

Teaching Philosophy

When I first became a student in psychology during my undergraduate years, I was extremely fortunate to encounter outstanding professors who nurtured my love for psychology through their teaching. While I have worked to develop my own instructional methods and style, an element of major importance in my teaching philosophy is to make students feel the way I did when I encountered effective teaching in my educational journey – valued, empowered, and challenged. To accomplish this with my own students, my approach to teaching embodies three broad aims: 1) to provide course content that is *appropriately rigorous* for the level of the student's current educational attainment, 2) to help students focus on the scientific *methodology* employed to generate the scientific information they are consuming, and 3) to foster an inner spirit of *curiosity and motivation* regarding the learning of psychological science that will persist after completion of my course. It is my ambition for students who have me as a professor to leave my class with a greater appreciation for psychological science, including its limitations and avenues for improvement, and a clearer sense of how to achieve their educational goals. Furthermore, as a Black man who understands the all-too-familiar issues of minority underrepresentation in the professoriate, I take particular pride in being able to provide a learning environment for my minority students that adapts materials, off-hand references, humor, and other forms of representation to minority communities in ways students unfortunately rarely experience otherwise.

To achieve my stated teaching aims, I have looked to the pedagogical literature to identify the most current and effective methods for teaching. With regard to my first aim, research suggests that repeated, routine assessment of knowledge retention and personalized feedback is effective for long-term learning and motivation. However, due to increasing trends of test anxiety and concerns over grades and grade inflation, I believe it is essential for assessments of knowledge retention to be collaborative between professor and student, so as to reduce anxiousness about evaluation. To this end, my classes include regular assessment of students' ability to apply what they have learned to 1) contexts explicitly encountered in class already (retention), and 2) novel, but related contexts (application). These assessments may take the form of short quizzes (only a few questions), or applied assignments (e.g., in my research methods lab, activities such as running correlation or regression analyses in SPSS using actual data). Importantly, students receive feedback quickly, allowing me to adjust my teaching to shore up misunderstandings personalized to each student's current level of knowledge. In the service of my second teaching aim, I rely on my own extensive expertise in quantitative methodology to instill an *understanding* of research design and statistics in relation to assigned primary-source readings. My goal in this is to help encourage students' independence as critical consumers and evaluators of the scientific literature. Along these lines, I want to help students develop a self-directed sense of curiosity and enjoyment of the scientific literature pertaining to their interests. To that end, regardless of which class I am teaching, I spend time helping familiarize students with the effective use of electronic databases for searching the scholarly literature (e.g., Google Scholar, PubMed, etc.). In my Research Methods lab course, one of the first assignments is for students to find papers assigned in the syllabus using these methods (harkening back to my first teaching aim, involving novel applications of learning), and then locate articles on topics of personal interest that have employed statistical methods being covered in class (e.g., ANOVA, regression). Lastly, I place priority on connecting my students with professional development resources and serving as a source of information about furthering their careers, including preparing for graduate school and careers in and outside of academia.

Ultimately, my goal as an instructor is to shepherd personal intellectual development and build rapport with my students. I believe students learn better when they feel valued, and I aim to weave humor, kindness, and genuine enjoyment of intellectual material into all my classes.

Teaching Experience and Evidence of Effectiveness

I have pursued various opportunities for professional development in teaching, and over a two year period, I have served as instructor of record for a total of nine sections of a Research Design and Methodology Lab. Class sizes have ranged from 20-35 students per section. In this lab course, I taught students how to formulate a research question, collect data addressing that research question, analyze and interpret the data, and summarize findings from their research in the form of a poster display mirroring that of a scientific conference presentation. As indicated above, I employ several strategies to ensure learning among my students, which I believe have contributed importantly to my highly positive teaching evaluations at the end of each semester, in contrast to the low ratings that statistics classes often receive. I have addressed the prevalent issue of math anxiety head-on through use of humor and relationship-building strategies that help to allay apprehension among students who struggle initially with statistical concepts and methods. In addition, I have served as a research mentor for numerous undergraduates and younger graduate students during my time as a graduate student – including two undergraduates who completed independent honors theses, and five others who submitted posters for presentation at national conferences. Of note, several of these students have now progressed into graduate programs themselves to train for their own careers. I could not be prouder of the role I've played in advancing their intellectual development. Included below are sample statements regarding my teaching effectiveness from evaluations completed by students in my Research Design lab course, along with quantitative metrics pertaining to effectiveness that include comparisons with broader department and university averages for courses of all types (not just statistics). My scores reflect averages across all sections and semesters I have taught; department and university scores reflect averages for courses of all types in those semesters. Despite teaching a research methodology course that many students find more demanding than other “substantive” courses, all of my ratings fall into the ‘excellent’ range and exceed the department and university averages on all but one metric.

Selected Qualitative Comments:

“He was constantly willing to help and support students with assignments and the final project. He worked with students and was reliable with returning emails.”

“Keanan is amazing. He is SO knowledgeable and passionate about the subject he teaches. He is great at explaining things. The course itself is VERY difficult. Many of the students struggle with certain subjects but Keanan is always available for answering questions and helping his students.”

“Clearly cared about students and their success-very helpful during projects, but still made sure WE did the work and we understood why we did the operations we did.”

“Keanan was a great instructor, and truly knew a great deal about the subject matter. He made each student feel welcome and valued in the classroom, and answered each of our questions in depth, so we knew exactly what we were doing.”

Quantitative Metrics:

Item Text	Mean	SD	Department Mean	University Mean
1. Instructor provided clear expectations for the course.	4.68	.52	4.58	4.40
2. Instructor communicated effectively.	4.63	.62	4.53	4.33
3. Instructor stimulated my interest in the subject matter.	4.24	.98	4.32	4.17
4. Instructor provided helpful feedback on my work.	4.65	.63	4.26	4.16
5. Instructor demonstrated respect for students.	4.76	.45	4.70	4.56
6. Instructor demonstrated mastery of the subject matter.	4.73	.56	4.64	4.57
7. Overall rating for instructor.	4.58	.76	4.46	4.33

Note. Items rated on 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).