

Teaching Statement

Andrew Luttrell

Teaching Philosophy

As a college sophomore, I competed for the first time at the National Speech and Debate Tournament in Nashville, Tennessee. I watched the best speakers in the country give moving, engaging, and informative speeches. When the tournament ended, I approached the student who won the best individual speaker award and asked him how I could improve my own speaking. He said, “Don’t do it for yourself. Do it for everyone else.” At the time, his advice confused me, but upon reflection, I found wisdom in those words. Communication is not a chance to show off what you know; it is a chance to give other people knowledge and understanding that is meaningful to you. The advice stuck. The next year, I was a semifinalist at the same national tournament, and the “do it for them” mentality has since spilled into my everyday interactions with students. My mission as a teacher is to “do it for them”—to give students the gift of understanding psychology and its methods. Psychological science has enriched my life, and I want my students to enjoy the same enrichment. As a result, three “do it for them” goals guide my teaching decisions: connecting psychology to students’ lives, encouraging them to think like psychologists, and implementing tested principles from the psychology of learning.

Learning about psychology can radically change a person’s perspective by illuminating new ways to think critically about a social world that we all inhabit. My first goal is to connect psychology’s theories and principles to students’ lives in order to convey their far-reaching implications. I have tried to do this in part by curating relevant examples that illustrate psychology in action. For instance, during the 2012 presidential election, I connected psychological concepts to candidates’ campaign strategies, public opinion polls, responses to the debates, etc. Students respond favorably to these examples, as noted through both formal and informal feedback. One student sent me an anonymous note using Ohio State University’s “Thank A Prof” system, writing, “[h]e makes the topics fun to learn about by applying the concepts to people or incidents that apply to our demographic as young adults.”

Further, I try to also show students how their *own* thoughts and choices are consistent with psychological principles. I do this by supplementing traditional lectures with active learning exercises. For instance, when I teach the topic of “compliance,” after discussing strategies shown to reliably increase sales and donations, I ask students who have been to Tupperware Parties or their modern equivalents to share their experiences. Gradually, they realize that their own purchase decisions were shaped by the principles of influence we had just covered. I also love to use classroom demonstrations that show, in real time, that students themselves are prey to various psychological biases. In one such demonstration, students develop confidently held false memories. These demonstrations help illustrate the information and show students that they themselves operate according to the same psychological tendencies as everyone else.

In addition to illustrating social psychology’s influence in the world through relatable examples, I also strive to get students to think like psychologists. As an undergraduate, I valued the way my professors facilitated my growth as a scholar by challenging the way I thought about social problems. As an instructor, I want to teach my students how to think scientifically so they can ask critical questions and push their understanding beyond the pages of the textbook. One way I have tried to meet this goal is to focus on teaching the experiments that provided the foundation for psychological principles and theories. For example, it is one thing to *say* that

implicit prejudice leads to discrimination, but I can go deeper by showing how carefully controlled studies provide evidence for that effect while ruling out other explanations. Similarly, I often challenge students to answer questions that a psychological scientist would have to answer, such as “What kind of study would prove this?” “How do you measure a concept like ‘love’?” “What do these results really mean?” These active learning exercises test and challenge student knowledge, encouraging them to not only think about psychological principles, but also to think about how we can come to know them, further cementing the concepts in memory.

More recently, my third goal as a teacher has been implementing research from the psychology of learning to ensure that students are actually understanding and internalizing the class material rather than merely memorizing it for exams. My reading of the relevant research and the approaches taken by other instructors have inspired a variety of teaching practices. One of these practices is recurring low stakes testing. A regular feature of my classes is a review of the material that has been covered the day before. These reviews include informal questions at the beginning of each class as well as weekly quizzes covering the previous week’s material. By continuing to practice retrieving the information, students are better able to retain the material long term. Another practice involves getting students to make predictions. The research in psychology has shown that when people first predict the answer to a question before learning that answer, they retain the information more even if their predictions were inaccurate. Thus, another regular feature of my classes is predicting the outcomes of psychology studies. I will set up the overarching research question and present the study’s procedure and ask students to predict the outcome. This requires students to elaborate on the information and connect it to relevant conceptual knowledge, building a platform on which to understand the correct answer when it is revealed. These are just two examples of my use of relevant research in learning science to improve student comprehension.

Finally, as a social psychologist, I am keenly aware of both the value diversity can bring to an organization and the challenges that inhibit diverse organizations. As a teacher, I work to foster an open atmosphere in the classroom, encouraging discussion that includes many different student perspectives. When I teach *Introduction to Social Psychology*, I make a point of weaving the role of culture throughout the semester’s lesson plans. This deliberate inclusion of culture has initiated many insightful conversations about cross-cultural differences and similarities. As a research mentor, I have had experience mentoring a diverse group of undergraduate research assistants. In addition to teaching and mentoring, I have also helped coach Ohio State’s Speech and Debate Team, whose members include a diverse array of sexual orientations, gender identities, races, and ethnicities. As a coach, I worked directly with students one-on-one to help them develop and grow as public speakers and performers by highlighting their individuality, identifying their unique strengths, and encouraging them to reach their specific goals. Overall, my unique set of experiences has equipped me to continue working with diverse student groups in ways that serve both individuals’ success and the success of the larger group.

Through classroom teaching and individual mentoring, I aim to make psychological science relevant to students’ often diverse everyday lives and encourage scientific thinking about social issues. I do this through carefully selected examples, classroom discussions and activities, conscious lecture design, and an approachable, entertaining teaching style. The comments I receive from students suggest I have been successful. One student, for instance, recently wrote on a course evaluation, “I never thought social psychology would interest me until I took this class.” Of course, the work is never complete, and each semester requires refining, updating, and adding to students’ experiences because, after all, I don’t do it for myself. I do it for them.

Summary of Student Evaluations

Soliciting and reflecting upon student feedback has been critical to my growth as an instructor. One source of such feedback has been Ohio State's official student evaluation system, and I have provided a summary of those evaluations for each of my courses below. These data represent students' average evaluations of my teaching, across a number of more specific ratings. The table presents the average ratings I received as an instructor and the average ratings for other instructors in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences during the same semester for comparison. At this time, I do not have evaluations from my recent appointment at the College of Wooster.

Semester	Size	Class	Student Evaluations	
			My Mean	College Mean
Fall 2012	25	<i>Introduction to Social Psychology (Writing-Intensive)</i>	4.7	4.2
Fall 2013	25	<i>Introduction to Social Psychology (Writing-Intensive)</i>	4.8	4.3
Fall 2014	35	<i>Introduction to Social Psychology</i>	5.0	4.3
Spring 2015	90	<i>Stereotyping and Prejudice</i>	4.7	4.3

Student evaluation means are on a 1-5 scale in which higher numbers indicate more favorable evaluations.

Teaching Experience

My teaching experience as the instructor of record spans three years as a graduate student at Ohio State University and the current year as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the College of Wooster. By the end of this academic year, I will have taught three separate semesters of *Introduction to Social Psychology*, two semesters of *Stereotyping and Prejudice*, two semesters of *Attitudes and Persuasion*, and two semesters of *Introduction to Statistics and Experimental Design* across these two institutions. I was also the course assistant for *Judgment and Decision-Making* for one semester, and I completed the Ohio State University Psychology Department's *Certificate of Training in the Teaching of Psychology*, which involved extensive observation of other classrooms and reflection on my teaching. Beyond direct classroom experiences, I have also gained valuable experience in mentoring students for their independent research projects in psychology.

Introduction to Social Psychology has two forms at Ohio State. One version is a writing-intensive undergraduate course that fulfills a university writing requirement. I have taught this version of the class twice and each time, approximately 25 students were enrolled, largely comprised of second and third-year students. Although many psychology majors take this course, the students come from a variety of majors. The course functions in large part as an introduction to the academic field of social psychology, and I cover topics including research methods, persuasion, relationships, the self, helping behavior, and prejudice. The course also functions as an opportunity for students to improve their written communication skills through focused instruction and practice in addition to five short essay assignments over the course of the

semester. For this course, I designed my own syllabus and all teaching materials. In addition, I designed and graded all exams and writing assignments

The second version of the *Introduction to Social Psychology* is similar to the course just described but without the writing component. I was the sole instructor for this course for one semester, and I covered the same topics as the writing-intensive version of the course. Approximately 35 students were enrolled when I taught this class, consisting primarily of second and third year Psychology majors.

Stereotyping and Prejudice is a higher-level undergraduate course. At Ohio State, this course also fulfilled a university Social Diversity requirement. I was the sole instructor for this course for one semester. Approximately 90 students were enrolled, and students were comprised mostly of third and fourth-year Psychology majors; however, many other majors were represented as well. The course functions in large part as an introduction to the academic study of stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and other intergroup issues. For this course, I designed my own syllabus, exams, and all teaching materials. I also developed two writing assignments to encourage students to connect the material to real-world examples. I will be teaching this course again next semester at College of Wooster (approximately 25 students).

Attitudes and Persuasion is a higher-level undergraduate course primarily for Psychology majors (approximately 25 students). I am the sole instructor for this course for the current semester and will teach it again next semester. This course aims to introduce students to the social psychological research in attitudes and persuasion, illustrating the real-world applications of the research. Topics covered include attitude strength and structure, measurement, classic and contemporary approaches to attitude change, attitude-behavior correspondence, implicit attitudes, and cognitive dissonance. I have designed and will grade all aspects of the course, which includes a writing assignment aimed at developing students' abilities to communicate research in social psychology to the general public.

Introduction to Statistics and Experimental Design is a required course for Psychology and Neuroscience majors at the College of Wooster. Approximately 25 students are enrolled, comprised mostly of second-year students. I am the sole instructor for this course for the current semester and will teach it again next semester. This course aims to develop students' skills in statistics and data analysis, focused on preparing them for their upcoming independent research projects. Topics of this course include basic introductory statistics concepts such as central tendency, hypothesis testing, t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, and regression. The course also features hands-on instruction using the SPSS software for conducting statistical analyses.

Judgment and Decision-Making is an upper level undergraduate course with approximately 60 students enrolled, comprised mostly of third and fourth year Psychology majors. This course reviews psychological research on judgment and decision-making processes. As the course assistant for this class, I was responsible for grading all exams and quizzes, and I held office hours to meet with students. In addition, I presented a special lecture on neuroscience and decision-making.

The *Certificate of Training in the Teaching of Psychology* program gave me valuable training that has prepared me for all aspects of teaching. The requirements for this certificate include participating in a full semester pedagogy course, attending teaching workshops, observing and reflecting on peer and faculty teaching, and being observed by faculty. Such extensive training and reflection has given me a reliable set of skills for effective teaching.

Mentoring Experience

In addition to my classroom teaching experience, I have also worked individually with many undergraduates who want greater experience with research in psychology. My mentorship model involves actively reading and discussing empirical research that relates to the research we are conducting in the lab, as well as training in experimental design and analysis.

I have also directly mentored several undergraduate research projects. At Ohio State, I supervised an undergraduate thesis project, mentoring him through study design, analysis, and communication via written reports, poster presentations, and oral presentations. In 2014, I received an “Outstanding Research Mentor Award” from the Undergraduate Research Office at Ohio State University, based on a nomination by this thesis student. Now, at the College of Wooster, I am advising five undergraduate research theses in psychology. The College of Wooster is a school recognized for its emphasis on mentored undergraduate research, and all students complete an independent research project before graduating. The independent research program is a year-long project that culminates in an oral defense. In my role as an adviser to five students, I will be guiding them through hypothesis generation, study design, data analysis, writing the final thesis, and crafting a research presentation. Many of these students will go on to present their research in a college-wide event recognizing student research.