Katherine S. Corker
Teaching Statement

Two major goals are the driving force behind my instructional design. First, I strive to emphasize the importance, logic, and use of the scientific method in the study of psychology. Much of the time in my courses is spent discussing the hypotheses, design, and results of experimental and correlational studies, which I present with an eye towards helping students learn to distinguish between causal and observational research. It is my goal that students learn to be active consumers of scientific information, developing skills that help them to distinguish plausible from implausible interpretations of research, not only in academic contexts but also in daily exposure to research findings in the media. Second, I encourage students to be active participants in the learning process, approaching coursework with a mastery orientation that facilitates deeper engagement with the material. I do so by working to make my lectures interesting and relevant, for example by incorporating multi-media components and facilitating small group discussions.

Thus, my courses are not merely the presentation of a series of “facts” that psychologists generally accept to be true; they are a narrative about the process by which scientific theories are developed, tested, modified, debated, and eventually discarded based on experimental and correlational evidence. On the basis of these goals, I strive to develop assessments that measure the extent to which students are really mastering course material, developing their skills in differentiating effective from ineffective research designs, and becoming able to distinguish valid from invalid conclusions in psychological research.

My assessments are a blend of written assignments, quizzes and traditional exams. Written assignments encourage students to develop their writing and rhetorical skills in a context that is supportive of a mastery and growth orientation. Multiple opportunities for feedback provide an environment in which students get needed practice and can really improve their writing. Quizzes give students a chance to rehearse important skills (e.g., identifying research design elements from a study’s abstract) in a low-pressure environment that provides valuable practice recalling and expressing course concepts. Exams assess the student’s ability to synthesize course concepts and retain knowledge gained over longer periods of time. On the whole, high quality assessment is critical for me to ensure that my two overarching instructional goals are being met.

Teaching Experience and Pedagogical Training

The majority of my teaching experience has been in Social Psychology, which I taught in two semesters independently in small sections (fewer than 20 students per section). I was also a teaching assistant in this course for two semesters in larger sections (between 150 and 200 students each). Table 1 contains evidence of my teaching effectiveness. I structured my social psychology course from a social cognitive perspective, covering a variety of topics (e.g., attributions, consistency theories, attitudes, norms, roles, social influence, evolutionary approaches, social facilitation, group relations, and culture), emphasizing the two major goals detailed above throughout the course. I have also taught a large, online section (200 students) of Introductory Psychology. I frequently employ online learning aids in both my online and in-person instruction (e.g., course management software such as ANGEL, course websites) because I strongly believe these tools help to engage students in course material, as well as to facilitate
discussion and cooperative learning. For instance, students in my social psychology class have found these tools very useful for communicating with one another and me.

In addition to my classroom experience, I also have training in state of the art techniques in college teaching, including over 25 hours of formal instruction on a range of topics (e.g., communicating with students, evaluation, active learning, incorporating diversity, handling conflicts, and using technology in the classroom). I completed a certificate in college teaching that, in addition to the previously mentioned formal instruction, involved developing, implementing, and reflecting on a teaching technique that was new to me. For my teaching technique, I revamped a lecture on research ethics to make what might be a dull topic to some students a more interactive and engaging experience. I first utilized a jigsaw technique in which students taught one another about different components of the Belmont Report. I then facilitated a group discussion in which the class had to decide if a sample IRB application that we were considering was ethical according to Belmont principles. We discussed the various ethical issues in the application as a class, and students were able to apply their newly learned principles from the Report to lend support to their arguments for and against the ethicality of the experiment’s design. In short, the process of becoming a certified college teacher has given me the opportunity to hone my instructional skills, and it has made me a more creative and reflective educator.

Additional Mentoring Experience

During my graduate training, I have had the opportunity to work with over two dozen talented undergraduates in my research. Five of these students are now in PhD programs, and another seven are in other advanced degree programs (e.g., Educational Specialist, Master of Public Health). Of course, these students’ successes are due in great part to their high levels of motivation and ability, but I believe their success is also due to the training and experiences they received in my lab. One task I’ve greatly enjoyed was working with four of these students to develop their senior honor’s projects. We worked together to navigate the process of learning to do IRB applications, search the literature, conduct analyses, and write about psychological findings. Two of these four students are now co-authors on papers that are currently or will soon be under review at high quality journals. It should be evident that mentoring students is something I take very seriously and look forward to continuing to do as faculty. I am passionate about helping students succeed in my roles as scholar and teacher.

Courses Qualified to Teach

There are several courses that I would be qualified to teach. As noted above I have four terms of teaching experience in social psychology; thus, I would be well-qualified to teach Introductory Social Psychology, Research in Experimental Social Psychology, or Special Topics in Social Psychology. I could also teach specialty courses in my areas of expertise (e.g., motivation, social cognition, health psychology, group relations). Furthermore, my doctorate is in social and personality psychology. Therefore, Personality Psychology is another course that I would enjoy teaching and am well-qualified to instruct. I am also happy to teach Introductory Psychology again in the future.

While at Michigan State, I obtained a certificate in quantitative and evaluation methodology that involved eight courses in a variety of areas (e.g., advanced measurement, structural equation modeling, longitudinal data analysis, growth curve modeling), in addition to
an independent quantitative project. My quantitative and methodological training has been thorough and strong. I firmly believe that the power of psychological research lies in our use of cutting edge statistics and methodologies, and although many people are intimated by the thought of learning these advanced techniques, I am working to make these methods more approachable for mainstream psychologists. I would therefore be happy to teach Statistics and/or Research Methods at any level. I have taught small workshops on using the statistical software R in the past and would enjoy instructing on this and other topics (e.g., using Mplus for structural equation modeling).

Finally, I would relish the opportunity to work with honors students in any capacity, be it by offering honors-level classes or working one-on-one with students on honors projects. My experience as an undergraduate honors student, in conjunction with experiences I’ve had mentoring honors students at MSU, make me eager to continue working with honors students. There is nothing quite like helping bright students develop and test their own ideas; it is truly one of the most worthwhile things we do as educators.
Table 1: Comparison of Student Evaluations obtained in Two Sections of Social Psychology to Psychology Department Average for all 200-Level Courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PSY235 (Social) Summer 2010</th>
<th>PSY235 (Social) Summer 2011</th>
<th>Psychology Average</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor Involvement</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interest</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.91*</td>
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<td>Course Demands</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.37</td>
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<td>Course Organization</td>
<td>3.94</td>
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<td>.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-Instructor Interaction</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Evaluations displayed are from all classes in which a formal evaluation was conducted and represent all five categories assessed. Rating scale is 1 = “inferior,” 2 = “below average,” 3 = “average,” 4 = “above average,” and 5 = “superior.” Z is the standardized difference between obtained rating and psychology department average (which is based on all 200-level courses from 1996-2011). Starred ratings are statistically different (p < .05) from the university average based on n = 14 in 2010 and n = 13 in 2011.

**Representative Student Comments (2010)**

“Katie presented the course material in both interesting and humorous ways. She is pleasant, tries to ensure the material is understood by the students and is always available for after class extra help.”

“Katie has improved her teaching skills since the first week!”

“Very good instructor, made sure we understood the material by providing a lot of examples. I really liked all the feedback she provided. Note taking was a challenge but made it almost impossible to miss [class] which was good.”

**Representative Student Comments (2011)**

“Love the way you teach – kept me interested in the course and made me more intrigued by social psychology!”

“Katie has been a great instructor. She is always available to meet with me when I have questions or to go over exams. She has really made this class enjoyable!”

“I definitely enjoyed social psych more than I thought – even if it was an 8 am! Thanks for a fun semester 😊”