

## Statement of Teaching Interests

Psychology is a subject of natural interest to almost everybody, and it is consistently one of the most popular majors in most colleges and universities. To a teacher of psychology, this is both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, there is an opportunity to reach a broad audience and develop students' interests in psychology. On the other, many students may not find themselves fully engaged in the course material. One reason for this is that psychology has both a quantitative, experimental aspect as well as an interpersonal, clinical aspect, and students whose interests lie on one side of this divide are often required to take several courses on the other side. For these students, their expectations of a psychology course can be quite different from those of their instructors.

As a teacher, I believe that the wide audience and different background experiences of many psychology students presents an opportunity, as well as a challenge. To take advantage of this opportunity, I believe it is of the utmost importance to engage the students. By using a combination of short video presentations, in-class examples, and humour where appropriate, an instructor can effectively guide a student's attention throughout a lecture-based course. This is not simply pandering to an audience, but a way of diversifying the presentation and helping to explain and ground concepts. For example, short videos of interviews with patients with Broca's and Wernicke's aphasia can help students remember the differences between the two, and better understand the roles of different neural areas. As courses become smaller and more focused, discussion can begin to augment lectures, and provides an even more natural way of engaging a student. Having had a good deal of performing and stage direction experience, I am quite skilled at presenting to an audience. I believe that a good instructor is able to maintaining and guiding the attention of their students so that they will get more out of a class than simply course credit

My other major goal as an instructor in psychology is to give students a better understanding of the rigorous, quantitative nature of experimental psychology. People often don't think of psychology as a hard science on the same level as chemistry or biology. In my teaching, I try to stress *how* we know something just as much as what we know. Applying the scientific method to human behaviour is a critical part of this field, and I believe this is a good way to engender a deeper level of thought. In the same vein, I am not afraid to include numbers and graphs in my lectures, to get students thinking about the sometimes tricky nature of behavioural measurement, and to become comfortable with the quantitative aspects of behavioural science. One simple way of promoting this, for example, is to ask students to name the independent and dependent variables of an experiment, and to give the unit of measurement of the dependent variable. This prompts students to think about how we know what we know, and to think critically, rather than simply memorize a list of facts. In my experience as a student, the most effective teachers have been both rigorous and engaging; those are the teachers who have been able to shape my viewpoint and whom I strive to emulate.

As a U.S. citizen studying in Canada, I have not been permitted to teach full courses during my Ph.D. or postdoctoral study. However, I am passionate about teaching, and have sought out multiple opportunities to do so. I have given guest lectures in undergraduate and graduate classes, and received strong positive feedback from students as well as the regular instructors each time (teacher evaluations from these are available upon request). I have also served as the advisor to two graduate students, who have studied primarily with me, under the aegis of my postdoctoral advisor, and guided them to make useful, substantial contributions to research papers. In addition, I have tried to give guidance to my fellow lab mates, acting as a de facto statistics advisor for the lab, presenting a detailed workshop on advanced uses of Excel for research purposes.

I am happy to teach introductory courses in psychology, and am also ready to teach courses in Cognition, Sensation and Perception, and Psychology of Language, among others. One course I am especially excited about adding to the department is a course on the Psychology of Music. This would

be an upper-level course intended to teach nonmusicians about how the human brain hears, processes, and responds to music. I believe that a course such as this would prove to be very popular, as it provides a scientific look at a topic that is of general interest. A sample syllabus for this course and one example lecture on the relationship between language and music can be found on my website, <http://www.brams.org/members/seanhutchins>