My teaching philosophy is grounded in the awareness that ***context matters***. As an instructor and developmental psychologist, my goal is to effectively teach to a diverse group of students, all of whom have unique developmental trajectories. These trajectories continue to evolve both in the context of the learning environment we co-create, but also in the context of their individual characteristics, previous life experiences, and the broader familial, social, and cultural contexts in which they live, work, and interact with others on a daily basis (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). With context at the forefront of my teaching, I strive to foster an inclusive classroom for all students, engage my students' interests and experiences outside of the classroom, and facilitate their understanding of how course materials are applicable within their own unique and ever-changing contexts. Along with fostering an inclusive environment, I get to know each of my students individually to best tailor course content to their specific needs, ensure they feel comfortable approaching me with questions, and to understand how my role as their instructor can extend beyond the classroom. For example, I am readily available for virtual and in-person meetings and encourage students to book appointments as often as needed. I use these meetings for one-on-one teaching opportunities, which often expand to graduate school or vocational mentorship, and even future research collaborations. I also use these meetings to help students develop their own research interests and thus connect more personally with what we are learning in class.

Across all my courses, I integrate research skills into my teaching materials from the day students enter the classroom. How a student 'learns to learn', in other words, how a student learns to think like a scientist and become a conscious consumer of scientific knowledge, is foundational to every additional course they encounter as an undergraduate, but also to navigating life. Thus, another driving force in my teaching is the belief that ***science is a life skill***. Teaching science as a life skill involves promoting critical thinking skills through hands-on and experiential exercises that offer students autonomy in their own learning. Most practically, this approach involves teaching students about how research findings are generated (i.e., peer review and empirical vs. non-empirical research), how to better determine the quality of research, and finally, how to read and understand peer-reviewed research articles.

Even when using a course textbook, it is invaluable that students understand how each chapter is constructed based on findings from empirical research studies, and further, that they understand how to find and digest quality peer-reviewed, empirical sources independently. In non-methods specific courses (e.g., child development), I attempt to blend these scientific skills with other course objectives such as "to critically distinguish, understand, and apply the major theories of child development" to help students understand how theory is foundational for research, and how theories evolve as new research is generated. An example activity from one of my previous courses can be found here, where I taught students how to read peer-reviewed empirical research and gave them an opportunity to apply their knowledge to an article within our class content area.

When asked to reflect on this class activity designed to promote scientific literacy, previous developmental psychology students provided feedback such as: *"I learned how to effectively read a complete study."*

"Perhaps the biggest thing I learned is that there are many ways of conducting research, and some designs are better than others for specific situations."

"I learned a lot about the differences in published articles relating to psychology versus those in biology or chemistry. Psychological studies require a lot of background explanation about how the researcher is interpreting previous theories into a new way to apply or study the theory. I liked that this forced me to see the application of the theories that we have discussed in class."

"I have a better understanding of how to comb through an article to find answers to questions being asked."

"I learned just how extensive studies are for real journals. I took away how to identify certain parts of a research article and how to identify certain designs of the article."

"I learned that there are many factors that make up a real study. The articles can be hard to dissect but all the answers are in it somewhere."

The last core of my teaching philosophy is that ***learning is an active process***. This statement holds true for both myself as the instructor, and for my students. As an instructor, I continually learn from my students both through classroom interactions and written feedback. For example, I give my students anonymous surveys throughout each semester and strive to re-work the way I present information based on the feedback I receive. I also ask students to submit short course reflections on a few occasions throughout the semester. These reflections generally include prompts (e.g., "which developmental theory have you connected with most and why?") that ask students to dissect and reflect on what they are learning, apply it to real-world experiences, and offer honest insights about their interactions with both myself and the course materials. I attempt to facilitate learning through collaborative peer-activities that expose students to other viewpoints. Further, in both methods and substantive courses, I also create assignments that give students autonomy to express creativity, choose their own topic, and/or actively tailor their submission to their own life and goals. One example is a film analysis project with corresponding educational guide.

Teaching Responsibilities, Experience, and Interests

Over the past six years, I have extensive experience instructing, guest lecturing, and serving as a TA for a variety of courses in both Psychology and HDFS departments at both R1 and liberal arts institutions. Broadly, these courses include: Child Development, Atypical Development, Biosocial Foundations of the Family, Research Methods, and Multilevel Modeling for Developmental and Family Researchers. Through these courses (official descriptions for all courses linked here), I am experienced in teaching traditional, online, and hybrid formats and am proficient in multiple course delivery platforms, such as Blackboard and Brightspace. I also have experience creating my own course companion websites through website builders like Squarespace. Below I provide a more in-depth overview of my most integral teaching experiences.

Research Design and Program Evaluation (HDFS 346): In spring 2021, I was the instructor of record for Research Design and Program Evaluation at Purdue University. Most of the students enrolled in this course were pursuing careers in either human services-related professions or early childhood development programs. Therefore, my goal was to teach my students applied research skills, such as how to evaluate and understand research and subsequently use it to benefit the children and families with whom they will work. I also aimed to teach students to evaluate community programs and design their own applied research study. The overarching project for this course was an independent research proposal, where students must generate their own research question, develop, and describe the methodology they will use to answer their question and provide an evidence-based rationale for both their research question and corresponding methodology. I required that students meet with me individually throughout the semester, which involved individualized instruction on research methods and working together with the student to successfully develop their own research question that is testable, measurable, and important. As the instructor, I developed new activities, assignments, and grading rubrics that help students incrementally build the skills needed to successfully complete an independent research proposal over the course of one semester. See here for a list of activities and assignments that are part of this iterative semester-long learning process, as well as student examples of research proposals from my course. At Purdue, I was also a TA for this course in fall 2020 (where I taught a small synchronous online section each week) and Research Methods in Psychology (PSY 255) in spring 2016.

Child Development (PSYC 2216): As the instructor of record for Child Development, my primary goal was to teach students to think like a developmental scientist, while providing engaging, thought-provoking, and applicable content on theory, methods, and developmental domains/trajectories across childhood (e.g., physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development). Many of my students had never

read an empirical peer-reviewed research article before, nor did they understand the process through which we get the knowledge we have within the field of child development. We discussed and dissected articles as a class, giving students the tools and confidence to answer questions about the research design, strengths and weaknesses of a study, theoretical ties to course content, and implications for science and practice. I also included a guest speaker series in this course that highlighted unique careers that interface with child development from each developmental domain (e.g., clinical child psychologist, speech language pathologist). This course also included projects where students could apply their knowledge of theoretical concepts through popular culture and create resources for families in the community that are grounded in theory and research. Overall, I designed all new lectures, instructional materials, and assignments for this course and look forward to continuing to find unique ways for students to evaluate and understand research within their regular, non-methods focused psychology courses.

Biosocial Foundations of the Family (HDFS 305): As co-instructor of record for HDFS 305 with Dr. Valerie Knopik (Fall 2018 and current), I created and delivered roughly half of course lectures on topics including biological systems involved in stress, physiological and stress measurement in research, how stress physiology unfolds and across the lifespan, and the implications of stress within various developmental contexts (e.g., parent-child and marital relationships). I also assisted with overall course assignment/exam development and independently created a new course project—a group poster where students worked collaboratively to generate a scientific poster on a chosen topic that relates to stress physiology. This project culminated with a class poster session where we and other faculty from HDFS could attend student posters, ask questions, and hear students present their work. I created the instructions for this assignment, along with a comprehensive grading rubric, poster templates, and peer feedback form. Ultimately this project provides another example of teaching research and presentation skills within the framework of content specific course goals (e.g., "describe the direct implications of stress physiology for families, children, adolescents, and adults").

Multilevel Modeling for Developmental and Family Researchers (HDFS 327): Finally, serving as the Teaching Assistant for an advanced graduate-level statistics course allowed me to convey my enthusiasm of statistics and the unique research questions we can ask when we add more advanced statistical methods to our scientific toolbox. This role required an in-depth foundational knowledge of statistics, advanced statistical programming skills in R and SAS, and the ability to teach students complex concepts, such as how to write MLM equations that correspond to each level of their own research question. A large portion of my role for this course involved helping students apply techniques learned in class to their own data—including developing an appropriate research question, cleaning, screening, and restructuring data, writing and trouble-shooting syntax, and interpreting results. This course was unique in that students completed all homework assignments and projects using their own data, or an appropriate public dataset that fit their interests. Therefore, I also had weekly one-on-one teaching opportunities, all of which presented unique challenges and the necessity for me to truly individualize my instructional methods and understand diversified ways to apply the techniques students were learning in class.

Conclusion

Given my education and teaching experience in research methods and psychological statistics, I am well-poised to teach PSY 222 (Research Methods) and PSY 221 (Statistics for Psychology) at Niagara University. I am also particularly excited to teach courses in developmental psychology and atypical development such as PSY 201 (Developmental Psychology), PSY 310 (Child Psychology), and PSY 353 (Abnormal Psychology) among other foundational courses (i.e., PSY 101). My research background and training in sleep, biological foundations of development, and the clinical neuroscience of autism spectrum disorder also lend themselves well to teaching a variety of other upper-level electives and special topics courses as there is need and student interest. Representative comments from teaching evaluations are provided on the next page. Faculty evaluations of my teaching abilities, along with example numerical teaching evaluations are included in a separate teaching effectiveness document. Overall, I have

demonstrated repeated success in teaching at the undergraduate level, especially across contexts that are relevant to the Assistant Professor role, and I am committed to continuing that success at Niagara University.

Representative Comments from Teaching Evaluations

The following are selected comments from independently taught courses - typed exactly as written.

Interactions with Students

"Professor Abel was to transition to distance learning smoothly. She was very empathic to what wee were all going through. I felt as though I could reach out when I needed help without any judgement. I also felt like she truly cares about her students."

"The teacher interacted with the students in a fun way especially when learning a new topic/ By using games like Kahoot."

"She makes sure everyone has an opportunity to pass her class. She's straightforward and easy going."

"She made sure to have us involved and participating."

"She was always very flexible and wanting to know and do what makes you feel good. she was always figuring out effective ways to get us involved based off our learning habits."

"The teacher interacted with the students in a fun way especially when learning a new topic/ By using games like Kahoot."

"Professor Abel was always there to help the students. She always made you feel like she was their to help you in any way she can."

"[I liked] how she was enthusiastic and cared about what the students had to say and their worries"

"[I liked] her enthusiasm and accessibility outside of class."

"Mrs. Abel does a wonderful job encouraging students. When I saw we were required to have two meetings with her I was worried they would be a waste of my time. But she came to them prepared with suggestions on how I could improve my proposal and resources for me to look at. She demonstrated this helpful, caring attitude throughout the semester and I hope she continues to in the future."

"Emily was very willing and able to meet with me to give feedback on any assignments. She was always kind and helpful!"

Teaching Effectiveness and Course Design

"Professor Abel incorporated many in–class learning activities that helped me grasp the main idea of the lecture material. She also brought in professionals from certain fields in the area of study so we could get a realistic, outside view of what child development looks like. She TRULY wants to see her students do well and does everything she can to make that happen. Even after classes transitioned to online, her work ethic still remained the same and out of all of my professors, she along with one other made this transition very easy!"

"The instructor was always enthusiastic when teaching new items."

“I liked the in class activities to help better understand the content given to us other than just the textbook.”

“I liked the class activities that had us all participate and share viewpoints”

“The teacher interacted with the students in a fun way especially when learning a new topic/ By using games like Kahoot.”

“I feel that the way she modeled is course is perfect for effective learning.”

“I really enjoyed how much knowledge she has on this topic, I truly feel that I have learned a lot from her and this course. I have has professors that didn't know the answers to questions we asked about the topic unfortunately.”

“I liked how she wrote important points in the lecture on the board, so we could write it down and remember it.”

“I liked how interesting, fun, and interactive her lectures were. I was never bored in this class.”

“I like how she was very organized which helped with my learning.”

“Pay attention in class and keep up with your work. The work given is not strenuous, very easy to do if you pay attention in class. if you have questions just ask, she is very understanding and will take the time to make sure you understand the lessons”

“Used note cards at the end of class to make sure we understood what was taught that day.”

“Usually in these courses we are fed theories to memorize, but never truly make the connections between theory and real-world consequences.”

“The instructor is explains assignments in a very detailed manner and provides helpful feedback for improvement.”

“I like how meetings with the instructor are required because it forces me to accept help and feedback.”

“Keep offering meetings.”