

Teaching Statement

The Teaching Excellence Award I received in 2003 exemplifies my passion for being a university instructor. The professors I had as an undergraduate and a graduate student provided limitless ideas for how to capture the attention of students and send them home with a new appreciation of human thought and behavior. During the past 8 years, I have taught classes as small as 7 and as large as 350, so I am aware that different teaching styles fit certain classroom environments better than others. I am also aware of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in each of these environments, so I try to maximize the benefits of each classroom setting. I have also taught a wide variety of topics in psychology as a graduate student, so I was often able to fill any void the department needed me to fill. Although research is my primary reason for becoming a psychologist, I have found that teaching solidifies my knowledge base while giving me a chance to interact with students and have some fun. Teaching can be a welcome change of pace after spending the day analyzing data and writing manuscripts and I will always consider it an invaluable way to pass on the knowledge I have learned.

Teaching Philosophy

Despite having specific objectives in each course, all of my classes have common goals. My primary goal when teaching is to make the material personally relevant to my students' lives and interests. I consider the class a success when my students can find their own real-world examples of concepts and identify events and situations in their environment that demonstrate a concept they learned in the classroom. For example, when covering the "bystander effect" (i.e. the more people that are present during an emergency, the less likely someone will help) in my social psychology lecture, I told my students that one day they will probably experience such an event in their lives. Having learned this phenomenon, I told them, is like a "positive curse" so that whenever they are in this situation they will be the one to help because they will recognize the diffusion among their fellow bystanders. I illustrated this point by telling them how the "curse" made me stop a man from assaulting his girlfriend in front of my apartment although there were several neighbors who were present as well. I also conducted an in-class demonstration where I showed them the difference in a potential helper's reaction time between asking if "someone will help me" versus pointing to a specific person and asking if "YOU will help me." One week later, one of my students told me that a fellow student was hit by a car outside of the dorms and no one in a crowd of people offered to help. He told me that, because he recognized this real life bystander effect, he was able to jump in to help the injured student and asked specific bystanders to call an ambulance. Thus, teaching through personal examples and in-class demonstrations allows the students to take the message home with them and even become better citizens.

Another common goal for students in my courses is to become better consumers of psychological research. I encourage a healthy amount of skepticism in the classroom after I teach them about the common pitfalls of both professional and pop psychological research. In the smaller courses, I assign at least one APA journal article for them to read so that they can see the type of work done by professional psychologists and appreciate the amount of effort it takes to get one's work published.

I have taught, and hope to continue to teach, students from multiple backgrounds and with various experiences. I welcome ideas from any of my students and appreciate each of the distinct characteristics they bring to the class. I always do my best to continue to challenge the students who find the coursework easy, and to nurture the students who find the material difficult. I always try to be one of the best teachers the students have had in their college experience, but I am continually looking for ways to improve. The remainder of this statement outlines my teaching experience since I began college instruction in August, 1999.

Teaching Experience

Below is a list of the courses I taught, and continue to teach in many cases, at Eastern Kentucky University since 2005. Each course includes a brief description, the objectives, examples of topics covered in the class, and the average class size. Following this list is a table of student evaluation ratings I have received for each course, based on the standardized assessment of teaching effectiveness at Eastern Kentucky University.

Statistical-Experimental I

- Description: Course focuses on research design and descriptive statistics
- Objectives: Introduce students to descriptive statistics and basic methodology in psychology, have students design, collect, analyze and write a manuscript on a research project.
- Topics: Experimental Design, Experimental Validity, Central Tendency, Variability
- Enrollment: 20-30 students per section.

Social Psychology

- Description: Introductory lecture course on research and applications of social psychological theories.
- Objectives: Familiarize students with social psychological theories so that they can recognize concepts outside of class.
- Topics: social influence, aggression, helping, relationships, and group dynamics.
- Enrollment: 350-375 students per section.

Social Psychology & Cultural Diversity

- Description: Graduate course that covers theory, research and applications of social and cultural psychology.
- Objectives: Students integrate social psychological concepts into their own field of interest, recognize cross-cultural challenges within social psychology and within their own field.
- Topics: self, aggression, helping, cultural vs. cross-cultural psychology.
- Enrollment: 30-35 students per section.

Introductory Psychology

- Description: Survey course on the basic concepts and applications within fields of psychology.
- Objectives: Familiarize students with basic psychological concepts so that they can recognize concepts outside of class.
- Topics: neuroscience, abnormal, social, developmental.
- Enrollment: 30-35 students per section.

Table 1. Evaluation Ratings by Course at Eastern Kentucky University (all responses were made using a 5-point scale with a score of 5 being the highest possible rating).

Course	# of sections	# of students	Instructor rating	Course rating	Progress toward objectives
Statistical-Experimental	2	47	4.7	4.5	4.4
Social Psychology	4	96	4.6	4.3	4.1
Social Psychology & Cultural Diversity	1	35	4.5	3.8	3.6
Introductory Psychology	2	60	4.6	4.5	4.0

Note: This table was last updated 2/15/07.

Below is a list of the courses I taught between 1999-2005 at Iowa State University. Each course listing includes a brief description, the objectives, examples of the topics covered in the class, and the average class size. Following this list is a table of student evaluation ratings I have received for each course, based on the standardized assessment of teaching effectiveness at Eastern Kentucky University.

Personality Psychology

- Description: Lecture course on the basics of personality theory and research.
- Objectives: Understand basics of personality assessment and applications, create and interpret personality profiles of characters in films.
- Topics: the Big 5, psychoanalysis, personality disorders.
- Enrollment: 30 students.

Research Methods in Psychology

- Description: A writing-intensive course that allows students to conduct their own research.
- Objectives: Encourage students to pursue their own research interests, write a high quality research manuscript and present their findings to an audience.
- Topics: Generating hypotheses, writing in APA style, analyzing data using SPSS.
- Enrollment: 15-20 students per section.

Research Design and Methodology

- Description: Lecture course on the basics of research design and analysis.
- Objectives: Enhance students' abilities to identify and produce hypotheses for each type of research design, and recognize the types of analyses that correspond to each design.
- Topics: Correlational design and analysis, experimental design and analysis, ethics.
- Enrollment: 45-50 students per section.

Social Psychology

- Description: Large introductory lecture course on research and applications of social psychological theories. Course was split between two instructors, with each instructor teaching half of the total material.
- Objectives: Familiarize students with social psychological theories so that they can recognize concepts outside of class.
- Topics: social influence, aggression, helping, relationships, and group dynamics.
- Enrollment: 350-375 students per section.

Psychological Measurement Lab

- Description: Lab course that allows students to apply material covered in lecture.
- Objectives: Introduce students to types of psychological measurement, and to the methods for assessing the quality of measures.
- Topics: generating items, calculating descriptive statistics, critiquing the elements of established tests, analyzing the reliability and validity of measures using SPSS.
- Enrollment: 15-20 students per section.

Motivation

- Description: Lecture course that covers past and present theory and research in motivation.
- Objectives: Familiarize students with the different approaches to understanding human motivation and action
- Topics: Freud, Field Theory, Attribution, Self-Determination, Self-Concordance Theory
- Enrollment: 24 students

Introduction to Psychology Lab

- Description: Lab course that illustrates the concepts learned in the larger introductory psychology class (Psychology 101).
- Objectives: Allow students to apply their knowledge through hands-on activities.
- Topics: Behavioral reinforcement, obedience, perception
- Enrollment: 15-20 students per section

Academic Learning Skills

- Description: Small lecture course that teaches Freshmen and Sophomores how to succeed in a college atmosphere.
- Objectives: Enhance students' abilities to improve their academic performance.
- Topics: Note taking, paper writing, speech presentations.
- Enrollment: 5-20 students per section.

Table 2. Evaluation Ratings by Course at Iowa State University (all responses were made using a 5-point scale with a score of 5 being the highest possible rating).

Course	<i># of sections</i>	<i># of students</i>	<i>Instructor rating</i>	<i>Course rating</i>	<i>Amount learned</i>
Research Methods in Psychology	2	37	4.59	4.43	3.99
Research Design and Methodology	2	94	4.64	4.21	3.76
Social Psychology	2	751	4.22	4.27	3.82
Psychological Measurement Lab	5	82	4.62	3.87	3.54
Motivation	1	24	4.17	4.00	3.61
Introduction to Psychology Lab	3	55	4.27	3.92	4.65
Academic Learning Skills	3	40	4.35	3.84	3.27

Other Teaching Experience

During my first year as a graduate student at ISU, I took a “Teaching of Psychology” course, which gave me the basics on how to develop syllabi, give a lecture to a large and small audience, and use in-class discussions and activities. One of the requirements of this course was to give a guest lecture in one of the psychology courses, which was videotaped and later analyzed for strengths and weaknesses. For this assignment, I gave lectures on “Culture and Mental Disorders” in the Cultural Psychology course (Spring 2000), and a lecture on “Persuasion” in Social Psychology (Spring 2000). In addition, I also gave lectures on the “Psychology of Men” and “Women and the Media” in the Psychology of Women course (Summer 2001). These opportunities gave me a chance to prepare and present material for an unfamiliar audience, while at the same time adding to my knowledge base in these areas.

Mentoring Undergraduate and Graduate Students

During my five years at Iowa State University, I worked with over 30 undergraduate research assistants and was in charge of Dr. Susan Cross' psychological laboratory for four of those years. Most of the time, the research assistants learned how to collect data and conduct a research project. They also participated in bi-weekly laboratory meetings, in which I led discussions on new ideas for research at the theoretical and methodological levels. At these meetings, I also taught them about data analysis, using some of the data they had collected earlier in the semester. A popular meeting topic we have every semester is a graduate student

panel, where the lab assistants (and any of interested research method students) ask a panel of graduate students about applying to and surviving graduate school. I have also involved students in the presentation of research at psychological conferences. In Spring 2000, I worked with four undergraduates on a poster that was submitted and accepted to the American Psychological Society conference in Miami, Florida. In the future I hope to involve my research assistants in my projects even more than I was able to during the past five years.

I have also mentored graduate students on such topics as how to present at professional conferences and running a research lab. My graduate program involved a weekly seminar in which the graduate students in psychology talked about topics pertinent to success in graduate school. I was also given the opportunity to present my research to other graduate students, giving them some ideas of how research is conducted and analyzed. In my future interactions with graduate students, whether they are under my supervision or not, I plan to continue tutoring them on conducting, analyzing, and writing their own research. I am very comfortable assisting graduate students on their research projects and look forward to some collaborations with those that I take under my wing as a faculty advisor.

Teaching Interests

I would be happy to teach any of the courses I have listed above, particularly the research methods courses and the social psychology course. As my areas of specialization are the self, motivation, and cultural psychology I would enjoy teaching any course that had an in-depth focus on any or all of these topics. I can also teach broader courses such as introductory psychology. I am comfortable teaching statistics courses to undergraduate and graduate students (the research methods courses I taught involved training in statistical analysis). I have been trained in both correlational and experimental data analysis techniques, and have experience using such statistical packages as SPSS, HLM and LISREL. I would be particularly interested in teaching simple data analysis to undergraduates (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, bivariate and partial correlation) and more complex correlational analysis to graduates (e.g., structural equation modeling and other multivariate analysis), but I am confident that I can teach most analysis techniques to either group. I am willing and able to teach for any number of students, although I hope that some topics be taught in smaller classrooms (e.g., a writing-intensive research methods course). I have enjoyed teaching all of the courses in the past, and look forward to any assignments that I receive during my career as an academic psychologist.