

**[00:00:00] Bonni:** Today on Episode Number 328 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Chris Friend joins me to talk about Teaching As Listening.

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**[00:00:12] Production Credit:** Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

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**[00:00:22] Bonni Stachowiak:** Hello, and welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'm Bonni Stachowiak, and this is the space where we explore the arts 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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Chris Friend joins me today. I'm excited about you hearing his conversation, but let me first share a little bit about him. Chris Friend welcomes people to new ways of thinking. He has been teaching writing classes since 2000, seeing and trying a variety of approaches to writing instruction. He believes testing disempowers students and makes them resent writing. He jumps at any opportunity to give students more control over their own learning and writing. As Director of Hybrid Pedagogy, Chris works with authors and editors in a double-open collaborative peer review process to bring out the best in writers and collaborators. Chris, welcome to *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

**[00:01:38] Chris Friend:** Thanks, Bonni. Good to be here.

**[00:01:39] Bonni:** We are discussing today a topic which gets talked about a lot. Simultaneously, well, also not being talked about a lot.

[laughter]

**[00:01:51] Bonni:** Let's begin with what is it look like to not listen? Let's start with listening as a one-time act. Where do you see this showing up in your own teaching and failures that you've had or in the ways others approach listening as a one-time act?

**[00:02:08] Chris:** What I should do here is demonstrate, rather than answer your question and just answer completely the question because I choose not to listen to the question you just asked. An example for you. Years ago, I was struggling with in-class conversations, and I wanted to have dialog going and students contributing to discussions and how those discussions lead to a certain outcome.

I went into the class thinking, "Oh, by the end of this discussion, the students were going to have this one particular concept figured out, or whatever." Then I would initiate the discussion and I would try to guide them through as we went and people would say something. I would try and suggest other options and that sort of thing to shape the conversation to arrive at where I thought I was going to go whenever I walked in the beginning of the class.

Funny how, it always ended up going exactly where I thought I was going to go, even though I thought I was hosting a discussion in class. I wasn't. What I was doing was inserting my opinion and my view and what I wanted to have happened in the class without actually listening to the students. I acted as though I was. I gave students feedback to make them feel like I was listening to them.

I would echo back what they said and I would make sure that they understood that I heard what they were talking about and that I agreed and that sort of thing, but then I would insert my own predetermined directions. It wasn't an actual conversation. It wasn't a discussion. I read about it before and said that it's a lecture-in-disguise. That it was really me just trying to get the students to jump through the hoops, and that was that. That's when I realized how important listening is and how it's actually important to really listen and not just pretend.

**[00:03:51] Bonni:** I'm hearing a little bit of listening as performance. These are the things I'm supposed to do to show you that I'm listening, but actually, as I am performing, that means that I'm actually not listening, even though I am performing the active listening.

**[00:04:08] Chris:** Yes. That's been a hard one for me to deal with because I tend to be a bit of a control freak in class. I want to make sure that all my docs are lined up, and that everything goes according to plan. I blame that on being raised in Orlando. I first worked at Disney when I graduated from high school. If anybody been there, they know what show quality looks like and everything at Disney is scripted and rehearsed and timed perfectly. They put on the same show every single day the exact same way because they've got it all down to a science.

That was my concept of what performance was developed in that environment. Then I go into the classroom, I don't want to call it song and dance, but I jokingly refer it to as song and dance. When I am doing the performance of teaching in class, I default to wanting it to be as scripted and perfect as I was raised to expect. That just takes all of the vitality right

out of it. That makes it a script that doesn't respond to the students who are in the room at the moment.

One thing I always love saying is that, "we teach students, we don't teach content". We teach the students who are in the room. You can't do that if you go into the room with that preconceived script in your head, and you want to get the students to all do the same thing because you want it. That's not teaching the students in the room, that's teaching whatever idea is in your head that you brought in to the classroom.

**[00:05:27] Bonni:** I do think we can take that idea a little bit too far, at least, when I think through my own failures, I got to go in with a plan, [chuckles] and I do. In my case, really need to have thought through the timing of things because otherwise, what I'm left with this, I can become so enthralled with what is happening in that moment and get so enveloped in it and excited. We're going down ways I never expected us to go, but not actually be a good facilitator because there was a pla-- It's really this delicate dance between the plan.

**[00:06:09] Chris:** Yes, and impulse.

**[00:06:10] Bonni:** Yes. I guess leaving enough room in our plans because we always know though this stuff that's unexpected. I get a little nervous if I ever feel someone is going way too far in one direction or the other on the plan versus the moment.

**[00:06:27] Chris:** In my experience, planning less has always paid off for me. The more I go into a class thinking I know what's going to happen, the less likely that is to actually happen or the less that involves responding to the students in the moment. When I go into a class without a plan, I have an idea of the kinds of things I want to talk about, or I've got this question that I want to use as a prompt to get the discussion going.

I force myself to not plan the details of that conversation because then I have to rely on material that the students provide in the class at the time. That makes it more improvisational. I teach freshmen writing classes. My schtick is rhetoric and writing courses, usually, first-year kind of thing. I always tell students that, "my goal is to make them the little rhetoricians".

The thing that I bring to the class is experience working with rhetoric and experience looking at the world through the eyes of a composition scholar, or teacher, or whatever you want to say there, that's what they don't have. They have experience with writing. They have experience with the things that interest them. They just don't have the lens that I can bring to the classroom.

When we have conversations, if they go off the rails, if we go on tangent after tangent or something like that, I always remind myself, "Okay, wait, how would a rhetorician look at this thing that we have now going on this tangent talking about." That's how I look it back. I'll usually be really deliberate and explicit about it and just say, "Okay, so this thing that we

just talked about, we're in a writing class. Here's how writing people look at this thing you just talked about."

That immediately brings me back to where I wanted the conversation to dwell. I'm not going to say where I want it to go because that's not my goal anymore, but I want it to be about rhetoric-related concepts. I can always pull the lens card like, "Hey, now, we're going to look at this situation the way that this class is going to expect us to look."

It allows the freedom and flexibility of the conversation to go where it wants while still then giving me the opportunity to show students what the discipline that they're their to study looks like when it's being used in "the real world". Whatever topic they bring in is real to them and important to them. Great. Let's look at that through the lens of rhetoric because that's what we're here to do.

**[00:08:40] Bonni:** I really appreciate that distinction that you just made. I joke a lot, much as it's also serious, that I live in the future. [laughs] I don't live right now. That's a real struggle of mine. This tension you talked about of the plan and where it's supposed to go, where it can dwell versus where it needs to go and that idea of dwelling somewhere as a means for, in your case introducing them into what is it like to be a person who studies rhetoric? [laughs]

**[00:09:11] Chris:** Rhetorician.

**[00:09:12] Bonni:** It doesn't just roll right off my tongue the way it rolls up with yours, Chris. [laughter]

**[00:09:22] Chris:** That's why I'm here, and welcome to my world. I would provide the word.

**[00:09:24] Bonni:** Rhetorician. Thank goodness for spellcheck too because as I was typing it, it snapped that right up for me. I didn't even have to learn how to spell that thing. The next one would be that we need, and it's actually related to what we've been saying, but listening beyond the answer. I was really intrigued by this analysis that Robert Talbert did of a study about hybrid or online learning. I'll link to it in the show note so people can go and check it out. Essentially, it was him telling the story of the study where they looked at what are your preferences about what you value the most in this class you're about to take. Is it that you value instructor videos or having office hours or practice tests? There were all kinds of assets that might be contained in this class, and essentially by the time you're done with that, you can see in a relative ease where people perceive they're going to really value things.

Then, I guess to the end of the class, and you can really see, and Robert Talbert does such a good job of sharing this. See the things you think you're going to value about an experience and learning will so rarely match up. It's nothing like wrong with the students who took the survey.

We would be the same way thinking, trying to predetermine what an experience is going to be like versus dwelling in it. The whole thing of projecting some of our assumptions. How can we turn listening where we go beyond those assumptions that we're all going to have whenever we start asking questions about preferences and desires and vision for a class, et cetera.

**[00:11:04] Chris:** As you were describing that, I realized that I put students through the same paces at the beginning of my classes, and it never occurred to me that I'm basically forcing them to listen more intently. Whenever we start at the beginning of a first-year Composition Course, I introduce it as a course about writing rather than an English Course, and that one small shift makes a huge difference in what they expect in the class.

A lot of them are used to, "Well, read a novel and write an essay about a novel." I say, "No, this is going to be about rhetoric. We're going to look at how people use writing in the world to get things done." That just blows up their brains a little bit, because that's not what they were expecting.

Then to get back to your question about listening beyond the answer, at the beginning of this semester, I was asking the students as I always do, "What kind of class do you want to have? What kind of policies do you want to put in your syllabus?" I never write the class policies in my syllabi. I always leave that up to students to write because each group of students has different needs, and I want that reflected in the policies. I want them to invest in the class to make sure that it runs the way they want it to.

This semester, one of my classes, just like I asked that question, "Well, what policies do you want in a syllabus?" I didn't even hear crickets. Crickets would be loud compared to what happened in this class, it was dead silent and nobody made a move. I presented two different syllabi to them. I was like, "Which of these courses sounds more interesting to you? Do you want to do course A or course B?" Silence. [chuckles]

Out of 20 students, I had four people speak for an entire hour. It was painful. It occurred to me because students volunteered more information and I actually closed my mouth and opened my ears and listen to what they were telling me, that the questions that I was asking weren't appropriate for them in the moment and at that time. I was asking them questions that were more expansive than they had ever been asked before.

For a teacher to say, "What do you want in your syllabus," they just couldn't comprehend that I would actually want them to generate ideas and they have no experience in this. They've never been asked to write a policy and, of course, a little bit before, so they didn't even know where to begin. They didn't know what they could get away with. They didn't know what was important. They didn't know how you brainstorm this sort of process.

In my mind like, "Hey, I do this every semester. Why not? What policies do you want?" In my head I'm like, "I'm being such a nice responsive teacher because I'm giving them this great opportunity." It fell completely flat because I was asking the wrong question. I had to

struggle to listen enough to that silence and to ask why there was silence there and what concerns they had in their mind.

Eventually, someone said, "We've never been presented this option before. We've never had this chance before. We don't know what to do." It reshaped my entire connection with that class. I had to basically back up, start over again and it helped me figure out how to unlock that class. The class sessions since then, we've had conversations. It's still a quiet class, but we're engaged, we're interactive.

They understand that I am there to help them. They understand that I really do want to hear from them and it's moving again. I had to throw out my question because I asked the wrong one and I had to listen to the information that they really wanted to provide me and not the information that I thought I was going to get.

**[00:14:28] Bonni:** We've explored a few ways in which our attempts at listening wind up being far from it. Now, we'll talk a bit about teaching as listening. As you were describing that experience, it's really hard to share with people who haven't been teaching as long as us, because I think so often it's so easy to just attribute it to one's own failure. It becomes a little too close to our identity and our sense of meaning and significance.

I can't say it never happens to me, but I at least have enough failures to go like we can get through this moment that we're in, but also teaching right now with the amount of individual trauma multiplied by collective trauma like have never seen in our lifetimes. Sometimes I just feel I could check the box in the clunkiest ways. I have decided that I'm not going to require people to turn their cameras on. We did a little bit of how do we want to show up as a community?

I can't even tell you now any of the things that they decided, but it was a very short list of like, "You don't have to turn on your camera. You don't have to do this. You don't have to do that." I just think they have enough policing in their lives right now. They have enough, I don't need to be that for them. I have to just clumsily go-- just yesterday I would go, "No one's saying anything and I get that, but so could you just do something to let me know?" They really have taken to using the little, they're not emojis, but like the thumbs up or the-

**[00:16:08] Chris:** The reactions.

**[00:16:09] Bonni:** Literally, if I just ask, because I literally will think in my head, "Oh, they've gone to the restroom, they're not even there anymore." That I will get the fastest, most universal response. I'm not used to that, but I go, "Okay, this class, this group of people, we're developing a language between each other, that I can get better checks than I could if I was with you in a classroom and be like, "Okay, we're tracking, we're good. They are quiet or like you said, some of them are just going to be quieter to stop fighting that. It doesn't, and find other ways to listen besides what we normally think of as listening.

**[00:16:49] Chris:** Yes. I completely agree that now is a crazy time to be teaching, and I am so glad I have multiple years of experience. If I didn't have 10 or 15 years of experience, I wouldn't be losing my mind right now. Also because I have experience with many, many, many classes. This semester's classes amaze me with how flexible and sympathetic students are when things go wonky because what isn't going wonky this year, when things go wonky, students are patient and kind about it.

They are so forgiving when stuff doesn't happen the way it's supposed to. I'm getting the sense like your students give the reactions to let you know that they're there. I'm getting the sense that students are really trying, but they really want to make this work. They really want to get something out of this class and they know that that just looks different and is hard this semester because of the circumstance.

It's been so relieving to know that I don't have to be perfect for them because nothing is perfect right now. When I show fallibility, when I show that things just screw up, they are kind and we just meet in the middle basically. It's like, "Okay, I'm trying here, you're trying here, let's make this work." It's been heartwarming in a way that I really needed the semester to know that, "We're going to get through, we're going to make it and we're going to learn things and it's going to work."

We just don't know what shape that's going to take. That goes back to the dwelling in the moment and being aware of how things are actually happening to just relax and not sweat the small stuff and not freak out because I'm losing control of something, but to understand what really is happening in the classroom and help students navigate that situation as best as possible.

**[00:18:32] Bonni:** Sean Michael Morris, I believe was the person who coined the phrase "Synchronish". I am finding myself so grateful that I don't rely so heavily on the scheduled sessions. We meet Mondays at 2:30, as opposed to, I can see the depth and the richness in the conversations that are actually coming out there. The technical way I built them are quizzes, but they are the quizzes that students are receiving 100% on because they shared their answers to these open-ended reflective questions.

They're not intense assessments as much as they are opportunities to reflect. I'm so glad that I did that because whereas that might have normally taken place, those deep, rich, revealing, vulnerable conversations in that web conference, it's just not happening. Although to be fair to myself and to our growing learning community, we have had all of two class sessions. No one would not expect to have everyone showing up in such a vulnerable ways to begin with.

I really like that term to the idea that we can be fully present in those moments of learning lots of different times throughout the week and what a nice thing that is to have built it that way, where that's where I really am starting to feel some of those connections. It's great, because some so much of it too, they just might not be ready to do this with an entire group

of people, but they're ready to do it with me because some of them know me from prior semesters and building up that kind of trust is nice.

**[00:20:07] Chris:** We need to remember when we're in a video conferencing environment, or a Zoom session, or something like that, it feels like a performance. It feels like a show, it feels like it's being broadcast and my institution, we've basically been asked to record every single session so that students can go back and view it again later because schedules are a mess right now.

With that performativity in mind and with that sense of it being broadcast or recorded or something, I completely understand someone's desire to leave their camera off, to not be vulnerable, that sort of thing. The connections that we're accustomed to sharing with students when we meet with them face-to-face are not going to happen when we're meeting with them through these mediums that make us feel like we're performing.

That make us feel like what is normally a conversation that stays within a particular set of walls could possibly be broadcast on the web for anybody to see, who knows. We're not going to have the same vulnerability, we're not going to have the same openness. It's not a failing of the instructor, it's a failing of the medium at this point.

**[00:21:12] Bonni:** Yes, and that there are so many alternatives to capture that same rich experience that we love. Listening, part of what you're talking about also involves becoming incredibly comfortable with silence.

**[00:21:30] Chris:** Isn't that important, this semester when we're dealing with online classes in Zoom and that sort of thing? I've made a running joke out of it in my classes this semester, that there is that AS, Awkward Silence. The awkward silence that you have to allow in an online presentation because it takes longer for people to unmute their microphone again and then gain the confidence to ask the question, that sort of thing, so it's a slower process.

We have to allow that silence to sit for a bit to let everybody have that chance to respond. More importantly, even when we're having a face-to-face conversation so much can be exchanged through silence, we can see reactions and moods. We can watch students process by the looks on their faces. We can see the ways that they're struggling with things or thinking through things.

When you get a student who is trying to articulate something, and they're stuck on words, and they're working on finding ways to articulate their ideas. It's so tempting to jump in because we know what words are supposed to go there, and we know what they're trying to articulate, but that takes the entire experience away from them.

By allowing them and the class to sit in that silence for a moment, we give them the respect of allowing them to process the information, and to come up with the phrasing that is uniquely theirs. That's when they're going to learn the material and feel like they own it



because they were the ones who were able to articulate what they were trying to say, with the silence, in that case, is where the learning happens.

**[00:22:59] Bonni:** You talked about this earlier, but I'd love to have you share more before we get to the recommendation segment. That is just this tension, wanting to control, versus allowing students to have that control over their own learning. I mean they always have their control, I think sometimes we just try to give ourselves the idea that somehow we could control it. What has that been like for you to learn, to give up some of that control?

**[00:23:27] Chris:** See, I don't think they always have control over their learning. I think that so many of their classes are designed around regiment. Not even rigor regiment, where you are supposed to do these things the same way every week. Don't get me started on discussion boards with the you know, "Write one and reply to two thing." Like that's regimen. That's baloney. That doesn't get you anywhere.

The experiences that I've had, I usually reteach myself the importance of listening the first week of the semester, and it usually happens once every two years or so. I go in and I have a rough class and I ask myself, "Why?" I realize, "Oh crap, I went in with my own thinking and I didn't listen to them instead."

When I evaluate what I did in class that day, invariably, when I have a bad day, where things just blow up or just there are a flop or something like that. I can always find someplace in the class session where I decided that something needed to happen a particular way. Once I identify that thing and I go, "Oh, okay, no, I need to let the students make this choice or lead the direction here, or figure out which way that they want it to go." I go into class the next time we do that and it just works so much more smoothly.

Every time I have a bad day in class, I find it's because I didn't listen carefully enough to the students. It's because I went in thinking that I was the one who knew what needed to happen and that just means that I'm ignoring them. That's the worst thing that I could possibly do when it's their needs that I'm there to try and work with. The less I try and impose myself on them, the more organic and natural the class becomes, and then I become a resource for them where I can help them think through things, but they're the ones that are going to be determining where we go.

**[00:25:12] Bonni:** This idea of students having control over their own learning, I probably have two things simultaneously happening in my mind. One is that, my students are reading *Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People*. Within that book, he talks about Victor Frankl who wrote the amazing book called *Man's Search for Meaning*, about his experience in the concentration camps. We just literally read it together, portions of it a couple of days ago.

It's very fresh in my mind, but just this idea that he lost everything. He lost his family, he lost access to food. He lost his social relationships. He lost everything, and the only thing he had left was the freedom he possessed in his own mind to have a vision for what it might look like beyond his present circumstances. That's in my mind.

I also have in my mind right now that sometimes we'll talk about our kids. They are now six and eight and this actually doesn't happen that often, but occasionally I actually really liked that this happens. My daughter will say something like, "You can't make me do that." Again, it's so rarely happens and it's really hard to describe that I actually find this a beautiful thing, because I think it's part of her recognizing her own agency and her own autonomy, and what a beautiful thing it is even at six-years-old to see someone realizing like--

I'll say something like with brushing her teeth. I just came up and I'd be like, "I both could and couldn't, I could try and be very messy. We probably would both be very hurt and neither one of us would be happy with their results because your teeth probably wouldn't be all that clean, so I think you probably are right."

We'll talk about the distinction between-- and as parents, I can't think of anything we force physically, I can't think of anything. When they were little, of course, you grabbed their hand so they don't run into the street, but they're well beyond those years. We would talk instead about when you make choices, then there are consequences to those choices and we try to have those consequences map as closely to whatever was happening.

All this to say, I think that's what I meant. I think we try to impose control around people's learning and you actually can't control someone's learning. You could only control the little games that you play with them to make them jump through the hoops. You can give yourself the illusion of control, but you're actually losing the fight just like the toothbrush example. I don't know.

**[00:27:42] Chris:** I'm so glad you brought that up because that reminds me of the importance of saying that giving students control of the class is very difficult. Not just for us to let go of our position of authority, but for students and to help students grow into that sense of agency that has been beaten out of them by so many classes before. If I go into a class and I say, "I'm going to let go, and I'm going to let the students direct it," I have to be ready to provide support for them.

I'm going to use the word nurturing here. I need to be able to help nurture them to give them or help them build that sense of agency to be able to control their own learning, because so many of their classes in the past have been teacher run and, "These are the things you must do." To writing classes it's you know, "Your essay must be this many paragraphs in this many words long."

I don't settling for requirements on my papers because I want it to be based on what they are trying to accomplish with their work. That even just the lack of a word count on an assignment sheet can be a terrifying experience for some students because they've grown to rely on that because that helps them understand what the teacher is imagining or envisioning for this assignment.

It requires constant constant reminders that they are in control of their learning. They are the ones that are important in this situation. They are the ones who are leading the direction

of the class. They are the ones who need to learn to make evaluations of what is good, what they are attempting to do, whether they have achieved their goal. Once they graduate, they're not going to have a teacher there saying, "Yes, that's good. No, that's not." They need to be able to make those evaluations themselves.

The process of giving students control goes hand-in-hand, as you were suggesting with the process of developing student agency. That is not something that happens overnight, not something that happens immediately, not something that happens just by asking them what policies they want on their syllabus. It's something that takes weeks, probably semesters to develop meaningfully and it requires a ton of patience and a ton of reiteration of the concept of the importance of the student.

**[00:29:48] Bonni:** I haven't gone back to check this theory, but I think if I went back to earlier episodes, I think I probably would have used the phrase, "Give students agency." I noticed that not on did you even give a hint of anything that sounds like giving them agency? I wish I could remember who it was that said this on teaching in Higher Ed, but you can't give them because if you think you can give it to them, it's something that they--

**[00:30:14] Chris:** You are taking control.

**[00:30:15] Bonni:** Yes, I just want to repeat back the words that you used for anyone who struggles with me with trying to reframe that. I think I'm mostly down. I haven't said it in a while, but it's still something I have to just think purposely about before I talk about agency, but you said, "Grow into that sense of agency." It's already there, but you're trying to give them the confidence that comes with that you're not playing the same games that so many other teachers have played with them and it takes a while to unlearn that and to build up that trust.

**[00:30:47] Chris:** Oh yes, and I'm not trying to give them their confidence either because that's not mine to give, I'm trying to help them develop their confidence. I'm trying to help them see that confidence is a thing that they are able to acquire or to have to possess along these lines. One little trick that I've used for several years now that I love and it really helps me reframe the way I look at my relation to the other people in this room, I refuse to use the phrase, "My students."

I don't own them. They aren't mine, they are students in my class, they are students that I work with, they are students in the room. That one simple little rephrasing has radically shifted the way that I perceive and articulate my relationship with the folks that I'm working with in a classroom.

As an editor of a journal, I've seen a lot of articles come in, talking about the relation that teachers have with students in the room. There is a market difference in the affect of someone when describing my students than there is with someone describing students in their classes. It makes a big difference and I would encourage anyone listening to give that a shot. Next time you say, "My students," blah, blah, blah, blah, catch yourself and

find another way to say it that more accurately articulates the nature of the relationship in that room.

**[00:32:06] Bonni:** I found myself saying my students earlier in today's conversation, and I do really like to work on language. It takes a while to change and as someone who every single week is recorded and knowing that my mistakes and language will go out, that doesn't mean you give up, how much more than should I think intentionally about the language that I use?

This is the time in the show where we each get to share our recommendations. The one I have, I have been hesitating recommending it for a while because it definitely is people making some interesting toys. It's not for the kids, not something you want to bring the kids out to see, but I loved it so much. It's a television show called *Ramy*, and it is on the Hulu streaming service. The main character is a Egyptian Muslim. He grew up part in Egypt and then moves to the United States.

It's one of those shows that does changes around different times and places and things like that. It gets praised a lot for its portrayal of American Muslims, and especially sort of this. In any religious tradition, the idea behind what we're expected to do within our given faith tradition and then what we may find ourselves wanting to do. [laughs]

Without getting too specific and giving anything away in this show, every temptation, you might think that a young attractive man in his 20s' might have, he probably has checked all the boxes and what you might think about, but rather than living for stereotypes, it really is a beautiful depiction.

There is another character in the show who uses a wheelchair and rather than having just this two-dimensional character of someone who is disabled, they just have a beautiful, complicated, multifaceted person who doesn't always make the greatest of choices. None of the characters in the show, except for maybe one make the greatest of choices all the time, so it just was a delight. It's both funny and also you really get into the characters and you become to really care about some of them and what happens to them.

There are just two seasons of it now I understand it has been renewed for a third season and I cannot wait to watch it. Just like anything, any show that focuses on any religion, it would maybe not be appreciated by all Muslims because he's not following the faith. Just as someone who follows a different faith tradition, I just love the wrestling because I'm really not into legalism, regardless of whatever religion it is.

It also has some beautiful depictions of that faith tradition, really, really beautiful ones. I felt like I learned about some of the traditions in that religion and some of the dynamics within the families. I found it to be good and I did before even recommended I did go and like, in general, that seems to be overwhelming for both people who are Muslim and then those who are not, but just like anything, did everybody love it? No. Did I love it? Yes.

[00:35:18] **Chris:** Oh, sure.

[00:35:20] **Bonni:** Yes, so what do you have to recommend for us today?

[00:35:23] **Chris:** I'm going to cheat. I'm going to recommend two things.

[00:35:26] **Bonni:** Please.

[00:35:26] **Chris:** First one, I don't think I've ever heard anyone recommend a clipboard manager on your podcast before.

[00:35:32] **Bonni:** No, but they are stealing my Wi-Fi now.

[00:35:33] **Chris:** Something where on your computer you can hit copy and then hit copy and then hit copy and then, later on, hit paste and paste and paste.

[00:35:40] **Bonni:** Yes.

[00:35:40] **Chris:** Oh my gosh, like mind-blowing, how much time that saves and how much frustration that saves being able to grab multiple separate objects from one place.

[00:35:48] **Bonni:** Can we go back for just a second because I have been using a clipboard manager. How I've been using it is to save them up in a queue so I can go back and see four times ago I copied this, and so I bring it up and I do that. What you just said, maybe makes me realize there's even more there. Could you literally do copy, copy, copy, paste, paste, paste. Is that what you meant like that in a string in a row?

[00:36:11] **Chris:** It would depend on how the app itself works. You probably then would, paste number four, paste number four, paste number four and because it's in a queue, number four would always change, and then that would work. Just hitting copy, copy, copy, paste, paste, paste, literally like that wouldn't work.

[00:36:29] **Bonni:** I'm thinking I need to dig in even more because there's probably even more I can be getting out of it, but even just what I'm getting out of it today is amazing.

[00:36:38] **Chris:** Yes, and so simple and they save so much time, and they make it so much easier to move through, taking information from one place and putting it somewhere else. The other thing I want to recommend is actually on behalf of students, in one of my classes, we were talking about implicit racism in textbooks, in schools, in buildings, that sort of thing. We got on the subject because I mentioned that the room in which we met was named after a dead white guy.

You drop that in the middle of the class and that's going to get some attention and we went back to that later and talked about it. My class is going to be writing a textbook and so we want to make sure that the textbook itself is anti-racist. We've had some really good,

intense, honest conversations about what racism looks like and how we don't even notice that it's in our textbooks and yet it is there and it is pervasive.

Several students said that they wish that more of their classes would talk openly about racism. They wished that more of their classes would use current events in their discussions within class. This goes back to what I was saying earlier about the lens that I bring to class and that I look at the world as a rhetorician. We talk about the language that is used to perpetuate racism. We talk about the ways that racism can be found in texts and that sort of thing.

The thing that students wanted or articulated that they want is more discussion of how the real world plays out and how the subject under discussion applies to the world. The thing I want to recommend is that people directly, honestly, and openly address or acknowledge racism in their classes, because you might be surprised that students are hungry for those conversations and we're not going to be able to do anything about racism if we pretend it doesn't exist, or if we pretend that it doesn't apply to our class, or if we pretend that we don't need to give it any attention, that's going to allow it to persist, so we all need to talk about it.

**[00:38:35] Bonni:** That's such good suggestion, and I love that it comes from your students. That's so such a good thing. I want to go back to-

**[00:38:41] Chris:** I will assume.

**[00:38:42] Bonni:** -to clipboard manager, but it feels really awkward to make the transition, but I'm just going to make it anyway because I wonder if you have one that you-

**[00:38:47] Chris:** Yes, go for it.

**[00:38:47] Bonni:** -would recommend.

**[00:38:50] Chris:** No, I don't. That's the problem.

**[00:38:51] Bonni:** Okay.

**[00:38:51] Chris:** I'm going to have to take my own recommendation here because I've gone without one for many years. I used to use an app called Alfred. I don't even know if it's still out there.

**[00:39:01] Bonni:** It is.

**[00:39:01] Chris:** It is. There was a whole bunch of overhead with it and I stopped using most of its main features, but it's clipboard managing features were fantastic. I might go back to reusing that just for that one feature. There are a number of other smaller apps. I've tried two of them today and I don't want to go either one of them, so I don't have a product name off the top of my head.

**[00:39:20] Bonni:** It's funny because I'm using Keyboard Maestro as my keyboard manager, which is like, "Oh, I can't come up with a good example," but it's like, it has all these features that I'm using like 1% of it that it's so much more than a clipboard manager, but I decided, "Hey, start small, start using it for this." Now I have memorized the keyboard shortcuts that I can just pull that up the list of what I want and go back to them.

**[00:39:44] Chris:** I'm a huge advocate for platform agnosticism and application agnosticism. Any recommendation for technology I'm going to make is going to be a type of application, not something by name because that shows preference and privilege, no.

**[00:39:59] Bonni:** Yes, and if people-

**[00:40:00] Chris:** Clipboard manager.

**[00:40:01] Bonni:** If people are thinking through clipboard managers too, it's not just within that one device because some of them now will go from a smartphone to your computer back and forth in both directions. That's really pretty cool too. Chris, it has been such a joy to have this conversation with you today. It feels special to me that we would be talking in a season like the one that we are collectively experiencing. You brought me joy this afternoon, and I know you're going to bring joy and hope to so many people listening. Thanks for joining me for today's conversation.

**Chris:** It's been great spending time with you and great chatting with you again. It's been quite a pleasure. Thanks for having me on. I appreciate it.

[music]

**[00:40:38] Bonni:** I'm thankful to Chris Friend for joining me for today's conversation. You can reach the show notes at [teachinginhighered.com/328](mailto:teachinginhighered.com/328). You're also welcome to subscribe to the occasional Teaching in Higher Ed updates at [teachingandhighered.com/subscribe](http://teachingandhighered.com/subscribe). When you do subscribe, you'll receive a eBook that will give you a guide of EdTech tools for both teaching and productivity. Thanks so much for listening and we'll see you next time on teaching and higher ed.

[music]

**[00:41:32] [END OF AUDIO]**

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