

Caitlin Morris

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Researcher and designer focused on how AI systems shape learning behavior and outcomes. I design and run experiments measuring the impact of AI-assisted learning interactions, build research tools, and translate findings across research, education, and design contexts. My work centers on understanding what makes AI learning experiences genuinely effective, supporting learner interest and capability beyond engagement metrics.

Education

PhD, Media Arts & Sciences — MIT Media Lab (PhD Defense: June 2026)

MS, Media Arts & Sciences — MIT Media Lab, 2021

MFA, Design and Technology — Parsons The New School for Design, 2012

Dual BS, Psychology & Architectural Building Sciences — Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2010

Fellowships

Meta Research PhD Fellow (2021–23) • LEGO Papert Fellow (2023–24) • Morningside Academy for Design Fellow (2024–25) • Cosmos Institute Grantee (2025)

Selected Projects

- **AI Feedback Attribution:** Pre-registered three-condition experiment showing perceived source (AI vs. human) significantly changes learner effort and work complexity despite identical content; non-credible attribution produces worse outcomes than transparent AI (N=148, mixed-effects models, behavioral + self-report measures)
- **Peer and AI Collaboration:** Comparative study identifying real-time interaction quality markers (explanation, curiosity expression, turn balance) that predict learning perception outcomes regardless of whether the learning partner is human or AI (N=36, published CSCL 2026)
- **Embedded Field Research:** Three-month on-site study in a high school in which students self-directed the design of AI tools for their own learning, combining ethnographic observation, participatory design, and qualitative analysis (structured coding of artifacts and transcripts using pedagogical frameworks)

Experience

PhD Researcher — AI & Learning

MIT Media Lab, Fluid Interfaces Group | 2021–Present

- Designed and deployed preregistered multi-condition experiments (300+ participants across studies), using behavioral logging, automated code analysis, and survey instruments.
- Built and evaluated LLM-based pipelines to analyze learning conversation patterns and connect them to learner outcomes including confidence, interest, curiosity, and idea generation.
- Led embedded mixed-methods research in high school classrooms, examining how learners adopt and adapt AI tools.
- Translated experimental findings into design frameworks for AI learning systems to increase active participation, curiosity, and collaborative interaction without reducing learner agency.

Learning Experience Design & Teaching

9 years of teaching experience across high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels

Teaching Fellow — Harvard Graduate School of Education | 2025

- Co-taught “Vibe Coding,” exploring AI-assisted coding tools and how they shape creative learning

Instructor — MIT Media Lab | 2022

- Designed and taught “Extended Cognition,” a course on augmenting cognition through sensory experience, social interaction, and interface design; guided students in developing prototypes grounded in neuroscience and computer science research

Lead Studio Instructor — NuVu Innovation School | 2019

- Co-taught project-based design studios for high school students; designed studio topics and taught design and technical skills across a range of abilities

Adjunct Faculty — NYU Integrated Digital Media | 2016–2019

- Taught courses in coding, electronics, and human-computer interaction for students in design and computer science

Festival of Learning Co-Designer — MIT Media Lab | 2022–Present

- Designed and facilitated an annual 200+ person event, coordinating 18–20 cross-disciplinary workshops

Lead Design & Engineering

Hypersonic (Design and Engineering Studio) | 2015–2019

- Led design and engineering for large-scale kinetic sculptures and interactive installations
- Worked across engineering and fabrication teams to integrate mechanical systems, electronics, and custom software into interactive systems at architectural scale

Creative Technologist (Front-End Software and Interaction Design)

Local Projects (Museum Media Design) | 2012–2014

- Developed interactive exhibits and media experiences for museums and public spaces

Methods & Tools

Methods: Experimental design, survey design, behavioral analysis, mixed-effects modeling, multimodal conversational interaction analysis, ethnographic and co-design methods

Technical: Python, LLM/NLP pipelines, JavaScript/React, C++

Prototyping: Physical computing, PCB design, sensing systems, 3D modeling and fabrication workflows

Selected Publications

Morris, C. & Maes, P. (2026) *Same Feedback, Different Source: How AI vs. Human Feedback Attribution and Credibility Shape Learner Behavior*. Abstract accepted (FIE); full paper under review. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2604.03075>

Morris, C., Elsonni, N., and Maes, P. (2026) *Students as Ethnographers of Their Own Learning Ecology: How Learners' Social-Emotional Insights Shape Their Designs for Technology in Collaborative Learning*. In preparation.

Morris, C. & Maes, P. (2026). *When Peers Outperform AI (and When They Don't): Interaction Quality Over Modality*. International Conference on Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL). <https://arxiv.org/abs/2601.11777>

Morris, C. & Maes, P. (2025). *MoSalC: Understanding Social Curiosity in Digital Learning Environments*. Connected Learning Summit. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.31871980.v1>

Morris, C., Danry, V., & Maes, P. (2023). *Wearable systems without experiential disruptions: exploring the impact of device feedback changes*. *Frontiers in Computer Science*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomp.2023.1289869>

Morris, C., Liu, P., Riecke, B. E., & Maes, P. (2023). *InExChange: Fostering Genuine Social Connection through Embodied Breath Sharing in Mixed Reality*. 2023 CHI EA. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3544549.3583917>

Morris, C., Danry, V., & Maes, P. (2022). *EmBER: A System for Transfer of Interoceptive Sensations to Improve Social Perception*. 2022 DIS. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3532106.3533550>

Selected Writing

"[The Irreplaceable Spark of Human Curiosity](#)" — The Rithm Project, 2026 (with A. Lee)

"[Social Tinkering: Why Collaborative Curiosity Beats Vibe-Coding](#)" — Cosmos Institute, 2025