

## Teaching Statement

### *Teaching Philosophy*

A major source of how I have developed my teaching philosophy and pedagogical style comes from my research on close relationships, social support, and cultural psychology. One of the main themes from my close relationships research is that people will be most likely to thrive when they believe their relationships are caring and supportive; and my work in cultural psychology informs me of how to tailor my teaching techniques to cater to a variety of student needs. Knowing that close others will be available and responsive when needed, and that others are accepting of who one is as a person, gives people the security and confidence to cope effectively with challenges and to work toward achieving their goals. This applies not only to close relationships, but also to teaching and mentoring relationships. Students will be most likely to reach their potential, and to get the most out of their courses, when teachers are available and responsive to their educational and individual needs. While there are many components I consider while teaching, **creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment** is the main objective that guides my teaching methodology.

To create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, I want students to be able to make **personal connections** to the material so they can not only see how the material is relevant in their lives but also feel validated for who they are as a person. One way I fulfill this goal is by connecting the material to students' experiences so they can see how the course content fits into their lives and is personally meaningful. For example, in my Close Relationships class, I created an assignment where students chose questionnaires learned from class and conducted a daily diary study on themselves so they could reflect on how the class material played out in their daily lives. In the same course, I encouraged students to talk about how aspects of their identity influence their relationships so they can better understand the constructs learned in class. For example, one of my students discussed how being both black and male affected his support-seeking behavior and his relationships. Discussing the intersectionality of his identity and the cultural values he grew up with helped other students open up about their identities and made the class discussion richer. Even in courses that may seem less relatable, such as Statistics, I aim to use more accessible, everyday examples to explain complicated, abstract concepts. For example, one difficult concept for students to understand is a statistical interaction, where the effect of one variable depends on another variable. One of the questions I ask students to promote their understanding is if they have a shy personality, are they shy with everyone? Most of them say no, it *depends* on if they feel comfortable with who they are talking to. The "it depends" part is key to understanding interactions because the influence of the personality variable on their shy behavior depends on who they are talking to, which may seem simple on paper but is a complex concept for students to grasp. By personalizing the course content, students are able to relate the material to their own experiences, which not only promotes their learning but also makes the courses more meaningful and enjoyable.

Another way I create a supportive learning environment is to make sure that I am always **approachable and available** for my students and that they know I am here to help them. Along with giving extra guidance to students who need more time to process the course material, I also follow-up with students after class, such as communicating via email, meeting with students in office hours, or making appointments, to make sure students get help if they need it. One course where this is immensely helpful is Research Methods, where students work in groups to design,

conduct, and present their own study. This class is known for being highly demanding (in-person and online), so I want students to know I am available to provide support so they can manage the demands of the course and excel despite the difficulty. Especially during remote learning, I make sure to check in with my students often to ensure they are following along. Even for students who do not need additional assistance, I want them to know I am available if they need help (without being intrusive), and that I care about their learning as well as their well-being.

Another way I create a supportive learning environment is **by seeking feedback from my students on how to improve my courses**. Teaching is a journey where not only is there always something new for me to learn but also something I must adapt for each new group of students and their needs. Therefore, it is important for me to check in with my students and seek feedback on my course materials and structure. One way I elicit feedback is via mid-quarter feedback surveys, asking students what they like and dislike about the course and what they would find helpful for their learning. In my most recent course, Research Methods, my students gave me feedback regarding topics such as which quiz questions and assignments were clear or not, how I spoke during lectures, and how I format lecture slides. Specifically, while previous courses I have taught preferred less detailed slides that reduce cognitive load and be easy to read through, the current class reported wanting more detailed slides. I was able to immediately adjust my slides to be more helpful for students (while still trying not to induce too much cognitive load). More importantly, students reported feeling less overwhelmed and more caught-up during lecture (as assessed via short end-of-lecture surveys). They appreciated the changes I made, as well as the effort I put in to try to update the course to benefit their learning.

I chose to highlight these teaching strategies because I believe they best accomplish my goal of helping my students feel validated and cared for. My hope is that by supporting my students in this way, they will be more likely to *push themselves* to learn to the best of their ability. From my personal experience talking with my students, and from empirical research, students are more motivated to learn and are better able to learn if they believe they have the support to do so. It brings me genuine joy when I see my students excel despite difficult circumstances, inside or outside of the classroom, or to see students succeed despite struggling earlier on in the course. I have much to learn about developing teaching practices that work for both my students and me, but even if my teaching techniques change, I will make sure that I maintain the supportive energy I have cultivated throughout the classes I have taught.

### *Teaching Experience*

I have taught and developed two classes as an instructor of record: Research Methods, designed for lower division students getting into the Psychology major, and Close Relationships, an upper division seminar course. In addition, I have served as a teaching assistant for seven lab courses that have required me to teach structured material and to develop my own activities to supplement students' learning. I am also active in helping other graduate students develop their teaching skills as a member of my department's Teaching Assistant Advisory Program (TAAP) since 2021, where I help teach first-year graduate students how to be a teaching assistant for different types of courses (e.g., labs, lectures, courses outside their area of expertise), strategies they can use to foster a welcoming environment in their classroom, how to be inclusive and sensitive to diverse students, and how to use evidence-based techniques to help facilitate student learning.

To further develop my teaching skills, I have also participated in numerous (optional) workshops and programs hosted by UCSB's teaching center, Instructional Development. For example, I attended the Summer Teaching and Instruction Association (STIA), which assists graduate student instructors with developing their summer courses, often in cases where graduate students are teaching for the first time. I am also completing my Certificate in College and University Teaching (CCUT), where I develop a teaching portfolio that includes how I use different technologies in the classroom to improve student learning, what pedagogy skills I have learned and how I apply these skills to my courses, and a record and reflection of my growth as an instructor over time at UCSB. I have also taken a graduate level course on how to effectively use multimedia during instruction, and I still refer to materials from that course when I created materials and resources for my own courses. I have also attended numerous teaching conferences such as the UC Teaching & Learning Conference to learn about new research on the scholarship of teaching and pedagogy. Most recently, I am currently participating in a semester-long *Community of Practice* teaching workshop through UCSB's Center for Innovative Teaching, Research, and Learning (CITRAL). This program includes a series of workshops designed to teach instructors best practices for fostering an environment of inclusivity and equity in the classroom.