

## Teaching Statement

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I believe that teaching social psychology provides people with multiple tools to understand their experience in interacting with, being influenced by, and judging other people. In teaching, I emphasize the importance of this understanding for any social issue that hinges on a judgment of other people, their capabilities, and their motives. One of my primary goals in teaching is to encourage students at all levels to be literate consumers of social science research on important topics (e.g., persuasion, prejudice, intergroup relations, media violence). At the advanced undergrad and graduate levels, I focus on teaching the skills needed to generate, translate, and apply new knowledge to promote human well-being. Finally, I believe that active mentorship in research activity and professional development is essential to student and faculty success.

I strive to enact these goals in classroom teaching, curriculum development, departmental administration, campus and national service, and media outreach through programs that seek to share the contributions of science (and especially social science) with the public in an accessible way. More specifically, I have been an active participant in the following areas:

- Departmental leadership (Honors Advisor, Social Psychology PhD program Area Coordinator, Director of Graduate Studies, Executive Committee, Dept. Chair),
- CSBS and Graduate School initiatives (ADVANCE College Task Force, Co-chair Graduate Education Task Force),
- Multiple interdisciplinary training initiatives in the health sciences (HCI PathMakers program for underrepresented students, STARS TL1 training grant, VPCAT, CCTS Peer Grant Review),
- Founder and director of GASP (the GLBT Alliance in Social and Personality Psychology, now celebrating its 20th year of providing mentorship and professional development resources to underrepresented students and faculty)
- Training-related service to national science organizations (panelist for the NSF Graduate Fellowship Program, including the Broadening Participation initiative; Mentor Judge and discussion leader at SACNAS), and
- Individual advisor or mentor to graduate students, honors students, and junior faculty.

Below I highlight the central aspects of my teaching philosophy.

### **Foster Intrinsic Interest**

If people do not care about something, they will not be motivated to understand how it works. I believe that most people will find most topics interesting if those topics are taught well and if the instructor makes a serious effort to discuss applications to topics students already care about. Similarly, I believe that instructors should encourage students to explore the implications of new material and theories for their own research, professional, and scholarly interests.

I accomplish this goal in the introductory social psychology course (Psy 3410, now 2500) through a special unit on the effects of media violence (TV and movies, violent music lyrics, violent video games, violent pornography) on attitudes and behaviors. As described below, I use this special unit to embed detailed consideration of the pros and cons of different approaches to research on media violence into this introductory undergraduate course. Most students are avid consumers of media culture and are curious about whether and how it may affect them and those close to them. I build on this interest by engaging them in a systematic examination of how researchers study these questions.

The advanced social psychology graduate core course (Psy 5410/6410) is required of all Ph.D. students in psychology and has been a central part of the curriculum for some business Ph.D. students. It also routinely fills with Honors students. I highlight the implications of research and

theory in social psychology for multiple fields by carefully selecting articles at the interface of social and clinical, developmental, or cognitive psychology and regularly highlighting applications of social psychological theory to health, education, and business. I encourage individual choice in how assignments, both large and small, may be fulfilled, so that they advance students' understanding of their own interests. For example, one assignment requires students to find and share with the class an article in their own area of interest that uses the theories we are discussing in a particular week. These assignments illustrate that even "classic" theories from social psychology may elucidate phenomena of contemporary interest. The final project for the core course similarly engages students in a scholarly "detective hunt" to trace the history of research and theory on a social psychological idea of interest to them, either by working backward from contemporary research or forward from germinal theories. Students then share their findings with the group.

### **Promote Scientific Literacy**

In each of my classes, I aim to instill curiosity and critical thinking about research design as it applies to important topics, such as the impact of exposure to media violence. My goals are 1) to get people to care about internal validity, external validity, and construct validity, and 2) to avoid reinforcing a false dichotomy between experimental laboratory research and field research (laboratory-based experiments can be realistic and involving analogues of real situations, with high potential for generalization to other contexts; field studies can be carefully controlled experiments). I teach students at all levels to think through the challenges of using alternative research methods to understand psychological phenomena for which experimental research is either impossible or unethical. My strong belief is that these critical thinking skills are important to being a responsible consumer of social science research. I tell students that my goal is for them to be able to read a news report about scientific research – whether it's on media violence, child rearing, intergroup relations, or health – and be able to formulate the key questions about the research design and methodology necessary to decide whether to take the findings seriously in their own lives or in the public arena.

### **Provide Mentorship in Research Activity and Professional Development**

At the graduate level, I provide both opportunity and encouragement for my advisees to be substantively involved in publications and to take the lead in presentations and articles as appropriate to their stage of development. I try to apportion responsibility for different parts of complex projects so that each student can enjoy a sense of ownership and mastery. I provide detailed, frequent feedback on multiple drafts of such work and communicate to students at all levels that I do not expect any draft to be perfect (it won't be) and that the key to revising something is to get it on paper (and edit multiple versions). I encourage my advisees to develop their own independent research ideas and to seek funding for them, so they gain experience with research proposals. I gladly supervise projects on which advanced students take the lead as they learn the most from them and become well-positioned for future employment as independent scholars. Last, consistent with my emphasis on scientific literacy and research methodology, I encourage my students to take as many advanced methods and statistics courses as possible so that they have the tools they need to understand others' research and to develop their own.

In the past several years, I have expanded this mentorship activity to junior faculty. Yelena Wu (originally in Family/Preventive Medicine, now in Dermatology) received an NCI K Award, on which I am the primary mentor, and we recently launched work on her newly awarded ACS Research Scholar Grant. I have mentored other departmental faculty (Trafton Drew, Anshu Jeong), as well as faculty in sociology (Megan Reynolds), and am participating as a VPCAT Senior Mentor (Lisa Taylor-Swanson, Nursing; Boyu Hu, Hematology, HCI). I am also a participating faculty mentor in the STARS TL1 training grant (Spheres of Translation across the Research Spectrum), and serve on

its Internal Advisory Board. In this capacity, I help select pre- and post-doctoral fellows, meet with interested students, and consult on training activities.

Since its inception, I have chaired the GASP Mentorship Luncheon at the annual meetings of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. These luncheons feature faculty mentors on topics ranging from publication and research ethics to how to secure funding for research on LGBT issues, sexual behavior and health, how to recruit underrepresented populations to research studies, how to teach and mentor diverse students, how to handle intersectional identity in academia, and how to interview for and negotiate one's first academic position. These luncheons, sponsored by the Diversity and Climate Committee of SPSP, are attended by 90-150 students and junior faculty each year. We also hold a networking social hour at SPSP, and I maintain a GASP website and a list K serve of more than 450 members worldwide.

### **Plans for the Future**

As Department Chair, I signed the department up to be one of two CSBS pilot programs for Return to the U, a major outreach effort through Continuing Education to support returning students in earning their undergraduate degree. I am currently teaching for this program at the Sandy Campus (Psy 2500). In 2020-21, I am pleased to be returning as Director of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology. As chair of the Honors Ad Hoc Committee, I worked with departmental faculty and the Honors College to develop a successful proposal for the departmental honors track that replaced our long-standing senior thesis program. It has been a pleasure to see this program grow and thrive. I will also be offering Psy 4460, Social Psychology of Health and Illness, a class with an Honors section that meets the requirements of other college majors like Health, Society and Policy.