Teaching Philosophy: Lise Abrams

Teaching and mentoring students, whether in the classroom or in my laboratory, have always been my passion and were instrumental in my decision to become a professor. As an undergraduate, I was inspired by several of my professors. These exceptional teachers encouraged my intellectual curiosity in their classes and helped me to hone my critical thinking and research skills, doing so in the context of a supportive learning environment. These experiences instilled in me a love of teaching that has guided my development as a professor throughout my career, motivating me to offer those same life-changing experiences to my own students.

My teaching philosophy consists of **three main goals**:

- Inspire students' intellectual curiosity by encouraging them to be active, engaged learners.
- Develop critical thinking capabilities that will serve students both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Create a learning environment that is supportive and accessible for all students.

Teaching undergraduates in the classroom

Inspire students' intellectual curiosity by encouraging them to be active, engaged learners.
I engage students in the classroom using my enthusiasm for disseminating knowledge in creative and interactive ways. Given that my classes typically consist of students who are diverse in their approaches to learning and in their preexisting knowledge of psychology, I integrate multiple approaches for presenting and evaluating information. One such approach involves the integration of research-based principles into my teaching by presenting classic studies and theories in the field, discussing empirical evidence for and against these theories, and examining newer frameworks that are not as extensively tested but are promising. I also incorporate my own research into my lectures to illustrate first-hand how research progresses from a theoretical idea to empirical data. Another approach is to use vibrant examples such as computer-based demonstrations and videos to illustrate abstract psychological phenomena. These examples include simplified versions of real psychological experiments as well as illustrations of "everyday" psychological phenomena, and they ensure better understanding by allowing students to "experience" the phenomena. They also encourage greater student participation in class because students are able to actively participate in the demonstrations, record their own data, and then compare their results to the class as a whole. A third approach is to link psychological phenomena with practical applications by asking students to relate the knowledge they gain in class to their own cognitive processes in everyday life. All of these active teaching approaches are designed to stimulate students' interest and passion for learning and nurture their growing curiosity for scientific discovery.

Develop students' critical thinking capabilities that will serve them both inside and outside of the classroom.
My classes are generally perceived as "challenging but fair". I focus on developing skills that give students a strong background in scientific thinking and the capacity for making and evaluating sound arguments, skills that will prepare them for a wide array of possible careers. I encourage critical thinking through in-class discussions and written assignments that challenge students to think more deeply and thoughtfully about the topics being presented. To this end, during my lectures, I pose open-ended questions that give students the opportunity to consider

different theoretical explanations and to evaluate the degree to which evidence for these theories is convincing. When in-class demonstrations do not replicate findings from classic studies, I have students hypothesize about potential factors that may have contributed to the discrepant results. In written assignments, I require students to synthesize literature, critique research, and generate predictions about alternative results. A typical assignment might require students to develop a hypothesis about how some variable will affect cognition and then design an experiment to test this hypothesis. All assignments are designed to motivate students to engage in novel ways of thinking. Similar to the written assignments, my exams challenge students by requiring more than a regurgitation of definitions that have been memorized. Instead, my exams test students' abilities to discover relationships between diverse concepts, apply knowledge to new situations, and interpret research in multiple ways. In short, through my teaching, I strive to teach not only the material but also a way of thinking that students can apply more broadly to enhance their understanding of and engagement with the world around them.

Create a learning environment that is supportive and accessible for all students.
Outside of the academic aspects of teaching, I believe in the importance of creating an environment that is open and encouraging to all students. I strive to insure a welcoming environment for students to share their cultural perspectives, and I work to incorporate multicultural examples and perspectives into class content. With the aim of creating a supportive class environment, I try to connect with students on a more individual level by learning about their relevant interests and incorporating those into class examples and assignments. I encourage students to come to office hours to discuss their ideas and questions or to talk about related issues, such as research experience or graduate school in psychology. I give students guidance on how to change their learning and study strategies to be successful in my (and others') courses. I emphasize the importance of getting involved in research and in developing a relationship with a faculty mentor. Lastly, I am a compassionate listener who is sensitive to the many competing demands of being an undergraduate student as well as the stressors that accompany being a high-achieving student.

Supervising undergraduates in research

While my goals for teaching in my research laboratory are similar to those in the classroom, supervising students in research enables me to give students more individualized instruction and an in-depth understanding of how programmatic research is designed, conducted, and disseminated. I conceptualize my undergraduate research assistants as collaborators, encouraging them to be independent thinkers while integrating them into my ongoing research program. Within this approach, students learn how to review literature to develop hypotheses, design experiments to test those hypotheses, develop stimuli, collect and analyze data, and write manuscripts. Through all of these experiences, I teach undergraduates to take pride in their work, to hold their standards of research to the highest level, and to critically evaluate their work during all phases of the research process. Students in my laboratory also have opportunities to present their research at national and local conferences and to become co-authors on publications in peer-reviewed journals. It is incredibly rewarding as a mentor to watch students learn, question, and discover the excitement of research.