

Nathan R. George, PhD

Teaching Philosophy

I believe there is no better model for engendering lifelong learning than one's own scholarship. This philosophy fueled my own academic journey. As an undergraduate student at Lehigh University, a highly selective liberal arts institution, my passions for child development were stoked through courses taught by respected leaders in the field and realized through opportunities to work with these scholars in research settings. As I prepare to embark on a career as an independent researcher and educator, this teacher/scholar model remains at the core of my teaching philosophy. My goal is that every student I encounter be inspired to use psychology as a window into everyday personal and professional experiences and be equipped, through the engagement of the rich data in behavioral science, to be critical consumers of information.

At Temple University, I served as a teaching assistant for two introductory courses, Cognition and Psychology as a Natural Science, before teaching two sections of Scientific Thinking, a class on research methods and scientific writing. In teaching foundational concepts for behavioral research, I engendered learning through anchoring concepts to engaging, relatable examples. Clips from Monty Python films facilitated conversations about logical fallacies. The oft confused principles of deduction and induction were presented through the accessible lens of child behavior. Methodologies were introduced via demonstrations built from the interests of the class. Students responded positively, mentioning my ability to explain difficult material as a strength of my teaching. Assessments in turn focused on applying knowledge, as assignments and tests required students to interpret classroom material in the context of real world examples. This spring, I will be translating these principles to the teaching of an introductory Cognition course at Penn State University.

The smaller size of my classes at Temple University also provided the opportunity for a more student-led model of learning traditional of seminars. My favorite role was facilitating discussions, creating a dialectic in which students could bring fresh ideas that often invigorated my own scholarship. Students also advanced their analytic thinking, methodological expertise, and writing through developing independent research proposals that flowed from their individual interests. From proposals on the effects of institutional care on well-being, to those on educational interventions for autistic children, students developed experiments that reflected their excitement to think deeply about pressing questions. The growth I saw from their first ideas to their final papers was extraordinary. In the future, I look forward to translating these principles to seminars in Cognitive Development, Language Acquisition, Language and Thought, and the Science of Learning, as well as teaching introductory courses in psychology.

From my own experiences as both student and mentor, I believe that the some of the richest opportunities for student growth occur through participation in the research process. At Temple University and Penn State University, I mentored students in their first explorations of behavioral research. Students reflected the diversity of a liberal arts college, with interests spanning psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, speech pathology, and medicine. Weekly discussions were lively, reflecting the merging of perspectives that invigorates scientific inquiry. As discussions yielded exciting new questions, I walked students through translating them into research proposals, and this fall will be advising a student as she carries out her proposal as an independent research project. The most rewarding part of mentoring is seeing students develop the tools necessary to channel their passions and curiosity towards the creation of knowledge. In the future, I endeavor to continue to use my complementary roles as scholar, teacher, and mentor to engage, inspire, and equip budding scholars for success in their professional careers.