Teaching Statement - Bonnie M. Perdue

My approach to teaching is inherently intertwined with and influenced by my scholarship interests and background in learning and cognition. This leads me to implement evidence-based practices in the classroom and seek out opportunities to improve my teaching and learn about the most recent research in the field. A variety of techniques have been identified in the empirical literature that support learning, memory, and long-term consolidation of content, and these techniques are widely implemented in all of the courses I teach. During my time at Agnes Scott, I have had the opportunity to teach a range of students, including majors and nonmajors, across all levels, in a variety of classes. I even have the fun opportunity to interact with prospective students during Scholar's and/or Achievement weekend each Spring.

To date, I have taught *Global Gateways, Introductory Psychology: Development, Social Behavior, and Individual Differences, Introductory Psychology: Biological Foundations and Cognitive Processes, Research Statistics, Research Design and Methods, Animal Behavior, Animal and Human Learning (*formerly *Learning and Memory), Cognitive Neuroscience*, *Research in Cognitive Neuroscience,* and *Directed Research.*

Teaching such a range of courses has allowed me to explore and develop specific elements of my teaching philosophy in varied class sizes and levels ranging from Summit courses to large introductory courses to small research capstones, but through this I have also identified several consistent themes that define my approach to teaching.

Teaching Themes:

1. Providing a Challenging Learning Environment

2. Working Together to Learn More

3. Extending Beyond the Boundaries of the Classroom

4. Evolving and Adapting Teaching Strategies

Challenging and Engaging Learning Environment

I am firmly committed to providing a engaging and supportive environment, but one that also challenges each student to achieve their full potential. One practice that I initiated early in my teaching career, and continue today, is to begin each class with a quiz. Students often express resistance when first learning of the practice, but by the end of the semester, most students greatly appreciate the act. I do this for several reasons. It is an evidence-based practice with a growing scientific literature that supports the idea that retrieving, or trying to remember, information is the best way to learn it and retain it. Long-term retention is critically important to carrying the lessons learned in the classroom to whatever comes next for students. Frequent, low-stakes quizzing has been identified as a key way to achieve this. These quizzes occur each class meeting and are low stakes because they receive partial credit for simply being present and these quizzes do not make up a large portion of the overall grade. This technique establishes a need for completing reading assignments and reviewing previous material which I expect of all students. It also serves as a useful metric for students (and for me) to monitor their progress prior to exams or major assignments and to creates an opportunity to meet early and often to address any concerns. Finally, it allows me to draw a connection between previously covered material, reading assignments and what will be discussed.

I also set and adhere to high expectations for the quality of work produced in each class. Over the years, I have created and adapted various rubrics for course assignments to fully align student expectations of workload with my own expectations of what should be produced. In addition, I have worked to break down papers into smaller components to allow students the chance to fully develop their ideas with feedback from myself and peers. As one example, in a recently redesigned research methods course, we implemented a structured submission process for a research proposal that spanned the entire semester. Students submit several drafts along the way focused on various aspects of research design (correlational, observational, experimental) on a topic of their choice. They receive feedback for each of these drafts from me, but we also include several formal opportunities for peer review of the content. As a result, the final papers produced in the course are much stronger and more in line with expectations, and the students learn a great deal more about the process than if a single paper was submitted at the end of the semester.

Working Together to Learn More

The professor undoubtedly plays a critical role in establishing the classroom environment, but I think there is also great value and importance in the role that peers

play in the learning process. My policies and assignments are geared towards challenging students, and I also try to create a classroom environment that allows students to support and challenge one another. By creating this type of community in the classroom, students begin to work together and become active agents in learning, rather than more passive recipients of knowledge.

Working in a group is an important skill for students to acquire during college and provides an excellent way to enhance learning. Students often find groupwork challenging, but with the right support and tools, it can be an enriching and important experience. In my introductory courses, I frequently have students reflect on a question individually, then discuss in a smaller group, and then discuss as a whole class. This gives each student a chance to develop confidence in expressing her thoughts and getting feedback from others without the pressure of necessarily having to speak to the whole room. As courses become more advanced, groupwork becomes a formal part of the graded course, often in the form of a semester long project. However, to provide support for the process, I have each group create a contract at the beginning of the semester that outlines schedules, division of responsibility, expectations, and ramifications of failing to meet expectations. Students have a clear idea of what is expected from group members and this has made groupwork far more productive as they learn to rely on one another and clearly communicate expectations and feedback.

In my 300-level courses, I have recently introduced a structure in which students must first write an individual literature review on a pre-selected topic, and only then begin to work together on a group-based paper. This forces each student to take responsibility for the content and come to the group with a degree of expertise. In recent years, I have also begun implementing a lot of informal teamwork in my classes. For example, in my research methods course, students engage in team-based learning as a more formal group learning experience, but I also have impromptu, low-stakes projects to facilitate group cohesion and learning. One of the first activities we do in the class is to create a brief review of statistics. Students are put into groups and have class time to design a brief presentation for classmates on a selected statistical test. After the group works together to compile the ideas, these brief presentations are shared with the rest of the class. There is not a grade attached to this type of exercise, but it often yields highly creative and engaging content from the students as well as an opportunity to learn from one another and work in a group setting without high stakes being involved.

Extending Beyond the Classroom
My hope as an instructor is that I can facilitate each student's development into a critical thinker who is capable of analyzing issues and drawing connections to their own lives

outside of the classroom. I try to create lectures and assignments that facilitate this with the hope that students will transfer these experiences to their own situations.

I have had great experiences in the last several years in effectively extending beyond the classroom walls. In particular, my involvement with the SUMMIT program has allowed for several courses that serve to do just this. Global Gateways is a team-taught course that focuses on global issues through the lens of a certain topic. For the two semesters in which I was involved in the course, the focus was on food. We examine how food represents and reflects a complex and intricate set of global processes and systems. My specific focus was on the Neuroscience of Food and how this relates to broader global issues. Students also drew connections to their specific destination locations for the Spring Journeys trip. Overall, this course was an excellent experience for me as a teacher in helping students to think beyond the classroom in a concrete manner. Another SUMMIT experience that I was lucky to have was to travel to Croatia for the Journeys 2018 trip as the co-leader. Our topic was focused on the environment and ecology in Croatia and how these were influenced by involvement with the EU. Having the opportunity to travel with 20 students was incredible and I learned a tremendous amount, but hope to have also helped students place the classroom content in a much broader context.

Another approach to broaden the learning experience is through the use of technology. I have also tried to incorporate some technological applications into the classroom, especially as they are supported by evidence-based research. In the last three years, I have worked to create external websites, bring technology into the classroom, and use technology to help students reach a broader audience. In my Animal Behavior course, students post "press releases" about recent research articles to an external website. This gives students the valuable experience of creating content for a broader audience as well as practice in the skill of creating content and posting it on a website. It also allows for interaction between the students in terms of the content they've created, so they have to think of the assignment as more than just one professor reading the work, but possibly anyone in the world. I presented this work at the Society for the Teaching of Psychology conference in 2017 and it was well-received by my peers. I also incorporate technology into most of my classes through various Google Applications, but my favorite experience has been with Google Slides. I will create a "shared" blank slideshow that all student can access and edit. Within one class period, I can ask students to either work individually or in groups to "create a slide" summarizing content on a certain topic. By the end, there is a shared resource for everyone to access and often a broader range of topics than I might have come up with. For example, in my Cognitive Neuroscience course, the textbook provides an overview of historical figures in the field, but it is

limited in terms of diversity. I challenge students to expand the representation and find a neuroscientist, create one slide to highlight the accomplishments of this person, and then we scroll through and discuss at the end of class. Students are playing an active role in their learning and create highly engaging content. A final way that I have used technology to expand beyond the classroom is to have students create a video about a research topic that is intended to reach and educate a broader audience than their classmates. This is supplemental to a standard classroom presentation and provides an opportunity to learn another skill and practice sharing information to a varied audience.

Evolving pedagogy

I am open to feedback on my courses and frequently make changes based on student feedback in course evaluations, mid-semester evaluations, and seek out opportunities to improve teaching practices. I regularly attend and participate in teaching panels at the Southeastern Psychological Association and will be presenting some of my work on using Google Slides in the classroom at the 2019 meeting. I have attended the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology on two occasions as well as the Society for the Teaching of Psychology Annual Conference on Teaching (ACT) on two occasions. In addition to presenting SoTL research at these conferences, I have also led sessions on "Teaching and Parenting" and created an online group to facilitate discussion and support among those interested in the topic. I was recently selected to serve as an expert reviewer on the Advisory Panel for the National Standards for High School Curricula (APA, 2011) which advances the scientific rigor of high school psychology courses. This will be an exciting opportunity to serve within the field, but I will also learn a great deal about the preparations and standards of the high school curriculum.

Another great benefit of attending teaching conferences is the opportunity to connect to others interested in a scientific approach to pedagogy. At a meeting in 2017, I made a connection to faculty at Thiel College and UW-Superior. They developed a supplement to statistics classes that focuses on socio-emotional learning and providing students with tools to overcome academic stress and develop resilience and academic buoyancy. I have joined efforts with the to expand this to other psychology class and have been collecting data to test the efficacy of this practice at varied levels. The approach involves a weekly assignment grounded in the scientific literature that students learn a new skill (e.g., goal visualization, meditation, etc). I have implemented this in several classes and the initial results suggest that this is a highly impactful and positive for students ranging from introductory to graduating. We will continue collecting data for the next year and then ultimately publish our findings The opportunity to directly interface pedagogy and scholarship is an exciting one for me and I will continue to seek

out opportunities to improve my own teaching as well as contribute to the scholarship of learning.