Teaching Statement

As an instructor at the University of Utah, I have had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of students, ranging from undergraduate students taking their first psychology course to advanced graduate students in our Psychology Ph.D. program who are working on their dissertations. In each of these contexts, my goals as an educator are to foster students' understanding of the key principles and ideas in psychology, cultivate their abilities to think critically about complex questions related to human development, and encourage their potential for creatively applying the information to effectively address real-world problems.

Classroom instruction

I have regularly taught two undergraduate psychology classes: Introduction to Psychology and Social Development. Although both courses have large enrollments, I aim to apply evidence-based instructional practices that have proven to be effective at promoting students' learning in science-related subjects (e.g., Kober, 2015). The first practice is to emphasize higher-order concepts and principles. Rather than focusing on the results of specific studies, the names of historical figures, or dozens of specific key terms, I focus on overarching themes or ideas. The primary way I accomplish this is by organizing each class session around a handful of learning objectives. These serve as the outline for each class session and are the basis for how I evaluate student learning. A second evidence-based teaching practice I employ is highlighting the connections between the course information and real-world situations. I use media examples that illustrate the phenomenon being discussed in class, and I incorporate writing assignments that encourage students to connect the course material to their own lives. A third evidence-based teaching practice is promoting students' active engagement in the learning process. I strategically punctuate lectures with opportunities for student involvement, including class discussions of the practical relevance of research findings for contemporary social issues.

I have also taught two graduate courses. One is a core course for the Developmental Area Ph.D. students. I had the opportunity to co-teach one of the core graduate courses for the Developmental area along with Cecilia Wainryb, who is a highly experienced and award-winning instructor. In that context, I learned new strategies for encouraging these advanced students to think critically about the central theoretical ideas regarding human social development, and I implemented these strategies when I led a graduate seminar in my substantive area during the upcoming Spring 2021 semester. These included

Student supervision

Undergraduate research assistants play an indispensable role collecting and processing the data in my research lab. Each semester, I supervise a nearly a dozen research assistants, and my goal is for the students to gain a deeper understanding of the research process and how to rigorously test ideas about human development. One way I accomplish this is with regular lab meetings. At least half of our lab meeting time is devoted to promoting students' understanding of the connections between the specific research activities in the lab and the broader questions that interest them. The other way I accomplish this goal is by supervising students' and Psychology Honors projects and independent research projects. I regularly meet with these students to help them identify a specific research question, understand the existing theoretical and empirical literature on the topic, and refine their scientific writing and data analytic skills.

In addition, I am currently mentoring two graduate students in the Developmental Ph.D. program. Both students are making timely progress with their degree milestones, including successfully defending their Master Theses last semester. I also work closely with them to help them prepare submission for research conferences, manuscripts for peer-reviewed journals, and research awards while also ensuring they are developing the methodological and mentoring skills that will need to successfully conduct research independently in the future.