

While teaching various classes at Penn State University – Schuylkill, I believe my teaching philosophy has been fleshed out to a rather simple idea: I want to make sure I am doing everything I can to allow my students to get the most out of their time at Penn State -Schuylkill and use it in their lives beyond college. I believe that I do in three main areas: in the classroom, advising students, and mentoring students.

I feel that finding ways for students to understand the material is the most important thing for me to do in class. One way to do this is through examples from pop culture. I like to bring in clips from television show that relate to material I am discussing in class. For example, when talking about different types of aggression, I show clips from an episode of *The Office* that shows different types of aggression. What I like most about this clip is that it shows various types of aggression in a funny way. Students really enjoy these examples and the clips can help break up the monotony of a lecture class and is a way to make the material more memorable and understandable. Another way I like to make the material easier to understand is to perform in-class demonstrations. I have found many demonstrations that I have utilized in my Introductory Psychology and Research Methods courses at Penn State - Schuylkill. The students have conducted lab assignments that include conditioning a computer simulated rat to press a bar for food, look at hemispheric lateralization, and the Stroop effect. All of these demonstrations give the students valuable hands-on experience with challenging concepts in psychology. My goal with these assignments is to make many of the abstract concepts in psychology more concrete and easier for the students to understand. These assignments also have an extra benefit. Many students who major in psychology tell me that these assignments really help sparked their interest in psychology.

After students decide their major on our campus, they typically change their advisor to a faculty member in that area. I have been fortunate enough to advise over three dozen students during my time on campus. I find this advising role is very important to help students plan what they are going to do after they leave school. A question I always ask my advisees, with a bit of tongue in cheek, is ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ Usually, after they roll their eyes at me, they give an honest answer. I believe it is my job as their advisor to get them to that goal. However, one of the things that I had noticed rather early on is that my advisees may have an idea of what they want to do but are not 100% sure how to get there. Especially when their dream job involves any form of post graduate education. This is not surprising as many students at the Schuylkill campus are first generation college students in their families, so they do not know how to navigate the labyrinth that is the graduate school application process. After attempting to help many students with this process I realized that our students needed more help not just with graduate study but with how to prepare for life post-graduation. I decided to start teaching a one credit special topics course that focused on how to prepare for life after college. The course was used to help students navigate the decisions about what to do after they graduated with such topics as, the graduate application process, how to find a job, creating a CV/resume, and how to ask people to be your letters of reference. The course is a very popular course on campus and I love how the students leave it feeling better prepared for the next phase of their lives. I like to think that my advice has helped them a little.

Finally, I think it is important to act as a mentor to undergraduates in how to do research in psychology. I offer an independent study course every semester where students get the opportunity to help create experiments, collect and analyze data, and I assist in a mentor role. I try to match students up to projects that they would most likely be interested in. In many cases, the students stay in the lab and assist projects that they worked on even after the semester is over and they are no longer getting course credit for independent study. I believe that students stay around to help because they feel more personally involved with the project. Through this model of mentoring, I have had six projects with undergraduates as first authors presented at national conferences and one paper published in an academic journal. I find it incredibly rewarding when students take ownership on a project to the point that they can go to a national conference and discuss their research and display an expertise in a subject. My hope is that this experience will spark a lifelong interest in psychology.