My philosophy for teaching about psychology and languag is grounded in compassion, self-efficacy, and research. I employ evidence-based, application-oriented activities to practice these values with the students in my classes. I aim to provide all students with tangible skills, stimulating discussion, and an inclusive and empowering classroom environment.

Compassion

My foremost value as an instructor is compassion. I believe that students engage more fully with the material when they feel valued, respected, and safe. One way I practice compassion towards my students is by offering multiple formats for demonstrating knowledge. I try to vary the submission format for low-point assignments, so that students have a low-stakes sandbox for practicing dispreferred skills (e.g., academic writing / oral presentations). On high-point assignments, students may choose the modality that best showcases their thoughts and mastery of the material. For example, for the final project in my Developmental Psychology course, students could choose between completing a [final presentation](#) or an [infographic](#) ([view students' cool finished products!](#)). To my delight, 50% of students chose each option.

From my perspective, providing stability and predictability in the classroom is another form of compassion. When students know what to expect, logistics-related cognitive load is decreased (Chandler & Sweller, 1991), and students can focus on the *content* of the course. Students in my Developmental Psychology class wrote: *"Erin also had the most organized, comprehensive, and clear syllabus and course schedule that I've ever received at Duke. It was incredibly helpful when it came to managing assignments and preparing myself to do well in the class"*. Similarly, I provide a roadmap at the beginning of each class session (e.g., 10 minutes lecture, 20 minute small group activity, 10 minutes lecture, 20 minutes full-group discussion). I find that when students feel comfortable and familiar with the format of an activity, they're able to explore more complex ideas.

Instructors can further demonstrate compassion in classes by understanding that students have tough weeks, outside commitments, and sometimes need mental health breaks. I strive to accommodate these challenges with built-in flexibility for students. For example, students in my zoom lectures can earn participation points by providing substantive comments through chat or out loud during lecture, or by submitting written answers to discussion questions after lecture. Additionally, once per semester, students can make use of a no-questions-asked quiet day, where they can refrain from class discussion without losing participation points. By providing students with explicit policies for dealing with hardships during the semester, instructors can demonstrate their investment in students as imperfect human beings, not infallible A-plus-earning machines.

Self-efficacy

As an instructor, my ultimate goal is for students to take the skills they learn in the classroom and feel empowered to apply them in their careers. Students with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more open to trying novel approaches and more resilient when faced with challenges or setbacks (Keye

& Pigeon, 2013; Prat-Sala, 2010). To promote students' sense of self-efficacy, I encourage them to tackle contemporary issues in psychological research, education, and policy.

As the next generation of scientists, our students will be grappling with problems like: *How can we reduce bias in participant samples? What should be done about psychology's replication crisis?* By soliciting students' thoughts and answers to these pressing questions, not only are we promoting growth of the field and encouraging conversation around these topics, but we're signaling to students that they're welcome members of the larger academic community. For example, during one in-class activity, students first learned about the process of recruiting infants to participate in psychological research here at Duke. Students then broke into groups and brainstormed where bias might be introduced in recruitment and how labs could improve the process. The ideas generated by students during these discussions are currently being implemented to help make research samples at Duke more diverse and inclusive.

Students are also encouraged to apply the course material to the world outside the classroom. For example, my developmental psychology students discuss contemporary issues such as: *Should vaccines be mandatory? Should the United States implement universal pre-k? How does abortion policy impact the lives of children?* The purpose of drawing real-world connections is to communicate to students that 1) their learning matters, and 2) through their learning, they can make a positive difference in the world. This strategy has the *added* benefit of promoting retention of material: drawing on students' experiences helps to form semantic and episodic connections that support memory (Burkley & Burkley, 2009; Henrichs, 2013). As one former student commented: *"I thought this class was intellectually stimulating because of the application of developmental psychology concepts to real life issues in almost every class. This made it easier to understand the importance of these concepts outside the context of the classroom."*

Research

One benefit of receiving a college education at a world-class research institution is the access to cutting-edge research and resources. Students in my class use research to supplement their learning. Psychology has changed over the past decades and many textbook studies, while important and foundational, no longer represent our modern understanding of psychological processes. My teaching philosophy draws on recently-published peer-reviewed research articles. Students are permitted to select topics and articles relevant to their interests, and together, we review the findings of the paper and practice academic literacy skills. In my courses, we also practice critiquing studies, and students are encouraged to develop their sense of what is and isn't compelling and what conclusions are unsupported by evidence. Tying in with self-efficacy, students design their own follow-up studies, gaining proficiency in the scientific process and learning what it takes to answer their own questions.

In my future career, I hope that my research program and undergraduate teaching are tightly intertwined. My dream course sequence would see students learning and practicing hands-on data collection skills, designing and pre-registering experiments, analyzing data, creating figures, and writing scientific papers. While much of this information is covered in traditional psychology lecture

courses (e.g., Statistics, Research Methods), allowing students to take an active role in the process facilitates deeper learning. See sample syllabus for an eye-tracking-based research course [here](#).

Obviously not all students want to pursue a career in research, but engaging with primary sources is an information literacy skill that is applicable for all students. Students in my Developmental Psychology course were tasked with reading and synthesizing research articles throughout the semester ([template here](#)). Students were permitted to select the articles that most intrigued them from a list of readings relevant to the course material. Some of the skills emphasized for this assignment were: *What do I do when I encounter jargon or statistics I'm unfamiliar with? How do I evaluate whether an article is trustworthy or not? What insights or further questions does this study yield?* These experiences fortify a valuable skill for academic careers and for life, as learning how to critically evaluate claims empowers students to better navigate the sea of online information and misinformation. Students who completed this (pilot) assignment wrote that: *"I learned how to critically analyze research articles for useful information."* and *"It also taught me more close reading skills"*.

Growth as a Teacher

As my Developmental Psychology students know, Jean Piaget believed that we learn best through experience and exploration. I have experienced and explored a variety of teaching styles throughout my semester as a teaching aide to a DeafBlind professor at Towson University, as a teaching assistant for five semesters and an additional semester as instructor of record at Duke. During these teaching experiences, I have iteratively honed the structure and style of assessments and assignments based on student feedback. In addition to the end-of-semester course evaluations, I make a point to solicit anonymous feedback after students' first exam, so that students can express freely what is and isn't working. After reviewing the mid-semester evaluations, I provide students a list of course changes in response to their feedback. Examples of changes from past courses include: reorganizing the course website for easier navigation, setting up automatic reminders for upcoming due dates, changing the classroom seating arrangement to a circle (rather than rows), and adding more small-group activities into discussion section.

To gain further knowledge of current pedagogical techniques, I am enrolled in the Certificate in College Teaching program. Throughout this program, I have received feedback from peer graduate student instructors, co-designed a new departmental course (LINK), and learned about evidence-based teaching techniques. It has also enabled me to articulate my values as an instructor: My teaching philosophy emphasizes **compassion**, so students feel safe and supported exploring new ideas and new experiences; **self-efficacy**, so that students believe themselves capable of developing and communicating knowledge; and **research**, so that students have access to the wealth of information from scientists past and present.

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