly switch between an analog and a digital world, and the way that those two things can speak to each other is so fun.

Anything else you want to share with regard to the Universal Design for Learning aspect of it, and maybe when it comes to representing our learning or whether it comes to having choice and agency in what we choose to pursue?

[00:24:18] Christina: First, I'll give a shout-out to Tom Tobin and Kirsten Behling's book Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education, because it was really their chapter, and Meet the Mobile Learners, that it was one of these three small moments where I thought, "Okay, I really have to pay attention to this. I feel like I've taken my own take, but I know there's inspiration from that chapter that informed my first chapter where I'm really making the case for why even if we're not excited and we feel like it just feels impossible to think about phones as another tool in our classroom that we actually intentionally use.

Why are we really have to pay attention if we are educators who are not only interested and more accessed to learning for our students, but actually really high-quality learning, more repetition, more frequency? We know through increased exposure, more research on things like retrieval practice and frequency that these are often things we're not capitalizing on because it's really hard for us in our current ways of tending to do things in our higher education teaching to provide a way for students to have lots of repetition and concepts, even though it's really good for building up a foundation.

When students come and are ready to do that complex thinking because they can so quickly put things, those smaller concepts together that they've been

practicing. Anyway, in their chapter Meet the Mobile Learners, they were really making this appeal that if you are someone who subscribes to Universal Design for Learning and really centering the diverse needs of your learners and trying to anticipate all the needs that they have, we have to pay attention to mobile devices. That really was the moment where I was like, "Okay, I don't consider myself a mobile learner yet, but I do consider myself a UDL proponent.

I'm going to try to apply all of our pedagogical powers to really figuring out how we can make this accessible for everyone." That's really the stance that I'm taking throughout the book, that, of course, it's focusing on mobile devices because that's what's less familiar, but it's really always fitting it in the larger context and landscape of where our students are when they're learning, whether it's in a waiting room, going to doctors' appointments, being on commutes that they have some way to help chip away at the work they're doing in any course or project and continue to be engaged so that when they do have those precious few longer bits of time to be focused and work on something, they are much better prepared.

They have lots of little notes, they've practiced things over and over again, but they really are more prepared when they come to class, and they're more prepared when it's time to have that deep focus time to work on their work.

[00:27:43] Bonni: If someone has decided that they would like to begin to experiment and maybe find themselves in a situation like you used to be, where it's like, "Okay, I need to try something here." What would be a good first few steps for someone to just begin to take?

[00:28:01] Christina: Well, I would say after starting to notice yourself as a mobile learner and make some observations and set some goals. Mobile, again, it doesn't just mean on your phone, but also how you tend to switch between workplaces and how your devices are connected to one another so that the learning and work is continuous. I would say after that step to start doing a test drive of your course materials on a phone just to see what that experience is like. You can ask your e-learning or online learning team at your college or university for stats on how often students are accessing the learning management system on their phones.

They can probably give you that data. I had done that too, so that's helpful. Your students are going through the course, even if you think they shouldn't be, they are, and for a variety of reasons. I think it's really informative to go through your syllabus and see, what does my syllabus look like when I open it on a phone and I get to information easily, are things framed in the right way?

Then, also, if you are using Canvas, Moodle, or whatever your learning management system is to go through that, see if they have an app. I think almost all of them do at this point. See what that looks like, but also try it on the browser, which is like Chrome or Safari, and see what it looks like. Click on things. You'll start to get a sense of, obviously, whether it works, whether it's readable, but you might even start to notice like, "Oh, it's too bad this quiz doesn't work that well on this device, because actually, the questions are pretty simple and quiz questions are pretty easy to do with a spare 5 minutes or 10 minutes."

It may automatically start giving you some really useful feedback and ideas. It's been a theme in my life in lots of ways, but there's lots of power in first just noticing and giving yourself time to notice things, how things feel, how things work, and just give yourself that time to notice, rather than just always thinking you have to have an idea and immediately, and you have to have a ten-point plan. First, just giving yourself some time to experience things and then come up with that ten-point plan of the next things you're going to do.

[00:30:34] Bonni: Thank you for all the opportunities you've given us through the gift of this book to experience these things. It was a wonderful read and it did feel a little bit like an adventure, like I was moving with you. [laughs] It didn't feel static. I really enjoyed it so much, so thank you for that. This is the time in the show where we each get to share our recommendations. I wanted to share an app, which I think I've mentioned on recent shows, but I'm officially ready to recommend it. The app is a note-taking app. It is called Craft and the URL is craft.do. I love to geek out and watch lots of videos, speaking of YouTube, [laughs] lots of videos about various productivity tools, including note-taking.

I have been for a long while doing note-taking on Evernote for some of my stuff and an app called Ulysses for stuff that's just me. It's harder for me to find a really good solution for a team to do note-taking. Craft has kept coming up. First of all, it is a gorgeous app which lets you create gorgeous notes, which is really fun. Its collaboration features are really nice. I've been enjoying it quite a bit. Our team is now moving over to it. I subscribe to something called SetApp, which is for the Mac. Basically, what you get with SetApp is a membership where you can install and use hundreds of Mac applications, including Craft, which is a fairly recent thing as of late January 2023.

SetApp is, I'm not recommending it today, but if you are on a Mac is definitely worth a look [laughs] because of the apps. I should probably do a blog post just on which apps I make use of every single day on my computer that are available as part of the SetApp membership. Craft is a membership and they now have a mobile version of it and they also have a Windows version of it and on iOS. You're really getting most of your bases covered with the software that

they're developing and we've been having so much fun just collaborating and engaging. They don't have what are called Kanban Boards, this project management thing where you can see where things are.

Some of you might have used Trello before where you're literally dragging these cards from one phase or one category to another. You can simulate a Kanban Board until such time as they build that feature in. We have many applications of creating shared notes that are essentially in a Kanban looking thing where we're just dragging it from one little toggle list down to another as it goes through phases. We are beginning some course builds, and so we're going to be able to see exactly where the courses are, which of our phase of course development are they in.

We're also going to be able to see what I keep saying, show the receipts, it's a little silly joke, but you can see all the way along the way, what questions did people have? What feedback did they get? Did they go through all of the steps in a really visually beautiful and highly functional environment? Oh, I just remembered, Christina, I mentioned the craft because it also happens to have artificial intelligence in it, and I literally stumbled upon it. I was trying to think of why I had mentioned it.

It was because on prior shows, I have not signed up yet for some of the ChatGPT or any of that, but I'm getting little slivers of what that's like in the crap tap. [laughs] That's my context for whatever experimentation I have done this far. But highly recommend. Christina, I'm going to pass it over to you for whatever you would like to recommend.

[00:34:11] Christina: Yes. In the spirit of BiteSizedness, I try to come up with two that were really small. One is a quote, and it's from the Baha'i religion, one of their Prophets, Bahá'u'lláh. It's this quote about education that has just continued to resonate with me, so I thought I would share it. It is, regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can alone cause it to reveal its treasures and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

I've loved it because I know on the show, we often talk about the banking metaphor for how students are learning. I think this is meant to counter that idea of … into students and learners, but instead that they have everything they need. It's just about working together to uncover it. I keep thinking about it throughout my work and everything that we do together.

[00:35:18] Bonni: It's beautiful.

[00:35:19] Christina: My second recommendation, which is tying a little bit to a past episode and a colleague of mine, I recommend checking out VaNessa

Thompson's TikTok channel. I found that in talking with her, and I referred to her work a little bit in my book. I am not on TikTok myself. I have this really interesting relationship with social media, but I do think social media is both useful for social learning on mobile devices but also that BiteSizedness. It's really I'm watching her videos that I'm like, okay, she is communicating an idea to students in 30 seconds in this really high impact way.

I can see how she's taking a larger idea and putting it into these really small pieces. I find that from a learning design standpoint, it really gets my mind working in a new way, which I also think is exciting about the whole mobile mindful approach is it's just a new way to approach thinking about learning that we maybe never quite have.

[00:36:27] Bonni: She is such an inspiration. I'm also not on TikTok, but I sometimes get to see her videos that she'll post on Instagram. She'll sometimes re-post the TikToks and I get to see that. She is such an inspiration. She makes it look effortless. I realize it's not effortless, [laughs] but she sure makes it look like it is. I do think there is something to say of getting into a vibe, though, that it may not be quite as hard as those of us that are more novice at it think that it is.

I think as we get into a rhythm of things, then we are able to get some, not just time savings, but also we can get into the mindset of what is it like to create one of these things and perhaps put a little bit less pressure on ourselves because we have some past successes to build upon. She's a wonderful inspiration. What a beautiful quote. Thank you so much for that. That very generous and necessary quote.

Christina, it's been so lovely to have read your book. Thank you for the gift that it was. I was going to say read it early, but I think it's already been out, so I didn't [laughs] necessarily get it. Maybe I got it a smidge early, but what a pleasure it was to read it and then to get to prepare for and then have this conversation with you.

[00:37:35] Christina: Thanks a lot, Bonni. It's been great, too. I've been going through it with words on a page for so long that this is one of the early opportunities to really speak it out as well. It's been so great to talk with you.

[music]

[00:37:52] Bonni: Thanks once again to Christina Moore for joining me on today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. Today's episode was produced by me, Bonni Stachowiak. It was edited by the ever-talented Andrew Kroeger. Podcast production support was provided by the amazing Sierra Smith. Thanks to each of you for listening. If you've yet to sign up for the Teaching in Higher Ed weekly

update, you'll get all the recent show notes from the most recent episode, along with some other goodies that I don't share in the main show notes page. Head on over to teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.

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[00:38:51] [END OF AUDIO]

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