Teaching Philosophy   **Cory Inman, Ph.D.**

I believe that learning by doing is the most successful strategy to prepare students for their future careers. The primary role of a college professor is not only to teach background knowledge, but equally to demonstrate applied uses of this knowledge, both in the classroom, the real-world, and the laboratory. In other words, background knowledge in academia should always be delivered with an eye towards informing how one would apply that knowledge to solve specific problems. As students gain this knowledge in early courses, they should be given real opportunities to apply their knowledge to any problem they feel intrinsically motivated to solve. Thus, the mission of a teacher is not only to convey useful information, but to inspire students to own their educational experience through exposure to applied and practical experiences that capture the student's imagination.

Classroom Teaching. My experience teaching online in the Spring 2021 semester has changed aspects of my philosophy for teaching large lecture classes. In my job application I described my preferred approach to teaching large lecture courses is to flip the classroom, so that background material is learned at the student's pace outside of the classroom and time in the classroom can be spent working on specific projects that provide practical, applied, and instructor-guided experiences. I used this model in my online, asynchronous Brain and Behavior course (PSY2710) this past Spring. For some reason the at home production of over 100 short lecture videos for this class seemed more onerous than lecturing in person, but I am glad that I have these material produced with high quality and stored on Kaltura and Canvas for future use in a flipped classroom format. I also hosted optional Zoom sessions once every week of the semester to have the practical, applied, and instructor-guided discussions that can put the lecture material in a broader, more engaging context. Overall, I think the most difficult part of this experience was the lack of feedback on the lecture material I had produced. This feedback would be usually given in the form of live engagement and discussion in class, but online it was very isolating as the instructor. When I teach this class again in the Spring, I look forward to using these produced materials again, but having an in person session in which we can apply and discuss the material in more depth. My teaching evaluations suggest that my model worked well and would only be improved with an in-person component. Overall, while I still believe in the flipped classroom concept for classes like Brain and Behavior, I now recognize the personal touch in-person teaching provides.

The pedagogical training I've received over my career and my experiences teaching thus far have impressed upon me the importance of continued development of my teaching skills through self, peer, and student evaluation. For instance, I recently presented a Guest lecture on Neuroanatomy in my colleague Liz Conradt's Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience course. Afterwards, a developmental student, Katie Wyant-Stein, emailed me with a kind email stating "I wanted to share with you how much I enjoyed listening to your lecture. While my experience with cognitive science and neuroanatomy has been informative, it was never a topic that I found very stimulating. However, this was not the case with your lecture. …You did a great job at making the information easy to digest, yet it still challenged my thinking. I was able to integrate the applicable information into my own research interests. I really enjoyed the various ways that we interacted with the material (i.e., using our bodies to conceptualize scale, question and answer, graphics etc.) and how we frequently revisited key concepts (i.e., interpreting neuroimages). … your pace was perfect for me. I was so tuned in that I didn't look at the clock once during your lecture!" This positive feedback validates that I'm on track as I further develop my teaching style. Dr. Conradt also mentioned that she would be happy to provide peer observation of my teaching from this lecture.

Small groups offer more opportunity to design experiences that allow students to apply their knowledge. I believe small groups should learn material and skills through real and practical assignments that result in learning general academic skills, like debate and peer-review. I'm deploying this philosophy in my current Neuropsychology course (Psy 5700/6700). In this course I feature a debate format in which students debate current controversies on cognitive neuroscience most weeks of the class. The debates will be structured and assigned teams of students will debate the evidence supporting the sides of a cognitive neuroscience controversy in class. In addition to reading and learning to critically examine various neuropsychological perspectives, I'm also trying a novel writing assignment based on the most helpful assignment I received as part of a class in graduate school. In lieu of a long paper writing assignment, I'm asking students to peer-review a pre-print each week that is relevant to the debate topic. Students are responsible for reviewing this pre-print manuscript as if they were reviewing it for a journal. I believe this provides practice for a fundamental skill that will shape how students read and evaluate all published and unpublished papers in the future. Importantly, Pre-prints offer an imperfect paper that has not fully gone through the review process and will offer the best simulation of the peer-review process. My hope for these new features of the Neuropsychology class is not only to teach the content, but to help students develop skills that will be applicable throughout their career.

Mentorship. As a mentor in the laboratory, my job is to provide a collaborative environment where I can scaffold opportunities for mentees to learn, while still providing space and support for independence when applying their knowledge to specific research projects. I love the challenge and continual growth that accompanies mentoring students. I often grow just as much from mentoring as the student grows from learning. So far, I've thoroughly enjoyed passing on my knowledge to my graduate student, Martina Hollearn. Despite Martina just starting at Utah, I've been consistently mentoring her since helping her write an NSF GRFP application last Fall, for which she received an honorable mention. We've stayed in touch as she prepared to start graduate school. I've encouraged her to give me constant feedback on my mentoring and I regularly show my appreciation for all of the effort she is putting into getting our lab started. When mentoring, I believe this sort of two-way dynamic is essential for providing a collaborative, respectful, and caring environment in which both the mentee and mentor can grow. My primary goal as a teacher will be to inspire students to own their educational experience through exposure to applied and practical experiences that capture their imagination.