

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Nora D. Gayzur

My experience with teaching at the collegiate level began with a graduate-level teaching course called Introduction to College Teaching (COMM 702). In this class, I learned about different learning styles (e.g., thinking, feeling, doing, and watching), and how I, as an educator, can tap into each one of these learning styles to keep students engaged in a college-level lecture class. In this class, I created a curriculum design plan, which included goals, objectives, rationale, lesson plans, assignments, exams, and grading rubrics for a unit for Research Methods I. Also, I was able to lead class discussions and lectures. With both of these experiences, I received feedback from professors and peers and used that feedback to adapt my class structure to teach courses more effectively.

I have had the opportunity to teach two courses related to my areas of academic interests. Enclosed with this application are teaching evaluations from Research Methods I (PSYC 350) course I taught in Fall 2009. In addition to teaching, I have experience as a teaching assistant for online courses in Abnormal Psychology (PSYC 270), Developmental Psychology (PSYC 250), Introduction to Psychology (PSYC 111), and Human Sexuality (PSYC 210). I have also had the opportunity to mentor undergraduate and graduate research assistants in the Cognitive Aging Lab at North Dakota State University alongside my advisor, Dr. Linda K. Langley.

Research Methods I (PSYC 350) is a junior-level lecture course that is a requirement for all Psychology majors/minors and an important elective for undergraduates in various majors (Human Development and Family Science, Sociology, and others). The course covered research methodology in the first half of the class, and introductory-level statistics (e.g., t-tests and correlations) in the second half of the class. I firmly believe students should witness and practice the science of psychology in order to appreciate psychology as a science. By testing theories against empirical evidence, student witness first-hand how the body of knowledge that comprises psychology is formed. For this course, I chose the textbook and developed the syllabus and class structure. In addition to lectures (e.g., PowerPoint slides and background reading material), I took my experience from the teaching class and focused on class discussions of research topics (e.g., ethics), groups activities for statistical calculations, and class demonstrations on sampling. Many students feared the statistics portions of the class, which is why I incorporated group activities for statistical calculations. Other students were concerned with developing a study for the final paper. In the final project, students completed an actual experiment that studied a specific psychological phenomenon (the Stroop effect), in which each student would participate in the task. This way, each student engaged with the material by doing the task and experienced research from both the experimenter's and participant's view. Then, they reviewed relevant research publications, made hypotheses/predictions based on previous research, analyzed and reported actual data, and wrote a scientific paper in APA format. Since students shared the same topic for the final project, they could talk to me or fellow classmates for guidance on the final paper. This approach allowed students to obtain experience with research methodology while at the same time engaging material on their own time to write the final paper. Since I implemented this type of project in Fall 2009, a few other teachers adopted my approach to the final paper.

I am currently a teaching assistant for four online courses. My duties include writing lecture slides and exams, helping students with online troubleshooting issues, and grading and providing feedback to discussion board posts. In my feedback, I try to encourage students as well as help them think critically about the discussion topic.

In addition to formal teaching, I have trained and supervised many undergraduate and graduate research assistants since I started working the Cognitive Aging Lab in 2005. I have worked, along with Dr. Langley, with three outstanding undergraduate assistants, who assisted in writing publications or worked on honor's theses in the lab. My duties involved helping students design their research projects, reviewing relevant background literature (e.g., emotion, attention, and aging), conducting and interpreting statistical analyses, and writing journal publications. I had the chance to work individually on these projects with undergraduates and cultivate their critical thinking and scientific writing skills.

Some basic principles have guided my teaching. The first is "learning by doing." Whenever possible, I have incorporated projects and activities into my courses that engaged students in the learning process and allowed them to experience the material. For instance, in the final project for Research Methods, students incorporated and applied their knowledge from the semester for the final project, which gave them experience with scientific writing. Also, for statistics, I gave students class activities that would allow them gain experience with statistical calculations. "Learning by sharing" is the second principle of my teaching philosophy. In the right environment, students learn as much from one other as from the instructor. This is one reason I had students complete the same topic for the final project. That way, students could share their knowledge about the topic with each other. Also, my courses have involved group discussions/activities that varied in size from one-on-one to large groups (groups of 4 or more). In this way, I hoped to encourage all students to participate, particularly those who felt more comfortable sharing in a small group atmosphere.

For me, a rewarding component of teaching is individualized mentoring, in terms of both research supervision and academic advising. I have had the opportunity to work with a handful of talented undergraduate students as they completed their honors research projects. Guiding students through the stages of the research process, from choosing a question to interpreting the results, allowed me to share in their excitement as they generated findings. I believe research experience is an important element of an undergraduate education in psychology. As such, I plan to encourage students to play an active role in research, both by assisting with my research and by conducting their own research. I have also advised students in the past, although on an informal basis. I have shared my experiences of graduate school and helped with graduate school applications. I welcome future opportunities to advise undergraduate and graduate students on their academic, research, and career development.

Although I am pleased with my initial teaching efforts, I realize that there is more for me to learn. For one, I have taught courses that are largely lecture driven. I would like to introduce a "learn by teaching" component to future classes. When students are responsible for organizing and presenting course material, they approach the material with greater contemplation and diligence. Therefore, I would like to incorporate a presentation component (e.g., leading discussions of articles). My ultimate goal is to convey to my students my excitement about psychology.

In closing, I would enjoy teaching courses that I have previously taught (Research Methods and Statistics). I feel equipped to teach courses with which I have assisted in the past (e.g., Developmental Psychology and Introduction to Psychology). Courses that I have not taught before, but look forward to teaching, include Cognitive Psychology, Cognitive Neuropsychology, Lifespan Development, and Adult Development and Aging. In my role as instructor and mentor, I hope the principles that have guided my initial teaching efforts will become the basis for an evolving teaching philosophy.