

# Essays from E-xcellence in Teaching Volume XIII

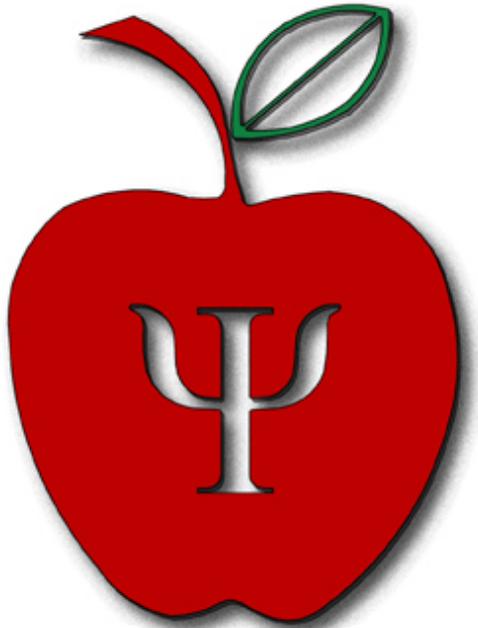
A collection of essays originally published on the  
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Society for the Teaching of Psychology

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## Introduction

This year's volume of *E-xcellence in Teaching* contains invited essays originally published on the Society for the Teaching of Psychology's (STP) PsychTeacher listserv. The listserv has provided a forum for discussion of issues related to the teaching of psychology at all levels, since its launch in 1998. STP has featured the *E-xcellence in Teaching* essay series on the listserv since the spring of 2000. This year's essays present both practical strategies and food for thought on a wide range of topics.

Several of this year's essays focus on the role of technology in teaching. For example, in chapter 2, David Miller describes how podcasting and screencasting can enhance student learning. Dr. Miller illustrates how technological tools (e.g., podcasts, coursecasts, screencasts, and other innovations) can serve as pedagogical enhancements. Judith Pena-Shaff and Amber Gilewski, discuss teaching with affordable technology including open educational resources (OER) such as MOOCs, in chapter 5. They discuss how OER can be used to combine different tools to help students develop shared knowledge through communities of practice. Dr. Pena-Shaff and Dr. Gilewski also caution that increased access does not necessarily mean enhanced or increased learning or motivation and, therefore, our role is to guide our students so that they will take advantage of these resources. In chapter 6, David Berg addresses using the iPad in the classroom. He gives excellent resources for workflow and classroom teaching including websites and apps for communication, presentation, and storage. Lynette Keenette and Bibia Redd discuss engaging students in online courses with instructor presence, in chapter 9. A few of their useful tips are sending students welcome letters, encouraging introductions, orientating students to the course, and holding electronic office hours.

Other essays in this volume provide specific, practical strategies for educating students in areas of professional development. For example, in chapter 3, Amie McKibban, talks about rethinking our approach to introductory psychology classes, to expose students to a broad range of knowledge including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. She address the importance of meeting the needs of our introductory students, knowing that many of them will complete a degree outside of the field of psychology. In chapter 4, Andrew Peck discusses the benefits and concerns regarding email messages. He shows how email has changed the nature of teaching and how students may infer that we are available 24/7. He concludes that emails have changed our relationship with students and outlines how to advise students on their etiquette for professional development. Elizabeth Sheehan discusses some of the issues surrounding writing across the curriculum, and provides some excellent ideas about how we can educate our students about plagiarism in Chapter 8. Her suggestions range from tactics as simple as online quizzing to making plagiarism into a theme for your entire course. She also writes about the importance of consistency and clarity in the reporting process for plagiarism.

In chapter 7, Michelle Drouin discusses her experiences with the Society for the Teaching of Psychology's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Writing Workshop. She relates how the structure of the workshop helped her get organized and prepared before the workshop, and then how the workshop itself helped her finish her article and get it accepted for publication. She relays the key elements which worked to make the workshop as success.

Several other essays include specific pedagogical techniques which have encouraged student learning and engagement. Christie Cathay, in chapter 1, looks to the world around us for unique opportunities to examine human social behavior, encouraging us to be on the constant lookout for “research outcroppings.” She talks about how her frustration with a local election campaign led to a class project that engaged and excited the class. In Chapter 10, Nicole Kras discusses how human development portfolios are great tools for students to demonstrate the knowledge they’ve gained in a human development course. She outlines 10 different portfolios used in her class, noting how these assignments provide the chance for students to think creatively about the information presented in the course and how they can relate the assignments to their own lives, making it more meaningful to them. Daniel VanHorn discusses how he engages students in psychological science by having them create fantasy researcher leagues, in chapter 11. Each student in a league selected a psychological researcher, found published articles by that researcher, and tracked the number of times the articles were cited during the course of the game. Dr. VanHorn’s fantasy researcher league model engaged students in psychological research and provided an exciting alternative to traditional courses and/or assignments.

Mark Ludorf and Sarah Clark write about their study on the usefulness of help sheets during tests, in our twelfth and final chapter. They found that it isn’t enough just to consider whether a student has access to a help sheet, but rather it’s important to do a careful examination of the help sheet content. They discuss their findings in relation to content and process psychology courses.

Together, these essays make up Volume XIII of *E-xcellence in Teaching*. We hope our readers find both thought-provoking ideas and practical teaching help in these essays. We thank the contributors for sharing their experiences and ideas with the readers of PsychTeacher, and with the rest of the psychology teaching community.

## Chapter 1

# In Pursuit of Teaching Outcroppings: Engaging Students with Emotionally Involving Current Events

Christie Cathey

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Most of us can likely remember the one experience that caused us to first fall in love with psychology and made us think, “*This is the stuff I want to do forever.*” For me, that experience happened 21 years ago this spring, when I took Ralph McKenna’s Advanced Social Psychology class at Hendrix College. The thing about that class that really hooked me on the discipline was how enjoyable the research process became for me. Dr. McKenna encouraged original, creative research designs (he would have nothing to do with canned research projects) and our class meetings were these ridiculously fun and engaging brainstorming sessions.

Dr. McKenna taught us to look to the world around us for unique opportunities to examine human social behavior, encouraging us to be on the constant lookout for “research outcroppings.” This term, originally coined by Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest, and Grove (1981), is a really nice metaphor. Just as geologic outcroppings, like highways cut through hillsides, allow us to observe aspects of Earth’s strata that would normally remain hidden from view, a research outcropping results when an atypical event in the world exposes normally hidden aspects of human behavior. For example, the semester I was enrolled in Advanced Social Psychology happened to coincide with the LA riots (sparked by the acquittal of three police officers in the Rodney King case). I remember my classmates and I excitedly considering the possible new vantage points into aspects of social thought and behavior this atypical event may have opened up.

I’ve always been a fan of this outcropping metaphor, and now, as a teacher of psychology, I like to use what I refer to as “teaching outcroppings.” These are unexpected, or infrequent events that are inherently involving for students, and that give us an opportunity to truly engage students by helping them see the immediate application of course concepts to the world around them. Sometimes these teaching outcroppings are difficult to spot, but other times, they appear without effort.

Early last September an unexpected (but in hindsight, obvious), outcropping revealed itself. I had my Social Psychology class planned out for the entire fall semester and had no intention of making changes. However, one morning, I happened to overhear a campaign ad for a local election playing in the next room, and it really ticked me off. The ad’s message was in direct opposition to my own values, and it so enraged me that I wondered how I would survive eight more weeks of listening to that garbage. I then had one of those “when life give you lemons...” realizations, and it occurred to me what a potentially rich teaching outcropping the 2012 election season might be. I knew then that I needed to quickly plan a new project for my Social Psychology class to take advantage of this fleeting opportunity.

The election season provided the perfect teaching outcropping for four distinct reasons. First, as we all know, the 2012 elections were particularly contentious and emotionally laden. I knew that if I could find a good way to get students to relate course concepts to the elections, their existing emotional investment in the elections might translate into heightened engagement in the course. Second, the sheer relentless and omnipresent nature of the persuasive attempts in the media in those final months of the election meant that students couldn't escape them and would be forced to think about social psychological concepts between class sessions. Third, my class was composed of students with diverse political attitudes, and I thought this would be a perfect opportunity to have them work together in small groups to experience diversity and to practice civility. Fourth, it would give them a chance to develop an important research skill: the ability to examine emotionally laden social topics in as unbiased a manner as possible.

Two weeks later, just as we began our coverage of persuasion in my Social Psychology class, I told my students that they would be working in groups to analyze persuasive tactics used in currently running political television advertisements. Then, in my most obnoxious infomercial voice, I added, "But wait...there's more!" and announced that they would also be writing and producing political ads of their own, and that on Election Day they would present and discuss their ads for the class. I knew I was onto something good when a 64-year-old student in the front row immediately exclaimed, "Oh! This is going to be fun!"

Over the next five weeks, the five groups of four students each met frequently outside of class. First, they selected two ads from opponents in the same local, state, or national election and then pinpointed the specific persuasive tactics they believed the campaign teams were using in those ads. While working on their analyses of existing ads, the groups also worked together to conceive of a fictitious political candidate, and to invent details about that candidate's life and campaign. I gave students the option of inventing either a third candidate for the same campaign they'd selected for the first part of the assignment or a candidate in an entirely different campaign. Students then chose specific persuasive tactics we had covered in class and used those to produce their own 30-second ad. I realized that not all students would have video production skills, so I gave them the option of creating either a television or radio ad and told them they even could act out their ad if they really feared technology. Alas, I underestimated students' technological adeptness, as no groups went with the "Shakespearean option."

On Election Day, I came to class armed with patriotic-themed cupcakes to help calm students' public speaking jitters, and we began the 15-minute presentations. Each group first showed videos of the two current ads they'd selected and presented their analyses of the intended persuasive goal and the effectiveness of each. They then provided details about their fictitious candidate (e.g., age, gender, political affiliation), and about their candidate's campaign (e.g., Was it early or late in the campaign? Was the candidate ahead or behind according to polls?), and played their original ad for the class. Finally, the group gave an in-depth analysis of their original ad, including a discussion of the intended audience, the ad's overall goal, and at least one persuasive tactic employed in the ad.

Although I was initially nervous about trying out a new, potentially risky project that involved students working closely in groups for an extended period of time, I believe this project was the

most successful (and certainly the most fun) I've ever used. The level of work all groups put into the project far exceeded my expectations. Their analysis of existing ads was sophisticated and thoughtful, and their original ads were creative and, in some cases, enormously entertaining and humorous. What's more, the class really loved the project, and despite the fact that several groups were comprised of members on opposite polar ends of the political spectrum, I am happy to report that not only were there no thrown punches, but that I witnessed true teamwork, high levels of civility, and the formation of strong bonds within groups of very diverse students. Finally, the class as a whole was the most engaged and excited about learning I've experienced in my 15 years of teaching Social Psychology. Of course, I can't be certain that this was a result of the election project and its usefulness as a teaching outcropping, but I strongly suspect that it was.

This project reinforced my belief in the value of seeking out and exploiting teaching outcroppings. I fully intend to make use of the 2016 election outcropping, but in the meantime, I have amped up my intentional search for others. This semester, for example, I simply asked students which current events most grab their attention. The resounding answer was the debate surrounding gun control in the U.S., so I'm building an assignment that takes advantage of students' high emotional involvement in that issue. Regardless of the courses we teach, I believe we can all make use of teaching outcroppings; we must only be insightful enough to recognize them when they occur and flexible enough to change our plans in order to take advantage of them. By recognizing these fleeting events in the world, we can develop creative coursework that grabs and holds students' attention, and emotionally involves them in their studies. By doing this, we can not only better engage our students, but, in some cases, we can truly transform a class.

### **References and Suggested Readings**

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## Chapter 2

# Enhancing Student Learning with Podcasting and Screencasting

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Portable devices for media consumption became prominent in the 1950s and 1960s with the growing popularity of the transistor radio (Schiffer, 1991). Since then, there has been a cultural shift fostered by the invention of newer technologies such as the Sony Walkman in the 1980s, and in the current century, the Apple iPod, and similar personal listening devices. A vast ecosystem of accessories that facilitate portability has co-evolved with these technologies (Darlin, 2006). While these devices were originally intended for listening to musical recordings, other media such as books, newspapers, magazines, movies, and podcasts have since gained popularity in the portable media market.

Podcasts are digital recordings that can be downloaded from the Internet or from another source, such as Apple's iTunes Store, from which they are also available for subscription, usually at no cost. Once downloaded, they can be accessed directly on a computer or transferred to a portable digital media player, such as an iPod, iPhone, or any other mobile device capable of playing audio files. (Despite the name, "podcast," one does not need an Apple "iPod" to use these digital recordings.)

When podcasts were first introduced around 2004, they were audio recordings. While this has remained the primary format, others have evolved. An "enhanced" podcast contains not only audio, but also a visual component, typically a series of static (i.e., no animations) Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple Keynote screens. Enhanced podcasts also contain a navigation menu. When accessed on a computer via iTunes, a new menu item appears called, "Chapters." Clicking on this unfurls a list of "chapters," along with a small visual icon, of each screen composing the podcast. Users can navigate to whichever chapter they want to hear, or can simply allow the podcast to play sequentially. Enhanced podcasts can be created in a variety of ways, but the most popular software packages are Apple GarageBand, which comes bundled with every Macintosh computer as part of the iLife software suite, and a shareware software package from Humble Daisy called ProfCast (<http://www.profcast.com>). For non-iTunes users, enhanced podcasts can be saved as .mov files playable on the Internet.

Finally, actual video podcasts have become more prevalent. They are best used only when a video component is essential, because video can greatly increase the file size depending on how it is encoded, its dimensions, and other factors. For example, if the university cancels class because of bad weather, I upload a video podcast of that day's lecture to keep my class on schedule. In this case, video is essential. Some podcasts, such as speeches by notable individuals, are available either as audio-only or as video. The visual aspect is appealing in such cases, but the audio alone can suffice.

### **iCube: Issues In Intro**

I began my first podcast series in the Fall of 2005, in connection with my 315-student General Psychology course. The main component of *iCube: Issues In Intro* is a weekly discussion of course material that I conduct with a small group of up to 20 students. The discussions, which typically last 40-50 minutes, are primarily student-driven (Sener, 2007). They ask questions and I respond. Nothing is scripted. These casual discussions take place in a seminar room near my office in which I set up eight microphones connected to an audio mixer, which, in turn, is connected to my laptop computer for capturing the audio.

Students who participate receive no extra credit for doing so. Some students return every week, and others stop by only a few times in the semester. Because I have to identify a time when both I and a seminar room are available, there are usually many students who would like to participate but cannot due to schedule conflicts. I encourage students to send in questions via email if they are unable to attend, and we address those items in the podcast.

The participants are highly motivated and willing to invest the extra time. Interestingly, the majority are not psychology majors, but many of them become very engaged in the course content via our podcast discussions and end up either switching majors, incorporating psychology as a double major, or pursuing a minor in psychology. As an added benefit, I've become the academic advisor of former podcast participants. In large classes, students and professors often have difficulty getting acquainted with one another, but podcasting greatly facilitates the kind of scholarly interactions that might otherwise not occur in large classroom settings. Having podcast participants as my advisees enables me to better serve them, and, of course, there are additional benefits to the students in terms of having at least one professor who can write somewhat detailed letters of recommendation in the years that follow.

Perhaps most importantly, these weekly discussions provide a means of personalizing the course, making it seem psychologically "smaller." The large class sessions are lectures with minimal opportunity for discussion; but, students who participate in the podcast recordings have an opportunity to interact with me (and me with them) in a relatively informal context. Students who routinely listen to the podcasts also report of sense of having a more personal connection with me and with the student participants. While I prefer lecturing with computerized multimedia in my courses, podcasting provides an important means to incorporate active learning for those students seeking such an opportunity (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007).

In addition to the weekly discussion, there are two other components of iCube: Precasts and Postcasts. Precasts are short, enhanced podcasts (5-15 minutes long) that I record twice weekly (because I lecture twice each week). They're intended to provide students with important points that I'll cover in the next lecture. I also play the Precasts before class begins for students who arrive early, which gives them yet another way of accessing the material and also provides a mechanism for "setting up" the lecture that immediately follows.

The third component of iCube is the Postcasts, which I create sporadically. Postcasts are content modules that I record to clarify difficult concepts, or items that I feel I didn't cover clearly in class. In recent years, I have uploaded video screencasts (see below) of full lectures to keep the class on track when school is cancelled.

iCube is accessible via iTunes for free subscription. As is the case with participating in the recording sessions, listening to the podcasts is entirely optional. I make it available as one of several course enhancements to aid in student learning.

Every semester, I add items to the University course evaluations to ascertain how many students are listening to iCube and whether they believe that these podcasts help them learn the material. Data gathered over the course of eight semesters starting in Fall 2005, indicate that approximately 40% of the class listen more than occasionally to the podcasts. Of that 40%, 76% of the students report that the podcasts enhance their learning. Most of the remaining 24% report that the podcasts were only marginally helpful. The reason that most of the non-listeners give for not accessing the podcasts is that they don't feel they have enough time do so.

### **Animal Behavior Podcasts**

In the Fall of 2006 (one year after launching iCube), I began a second podcast series for my upper-division Animal Behavior course. This course, which used to have a capacity of 50 students, now has a capacity of 150, and is also taught as a lecture. Among the 150 students, there are typically about 10 who are in the University Honors Program. Honors students at UConn may, with an instructor's permission, convert a non-Honors course to obtain Honors credit. (Students in the upper-division Honors Scholars Program need 12 Honors credits to graduate with Honors, along with other requirements.)

My Animal Behavior Podcasts series provides an opportunity to earn Honors credit in this course. It's based on the iCube discussion model, but Honors students who participate are expected to attend regularly. In these 40-50-minute sessions, we discuss animal behavior course content. Like iCube, these discussions are informal and are distributed on iTunes. In recent years, there have been about 14 Honors students each semester earning Honors credit by participating in these podcasts.

### **Interactive Discussion vs. Coursecasts**

In higher education, podcasting gained popularity as a means of recording and distributing entire lectures (what I refer to as "coursecasts"). Lecture recording has been around at least since the invention of affordable, portable cassette tape recorders. Today's coursecasts are much easier to distribute because of their digital format. At some universities, coursecasts can be created by any professor at the flick of a switch when they enter classrooms outfitted with recording equipment. But one wonders about the extent to which such ease of recording has been preceded by forethought regarding course enhancement.

Some professors fear students might skip class if coursecasts are readily available (Young, 2008). To minimize attendance problems, some professors who do coursecasting have developed counter-strategies, such as giving regular in-class assessments, recording only a portion of each lecture, waiting a week or longer before uploading the recordings, or even eliminating coursecasting altogether if attendance drops significantly.

My own experience at UConn with both General Psychology and Animal Behavior podcasts is that students not only view these podcasts as genuine enhancements over and above the classroom experience, but also that the podcasts help the students understand the material

and become further engaged with course content. Nevertheless, coursecasting appears to dominate higher education podcasts (certainly those available via iTunes U).

Coursecasting can also be helpful on religious holidays when observant students will not be in class, and when weather conditions are threatening enough to deter some (but not all) commuting students, yet not bad enough to result in cancelled classes. The result is that students who have legitimate reasons for being absent from a particular lecture will still have the opportunity to access the course content.

A major issue for coursecasting is the inclusion of copyrighted material in these distributed lectures. Materials that may have been used legally in a classroom through the “fair use” provision of the Copyright Law of the United States should not be distributed in downloadable podcasts. Instructors who record and then distribute lectures are legally required to edit out such materials prior to distribution. Unfortunately, some of the automated recording systems installed in lecture halls make this difficult because the files are immediately uploaded to a server. In situations where coursecasts are editable, instructors need to acquire expertise in editing as well as a willingness to devote the time for such post-production following each lecture. Thus, routine coursecasts not only have questionable value as an educational enhancement but also potentially have legal consequences.

Coursecasts might provide an enhancement if approached differently. For example, instead of recording in-class lectures, the actual course content could be delivered by recordings of the professor for students to access online on a regular basis. Class time could then be used for discussion, clarification, demonstrations, examples and applications that weren’t included in the recorded podcasts, and student presentations. Perhaps a better way to conceptualize the application of such media for classroom use is to use the term “coursecast” in reference to a recording of a live classroom lecture, and “screencast” as a recording intended to substitute for a live lecture, thereby providing a basis for what has come to be known as a “hybrid” or “flipped” course.

### **Screencasts**

In a sense, a screencast can be viewed as an evolutionary advance relative to podcasts and coursecasts. Screencasts are dynamic in the sense that they are produced by recording all activity on one’s computer screen with added narration, edited with sometimes powerful post-production tools, and then exported as videos to be uploaded to the Internet for viewing. Software programs such as ScreenFlow (<http://telestream.net>) and Camtasia Studio (<http://techsmith.com>) offer powerful, but user-friendly interfaces for producing screencasts.

Screencasts can range from simple tutorials (e.g., instructions to be followed in a laboratory course), elaborations of points made in class, or even entire lectures and entire courses, as would be the case with a hybrid or flipped course.

In 2009, I used ScreenFlow to convert my large Animal Behavior lecture course to a hybrid course in which most of the content was delivered online via streaming video. Students were able to access the videos anytime on a password-protected server, and we met once weekly for discussion, questions, and additional course content not covered in the screencasts. The post-production editing tools enabled me to focus students’ attention on particular screen elements,

which is not easily done in a live lecture. Additionally, students were able to pause the videos, replay parts if they so desired, and take thorough, high-quality notes.

The time that it took (well over 400 hours) to produce the screencasts paid off in terms of student engagement in course material and learning. Almost half of the class of 140 students earned course grades of “A,” and not a single student failed the course the first time it was offered in Fall 2009. It’s been offered in this format every Fall since then with similar results.

What is clear is that technology (podcasts, coursecasts, screencasts, and other innovations), when used properly, can serve as pedagogical enhancements. However, technology should not be used just for the sake of using it, or simply because it happens to be available. Pedagogy must always precede technology.

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## Chapter 3

# Teaching in the Core Curriculum: Re-thinking our Approach to Introductory Psychology Courses

**Amie R. McKibban**

*University of Southern Indiana*

“ I am losing hope, Amie. Our students are being raised in a political system that is guided by economic theory. How can I teach students the value of higher education when they come to college asking ‘what job is this going to get me and how much money am I going to make?’” This was the start of a very long conversation I recently had with a former colleague. Indeed, his concerns are well founded, as higher education has been in the center of a heated debate for the last several years. Political critics and academic administrators alike have given much attention to the idea that we need more college graduates with specialized skill sets as a way to increase graduates’ employability. Harvard English professor James Engell (n.d.) laments, “an emphasis on majors believed to land a good job... appeal to ‘utility,’ to a supposedly clear-sighted appraisal of what the ‘real’ world demands of college graduates” (para. 2). As Engell further discusses, this central parable in higher education is in conflict with the reality that few entry level jobs require four years of specialized knowledge.

In a recent survey, the American Management Association (2012) found that over half of executives felt their employees scored average, at best, in four areas: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Most of the executives surveyed agreed, that they need “highly skilled employees to keep up with the fast pace of change” in business (para. 3). Yes, college graduates do need a specialized skill set, but one that focuses on critical thinking and creativity, rather than content-specific knowledge. As Engell (n.d.) points out, even professional schools (e.g., law and medicine) want students who have been exposed to a broad range of knowledge; students who can critically think and “look at life as a whole” (para. 3). In other words, we need to begin reemphasizing the value of a liberal arts education and the utility of the core curriculum. As many of us in higher education know, the goal of a liberal arts education is not specialized knowledge or training. Rather, a liberal arts education aims to prepare students to function as productive citizens in a diverse and complex world (Task Force on General Education, 2007). Core curricula at many institutions embrace the same philosophy. This is often asserted in declarations similar to my own institution’s, stating that the core curriculum embraces non-specialized and non-vocational learning, with an emphasis on critical thinking (the ability to analyze and evaluate information) and information processing (the ability to locate, gather, and process information).

With this in mind, I argue that what the “real” world actually demands of our students is at the very heart of the core curriculum: a curriculum that prepares students for citizenry and productivity, regardless of major. Further, I propose that teaching Introductory Psychology from a core curriculum perspective is a step toward addressing the disconnect Engell so eloquently discusses. Although numerous instructors may currently approach the teaching of Introductory Psychology as a core curriculum class, there are just as many who take a content-based approach. That is, structuring the class with the goal of preparing students to succeed in

subsequent psychology courses should they declare a major in psychology. For those of you who fall into this latter category, I encourage you to reconsider the guiding philosophy of the course. In the remainder of this essay, I offer steps (points of consideration) in restructuring the course, and reflect on my own personal experience teaching the class for 13 years, providing insights and examples to help guide you through these considerations. I strongly believe in academic freedom, and therefore these should be taken as general guidelines. You know your students, community, and state requirements best, hence; the content of your actual class should be tailored accordingly.

### **Step 1: Develop a course that reaches the majority**

Although many of us would prefer to receive “graduate-school-bound” students in our classrooms, the reality of teaching is that many students who cross our paths will discontinue their formal educational pursuits after obtaining a bachelor’s degree. Others discontinue before completion of their degree. The majority of students will need to be prepared, as well as possible, for the realities of the working world. A core curriculum approach best meets this reality; I structure my Introductory Psychology course accordingly. Much of my course’s focus is on application of the material to the real world (i.e., making the connections between theory and example) rather than memorization of content. I achieve this largely by telling stories, giving personal anecdotes, discussing clips from popular television shows, and analyzing articles in local and national newspapers.

My approach is based on fulfilling two tenets of the core curriculum: critical thinking and information processing. Using content from the text to critically evaluate a news article, for example, reinforces the importance of a broad knowledge base for the students. It also models creativity, one of the four skills sets discussed by the American Management Association (2012). By making the course material relevant to their lives, students are better equipped (and more motivated) to actively engage with the content. As one student recently wrote in my evaluations, “Many of the personal anecdotes and stories that were used to help teach the concepts will be with me for a long time.” The point is this: what you do with the content is much more memorable and meaningful than the content itself. This notion brings me to the second step in re-thinking Introductory Psychology as a core curriculum class.

### **Step 2: Choose content for your course based on usability**

Often times we feel pressure to cover as much material as possible. This makes sense if you are preparing students for the AP test in psychology or if the only students required to take Introductory Psychology at your institution are psychology majors. For many of us, however, this course is part of a larger curriculum, and many students (especially freshman and sophomores) will filter through our classrooms. As such, I argue that it is not the quantity of information we cover that is important, but the quality. Cut content for the sake of experience. Although this may cause some of you to cringe, I offer this: there are many terms, definitions, and facts that we forget along the way (really, how many of you can remember everything from your intro to political science course?), however, we remember the process. That is, our students may not remember the difference between a conditioned and unconditioned stimulus, but if we make the content experiential they will remember the process of classical conditioning.

Given that many Introductory Psychology students will not become psychology majors, you should choose content by asking yourself “if this were the only course my students took, what would I want them to understand?” That is, what material (theories and concepts) will help students become more productive citizens? What do you feel is most important for them to understand and use in their everyday lives? In other words, what processes are important? For example, I always cover judgmental heuristics when discussing cognitive psychology, using current events in politics and recent findings in medicine. Indeed, understanding how humans make decisions is important in being able to make sound decisions and discover creative solutions. It is also an important process in becoming a knowledgeable consumer of information and services. What processes you feel are important to achieving the goals of the core curriculum are up to you. Choose them, and spend time on them in class. The students will remember these things. As a former student recently told me, “Every time I watch the news or read an article on Facebook, I can’t help but think of you and everything we learned in class. I find myself exclaiming ‘Darn it, McKibban!’ all of the time.”

### **Step 3: Seek continual feedback from your students**

Structuring your course in a way that promotes skill development, rather than content specific knowledge (application rather than memorization) requires continual feedback from your students. Waiting for the results of your teacher evaluations is not sufficient. I have found that having someone outside of my department come in for 20 minutes and run a focus group (while I am not there) results in the best feedback. With whatever approach works for you, ask your students, in an anonymous format, what they find effective about your teaching style, what content they have found most applicable and why, what is working for them and what is not. Tailor the questions to the individual class and discuss the results the next class period. This is something that can be done one to two times during the semester. Students will have suggestions, as well as good insights. The one “golden rule” of implementing this feedback is that you do make changes, when reasonable.

This idea of a continual feedback loop is not only mutually beneficial, but speaks to the goals of the core curriculum. It gives your students decision making power over their education and provides them with experience in collaborating with an expert in the field when making those decisions. If we are to prepare students for the demands of the world, effectively communicating with others is a skill they must develop, especially when those “others” are people in higher positions. Again, this process is important in developing a course that promotes critical thinking and assists in the development of communication, collaboration, and creativity. Not to mention, you will learn just as much from this process as your students.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The steps I have offered are meant to give you a framework in reconsidering the guiding philosophy of Introductory Psychology course development. Given the nature and breadth of the course, we have the unique opportunity to prepare our students for citizenry and productivity; for the challenge of seeing the world as a whole; and for a lifetime of critical thinking and reflection. I encourage you to ask, given your academic environment and situation, if your students would benefit from a focus on quality over quantity. I challenge all of us to find the best way possible to meet the needs of our introductory students, knowing that

many of them may not finish college, or will complete a degree outside of the field of psychology. I ask you to tell your students that “whether or not you stay in college and no matter what major you ultimately choose, I promise that you will use the information learned in this class,” and then live up to that promise. After all, psychology in and of itself embraces the philosophy of a liberal arts education and the goals of a core curriculum, and what better class to demonstrate this with than Introductory Psychology? What better way can we tell students “this is the value of higher education?” I think that those of us who teach this class can relate to Engell’s (n.d.) statement that “the aims [of a liberal arts focus] are at once personal and social, private and public, economic, ethical, and intellectual” (para. 9).

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# Chapter 4

## OMG RU Really Going to Send That?

### Email Communication with Students

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**E**lectronic communication plays an important role in traditional collegiate education and online learning. In 2001, the number of email messages outnumbered letters sent by the United States Postal Service (Levinson, 2010). In 2002, Bloch reported that the typed word began to establish itself as the primary means of interpersonal communication, mentioning a case in which a student broke-up with her boyfriend via email. In fact, email has become the most widely used instructional technology (see Wilson & Florell, 2012). Recognizing this, at least one college tells students that email is the “lifeline of [their] communication with the college.” (<http://www.gwinnetttech.edu/webmail/>, sec. 1). Interestingly, while we are most likely to initiate electronic correspondence to send course announcements or meeting requests, students tend to use their “lifeline” to make appointments, ask questions, and offer excuses (Duran, Kelly, & Keaten, 2005)

#### **Benefits**

Email can benefit faculty members and students in a variety of ways. Email is a relatively inexpensive way to communicate with many people quickly, it fosters collaboration, file sharing (Hassini, 2004) and group problem solving (Hassini, 2004; Wilson & Florell, 2012), and it provides an electronic record or “paper trail” for later reference (Wilson & Florell, 2012). Email can also increase the accessibility of the instructor (Hassini, 2004; Wilson & Florell, 2012). We can use email to provide feedback, which can foster academic development (Duran, Kelly, & Keaten, 2005), motivation (Duran, Kelly, & Keaten, 2005; Kim & Keller, 2008), and achievement (Kim & Keller, 2008). Some have noted that email can increase student writing (Hassini, 2004), although others have expressed concerns about the quality of students’ electronic correspondences (see Bloch, 2002). Email can increase communication with students who struggle with face-to-face communication, including foreign, shy, or disabled students (see Bloch, 2002; Duran, Kelly, & Keaten, 2005). Finally, email use can improve students’ perceptions of us, especially when our responses are helpful and prompt (Sheer & Fung, 2007), and include appropriate emotional content (Wilson & Florell, 2012).

#### **Concerns**

Like other instructional technologies, email is a tool, and misuse can result in unexpected consequences. Although the option to send a message to a large group of people quickly can be helpful, email does not come with “you probably shouldn’t send that” warnings, and sometimes people will send ill-conceived electronic messages to many recipients, as these examples of public Tweets (posts on Twitter) demonstrate:

“I can't believe my Grandmothers making me take out the garbage I'm rich f\*\*\* this I'm going home I don't need this s\*\*\*” - 50 cent (Note: I've added spaces and censored the message to make it more readable and appropriate for readers)

“With so many Africans in Greece, at least the mosquitoes of West Nile will eat homemade food.” - Voula Papachristou, Greek triple jumper who was removed from the Greek Olympic team for posting this sarcastic comment

Although many of us are fortunate enough to have students who don't send inappropriate mass mailings to classmates regularly, email does provide an avenue for upset students to vent before they've fully considered the consequences. Furthermore, while email increases the accessibility of the instructor, it also means that students have increased expectations about our availability and personal attention. Consequently, responding to email seems to have changed the nature of our work.

Some of us prefer to use email as little as possible because the loss of non-verbal, social, and contextual cues can increase misunderstandings (Hassani, 2004), but many of us seem to treat it as a job requirement (and sometimes it is). Nonetheless, it can be time consuming to respond appropriately to student messages (Hassani, 2004), and sometimes responding becomes “the third shift in an already overcrowded day” (Mason, 2010, para. 3). Sometimes, when it is clear that students did not take the time to read important announcements sent via email, we wonder if sending email is worth the time it takes us to compose the message.

To make matters worse, sometimes we wonder if the email students send are actually written by the student who is listed as the sender. In our department, my colleagues and I have received messages from student accounts that were actually written by those students' friends, roommates, and parents. Ironically, some of us might wish students' parents wrote messages for their children more often, as student messages can be too casual for many educators (see Bloch, 2002). It is not uncommon for electronic messages to lack grammar and punctuation, as this example demonstrates:

“can i come 2 ur office i need 2 meet w u b4 the test i have ?s thx”

### **Faculty Member Expectations**

Faculty members vary in their expectations of student email (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). To help students understand specific expectations, some of us include a statement about email communication in their syllabus. Here is an excerpt from a sample syllabus that focuses on instructor accessibility and other concerns:

Email policy: On weekdays, I check my mail once -- in the early morning. If you send me an e-mail after 6 a.m., do NOT expect an answer until the next day. I do NOT check my mail at all on weekends. So if you send me a message anytime after 6 a.m. on Friday, you will not get an answer until Monday morning. I do not open emails with attachments. I do not open emails without subject lines. I do not open emails written in languages I can't read – so be sure if you have your email set to a non-English format that your name and information come through in English.

([http://public.wsu.edu/~meija/Handbook/Sample\\_105\\_Syllabus.htm](http://public.wsu.edu/~meija/Handbook/Sample_105_Syllabus.htm), para. 2)

Here is an excerpt from another syllabus that focuses on tone and style:

...all email communication will follow the guidelines enumerated here. Email should be composed in formal, professional language, and with attention to the propriety accorded to the position of the writer, and the addressee...(<http://www.hist.umn.edu/hist3722/syllabus.html>, para. 9)

Some might worry that including these types of statements in their syllabus might cause students to view them as overly strict, but students may not be aware of how they come across in their email and appreciate knowing teacher expectations (Martin, 2011).

While a syllabus statement can help, challenging email messages seem to come with the job. While there are no recipes or guidelines we can use to construct the perfect email message, people have offered a number of helpful considerations. To help sort out these considerations, I have organized them below using based the popular green, yellow, red color coding scheme to reflect the potential gravity of the student's message or the educator's response.

### **Code Green Messages**

Fortunately, we sometimes get "Code Green" messages. These messages are complimentary or positive in tone and content (I wanted to thank you for..., I enjoyed your course, are you teaching others...), ask for appropriate information respectfully, or include appropriate requests. Generally, these messages are easy to respond to professionally, so there is little need to offer strategies for responding to these types of messages.

### **Code Yellow Messages**

Unfortunately, "Code Green" messages are often outnumbered by "Code Yellow" messages. These messages require us to proceed cautiously, as the message might require a considered response. Experience suggests that there are several types of "Code Yellow" messages: those that demonstrate that students misunderstand their own responsibilities, messages containing inappropriate personal information, and messages motivated by students' anxieties (see Wilson and Florell, 2012, for an excellent review).

Sometimes students misunderstand their own responsibilities, and deflect or request accommodations to compensate (Wilson and Florell, 2012). For example, my colleagues and I get messages from students like these:

Dr. \_\_, I didn't do well on your final exam. I am on the \_\_ team and need an A in your class to get into my major and retain my scholarship. Please help.

Dr. \_\_, I didn't realize the \_\_\_ was due yesterday. What can I do to make-up those points?

Dr. \_\_, I won't be prepared for class discussion and can't do the first reading quiz because I just ordered the book. I apologize for any inconvenience.

Dr. \_\_, I didn't make it to class today. Can you please send me the notes I missed?

Sometimes students will include personal details of their lives inappropriately to justify a request. Sometimes lonely students just write to be friendly, and sometimes students seeking

relationship advice confuse us with writers for the Dear Abby column. Consistent with examples provided by Wilson and Florell (2012), here are some example messages my colleagues and I received:

Dr. \_\_\_, How are you? I would like to make an appt. to meet with you. I don't have anything specific to discuss, I just thought I would stop in to say hi and chat. I have two dogs named....

Dr. \_\_\_, Help!...me and my friend hooked up once in the beginning of the semester and I liked her but didn't think she liked me back so I moved on, and.....but now...what should I do?

Sometimes "Code Yellow" messages are sent by conscientious and responsible students whose anxieties get the best of them. Consistent with examples provided by Wilson and Florell (2012), here are some example messages we received:

Dr. \_\_\_, I am in your 11:00 am class. I completed the extra credit writing assignment in class today, but I didn't receive credit in the online grade book yet. Please get back to me right away. I really need this credit. [message sent at 1:30 pm]

Dr. \_\_\_, I wonder if the study guide you gave us is really everything we need to know for the final. We didn't cover Chapter 11 in class, and it isn't on the syllabus, but should I study it anyway? I emailed you earlier today, but I didn't hear back yet.

Sometimes, students send "Code Yellow" messages requesting information that is outside of the responder's expertise. In these cases, it is appropriate to redirect the student to the appropriate resource, often an academic advisor or health services professional. However, many "Code Yellow" messages are class specific, requiring us to respond directly. In these cases, we should try to treat these moments as "teachable moments." We should model professionalism, maintain a professional tone and offer appropriate content (Wilson & Florell, 2012). Sometimes leading by example can help, and one never knows who will read the message, especially when technologies make it easy to share electronic correspondence with others easily.

As mentioned above, students appreciate it when we include emotional content in their responses (Sheer & Fung, 2007), but it is important to balance a congenial tone with a professional tone. One way to do that is to express empathy/sympathy when saying "no" (Wilson & Florell, 2012).

Example:

Thanks for letting me know. I appreciate your dilemma. I hope that you can stay on the team and keep your scholarship. I'd really like to accommodate your request, but I have to assign your grade on the basis of merit and abide by the grading policies in our course syllabus or I will.... violate departmental and college policies....create an unfair situation for other students....

Wilson & Florell (2012) have also recommended that we provide students with perspective and encourage responsible action.

Example:

Unfortunately, you can't make it up, but it is only worth...you can still do well in the course if you.....

Example:

Yes, you can do that. Please see the syllabus for details.

They also recommend ending our messages with a positive and sincere tone when possible, but also recognize that a persistent student will struggle to take "no" for an answer. In these cases, it is up to us to end the conversation directly, but not aggressively, ignoring additional email from the student about the same issue.

Example:

Thanks for following-up and providing more information. I hope you have a good weekend.

Example:

I appreciate your continued concerns, but as I said, there isn't anything else I can do without violating college/course policies. I consider this matter closed.

### **Code Red Messages**

While "Code Yellow" messages require us to slow down and respond cautiously, "Code Red" messages often require us to stop what we're doing to construct a planned response. "Code Red" messages are highly emotional, highly critical, or have an aggressive tone. Examples include pleas for help, student disclosures of abuse or suicidal inclinations, or hostile messages from irate students. While discussing strategies for responding to aggressive behavior, Tunnecliffe (2007) listed a number of potential causes for students' anger. He noted that some aggression stems from the lack of critical knowledge or inaccurate information, unrealistic expectations, or previous rewards for aggressive behaviors. Research on the development of the teenage brain also suggests that teenagers are more likely to become highly emotional than we are, and that emotion may cloud students' reasoning abilities (for an example, see Spinks, 2013). Regardless of the factors involved, many aggressive messages seem to be triggered by perceptions of unfairness or inequity.

Because of the nature of "Code Red" messages, there are a number of things to consider when responding. On many campuses, when faculty members are alerted to imminent threats of harm (including student self-harm) they are required to alert their chairs/department heads and campus or local police. Many campuses have counseling or intervention teams, other student resources, or partnerships with community programs to offer student resources. When appropriate, we should introduce these resources to victimized students and should consider facilitating student contact/appointment scheduling. If nothing else, we can encourage victimized students to go to the local hospital, where hospital personnel and case-workers can get involved.

On some campuses, faculty members are instructed NOT to take on the role of detective/police officer or ask the student specific questions about a traumatic experience. This can increase

feelings of victimization and make it less likely that the student will share critical details with law enforcement officials, student conduct authorities, police, or health professionals. Instead, we are advised to take the information the student has provided at face value, ask a few general questions (What happened? When? Where?) so that information can be passed on to authorities, reassure the student that they will do what they can to help, and then follow campus guidelines for helping.

Dealing with aggressive students can be challenging and emotional for us. My colleagues and I have found it helpful to walk away from the computer and let some time pass before we respond (usually 12-24 hrs). This gives us time to cool down so that we can respond more professionally, and it gives the student time to cool down, too. Occasionally, students will realize their message contained inappropriate content or had an inappropriate tone, and they will send a follow-up apology. While there isn't any research on successful strategies for responding to aggressive email, recommendations can be drawn from discussions about the best ways to communicate with angry students to promote de-escalation. It is important to avoid using a reprimanding tone (Tunnecliffe, 2007), which can promote defensiveness and increase perceptions of victimization. It is also important to recognize that anxiety can increase threat perceptions (Craske, Rauch, Ursano, Prenoveau, Pine, Zinbarg, 2009), and that anxious students are more likely to interpret ambiguous information or references to authority as more threatening than intended. A calm, jargon-free, tone might be more successful (Tunnecliffe, 2007; University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center, 2012). With this in mind, it is important to note that we should avoid using capitalized words or bold text for emphasis, as some student interpret these formatting cues to mean yelling rather than emphasis (Hassini, 2004). The University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center recommends acknowledging the student's emotion, and Larson (2008) recommends using content cues that facilitate an empathetic or sympathetic tone (e.g., I can see this is really important to you). We should use the present tense, focusing on the present situation rather than rehashing the past (Tunnecliffe, 2007) and explain what we can do (Larson, 2008) rather than explaining why we can't address the student's concerns, even if that is nothing more than an offer to meet and discuss.

Some of us might want to respond to criticisms from students directly. We all make mistakes, and sometimes students' criticisms are based on something legitimate. In these cases, it might be best to agree with what is accurate and share your plan for corrective action (Tunnecliffe, 2007). If criticism is vague, it is fine to ask for clarification (Larson, 2008). Sometimes the initial criticism, or the response to your request for clarification, can be lengthy. In these cases, it might be best to address concerns globally rather than respond to individual concerns (Tunnecliffe, 2007). If none of these strategies sound appealing, we can always deflect the criticisms by simply thanking students for sharing their views (Tunnecliffe, 2007).

### **Final Thoughts: Maintain Perspective**

Regardless of how you choose to respond to critical email messages, it is important to consider Alexander Pope's "to err is human; to forgive divine," and to cut ourselves some slack (Tunnecliffe, 2007). It is also important to recognize that, while we can make the most out of "teachable moments," we can't get through to everyone (Larson, 2008). Research has shown

that readers who are angered by email attribute the tone to the writer's personality (Levinson, 2010). Student politeness affects our feelings towards the student, our beliefs about the student's competence, and our motivations to help (Stephens, Houser, & Cowan, 2009; Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012). So, it is critically important to remember and apply the lessons we teach our students about the Fundamental Attribution Error and consider that situational, rather than dispositional, factors can lead the student to send inappropriate email.

Steve Johnson, a football player for the Buffalo Bills, blamed God for a dropped pass and posted the following to Twitter:

"I PRAISE YOU 24/7!!!!!! AND THIS HOW YOU DO ME!!!!!! YOU EXPECT ME TO LEARN FROM THIS??? HOW????!! ILL NEVER FORGET THIS!! EVER!!! THX "

So, the next time you read an annoying email message from a student, take a moment to appreciate that you are in good company.

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## Chapter 5

# Teaching with Affordable Technology to Increase Student Learning

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Last year at the APA Convention in Orlando, we participated in a symposium about the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) to increase student learning. Judith had little familiarity with OER, while Amber had been using these resources in her classes for the past two years, on the recommendation of her Provost who was enthusiastic about them. A few days later, the president of Judith's institution began his all-faculty meeting cautioning about the threat that OER known as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) posed to traditional institutions of higher education. As a current participant in an Introduction to Psychology class offered through Coursera, questions about the educational and learning values of these resources came to Judith's mind. Will OER increase students' learning? And if so, how? In this essay, we discuss the value of open educational resources to increase student learning opportunities, as well as their challenges and promises.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are "teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use or re-purposing by others" (Atkins, Brown, & Hammond, 2007, p 4). Inspired by the Open Source Software (OSS) and the Open Access (OA) movements in the mid 90's (Baraniuk, 2008; Wiley & Gurrell, 2009), OER are relatively new phenomena that aim to 1) provide free or at least affordable access to knowledge and digital educational and research resources; and 2) reduce the high cost of teaching materials. Philanthropically, it is hoped that OER will help to equalize worldwide access to knowledge, and provide everyone with the opportunity to share, re-use, and re-conceptualize knowledge (Atkins et al., 2007; Baraniuk, 2008). OER include, but are not limited to, learning resources such as full online courses, courseware (e.g., syllabi, lectures, quizzes, and homework assignments), learning objects, assessment tools, software (e.g., IHMC CmapTools program), learning management systems (e.g., Sakai), textbooks, encyclopedias (e.g., Wikipedia), simulations, and other resources or techniques used to support access to knowledge (Downes, 2007; Hylén, 2006). Some well-known open education projects are Connexions, which started in 1999; Wikipedia, launched in 2001; a series of OER projects sponsored by the Hewlett Foundation; MIT Open Courseware, which began in 2002; and more recently, platforms such as Coursera, Udacity, and edX (a joint venture between Harvard and MIT), which offer MOOCs.

There are many reasons why psychology instructors might decide to adopt OER in their traditional face-to-face or distance learning classes. First, OER allow us to provide students with affordable access to information and knowledge. For example, Gilewski provided students with the option to use an OER textbook in her general psychology community college classes

(Gilewski, 2012). They could either read the book online or print it for a small fee. She found, in contrast with previous semesters, that students spent less for their class materials, their grades improved, and there was a reduction in the number of course withdrawals. However, it is impossible to know if these results were caused by students' access to affordable reading material.

Second, OER allows instructors the opportunity to customize their course materials, providing students with different types of learning aids that better fit the course objectives and benefit different types of learners. For example, Audley-Piotrowski and Magun-Jackson (2012) used a custom-designed DVD with different types of learning resources to increase student preparation and involvement in a Developmental Psychology course. Their study revealed that different types of learning aids engaged different types of students. Non-traditional students and students who defined themselves as independent learners benefited the most from the ancillary the course CD offered than more traditional and dependent learners.

In addition, OER can be used to combine different tools to help students develop shared knowledge through communities of practice. Draper (2012) explored how knowledge-building activities, such as individually and collaboratively creating concept maps, helped her students develop knowledge convergence. She used Moodle, a free course management system, an asynchronous online communication system for student collaboration, and IHMC CMap tools, a concept mapping software package that can be downloaded for free at <http://cmap.ihmc.us/download/>. Integrating these learning resources with instructional activities increased student engagement and participation and fostered the development of complex knowledge structures both in online and blended classroom environments.

So far, we have presented the inclusion of OER in somewhat traditional course environments. MOOCs, however, are a different species of OER. Although the first course using the name MOOC was offered in 2008, the term became a buzzword at the beginning of 2012, with the creation of Coursera, an online platform that offers entire college courses for free. This company, started by two Stanford professors, now has contracts with well-known universities that offer free courses, although not yet for credit, through its online platform. Judith's experience taking an Introduction to Psychology class taught by University of Toronto professor Steve Joordens has been very positive so far, although not very challenging. The lectures are 15-minutes or less, and are geared to introduce a few basic psychology concepts and theories to a very diverse audience in terms of age, occupation, and geographical location. At the end of each lecture there are two multiple-choice items related to the lecture (not graded), links to free online videos (usually from YouTube), and additional readings. The online discussions are lively, and some participants have been promoted to the level of teaching assistants because of the feedback they often give to others. Other participants write lecture notes and share them with the class. Judith, as others, just watches the lectures. To obtain a certificate of completion a student must complete two multiple-choice exams with a grade of 70 or higher. These tests permit a review of the lecture and retest on the items, to allow the student to correct wrong responses (very like B. F. Skinner's Programmed Instruction technique). In addition, a short, peer-reviewed argument paper can lead to a "certification of completion with distinction."

From these examples we can see that OER offer instructors and students certain advantages. Students find them more affordable than commercial sources. Thus, if access to textbooks is an issue for our students, then OER become very appealing. OER also provide equal access to learning resources worldwide. For example, in the Coursera Introductory Psychology course, all participants have access to the videos and readings, no matter where they live or their levels of education. Many of the resources can be customized by instructors (e.g., editing the textbook, adding or simplifying information). They also give instructors the flexibility to combine different learning resources to better serve their students, to favor different pedagogical approaches (from memorization to knowledge construction), and to complement the textbook. They can be designed to follow a non-linear format. Instructors can link the course syllabus to the readings, videos, and Internet resources to help students gain a better understanding of the course content. All these factors sound very appealing.

For faculty interested in infusing more OER in their own courses, some resources may include, but are not limited to the Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (<http://oerconsortium.org>), Carnegie Mellon Open Learning Initiative (<http://oli.cmu.edu>), Saylor ([www.saylor.org](http://www.saylor.org)), and OpenStax College (<http://openstaxcollege.org>). Amber has been involved with the Kaleidoscope Project (<http://www.aacu.org/pkal/>), a cross-institutional collaboration for using the best existing OER for the past few years. They are always looking for new adopters in this grant-funded work.

However, there are also challenges in adopting OER. For example, increased access does not necessarily mean enhanced or increased learning or motivation. Research shows that less than 30% of psychology students read their textbooks before class and less than 70% read them before an exam (Clump, Bauer, & Bradley, 2004). Of the 60,000 individuals who registered for the Coursera-based Introduction to Psychology class that Judith is observing, 12,000 (20%) were still actively participating at the time we wrote this essay (class announcement, June 4, 2013). This was before the first assessment took place. We wonder how many participants will actually complete all the course assignments and finish the course.

Also, research on students' perceptions of textbooks' pedagogical aids (Marek, Griggs, & Christopher, 1999) shows that students tend to prefer aids that directly relate to test preparation (such as chapter glossaries, boldface definitions, chapter summaries and self-tests) rather than aids that might lead to a deeper understanding of the course material. Therefore, it was not surprising that students in Audley-Piotrowski's and Magun-Jackson's (2012) case study focused only on the readings and concepts and not on the other resources, since the test focused mainly on the readings.

Issues also arise from our lack of familiarity with and concerns over the quality of OER resources. Of course, this is not much different than when we try to select textbooks in our area. The main difference is that we can always get some feedback from colleagues about textbooks. Since OER are not so well known, we are less likely to get feedback so we have to figure things out on our own. Also, we must find the OER while the textbooks usually come to our offices via publishers' representatives.

A major challenge relates to the sustainability of OER in terms of funding (so far most OER funding has come from educational institutions' or foundations' grants), technical upkeep (e.g.,

What happens when a problem occurs? Who maintains the sites?), and content (updating the content, reliability of sources, and so on). Several models have been proposed, particularly for the sustainability of MOOCs, such as charging participants for certificates of completion, charging employers who might be given access to participants' grades, and of course, sponsors.

While we have different, affordable learning technologies available today, some of the problems we face as instructors are still the same. For example, Hammer (2012) discussed students' lack of metacognitive skills and learning strategies. Basically, many of our students do not know how to study or which learning strategies work best for them. We need to teach students these strategies directly, and help them become more conscious and purposeful in their learning. One way to do this could be by creating assignments that make them reflect on how they learn, regardless of the type of learning resources or environment where learning takes place.

Students also need to be active in learning. To encourage more active learning in her Introduction to Psychology classes, Amber has been involved with the Carnegie Mellon Open Learning Initiative, which provides a more interactive approach to learning the material. Students read material online, watch embedded videos, engage in "Learn-By-Doing" and "Did-I-Get-This?" activities that provide immediate, targeted feedback, before they go on to take graded Checkpoints after each module. She has seen a dramatic increase in her students' success and interaction with course material, which she'll present at a symposium at the APA's 2013 Convention in Hawaii.

In conclusion, OER provides affordable access to learning resources. Integrating OER and active learning strategies might help to foster complex knowledge structures. Our role is to guide our students so they use and take advantage of these resources.

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## Chapter 6

# Using The iPad In Your Academic Workflow: Best iPad Productivity Tools For Your Classroom Practices

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This document is based on workshops I presented at 35th Annual National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology.

### Introduction to “Using The iPad In Your Academic Workflow”

In the academic world, our workflow involves a number of different elements which may include planning and scheduling, project management, reading and writing, information management (gathering, sorting, storing), collaboration (students, colleagues, department, college, and organizations), participation in meetings and committees, and interfacing with cyberspace (email and web). We could add many more things to the list, however it's best to emphasize that workflow for the iPad looks like old S→P→O Psychology. The workflow starts with the INPUT (stimulus) into the iPad from either your computer (via iTunes sync), from the cloud (via DropBox or WiFi), or from your thoughts and ideas. The workflow ends with the OUTPUT back to your computer, to the cloud, to a projector, or perhaps to a printer. OUTPUT can take many forms: written and marked-up documents, media (audio/video/artistic/photos), presentation materials, podcasts, collaborative documents, and so on. What goes on in the middle is the PROCESSING which entails the use of many interconnected tools or apps on the iPad itself -- the majority of this essay focuses on the Process.

### iPad In The Classroom

Over the past two years or so, more and more faculty have been making use of the iPad as the “tool of choice” in their academic lives. As the iPad (and iOS) have matured, we've seen greater numbers adapting the device for their personal use. What about the iPad in the classroom? Beyond some simple usage, most faculty have not tapped the full potential of the iPad—still relying on laptops, smart carts, and the classroom smart podium (nice if your classroom has one). My favorite classroom is currently outfitted with 1976-era technology: a 27” wall-mounted monitor with attached VHS/DVD player (that works most of the time). Schleppling the smart cart from A/V services around the campus is a Herculean chore not for the faint of heart; getting all of the parts working and set up for class...well...resistance is futile!

So I made an executive decision. Though on a shoe string budget, I decided that I would not upgrade my old laptop but invest in the new tablet technology instead, and adapt it to both my classroom needs and my academic workflow. Mind you, I have a decent up-to-date desktop computer that provides a way around some of the content creation issues that come up regarding the use of tablet computing.

This section is aimed at the professional user who wants to make the most out of using the iPad in the classroom. It does not cover classes in colleges that give everyone an iPad (we should only be so lucky), but rather how to make use of the iPad as your go-to-technology.

## Issues

The four biggest issues usually raised when we discuss using the iPad are: Content Creation vs. Consumption, Laptop vs. iPad, Device Integration, and College vs. High School teaching. When the original iPad was first released, it really functioned as a superb consumption device—great for personal use but lacking in many ways to create content. Times have changed! You can create to your heart's content albeit with some limitations in a few areas; however, there isn't much that you can't do. Probably (for academics) the most serious limitations are in creating major presentations (PowerPoint and Keynote), developing large media projects, and other areas such as business applications (large excel spreadsheets and such). You can do these things, but not with the same ease as on a laptop or desktop computer.

Of course this brings us to the next issue of Laptop vs. iPad. The iPad excels as a portable device whether at college, in the classroom, at home, or for travel. In a classroom, the iPad can be connected to any monitor or projector with ease, and further it can be used as a whiteboard making for an interactive class. The laptop may be preferential in terms of data management, content creation of presentations and media, or for research and data. If you need to make a decision, think in terms of what your needs are rather than in terms of what device to buy. I have a wonderful desktop machine so I have given up my old laptop in favor of my iPad; when I retire, I will give up the desktop machine. If you do not have access to a good working computer, you might think about updating.

Once these first two issues get sorted out, you can then consider the third, Device Integration. NOT A PROBLEM. When the iPad first appeared, about the only way to get information in and out was through iTunes sync. Now, with the proliferation of cloud computing, the issue is no longer a difficulty. I prefer to connect my iPad to my computer every few days and use the sync apps-file sharing method in iTunes. However, many people prefer to use DropBox as their primary means of transferring information between their iPad and their Mac or PC. For specific types of documents, both Google and Microsoft have also introduced their own versions of the cloud for document syncing and collaboration.

Finally, high school Psychology teachers may have other responsibilities that college instructors don't have to deal with, such as interfacing with an administrative network, putting together course lessons for five day/week classes, and making lesson plans available to supervisors. There are now a number of apps to facilitate these functions.

## Accessories

Some accessories are a must to make full use of the iPad. Choose among the categories based upon personal look, feel, and expense. Try before you buy is always best, so speak to other colleagues and friends to determine what works best for you. If you live near an Apple store or BestBuy then go play. If you cannot, then four reliable online sources for accessories are Amazon.com, Meritline.com, Buy.com, and Handhelditems.com. Must have accessories include:

- Bluetooth Keyboard (stand-alone or in a folio case, approximately \$50)
- Folio style case or iPad cover (approximately \$35)
- Stylus (approximately \$20) and Screen Cleaner (approximately \$10)

- Auxiliary speakers & headphone (range in price from \$5 to \$200)
- Extra charger for office or auto (approximately \$20)

## Resources

There are a few excellent websites that will be helpful for both workflow and classroom teaching with the iPad.

MIT Library Guide: a fabulous compilation of app suggestions  
<http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=174869&sid=1481857>

Perhaps the best resource for high school Psychology instructors is “iPad As”:  
<http://edtechteacher.org/index.php/teaching-technology/mobile-technology-apps/ipad-as>



Secrets For iPad  
 a useful tips app  
 (\$1 in Apple’s App store)



iPad User Guide  
 (free from Apple’s iBooks store)

## Fair Use Guidelines & Copyright Issues

We need to exercise great caution in what we download, copy, and/or display. Distribution of copyrighted materials is a serious issue but simply displaying the material may not be. There are strict copyright guidelines regarding such matters. Understanding the fair use guidelines and the exceptions is very important. My experience has been that an email asking permission is easily obtained and avoids many hassles. For an overall view, the [Center For Social Media](http://centerforsocialmedia.org/fair-use/related-materials/codes/code-best-practices-fair-use-online-video) has provided a “best practices” paper dealing with copyright and provides a FAQs review (<http://centerforsocialmedia.org/fair-use/related-materials/codes/code-best-practices-fair-use-online-video>).

## What Do You Want To Do?

Probably the biggest question is “What do you actually want to do with your iPad?” This needs to be well thought out because it will entail investments of time, training, and some cash (for apps and accessories). I have arbitrarily divided the use of the iPad in both the workflow and the classroom into a number areas. These overlap and are by no means exhaustive. I’ve also listed apps that are highly rated in each category; some are free and others not. Check them out at the iTunes Store online or the App Store app on the iPad. Download the freebies and play. For those that cost, read the reviews and click the “most critical” in the reviews link before buying.

## The Workflow and Classroom Categories & Specific Apps

*Beginning and Ending the Workflow: Input and Output*

Getting your documents into the iPad is a fairly straightforward procedure called *syncing*.

The two most popular and efficient ways are through iTunes sync and DropBox. Simply drag a file to DropBox on your computer (PC/Mac), and it will show up on your iPad (assuming that both are in the same wifi network). Once you have the document on the iPad, use the “open in” command to move the file to the appropriate app. Reversing this process moves the document back to your computer.

iTunes sync occurs when you attach your iPad to the computer. There is a window in iTunes that contains all of the apps that share your documents. Simply add your document into this window, and it will sync to your iPad. The reverse process updates the document which can then be saved.

The advantage of DropBox is that you don’t have to attach the iPad to the computer; further, you can set up folders to share with other people over any network. iTunes sync’s advantage is better organization and control of your documents. I prefer iTunes sync.

Output from the iPad is pretty much the reverse of the processes listed. In addition, we can add email and printing as output methods. While I list presentation and communication apps later, printing is a special case, because it can take several steps to print. Some apps are AIRPRINT enabled meaning that they will, without any extra steps, print to an AIRPRINT ENABLED PRINTER. All of the major manufactures make them so if you are purchasing a new printer, look this up in the specs. For those of us who do not need a new printer, several apps are available in the iTunes store that will enable you to use a printer in the same wifi network. Choose apps that have two versions: a lite (free and trial) as well as a paid version. Download the lite and give it a try. If it works, then purchase the full paid version. Loading the app onto the iPad, and the computer version on to your Mac or PC will enable you to print wirelessly over your network. There are several choices: I have used PrintCentral from Eurosmartz (\$10) since the iPad came out (it was one of the first apps) and it works just fine for me.

### *Project and Task Management*

This category includes apps useful for project and event planning. The particularly popular apps are those that use the built-in Calendar and Reminders; those of you who use Google’s apps may want to integrate the Google Calendar into your iPad use. Additionally for those who really like to have more control, there are numbers of To-Do apps (e.g., Wunderlist, which is free, and ToDo, which costs \$5). If you want to do graphic layouts of projects, Popplet and Corkulous are quite good. For special presentations and projects, Exhibit A (\$10) is worth investigating. (Costs of the apps below are listed with the app; free apps are denoted by “F”)

## Project and Task Management Apps



Calendar  
(Free)



Corkulous  
(F + \$5)



Wunderlist  
(F)



ToDo  
(\$5)



Popplet Lite  
(F)



Exhibit A  
(\$10)

## Writing, Collaboration and Communication Tools Apps

These apps include writing and note taking apps, grading papers, email, Skype, Google docs, Dropbox, Podcast and Screencast production, internet.

### Apps to Substitute for MS Office and Note Taking



CloudOn  
(F)



Notability (\$1)



Penultimate  
(\$1)



SoundNote  
(\$5)



DocsToGo  
(\$10)



Pages  
(\$10)



Smart Office  
(\$5)



Google Docs  
(F)

### Good Utilitarian Browsers



Chrome  
(F)



Life Browser  
(\$1)



Safari  
(F)

## Browsers That Play Flash



Photon  
(\$5)



Puffin  
(F)



SkyFire  
(\$3)

## Utility Apps for Recording, Communications, Bar Code Reading



Dictate  
(F)



FaceTime  
(F)



Skype  
(F)



Display Recorder  
(\$10)



i-nigma  
(F)  
(QR codes)



Twitter  
(F)

## Utilities for Printing



PrintCentral  
(\$10)

AirPrint  
Enabled  
Printers

## Utilities for Displaying



Reflector  
(\$15)



Splashtop  
(\$2)

## Finding WiFi



Wi-Fi Finder  
(F)

## Information Management

These apps include textbooks, readers, database for information materials, lecture note replacement, and pdf readers/annotators.

Apps for information storage -- A personal file cabinet



DropBox  
(F)



EverNote  
(basic F, premium  
\$5/month)



GoodReader  
(\$5)



Exhibit A(\$10)



Google Drive (F)

*WebPage Storage Apps (Read webpages offline without an internet connection)*



Instapaper  
(\$4)



JotNot  
(\$2)



Offline Pages  
(\$5)



Pocket  
(F)



Safari  
(F)

## Research and Reading and Reference



Wolfram  
Alpha  
(\$5)



Mendeley  
Lite  
(F)



APA Journals  
(F; plus  
Subscriptions)



CourseSmart  
(F; +Books  
\$\$\$)



Inkling  
(F; +Books  
\$\$\$)

## PDF annotation, Pdf readers, Book Readers



iAnnotate  
(\$10)



iBooks  
(F)



Kindle  
(F)



neu.  
Annotate+  
(\$2)



Nook  
(F)

## Presentations

Apps to use for Presentations, Whiteboard, Digital Jukebox, Survey and Polls (without clickers). For a digital jukebox use GoodReader, Keynote, or any app that will play PowerPoint Slides.



Good  
Reader  
(\$5)



Keynote  
(F\$10)



Lecture  
Tools  
(F)



Poll  
Every-  
where (F+)



SlideShark  
SlideShark  
(F)

## Classroom Management

This category includes apps that are used for organizing the class such as calendars, grade books and attendance (roll book). If working with these types of apps feels cumbersome, then setting up a spreadsheet grade book on your computer and transferring it to the iPad may be a good choice. (I personally use the spreadsheet methods but some faculty like an all-in-one app.)



Google  
Calendar  
(F)



Numbers  
(\$10)



Reminders  
(F)



ToDo  
(\$5)



Wunderlist  
(F)

The following are specific apps to organize classrooms, attendance, and gradebooks.



Class  
Organizer  
Complete  
(\$5; for  
students)



GradeBook  
Pro  
(\$10)



InClass  
(F; for  
students)



TeacherKit  
(F)



Teacher's  
Aide (F)

## Demonstration Apps

This category includes specific psychology-related demonstration apps. These vary from those that can be used as “labs,” class A/V displays, digital jukeboxes (brain and body), and informational for both the professor and students. The list is by no means exhaustive.

### General Psychology Information Apps



Psych  
Drugs  
(F)



Psych  
Explorer  
(F)



Psych  
Guide  
(F)



Psych  
Terms  
(F)



PsycTest  
Hero  
(\$4)



Psych-  
ology  
Latest  
(F)

### Lab Demos



Cardiograph  
(\$2)



PAR CRR  
(\$4)



Puffin  
(APA OPL)  
(F)



Stroop  
Effect  
(F)

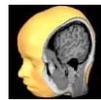


Touch  
Reflex  
(F)

### Anatomy & Physiology



3D Brain  
(F)



Brain  
Tutor  
(F)



Cardio-  
graph  
(\$2)



Eyes  
and Ears  
(\$1)



Grays  
Anatomy  
(\$1)



iMuscle  
(\$2)

### Sensation & Perception



3D  
illusions  
(F)



Eye  
Illusions  
(\$2)



Eye  
Tricks  
(\$1)



iTunes U  
(F)



Podcasts  
(F)



SoundBox  
(\$1)

### Audio/Visual Informational Resources

### DIY Presentations



Edu-  
creations  
(F)



Explain  
Everything  
(\$3)



Apple Video  
(F)



NetFlux  
(\$8/month  
streaming)



YouTube(F)

### Video Presentations

### Social Media



FaceBook (F)



Twitter(F)

You can find a digital version of this document with LIVE internet links (where applicable) on my college [webpage](http://faculty.ccp.edu/faculty/dsberg/) (<http://faculty.ccp.edu/faculty/dsberg/>) and click on "TUTORIALS & DEMOS."

## Chapter 7

### STP's SoTL Writing Workshop: A.K.A. How I Wrote a Paper in Two Days

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In this paper, I describe my experiences with the Society for the Teaching of Psychology's (STP) Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Writing Workshop. I first describe the obstacles preventing me from joining such efforts and then describe the process and structure of STP's Writing Workshop. As a result of my participation, I not only wrote a manuscript from (practically) start to finish in two days, but I also finished three other SoTL papers and developed and implemented a SoTL Writing Retreat on my own campus.

It is very difficult to say “no” to Regan Gurung. He is charming and charismatic, and as the former President of STP, he is kind of a psychology celebrity. So in May, 2012, when Regan invited me to apply to the STP's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Writing Workshop ([www.teachpsych.org/conferences/writing/index.php#.UcpdcZzNnUk](http://www.teachpsych.org/conferences/writing/index.php#.UcpdcZzNnUk)), try as I might, I could not say “no.”

“But it's hard for me to travel,” I said. “I have two young children, five and three.”

“Perfect! Mine are six and four,” Regan responded.

“I actually have a lot of projects going on, so I am really doing well on my SoTL writing,” I countered.

Regan smiled, “Are they finished? You owe it to teachers and students everywhere to get them out.”

“Teachers and students everywhere?” I pondered, “That's a lot of people depending on me... .”

“Ok, I'm in” I replied.

Thus began my journey with STP's SoTL Writing Workshop.

#### **The Obstacles**

As I look back on that day, I can clearly identify the obstacles that were keeping me from engaging in writing workshops generally and this one specifically:

I thought I had SoTL writing figured out. I had a few SoTL research papers published and had written two invited book chapters. Although I did not consider myself an expert in SoTL, I was certainly one of the SoTL leaders at my university. I knew I could do the work, so I really did not know what the SoTL Writing Workshop could do for me.

I did not think I had the time for a workshop. I was already time pressed—hence the many unfinished projects—so how would I find the time to travel and participate in a workshop?

I thought that unfinished projects were a normal part of academic life. My colleague (who has been in his position for 9 years) still has an unfinished project from graduate school. I have many unfinished projects, and as the years go by, that list is growing, especially for SoTL projects. I accepted this as a normal part of my academic journey.

I am actually a good, prolific writer. I don't struggle with writing. I spend much of my academic work time writing both disciplinary and pedagogical papers, and I am successful in getting my work published. According to the 2010-11 UCLA Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey, only about 20% of faculty at all baccalaureate institutions had five or more papers accepted or published in the last two years (Hurtado, Eagan, Pryor, Whang, & Tran, 2012), and I am pleased to say that I am in that 20%.

### **Engaging**

Despite my many internal protests, I engaged. Two weeks later, I was describing via email my various unfinished SoTL projects to my three fellow group members and reading *Optimizing Teaching and Learning: Practicing Pedagogical Research* (Gurung & Schwartz, 2009), which Regan sent to workshop participants. I was also learning more about the workshop through email and had received a participant timeline with "soft deadlines to make the workshop most effective":

- May: Introductions and basic idea sharing.
- June-August: Preliminary consultations.
- August 30th: Project proposal/status—Write a 1-2 page proposal for the topics you would like to research. If there is data collected, then list key hypotheses driving the study and draft a method section.
- September 15th: Complete a preliminary literature search for articles relating to topic of interest or study conducted (outline Intro section).
- Oct 1st: Final report on activity/project status due to Mentors.

(R. Gurung, personal communication, May 29, 2012)

Through this email correspondence, I also learned two important things: (1) that the mentors would provide follow-up consultations and draft reading (or other types of assistance) post-workshop, and (2) that the goal of the workshop was to have a SoTL publication submitted by the end of the 2012-13 academic year. As I hoped to finish at least one of my papers by that deadline, I thought this was a realistic goal for me. However, one of the hurdles I faced during my preliminary consultations with Regan was trying to decide which of my many projects to bring to the workshop.

### **Getting Organized**

At the time of our initial correspondence, I had SEVEN unfinished SoTL projects. I was already in the writing phase of an online lecture paper and decided to finish that one outside of the SoTL writing workshop; the workshop only accelerated my timeline. Thereafter, I turned my focus to three others: an iPad project, an online decision tree for psychology majors project, and a lecture capture project. In preparation for the August 30 deadline, I was overzealous and finished and submitted the decision tree paper, which left me with five papers to complete and

nothing firm to bring to the writing workshop. At this point I had to reassess and emailed Regan in desperation—“what project should I now bring to the SoTL writing workshop?”

Regan replied, “Given that you are progressing well, how about you aim to send a plan of what YOU hope to have done on EACH of the 3-4 topics. A few sentences on each so you have a clear picture of goals.” (R. Gurung, personal communication, August 29, 2012).

At this point, I finally committed to paper the goals I had for my various SoTL writing projects and constructed a table that would guide me through the rest of the process. In this table, I listed my five unfinished projects and the goals I had for them for the October workshop (summarized here):

- iPad cohort & lecture capture projects: Data analyzed; results and methods sections written, literature review mostly done
- Research assistantship, blogs as learning tools, and research review and presentation projects: Data cleaned; sources gathered

Creating this table gave me clarity. This was the first time in my academic career that I had actually listed all of my ongoing projects and created goals for each. Until this point, the projects were all quite nebulous—I did not even know how many unfinished SoTL projects I had. After I created the table, I had a visual reminder of my goals, and this was a breakthrough. As I thought about my goals, I knew that if I could arrive at the writing workshop with at least cleaned data sets and relevant sources gathered, I would be able to make the most of the personalized statistical consultations and also be able to get advice on publication. Minimally, this is what I hoped to accomplish, and in the end, this is what I had accomplished when I boarded the plane for Atlanta in October, 2012.

### **Attending the Conference**

Early in my career, I heard a rumor about two professors who would get together and complete manuscripts (from start to finish) in a weekend. I remember the questions that rushed through my head at the time—“How did they do it? What did they do to prepare for this writing extravaganza? Did they each work independently, or did they work collaboratively?” Because the source of this rumor had so few answers, I dismissed it as urban legend. However, now I know that this feat can be accomplished.

When I arrived in Atlanta for the SoTL writing conference, I had 733 words (mostly methods), a cleaned data set, and sources gathered for a manuscript on the effects of using lecture capture in an introductory psychology course. I focused on this paper because after cleaning the data sets of three other projects (research assistantship, blogs, and research review), I decided I needed to collect more data. Meanwhile, although I had enough data for the iPad project, it was not specific enough to psychology to make use of the mentorship I was about to receive. Thus, my lecture capture project became my official SoTL workshop baby.

The SoTL writing conference runs concurrently with STP’s Best Practices Conference, so we were able to attend the keynote addresses for the Best Practices Conference; however, the rest of the time we were to devote ourselves to our SoTL projects. The structure of the conference was:

- Day 1: Evening arrival, dinner, presentation on doing SoTL research by Regan Gurung, large-group introductions with explanations of our SoTL projects.
- Day 2: Writing, individual consultations with mentor, individual consultations with statistician and ToP editor.
- Day 3: Writing, presentation by Drew Christopher (Editor, *Teaching of Psychology*) on getting published, departure in the afternoon.

I spent most of my time writing, in the hotel lobby, side by side with other workshop participants, pausing at times to ask them their feedback on something that I had written but mostly just in my own private writing abyss. I had a few consultations with Regan, where he pointed me to relevant sources and asked me to include additional information. I talked through my statistical analyses with Georjeanna Wilson-Doenges, who helped me see that what I was actually proposing was a mediation model. And I also spoke at length with Drew Christopher, who encouraged us all to be tenacious with our papers. When I boarded the plane to go home, I had 5,697 words and a paper that was nearly complete. A few days later, I sent it to Regan for feedback, and approximately one week later, I sent it out for review.

## Results

A few months later, my paper (Drouin, 2014) was accepted with minor revisions for publication in *Teaching of Psychology*. However, this was not the only positive outcome of my SoTL writing workshop experience. Two other papers I prepared as part of this process (lecture format study and iPad project) have now been accepted for publication, and I am currently revising another (online decision tree) in response to a revise and resubmit decision. This is the greatest number of SoTL papers I have even written in a one-year time frame and is equivalent to the number of SoTL articles I had accepted before I joined this workshop.

These accomplishments are overshadowed though by my biggest take-home of the conference. In May, 2013, just one year after my initial conversation with Regan, I coordinated my own SoTL Writing Retreat on my campus. We had 12 participants, working side-by-side with four experienced SoTL mentors, a statistical consultant, and librarians, who assisted with source gathering and finding publication venues. Sponsored by IPFW's Committee for the Advancement of Scholarly Teaching and Learning Excellence, this SoTL writing retreat was the first of its kind on our campus and was a great success. Although I did not follow the STP Writing Workshop model exactly (e.g., due to time constraints, we did not provide consultations in advance, and we also did not create a firm structure for follow-up consultations), we included key elements that were helpful in making the workshop a success for me. More specifically:

1. We had an application process. Participants were asked to describe the projects they were working on, where they were in the process, and what they hoped to accomplish during the retreat.
2. Participants were paired with mentors who had knowledge of the content area or data collection method. Based on the applications, we formed mini-groups composed of people who were working on similar projects or using similar data collection methods, and we matched mentors with writers on this basis.

3. The writing retreat lasted only two days. Longer writing workshops or writing lockdowns that have meetings over weeks or months, like those highlighted by Belcher (2009) or Jakobsen and Lee (2012), certainly have their strengths, but my university already had writing groups, and I had never engaged because I feared the long commitment. Workshops of a limited duration are perfect for commitment-phobes like me, and because this model had worked for me with STP's workshop, I wanted others to be able to experience this model.
4. It was a retreat, with large chunks of time devoted to writing. We had only two short workshops on IRB proposals and publication venues; the rest of the time was devoted to manuscript writing or other types of SoTL writing activities (e.g., writing an IRB proposal, writing out a plan for the research).

Feedback on the workshop was overwhelmingly positive, but I did have suggestions to do more preparatory work with participants before the retreat, which aligns well with STP's model. Overall, participants appreciated the time devoted exclusively to working on their projects and the synergy we created during those two days in the campus library. It was inspirational for me, and in a sense, I felt that I was paying it forward.

As I closed the writing workshop, I chose my words carefully: Echoes of a year before and foreshadowing for the essay you are now reading— "This is important work. You owe it to students and teachers everywhere to get it out."

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## Chapter 8

### That's What She Said: Educating Students about Plagiarism

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**D**ealing with plagiarism is one of the more unpleasant aspects of our job as instructors. There is the sinking feeling you get when you suspect plagiarism, the moment that your Google search returns the exact passage from your student's paper, the uncomfortable conversation with the student, the documentation to your department, and the potential hearing with the honor board. I would venture to say most of us have either dealt with these ourselves or at least supported another colleague through the process. These cases range from the cringe-worthy (e.g., copying directly from an instructor's own published article, turning in a paper written by another student in a past semester) to the more minor infringements (e.g., unintentionally omitting quotation marks around a direct quote).

At the teaching conferences I attended over the last few years, there seems to have been more emphasis on learning outcome assessment and reliance on the APA's learning outcomes for undergraduates with a psychology major (APA, 2007). One of those outcomes is for students to "demonstrate effective writing skills in various formats" (p. 18). There also never seems to be a lack of presentations on how to incorporate writing assignments into your courses. Increasing writing assignments in your courses might mean increasing the chance you will encounter plagiarism; however, we might be able to prevent some of these cases with a greater focus on educating our students about plagiarism. Moreover, educating our students about plagiarism helps us address other APA learning outcomes about ethical behavior.

#### **Why Do Students Plagiarize?**

To decrease plagiarism, a good place to start would be to try to understand WHY students plagiarize. At the last meeting of the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology, I led a Participant Idea Exchange (PIE) on educating students about plagiarism (Sheehan, 2013). These PIE sessions are roundtable discussions on a topic. My group generated the following list of potential reasons students plagiarize:

- difficulty comprehending a reading;
- rushing through an assignment;
- convenience;
- cultural misunderstanding;
- poor understanding of the definition of plagiarism;
- not knowing how to integrate/synthesize/paraphrase;
- plagiarism is all around us in society; and
- not confident in their ability to write.

You may be familiar with some of these, especially time constraints, difficulty with reading comprehension, and the inability to paraphrase. The idea of culture stood out to me from the PIE discussion. First, some cases of plagiarism could be due to cultural misunderstanding. Stowers and Hummel (2011) provide some examples of how students from an Eastern culture

may view the use of another's work. For instance, they assert some Asian students may see it as a sign of disrespect to paraphrase or change someone else's words.

A second example of culture is how plagiarism takes place all around us in society. We regularly use the functions of copy and paste on our computers in many different settings. People re-post others' writing on their Facebook pages, re-blog someone else's blog entry, forward YouTube videos to friends, etc. Usually these events can be accomplished through one or two clicks. While these aren't examples of academic writing, they do provide precedents that we have to overcome in our courses.

### **Educating Students About Plagiarism**

We had a discussion about plagiarism in my department, and our faculty reported a number of problems in pursuing cases of plagiarism, including some cases not being reported at all, faculty handling cases on their own, cases meeting our discipline's definition of plagiarism being overturned by the college, not knowing the university reporting procedures, etc. It was clear we needed consistency and clarity. We also decided we wanted to focus less on policing, and to favor educating our students to prevent future plagiarism. You could probably guess that this led to a subcommittee (and the idea for my PIE). Our subcommittee created a standard definition of plagiarism that went into all syllabi, a writing workshop on plagiarism, a quiz, a contract for students, a flow chart of how to report plagiarism, and class activities to teach the identification of proper paraphrasing and citations. These materials (Lamoreaux, Darnell, Sheehan, & Tusher, 2012) are publicly available on the Society for Teaching of Psychology website

<http://teachpsych.org/Resources/Documents/otrp/resources/plagiarism/Educating%20Students%20about%20Plagiarism.pdf>).

At my PIE, I asked other faculty how they educated their students about plagiarism. Below are the techniques they listed:

- a quiz on plagiarism;
- a quiz on student handbook;
- list policies in the syllabus on paraphrasing and/or a link to school policy;
- discussion on the first day of class;
- starting early in introductory classes or freshman year before students are allowed to register for classes; and
- using technology (e.g., Turnitin or SafeAssign).

One quiz recommended by multiple instructors is available through Indiana University, and can be found at <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>. At this site, students can complete a tutorial on plagiarism, see examples, take a quiz, and get a certificate of completion. My department uses this site as a part of our plagiarism training for students.

A lot of us put policies on plagiarism in the syllabus and reference it on the first day of class; however, this alone is not enough. First, we can't always rely on students to read it or to follow a link to the university policy. Second, we can't assume they will understand the policy. Gullifer and Tyson (2010) present data demonstrating students have a great deal of confusion over what constitutes plagiarism despite online access to a policy. Students in their study also

reported wanting education on plagiarism. These findings are also corroborated by data from Holt (2012).

Holt provided basic information about plagiarism to a control group of students and training in paraphrasing to an intervention group. The control group received a definition of plagiarism in the syllabus, a link to the university policy, one example of proper paraphrasing, and a 10-minute demonstration of improper phrasing in class. The intervention group received training in paraphrasing and proper citations, along with assignments in class. As you might expect, the group with additional training was able to identify plagiarism more accurately than those without training. This study identified reasons for unintentional plagiarism as well. For example, students thought that quotations were not needed or materials didn't have to be paraphrased if a citation was provided.

Something as simple as a weekly paraphrasing activity can help. For 6 weeks of the semester, Barry (2006) gave students a paragraph from a famous developmental theorist. Students had to paraphrase the passage and provide a proper citation. After completing the activity, students' definitions of plagiarism were more complex than those offered at the onset of the study. Not only did they define plagiarism as "taking someone else's idea", they added "not giving credit" to their definition. This isn't necessarily evidence that this activity would reduce the number plagiarism cases, but it is evidence of students gaining a better understanding of plagiarism.

You could also incorporate plagiarism as a theme in your course. Estow, Lawrence, and Adams (2011) designed a research methods class where the assignments and projects in the class related to the topic of plagiarism. For example, their students designed a survey about plagiarism, collected data, and wrote a research report on their findings in one set of assignments. The researchers compared the progress of this class to one with the same assignments but a different theme. The students in the plagiarism-themed course were able to better identify plagiarism and generate more strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

Plagiarism is scary, for both professionals and students. The consequences can be steep. It has resulted in failed assignments, expulsion from school, revoked degrees, and even ended careers. Students often tell me how terrified they are of unintentional plagiarism; Gullifer and Tyson's participants also expressed fear of unintentional plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism. Implementing some of these fairly simple ideas in our courses will enhance our students understanding of plagiarism. A better-informed student should be less fearful, more confident in their ability to write, and less likely to plagiarize.

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## Chapter 9

# Creating a Sense of Instructor Presence in Online Courses

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Successful online learning requires a sense of instructor presence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). It is well-established that classroom climate and instructor availability are important determinants of student success (e.g., Ni & Aust, 2008; Vogt, 2008). Kennette, Redd, and Wright (2012) demonstrated that incorporating a strong online presence into an introductory psychology course had benefits for student performance, increasing scores by about 10% compared to sections of the course without a strong online presence. A sense of instructor presence and availability creates a comfortable environment for the learner, which leads to better learning outcomes (Caspi & Blau, 2008). In fact, both peer and instructor presence have been shown to be positively related to both student satisfaction with the instructor and perceived learning, with instructor presence being more important than peer presence (Swan & Shih, 2005). Although the present article will focus on creating a sense of instructor presence, we discuss applications to classmate presence where appropriate. We also assume that everyone teaching online is using some sort of learning management system (e.g., Blackboard, Desire2Learn, WebCT, etc.), though many of the resources we discuss do not require the use of such devices.

Some examples of how instructors can increase their presence in online classroom settings include sending students welcome letters, encouraging introductions, orientating students to the course, holding electronic office hours, posting frequent announcements, providing detailed digital feedback on assignments, using personalized videos, creating class collages, and using the discussion board to encourage student collaboration and interaction (Kennette, Redd, & Wright, 2012; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). We will discuss tools and resources, as well as suggestions for their effective application, as they pertain to common areas of concern in online teaching: how to handle introductions; displaying and presenting information to students; assessments and evaluations; and ongoing communication.

### **Introductions**

Introductions set the tone for the rest of the course, therefore we send out introductory emails just prior to classes starting, to introduce ourselves to all of our classes: online and face-to-face. It's important for students to feel as though the instructor cares about their success. It is especially important in an online class, since you are unlikely to ever see any student face-to-face. Nevertheless creating a sense of presence and class cohesion online should not only involve the professor introducing him/herself to students, but also students introducing themselves to each other. Much like they would in a traditional on-campus course, students should get to know their classmates as well as their instructor. As an added bonus, getting students to know each other in this way can also be beneficial for group work, serving as a kind of icebreaker.

In its most basic form, students can post written introductions with a picture on the class discussion board. To make the assignment more engaging, we combined students' photos into a class collage (labeled with students' names on their pictures) and posted that to the learning management system (LMS), making the collage available to each student enrolled in the course. Another creative idea is to have students create collages or PowerPoint presentations introducing themselves, or use screen capture software such as Jing ([www.techsmith.com/jing.html](http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html)) or Xtranormal ([www.xtranormal.com](http://www.xtranormal.com)) to create narrated videos. These videos can be posted in the LMS or posted on YouTube for students to access. Both Jing and Xtranormal are easy to use and free (although Xtranormal has limited free features).

### **Displaying and Presenting Information**

Handouts and PowerPoint slides can work in traditional face-to-face classrooms, but the online environment adds a level of complexity, given that the instructor isn't physically present to explain content, assignments, or activities (except in the less common case of a synchronous online delivery model). In light of this, instructors can use Jing (or a paid program such as Camtasia or Snag-It) to narrate instructions to assignments. This allows you to give students more information about an assignment and your expectations in a more personalized manner. Another popular screen capturing software is Screenr ([www.screenr.com](http://www.screenr.com)), which has a free version available for use. Instructors can narrate their lectures, or comment on images and videos, using this type of technology. As an alternative to PowerPoint, Prezi ([www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)) offers more interesting presentations that are graphic and often non-linear, which can be shared with students using a unique link, and it's free!

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

Academic honesty can be a problem in higher education. It's all the more tempting for students to cheat in an online environment because students may have less of a feeling of accountability. A number of measures can be taken to minimize dishonesty (or at least discourage it).

For assignments, most instructors use the Dropbox feature in their LMS. We highly recommend this (rather than email submissions), especially for large classes. We've found that Microsoft Word's Track Changes feature is a fantastic tool for providing students with detailed, virtual feedback on these assignments. It allows editing and commenting, and students can clearly see the changes you've made. Another option is to provide students with a recorded general feedback statement, which many LMSs allow you to do from the Dropbox. This would best work with a conceptual assignment or a draft of a proposal for a future paper assignment, where you're interested in the macro level (their ideas).

Of course, academic dishonesty is of concern in any class. Many schools subscribe to plagiarism detection software (e.g., [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com); or SafeAssign in Blackboard). If you're planning to check only suspicious sections in a handful of papers, [plagtracker.com](http://plagtracker.com) is a free website which requires no account (you copy and paste the suspicious text directly to the website; a monthly subscription fee allows you to upload entire files and download plagiarism reports rather than simply viewing them online). But keep in mind that assignments don't have to be written. You can vary the assessments you have students complete: videos, mock Facebook pages or twitter feeds (e.g., for a famous psychologist) or create an infographic for a topic (we recommend

[www.piktochart.com](http://www.piktochart.com), which has many free layouts). These non-traditional assignments can also reduce the concern of plagiarism.

For examinations, most LMS systems have built-in testing features. To reduce cheating, you may require students to use Respondus lockdown browser (which needs to be purchased if your school doesn't have a subscription). This "locks down" everything on the computer except for the test while students are writing it. However, it doesn't prevent students from having a second computer open or synchronizing their phones to Google answers. Instead, we suggest that faculty assume that students will have access to the Internet. In fact, allowing them to access their notes and text during the exam is not a bad practice: it evens the playing field for all students, as the temptation to be dishonest is higher when nobody is watching. Instead, we suggest that, if appropriate, you test at an application level, where students won't be able to Google the answer. This provides a more authentic testing experience, since in today's world, students are expected to apply their knowledge and typically do have access to resources.

### **Ongoing Communication**

Continued communication with your students is important in making your presence known. After all, you communicate with your students at least weekly in a face-to-face class, so why should an online course be different? The frequency of communication should not differ, though the modality may be more varied. For example, you may respond to students' discussion posts one week post a course announcement reminding them of an upcoming test the next week, and then email to various groups of students based on their test performance the following week ("good job", "good effort" and "need to work harder" –type emails). That's not to say that you shouldn't do more than one of these interactions in a given week, but you should also be careful not to inundate students' inboxes with too many messages. Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) and Poll Daddy (<http://www.polldaddy.com>) offer free survey-type tools, which we use to get to know our students at the beginning of the term, and to obtain ongoing feedback about how they're enjoying the class and what they find challenging. For more synchronous communication, you can use [polleverywhere.com](http://polleverywhere.com) (free for up to 40 respondents) to live-poll students.

Office hours are also understandably different in the online environment. In addition to using email for email office hours, Skype can make it easier (and faster!) for you to communicate with students and explain concepts to them. We recommend having scheduled virtual office hours, where students know you will be available and they can get an immediate (relatively) response from you, though you may choose to offer more asynchronous office hours as well.

You should also make it easy for students to communicate amongst themselves, to try to reduce the questions you receive via email. In all our online courses, we create a Social Café discussion board where students can go to plan study groups, etc., and another discussion board for Q&A, where students can ask questions and the instructor (or other students) can answer. These are typically related to course assignments and deadlines. We also pre-populate the Q&A discussion board with a few common questions (e.g., technical assistance) and refer students to the discussion board if they email with a question that has already been answered.

## Concluding Remarks

Outlined here are but a few of the resources we've come across in our years of teaching. Check with your campus' office for teaching and learning: in many cases, your school may have purchased access to some of these programs (such as Camtasia and Turnitin). New technologies will come to light which may be useful to your students. It's important to engage in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research surrounding these technologies, in order to ensure that they really are best practices and that students receive an actual benefit from your use of new technologies.

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# Chapter 10

## Human Development Portfolio

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Portfolios are a great way for students to demonstrate the knowledge they have gained throughout a semester. This essay presents ten portfolio assignments that I use in my undergraduate human development courses. A description of each assignment is presented along with the encouragement to modify each one to meet individual needs or course requirements. An end of the semester presentation of the portfolios provides students the opportunity to present their work to the class and learn from their peers' experiences.

Teaching a course in human development offers a wide variety of opportunities for self-reflective assignments and projects. Each semester my human development students engage in a semester long project that cumulates with a portfolio presentation. It has been my experience that students enjoy this process because it provides them the opportunity to connect theories and concepts to their own lives. These assignments also present alternative ways to assess their knowledge. This essay describes ten assignments that are part of the human development portfolio. Each assignment can be modified to meet specific course requirements and student needs.

1. **“Dear Mary” Letter.** In this portfolio assignment students write a fictitious letter to their dear friend “Mary” who has just found out she is expecting a baby. Students are encouraged to include information that they consider to be crucial for Mary to know. Examples of information that students have included in the past range from stages of prenatal development, teratogens to stay away from, the importance of nutrition, stages of labor, birthing options, prenatal yoga and prenatal massage, Lamaze classes, and prenatal testing. Students present this information in letter format. Often time students get creative with the formatting of their responses, especially students who are parents and who have their own information they want to share. This assignment provides the opportunity for students to evaluate the information presented on prenatal development and select the information that they believe is essential for an expecting mother to know.
2. **Informative Brochure.** Students are instructed to pretend that have been hired by a community service agency to develop an informative brochure for new mothers. Students can decide on the brochure topic out of three options that I provide. For example, these topics may include post-partum depression (PPD), breastfeeding, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Students are told to include information that new parents should know. I encourage them to be creative including images and factual information about the topic. Some students have created their brochures using colored pencils and markers, some use magazine images, and some create brochures electronically. It is a great opportunity for learners to visually represent what they have learned. In addition, this assignment provides the opportunity for

students to research additional information about one of three key issues in human development.

3. **School Design.** After learning about different types of schooling, cognitive development through adolescence, and intelligence, students are required to complete a two part portfolio assignment on school design. The first part is a written component that asks students to describe all aspects of a school that they would design (i.e., age level, philosophies, discipline policies, views on assessment, curriculum, and parent and community relations). Once the school is developed, the second component is a visual representation of their school design. This can include a diagram of the whole school or a classroom or a picture of an aspect such as a greenhouse or a sports center. This assignment demonstrates the student's ability to understand the progression of cognitive development throughout the lifespan, including intelligence.
4. **Parenting Styles.** In this portfolio assignment students write a reflection essay on the parenting styles of their parents or guardians when they were growing up and reflect on the impact these styles have on them as an adult. Specific examples must be included to support their beliefs. This assignment is a great opportunity for the students to connect their personal experiences to course content as well as demonstrate their understanding of the implications of different parenting styles on human development.
5. **Adolescent Reflection.** The selected written reflections provide the opportunity for students to make personal connections to socio-emotional factors that influence adolescent development. Students select one of the following three reflection questions to write about:
  - a. Erikson said that the crisis of adolescence is "identity versus role confusion." How was this crisis present in your adolescence? How was it resolved?
  - b. Who was the most influential person in your life when you were an adolescent? Why was this person so influential? Why is having a good role model in adolescence important for social and emotional development?
  - c. Many people consider the prom a rite of passage. Do you agree? How did your prom have an impact on your social development as a teenager?
6. **Program Development for Adolescents.** After covering issues that adolescents may face (e.g., bullying, teen pregnancy, eating disorders, and substance abuse) students pick a topic and develop a fictitious program to educate adolescents. This assignment must include a description of all aspects of developing a program such as advertisement, recruitment, goal setting, presentation, and evaluation. Students are encouraged to think of the adolescent illusion of invulnerability and develop programs that would have an impact on this population. This assignment encourages in-depth research on how one issue facing adolescents might influence cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development.
7. **Interviews.** Students must interview at least two different people who have experienced the following life situations:
  - a. Confused about a career path
  - b. Getting married

- c. Having a child
- d. Taking care of an aging parent
- e. Losing a loved one

Students compare and contrast similarities and difficulties between the interviewees. Students then write a paper describing the interviewees' experiences and how they relate to developmental theories. This assignment provides the students the opportunity to think critically about development theories as well as strengthen their interviewing skills.

8. **Personality Collage.** In response to the presentation of various adult developmental theories, students are asked to create a collage out of magazine images and other mixed media to represent their own personalities. Students then use the collage as a base to describe which adult developmental theory they subscribe to and how they can use that theory to describe their current stage of adult development. In addition to gaining a deeper understanding of adult development and personality theories, collage making provides the opportunity for the visual representation of acquired knowledge. This portfolio assignment is often completed in class to assure that all students have access to art materials.
9. **Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development.** Students put together a slide presentation that incorporates television and/or movie clips that provide an accurate representation of each of Erikson's psychosocial crises. Each crisis and reason for media selection must be supported. These slide presentations are limited to 10 minutes in length and shared with the class. This is often students' favorite portfolio assignment because it is a fun way to demonstrate their technological skills as well as an understanding of Erikson's developmental theory.
10. **Bucket List.** Students will develop and present their own bucket lists in any format they select. Previous formats have included posters, collages, index cards, power point slides, and videos. This assignment provides an opportunity for students to make a personal connection to assist them in understanding differences in how individuals deal with the prospect of their own death. The open format also allows for students to present their information in a way that that meets their individual learning styles.

Each portfolio assignment aligns with course objectives. For example, an objective of the human development course is to assemble, assess, incorporate, and present written knowledge and information both critically and creatively. The portfolio provides an excellent opportunity for students to meet this objective. In creating the required components, students are expected not to simply reiterate course content, but to understand and manipulate the information. By engaging in activities such as the design of a brochure, the writing of a letter, the presentation of mixed media, and the creation of a collage, students have the opportunity to present their knowledge critically and creatively. The rubric is provided to students on the first day of class.

At the end of the semester students present their findings to the class and hand in their completed work inside a self-designed folder. Next semester I will give the students the option of developing an electronic portfolio. In the past, students have commented that they enjoyed

the process of creating their portfolios and looked forward to presenting their findings to their peers and learning from their classmates' presentations. Having a cumulative project such as a portfolio provides a great opportunity for the students to review and reflect on the course objectives. Students have even brought their portfolios when they interviewed for internship sites as an example of their academic work. I have received feedback from students that they prefer completing the portfolio assignments over traditional research papers and exams (a research paper and several exams are also a required part of the course). Students note that they prefer the portfolio assignments because it provides the chance for them to think creatively about the information presented in the course and they can relate the assignments to their own lives making it more meaningful to them.

You can find Nicole Kras's Human Development Portfolio Rubric on the ToPIX wiki at [http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/69958892/Human\\_Development\\_Portfolio\\_Rubric](http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/69958892/Human_Development_Portfolio_Rubric)

# Chapter 11

## Fantasy Researcher League: Engaging Students in Psychological Research

Daniel R. VanHorn

*North Central College*

In this essay, I describe a Fantasy Researcher League course design that I presented to a group of colleagues at the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP) in 2013. This innovative course was designed to get students excited about psychological research. I am grateful for the encouragement and feedback that I received from those who attended the institute. I have divided this essay into four sections. First, I describe the motivation behind the development of the course. Second, I describe the course itself. Third, I present survey data collected from students that have taken the course. Finally, I discuss how this course might be used in the future.

### **Motivation**

While students may not complete textbook reading assignments regularly (Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Clump, Bauer, & Bradley, 2004), they do often find value in the primary textbook assigned for a course (Carpenter, Bullock, & Potter, 2006). For example, a textbook is often a very useful quick reference guide. Textbooks are also helpful because they simplify and clarify psychological research. The problem with textbooks is that, in truth, psychological research is not simple and clear, but rather it is complex and messy. Textbooks also often present information as if it is finalized instead of an ongoing process and dialogue among experts in the field. Finally, many textbooks are not structured in a way that enables critical evaluation of the research they present. Reading and discussing primary sources (e.g., articles with original research that are published in peer-reviewed journals) provides an alternative to textbooks, and I believe students significantly benefit from working with primary sources in psychology. When students work with primary sources they begin to appreciate the intricate work behind what textbooks present as statements of obvious fact. They start to see that psychological research is constantly evolving and that there is still much to be learned. Working with the psychological literature also helps students develop critical thinking skills (Anisfeld, 1987; Chamberlain & Burrough, 1985). They learn to critically examine evidence and use that evidence to evaluate theories and/or claims. A significant challenge that many psychology teachers, including myself, face is getting students to engage in psychological research. Reading and thinking about psychological research is difficult, so we have to find creative ways to motivate our students to work with primary sources in psychology. One approach is to take the things that excite our students outside the classroom and implement them inside the classroom. Keeping this approach in mind, I looked to fantasy sports for help in getting my students engaged with the psychological literature.

Fantasy sports are extremely popular. The Fantasy Sports Trade Association (2013) estimates the 2013 American market for fantasy sports is over 35 million players. Fantasy sports that are available to players include baseball, basketball, football, hockey, soccer, golf, and auto racing. In fantasy sports, approximately 8-14 participants get together and form a league in the sport

of their choice. For example, a small group of friends might form a fantasy professional American football league. Each participant in the league selects current professional American football players that make up their fantasy team. The players on a participant's team score points based on how they perform in real-life games (e.g., how many yards they gain and how many touchdowns they score) and the participants' teams compete against each other.

### **The Course**

I feel that fantasy sports provides a model that can be utilized in classrooms for engaging students. I took the fantasy sports model and modified it to engage students in psychological research by creating a course that took the form of a game. The official title of the course was Immersion in the Psychological Literature, but the course became known to students and faculty alike as Fantasy Researcher League. The official learning objectives of the course included the following: effectively search for published research and track research lines/programs, describe the research programs of several prominent psychologists, explain the current theory and findings of a few threads of research in the field, and identify how psychological theory and research evolve over the course of a research program. In addition to the official learning objectives described above, I wanted to show students that psychological research is dynamic. It is evolutionary. What students read in their textbooks is old news. I wanted my students to be on the cutting edge of psychological research and get a sense of what it feels like to discover something new. I hoped to get my students excited about research in psychology. I also wanted them to discuss psychology outside of a traditional classroom setting in a place where they would exchange ideas and not worry about whether they were getting a C+ or a B- in the course. Finally, I wanted them to discover their passion by having the freedom to explore their own academic interests.

The course consisted of a small group of students that met with faculty approximately every three weeks throughout the academic school year. At the beginning of the course, the faculty members teaching the course put together a list of several prominent psychology researchers from a variety of research areas. Students were given the opportunity to add other researchers to this list. All the researchers on the list had to be currently active in the discipline. Each student drafted a team of five researchers from the finalized list. Each researcher could only be selected once. These teams made up our fantasy researcher league. Each student then selected one published article by each of their five researchers and tracked the number of times each article was cited during the course of the game. Students had the option to replace their articles at the beginning of each term. Students also kept track of all of their researchers' scholarly activities and accomplishments (e.g., books, articles, and presentations) during the academic year. Students documented their researchers' productivity by designing and maintaining a team webpage. A student earned points for their team by correctly documenting their team's scholarly activities and citations. The league scoring system is described in Table 1.

Table 1

*Fantasy Researcher League Scoring System*

Scholarly Activity	Points
Book single author	8
Book co-author	4
Book editor	3
Book chapter author	3
Article first author	4
Article other than first author	2
Citation	1
Presentation	3
Grant/Award	3

During class meetings, students discussed the recent research activity of their teams. Students were also asked to connect their researchers' current work to their researchers' past work. At the end of each class, team scores were updated and high scoring teams were recognized.

**Survey Data**

Five students that participated in the course during the fall of 2011 and eight students that participated during the winter of 2012 completed a voluntary survey where they indicated how much they agreed or disagreed with specific statements related to the learning objectives for the course. Ratings ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Student responses to the closed-ended survey questions are shown in Table 2, and they suggest that we met our learning objectives. The vast majority of students agreed that they developed basic research skills, understood and could discuss cutting edge research, learned about today's prominent psychological researchers, and learned how research programs evolve over time.

Table 2

*Student Survey Responses on Course Learning Objectives*

As a result of participating in this course, Recorded 7pt. scale to 3pt. scale	Agree (5-7)	Neutral (4)	Disagree (1-3)
I can better search PsycInfo to locate research-related material and people.	11	1	1
I can more effectively search for psychological research and researchers in electronic sources.	12	1	0
I am more familiar with the intellectual history and background of some psychology researchers.	11	2	0
I am more familiar with some of the most current research in psychology.	13	0	0
I feel more competent at presenting and discussing a researcher's current research.	13	0	0
I have a better understanding of how a researcher's program of research or interests evolves over time.	11	2	0
I can describe the research program of several prominent psychology researchers.	9	4	0
I have a better sense of which areas of psychology interest me and which do not.	13	0	0
I can better create and edit webpages.	13	0	0

Students were then asked to describe what they learned in the class beyond the topics already covered in the closed-ended survey questions. Responses to these questions suggest that students enjoyed the social nature of the game, learned more about psychological research, and began to discover what areas of psychology interest them most. Examples of student responses to this open-ended question are included below.

- "I was able to find researchers that I would be interested in following later."
- "I learned what areas in psychology interest me, which has helped me make decisions for my future."
- "How to effectively create a webpage."
- "What modern research is like."
- "Better research skills."
- "How to find articles that cite another article."
- "Winning!"

**The Future**

Student surveys suggest that the fantasy researcher league model engages students in psychological research and provides an exciting alternative to traditional courses and/or assignments. The fantasy researcher league model gets students to read and discuss primary sources. This is crucial because working with primary sources is one way for students to develop critical thinking skills (Anisfeld, 1987; Chamberlain & Burrough, 1985). The fantasy researcher league model also helps create a learning community where students play a central

role in learning and discovery. It is the students that select the researchers and research topics that are presented and discussed in class. In the fantasy researcher league model, teachers provide the initial structure of the course but then focus on supporting and empowering student learning and discovery. In the future, I envision a fantasy researcher league online gaming experience that can be used in a variety of disciplines and can bring together team managers from a college or across the world. In the meantime, I believe that the fantasy researcher league course described here could be incorporated into many courses as a long-term research project. In my course, students worked individually, but I believe the project would also work well if completed in small groups.

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## Chapter 12

### Help Sheet Content Predicts Test Performance

Mark R. Ludorf and Sarah O. Clark

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**R**eaders of *E-xcellence in Teaching* know the importance of finding the best teaching methods and techniques to reach students. Although instructors rightfully seek to improve their teaching to enhance student learning, often times too much focus is placed on enhancing “input” and not enough focus is placed on enhancing the fidelity of “output”. That is, instructors should explore both the methods to make them better teachers, but also consider innovative methods to create better measurements of what students have learned.

Professors regularly confront the challenge of teaching to a student population with diverse levels of academic ability. To address such diverse ability instructors have implemented various pedagogical methods, many of which are time consuming and tedious. One method instructors have used to address diverse learning abilities is to allow students to access information during a test. Some instructors limit the amount of information that is accessible (e.g., index card or standard sheet of paper), while other instructors allow access to an unlimited amount of information (i.e., “open book”).

Ludorf (1994), allowed students to select the amount information they could access on each of five statistics tests. Results showed significantly higher average test performance (72% versus 62%) when less information was accessed than when more information was accessed; a result consistent with previous results (Boniface, 1985).

During the last 3 decades numerous researchers (e.g., Dorsel & Cundiff, 1979) have explored the role of help sheets (aka cheat sheet or crib sheet) and how the use of help sheets is related to test performance (Dickson & Bauer, 2008; Dickson & Miller, 2005; Hindman, 1980; Visco, Swaminathan, Zagumny & Anthony, 2007; Whitley, 1996), learning (Dickson & Bauer, 2008; Funk & Dickson, 2011) and anxiety reduction (e.g., Drake, Freed, and Hunter, 1998; Erbe, 2007; Trigwell, 1987). Overall the results have been mixed regarding help sheet use and the variables investigated.

One aspect of help sheets that has received little attention is the relationship between the content of a help sheet and test performance. Most of the research cited above examined the relationship between test performance and whether or not a student used a help sheet. Only a few studies (Dickson & Miller, 2006; Gharib, Phillips, & Mathew, 2012; Visco, et al., 2007) have explored how the specific content of a help sheet is related to performance.

Dickson and Miller (2006) found significantly higher test performance when students used an instructor provided help sheet compared to a student provided help sheet. However, the result may be confounded as help sheet condition may have varied systematically with the amount of studying students did. Visco et al. (2007), examined student generated help sheets and concluded that students likely need additional direction on what content to include on a help sheet in order to enhance performance. Finally, Gharib et al. (2012) examined the quality of

students' help sheets and found a reliable and positive relationship between the quality of the help sheet content and test performance; where a quality measure was obtained by rating a help sheet for organization and amount of detail.

To summarize the relevant research, the use of help sheets is not reliably or consistently related to student performance, learning, or anxiety levels. Moreover, help sheet quality appears to vary across students and such variation may explain the body of results. Thus, help sheet content should be examined more systematically.

The current study provided a systematic exploration to determine whether characteristics of the help sheet content (e.g., overall quality, inclusion of process information, density of information, etc) were related to test performance. Results of the study may be used to provide students guidance (Visco et al., 2007) when constructing a help sheet in order to enhance performance.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants (N = 21) were students enrolled in a required junior level psychological statistics course. Other sections of the course were taught by different instructors; students selected to enroll in this section unaware of the assessment that would be conducted. A majority of the participants were women. No other demographic information was collected.

### **Materials**

Students created a one-page 8.5 × 11 in. [21.6 × 28 cm] help sheet to use on each test. The help sheet could contain any information a student wanted to include and both sides of the sheet could be used. Students were informed that help sheets would be collected. Both sides of each help sheet were scanned to create an electronic copy. All help sheets were returned when the tests were returned.

### **Procedures**

Students were required to construct a help sheet for each test, though there was no requirement to use the help sheet. Based on informal observation during the test, all students appeared to use the help sheet to some degree.

Tests in the statistics course were all problem based and were graded on a 100 point scale. Student help sheets were collected, scanned, and rated by two raters on the variables of interest below. Both help sheet raters were blind to students' test performance at the time that the ratings were made.

### **Variables of interest**

Help sheets were evaluated on the variables of Overall Quality (4 – 0, with 4 being the highest quality); Verbal Process information (i.e., instructions) (1 <very informational> – 3 <neutral> – 5 <not very informational> ), Numeric Process information (i.e., solved problems) (1 <very informational> – 3 <neutral> – 5 <not very informational> ), Density of the information (as rated in deciles – 10 – 100%), Organization of information (1 <very organized> – 3 <neutral> – 5

<very unorganized> ), use of Color (present or absent) and Submission Order (ordinal position when the test was submitted).

## **Results**

### **Analyses**

The analyses were based on students' help sheets and test performance from a single test. Interrater reliability was computed for the two raters across the scales described above. Interrater reliability ranged from moderate to high, .521(Organization) to .978 (Density).

Help sheet ratings for the two raters were averaged and then regressed against students' test scores to determine which characteristics of help sheet predicted tested performance. Results showed that higher quality help sheets predicted higher test performance ( $b = 33.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as did lower density of information ( $b = -.35$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Moreover, higher verbal process scores were associated with lower test performance ( $b = 13.14$ ,  $p < .01$ ). None of the other variables were related to performance ( $p > .05$ ).

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Results of the preliminary analyses suggest that it is not enough just to consider whether a student has access to a help sheet or not, but rather a careful examination of the help sheet content is required. Similar to Gharib et al. (2012), overall quality of the help sheet was found to be a very important characteristic of the help sheet. As overall quality increased, test scores also increased.

Density of information was also significantly related to performance. Although not the strongest effect, it appears that having less information on the help sheet predicted higher performance. Such a pattern is consistent with previous research (Visco et al., 2007) which may indicated that density of information is a proxy for learning in an inverse direction. That is, students who have a robust understanding of the material do not need to include as much information on the sheet and create a less dense help sheet. Conversely, students who do not have a robust understanding of the material must include as much information as possible to compensate for the lack of understanding, thereby creating a high density help sheet.

One surprising finding was that students who included more verbal process information, which included information like instructions on how to perform some processes, scored lower than those students who included less of this information. Similar to the density argument above, it could be the case that students who included more verbal process information did so because they were not comfortable completing such problems without help sheet information and so they included more verbal process information on their help sheets.

Finally, in examining the help sheet research, there are two notable issues. First, help sheets do not facilitate student performance in courses involving mostly content knowledge including abnormal psychology (Hindman, 1980), developmental psychology (Dickson and Miller, 2005 and 2006), or social psychology (Whitley, 1996). However, when a course includes more process than content knowledge, as in the current course or other studies including statistics (Ludorf, 1994, Philips, et al., 2012) or engineering (Visco et al., 2007), students' test performance appears to be related to help sheet content. Second, taking into account the

research showing that content of a help sheet is related to test performance, we join Visco and colleagues in calling for the need of instructors to become more involved with help sheet construction as a way to provide students of all abilities a high quality help sheet.

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**Mark Ludorf** is a Cognitive psychologist who joined the faculty at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) in the fall of 1990 and is currently a Full Professor of Psychology. He has served in university wide administrative positions at two universities (SFA and Oakland University in Rochester, MI). He was also an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow in Academic Administration. Ludorf has been active in the use technology in higher education. He has taught online since 2001 and developed several online courses. His other academic interests are in leadership and study abroad. Ludorf currently serves as Senior Editor of the Journal of Leadership Studies. He has also offered numerous study abroad programs in Italy. At SFA Ludorf has been recognized as the Alumni Distinguished Professor and was awarded the SFA Foundation Faculty Achievement Award.

**Amie R. McKibban**, professor of psychology at the University of Southern Indiana, completed her Ph. D. in community psychology in 2009. She has presented numerous papers and published in diverse areas, ranging from attitudes toward individuals in the LGBT community, sexual health and communication, happiness, community redevelopment, academic dishonesty, and perfectionism. Using a well-known program in a way that mobilizes allies and allows for solutions at each level, she founded and directs a community and campus wide Safe Zone program. In the first few years of her tenure at the University of Southern Indiana, she has received the Willie Effie Thomas award and Phenomenal Women of USI award for her work in social justice, as well as the H. Lee Cooper Core Curriculum award for her excellence in the teaching of psychology.

**David Miller** is a Professor of Psychology, Associate Department Head, and Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. He received his Ph. D. at the University of Miami in 1973, and his research has focused on animal behavior, both in the field and in the laboratory. He was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, where he did field research on parent-offspring auditory interactions of several avian species. In 1977, he became an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the University of Bielefeld (Germany) in the Department of Ethology and a participant in a nine-month interdisciplinary conference on “Behavioral Development in Animals and Man” at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research. He returned to the North Carolina Division of Mental Health in 1978 as a Research Associate, where he began a long series of studies on alarm call responsivity of mallard ducklings, which continued when he joined the faculty at the University of Connecticut in 1980. Beginning around 1990, his long-standing interest in the effective use of multimedia in the classroom expanded and has continued to evolve. He has received several awards for teaching excellence at the University of Connecticut and, in 1989, was the recipient of The National Psi Chi/Florence L. Denmark Faculty Advisor Award “for outstanding contributions to Psi Chi and psychology.” He received the high honor of University of Connecticut Teaching Fellow (1997–1998), and, in 1999, his work in multimedia instructional design and classroom implementation was recognized with the Chancellor’s Information Technology Award. In 2005, he received the University of Connecticut Alumni Association Faculty Excellence Award in Teaching at the Undergraduate Level, as well as the 2005–2006 University of Connecticut Undergraduate Student Government Educator of the Year Award. In 2007, he received the University of Connecticut Outstanding Student Advisement and Advocacy Award, and his efforts in podcasting were recognized by the national publication, *Campus Technology*, which awarded him the 2007 Outstanding Innovator Award in Podcasting. In 2011, he received the Frank Costin Memorial Award from the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology for promoting quality teaching methods, as illustrated in a poster on screencasting, and, in 2012, the Animal Behavior Society Distinguished Teaching Award. He has served on several editorial boards and was Editor-in-Chief of the scholarly journal, *Bird Behavior* for 15 years. In recent years, Dr. Miller has devoted considerable time in creating computerized, multimedia versions of his animal behavior and introductory psychology courses. Multimedia production of university-level educational material is one of his foremost activities. His most recent multimedia project involved a major transformation of his Animal Behavior course into 90 screencast movies, an effort that was also featured in *Campus Technology* magazine.

**Andrew Peck** is a Senior Lecturer and Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Department of Psychology at the Pennsylvania State University. He teaches and coordinates the teaching of resident and online courses. He earned his Ph. D. in Cognitive Psychology from the Pennsylvania State University in 1998. He is the director of the PRISM (Penn Staters Researching Interventions for Social Misconduct) lab which is currently investigating student attitudes that support sexual misconduct and related interventions.

**Judith Pena-Shaff** is an associate professor of psychology at Ithaca College. She earned her Ph. D. in educational psychology from Cornell University in 2001. Dr. Pena-Shaff’s research interest is in instructional technology. Specifically, she is interested in the knowledge construction processes students use in computer-mediated learning environments with the purpose of

creating a taxonomy to help instructors assess student learning. In addition, Dr. Pena-Shaff is highly engaged in her community, often conducting evaluations of educational programs run by schools and local organizations.

**Bibia R. Redd** , born in Detroit, Michigan was originally employed as a Police Officer with the Wayne County Sheriff's Department prior to receiving her Ph. D. in Psychology from Wayne State University (Detroit, Michigan) in 2012. Her areas of interest tend to focus on the social issues that hinder the optimal development of minorities in terms of their health and educational attainment. In 2011, her interest in educational attainment turned more inward and began focusing on pedagogical issues affecting the learning environment. Dr. Redd is currently teaching at South University, Novi Michigan Campus.

**Elizabeth Sheehan** is a Lecturer at Georgia State University. She earned her Ph. D. in Psychology from Emory University in Cognition and Development. She currently teaches Intro Psychology, an integrated version of Research Methods and Statistics, and Forensic Psychology. She has presented her work on designing study abroad programs, teaching with technology, and incorporating writing assignments into courses at teaching conferences, such as the Southeastern Conference on Teaching of Psychology and the Developmental Science Teaching Institute for the Society for Research in Child Development.

**Daniel R. VanHorn** earned his B.S. in psychology from Wittenberg University in 2003. He earned his M.S. (2005) and Ph. D. (2009) in cognitive psychology from Purdue University. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Psychology at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. He regularly teaches introductory psychology, cognitive psychology, statistics, and research methods. He also has an active research program in cognitive psychology where he trains aspiring psychologists.

## About the Editors

**William S. Altman** is a Professor in the Psychology and Human Services Department at SUNY Broome Community College. Dr. Altman earned Ph. D. and M. S. degrees in Educational Psychology and Measurement, and an M. P. S. in Communication Arts (Organizational Communication) from Cornell University, as well as a B. A. degree in History from the University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include effective teaching and learning, and creativity. Bill currently serves as the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP)-National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology Liaison, and the co-editor of STP's *E-xcellence in Teaching*. He also served as the consulting editor for two introductory psychology textbooks, and has created numerous learning and teaching materials for several publishers. In addition to scholarly publications and presentations, Dr. Altman has written for several non-scholarly publications, spent over a decade sharing information about education, technology, and psychological science on local radio, been a professional photographer, and performed in theater and as a standup comic (ostensibly to work on classroom presentation skills, but mostly because it's fun). In addition to presenting many workshops and seminars about effective teaching and learning, he has also contributed over a dozen videos on effective teaching, as part of the [Wadsworth Guest Lecture Series](#). Dr. Altman also consults on the development of effective teaching materials and techniques for applications in other fields. For example, he assisted the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in developing their training manual for nuisance wildlife control operators (available online at NWCO.net) and in creating and validating their statewide licensing test. Most recently, with award-winning science fiction author Jill Shultz, he began offering workshops to train fiction writers and actors to use psychological science for character development. Bill Altman is driven by a wide and unpredictable curiosity, an almost pathological need to solve problems, and a sense that it all ought to be fun.

**Lyra Stein** is currently a faculty member in the Psychology department at Rutgers University. Dr. Stein earned a B. S. degree in Psychology and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from Rutgers University, an M. S. in Neuroscience from Albert Einstein College of Medicine and an M. S. and Ph. D. in Social Psychology from Rutgers University. Her research interests include performance and learning based on personality orientation. Dr. Stein currently serves as the co-editor of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP)'s *E-xcellence in Teaching* after serving as the Member at Large, Research/Academic Focus for APAGS and a regional representative for STP. In addition to publications, presentations and advising student projects, Dr. Stein is currently working to enhance online education and online course conversion, including the Rutgers University signature course Soul Beliefs. In 2012, Dr. Stein won the Rutgers University award for distinguished contributions to undergraduate education and, as well as teaching classes in general psychology, social psychology, abnormal psychology, personality psychology and research methods and graduate classes in social and developmental psychology, Dr. Stein has created several classes including Myths and Misconceptions in Psychology which explores the validity of psychology in the popular press.

**Jeffrey R. Stowell** earned his B. S. and M. S. from Brigham Young University and his Ph. D. in Psychobiology from The Ohio State University. He also did one year of postdoctoral research

with Dr. Janice Kiecolt-Glaser at OSU on marital stress and wound healing. He currently is a Professor of Psychology at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois where he teaches courses in biological psychology, sensation & perception, learning, introductory psychology, and controversial topics in psychology. In 2006, he received the Early Career Teaching Excellence Award from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology. His research interests include using technology in teaching and stress-health connections, particularly in the context of test anxiety.