David M.G. Lewis

Teaching Statement

I am as passionate about my teaching as I am about my research. Science depends as much on communicating knowledge and discoveries to others as it does on making those discoveries. To be a psychological scientist, I must transfer my skills, knowledge, and training to society's next generation of problem-solvers, whether they become clinical psychologists working with clients facing psychological disorders, economists guiding governmental policy, or research scientists like myself.

I completed my PhD just two years ago, but I have already held instructor positions for over seven years with The University of Texas at Austin, Concordia University, Johns Hopkins University, and Bilkent University in Turkey. Additionally, with the support of a National Science Foundation graduate fellowship, I served as resident scientific advisor for K-12 STEM education for two local public schools in Texas.

I have experience teaching 19 distinct courses. These have included 10 different courses in statistics and research design, and have ranged from small, laboratory-based graduate courses such as "Advanced Research Methods and Statistics" to large, lecture-based introductory psychology courses. (Please refer to my CV for a complete list of courses.) I have also been responsible for curricular design for the research methods and statistics modules of the Master's and PhD programs in Psychology at Bilkent University. I have designed and developed several courses, including multiple advanced graduate courses in statistics as well as upper-level undergraduate courses in my areas of specialization. For example, my interdisciplinary class "Mind in Evolution" has drawn students from diverse fields, including molecular genetics and biology, computer science, and psychology. My teaching effectiveness across these courses has been acknowledged wherever I have taught. I have received the highest student evaluations in the Psychology Department at Bilkent University, Johns Hopkins University named me their nationwide course mentor, and The University of Texas at Austin Psychology Department granted me the Most Outstanding Instructor Award.

My teaching focuses on three student outcomes: 1) increased depth, breadth, and integration of students' content-based knowledge; 2) the development and honing of analytical and critical thinking skills; and 3) the inspiration to apply these skills to the broad range of academic and non-academic problems facing society today.

To achieve these objectives, I guide students through different stages of learning using diverse strategies and tools. First, I lead students through selected readings from scientifically rigorous texts to help them acquire, retain, and integrate content. To facilitate exploration of this content, I use instructional methods ranging from brief lectures punctuated by class discussions to online forums. I also use a variety of assessment methods to enable students to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways. This includes live performances, visual illustrations, and three-dimensional and multi-media models, in addition to more conventional, paper-based assessments.

After helping students grow their content-based knowledge, I help them hone their analytical skills. We focus on 1) identifying and evaluating empirical evidence in support of or against proposed theories, 2) drawing evidence-based conclusions, and 3) translating interpretations of observations into new, testable hypotheses. To help students transition from knowledge acquisition to analytical thought, I provide them accessible summaries of seminal empirical research. This helps them focus on the important task of identifying and distinguishing between a published study's hypotheses, results, and conclusions. This ability to discriminate between interpretation and observation is a crucial skill for understanding and conducting sound scientific research, and for becoming an informed consumer and analyst of information in the world at large.

These guided instructional experiences culminate with my students generating novel hypotheses, deriving testable predictions, and designing studies to test these predictions. I supervise them as they conduct their newly designed studies, analyze and interpret study results, and prepare research reports for submission to peer-reviewed journals.

To help students enjoy this intellectual risk-taking, I take deliberate measures to create an openly interactive classroom environment. I actively seek my students' feedback, participate in online study forums with them, invite and encourage them to question and challenge ideas, and regularly consult with them during open office hours and individual appointments.

I am also a dedicated research mentor. I have supervised over 100 independent research projects, including Master's and undergraduate honors theses. Through the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin, I also mentored 20 interns, the majority of whom were from underrepresented minority backgrounds and the first in their families to go to college. Seventy-five percent of these mentees have successfully gone on to graduate and professional schools: seven entered Master's programs, four are currently in medical school, and four are pursuing their PhDs.

I am honored and privileged to help students become informed and analytical thinkers. Helping them cultivate these skills so that they can excel in and make positive contributions to society in whatever profession they pursue—*that* gives teaching great meaning to me.