

ASHELEY R. LANDRUM

TEACHING STATEMENT

Experience and Approach

My primary goal as an educator is to encourage students to be active participators in the classroom environment. Working toward this goal, I incorporate in-class learning activities that promote critical evaluation and encourage active thinking. For instance, in both my General Psychology and Introduction to Statistics for Psychology classes, I divided my classroom time into brief intervals of focus activities, lecture, and learning activities. I find that dividing class time keeps students energized and engaged, especially during longer class periods. I begin class by administering short focus activities, such as reading quizzes. These quizzes help students recognize what they do not know, a process that I find helps students to highlight topics they need to focus on during the lecture. Additionally, these activities substitute for recording class attendance, while also encouraging students to arrive on time. During the second part of class, I give a brief lecture using PowerPoint slides and engaging videos to highlight and explain important concepts. My lectures are designed to be less formal and more conversational, which encourages class participation, discussion, and questions. Toward the end of class, I provide learning activities which engage students in thinking about the material to which they have just been exposed. I find that these learning activities are especially helpful for methods courses as they motivate the students to implement the methods they learned during the lecture. Students often think that they understand material until they are asked to actually use it. Thus, providing the students with guided practice in the classroom grants students the opportunity to see where their own knowledge gaps exist, ask questions, and receive immediate feedback. Moreover, it allows me to monitor student progress and adjust my methods as needed in real time—not after the course is completed.

Diversity in the Classroom

I have been extremely fortunate to teach at two institutions with diverse student bodies, the University of Texas at Dallas and Brookhaven College. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, the University of Texas at Dallas is one of the top 25 most ethnically diverse student populations in the country. In fact, less than 40% of the student body is Caucasian, and about 23% of the students are international. Brookhaven College, a Dallas county community college, is similarly diverse with a student body that is 24% Hispanic decent and 24% African American. In addition to ethnic diversity, both schools have a large population of non-traditional students including students that are over the age of 30 and students with physical, intellectual, and emotional disabilities.

I believe that it is important for the instructor to create an inclusive classroom environment where all students' needs are met as best as possible. This starts with the course outline. I make sure to check calendars of religious holidays prior to creating the examination schedules. I also include a statement about accommodation on my syllabi, including information from the university on where to get assistance. Also, as some topics in psychology can be a bit controversial (e.g., gender and sexuality), I make sure to begin the course by providing rules for respectful discussion (I also post these on my online classes). Moreover, to expose students to different points of view, as well as to engage their interest, I have invited diverse speakers to present to the classes. For instance, when covering the introduction to psychology chapter on gender, sex, and sexuality, I scheduled a transgendered individual to come speak to the class about her transition and her experience. These lectures were extremely well-received and increased students' engagement in the course.

Mentoring and Lab Management

Besides my more formal teaching experiences, I have also been honored with the opportunity to mentor undergraduate and master's students. While in graduate school, I was in charge of coordinating several lab projects, which included organizing tasks for and supervising teams of undergraduate and master's-level research assistants. When working with research assistants, I aim to expose them to all parts of the research process. This includes brainstorming ideas for research, summarizing and reviewing literature, testing participants, running statistical analyses, and writing and presenting the results. Contributing to this goal, I encourage even undergraduates to submit research findings to local and national conferences. During my time at UT Dallas, I personally supervised five undergraduate research conference presentations. Additionally, I worked closely with one undergraduate on her senior thesis project which is now published (Johnston, Mills, & Landrum, 2015, *Cognition*). And I pulled two undergraduates into the writing process for two of my projects (Landrum, Mills, & Johnston, 2013; Landrum, Pflaum, & Mills, *under revised review*).

At the University of Louisville, I used my experience in coordinating undergraduates to start an undergraduate lab for my postdoctoral advisor, Patrick Shafto. For Dr. Shafto's lab, I developed a lab manual, implemented a process for organizing research assistants and tasks, and held weekly research assistant meetings and professional development lectures. Our team included 15 undergraduate researchers and two post-baccalaureate research assistants. Like with my graduate school lab, I encouraged students to present work at conferences including Cognitive Development Society's Biennial Conference, the Society for Research in Child Development's conference, and Cognitive Science Society's conference. Indeed, four of our research assistants assisted with conference presentations, including one who served as a co-author on a conference paper. Moreover, I supervised one of our undergraduate's honors thesis project. I look forward to continuing this kind of mentoring as a faculty member with both undergraduate and graduate students in my own research lab.