

Teaching Statement

Samantha Moore-Berg, Ph.D.

My teaching philosophy focuses on three themes: (1) I structure each course in a way that allows students to grasp the course's real-world relevance in addition to its fundamental concepts; (2) I empower students by making the learning environment accessible for all students; and (3) I provide continued mentorship to my students. Accordingly, I strive to create an intellectually stimulating learning environment to captivate students while in the classroom and to provide students with the skills necessary to achieve productive lives outside of the classroom.

Students more eagerly engage with course materials when they realize that the lectures, discussions, readings, and assignments are directly relevant to their academic and personal goals. Therefore, **I structure each course in a way that allows students to grasp the course's real-world relevance in addition to its fundamental concepts.** I take extra care when designing my coursework to ensure that I incorporate real world examples to elucidate fundamental concepts. For example, when I developed the new undergraduate seminar on *The Psychology of Peace and Conflict* for Spring (honors) and Fall (regular) 2025 and now as I develop the new graduate seminar on *Translational Science Methods* for Spring 2026, I supplemented scientific readings with non-academic articles, such as articles from the *New York Times*, to highlight material relevance. In my lectures, I integrated real-life examples when discussing complicated concepts to help elucidate key points. Further, I also incorporated many examples and exercises in my lecture that make dense material more manageable and relevant. I used a similar technique when teaching *Social Psychology* in Fall 2023 and Spring 2025. I actively worked to provide additional resources when teaching the complex material—for instance, I showed videos that provided real world supporting content through an interesting medium.

I promote accessible learning environments and strive to empower all of my students in my courses. At the beginning of every semester, I explain to my students that the classroom is a place of respect. As class discussions unfold, I provide thought-provoking questions that encourage conversation, while making a concerted effort to make safe spaces for all students. If conversation gets heated, I work to ensure that each student's voice is heard in a respectful manner. There have been several instances throughout my teaching career when I had the opportunity to moderate passionate class discussions. For example, while teaching my newly developed graduate seminar on *Political Psychology*, different opinions emerged regarding the roots of political polarization. It is my role as educator to educate students on the theoretical foundations of polarization while still maintaining a safe space for all students to participate.

In addition to teaching, **I provide continued mentorship to my students.** At the University of Utah, I have sought the opportunity to mentor six graduate students, including two as primary advisor and two as secondary advisor, and one undergraduate student. My approach to mentoring researchers is like my approach to teaching. I actively work to highlight the strengths of students and to help students overcome barriers to success by taking a hands-on mentoring approach. I work closely with my students to ensure that they learn the fundamental components of research and then help them discover how research is relevant to their immediate and long-term goals. My objective is to teach them the skills necessary for independent research—such as how to form research questions and hypotheses, how to conduct statistical analyses, and how to write a research paper—and then guide them through hands-on research practice. For more advanced researchers, I foster a collaborative environment in which I provide mentorship when necessary but also take a step back when they are able to master tasks on their own. Importantly, my role as a mentor and educator does not end when the course is over or when my students leave the lab. It is one of my top priorities to continue to provide mentorship to my students no matter how long ago I worked with them. It brings me great joy to stay in touch with my students to continue to help them succeed.