

# TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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# DOCUMENTATION OF TEACHING

This section provides more information on the three courses where I served at the instructor-level (either teaching an entire course or section): *Cognitive Foundations* (University of California, San Diego), *The Illusion of Perception* (Johns Hopkins University) and *Research Methods in Experimental Psychology* (Johns Hopkins University). In addition, I list a short description of each of the courses I have been invited to guest lecture at University of California, San Diego, as well as the four graduate and undergraduate courses for which I served as a teaching assistant at Johns Hopkins University.

## **Cognitive Foundations Instructor (303 Students) Fall 2018**

Course Description: “This course provides an introduction to the basic concepts of cognitive psychology. Topics include perception, attention, memory, language and thought. The relation of cognitive psychology to cognitive science and to neuropsychology is also covered.”

I completely redesigned the course from when it was last offered at University of California, San Diego. This involved both altering the structure and the content of the course, such as offering different readings and additional kinds of content to engage students in learning material (TED talks, New Yorker articles, etc). To further engage students in-class, I utilized iClickers as well as conducted experiments/demonstrations (with discussion) in every lecture. This was offered as an entry-level undergraduate course to over 200 students, primarily those in their first or second year at University of California, San Diego.

## STUDENT EVALUATIONS

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Do you recommend this **course overall**?

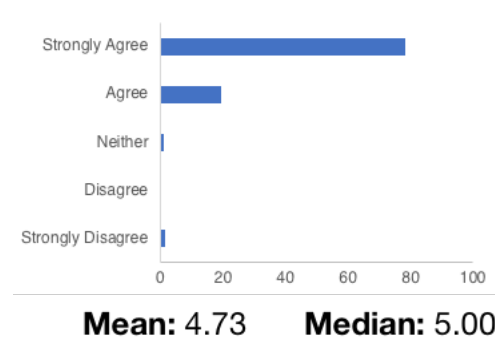
209 (96.8%): Yes  
7 (3.2%): No

Do you recommend the **professor overall**?

210 (98.1%): Yes  
4 (1.9%): No

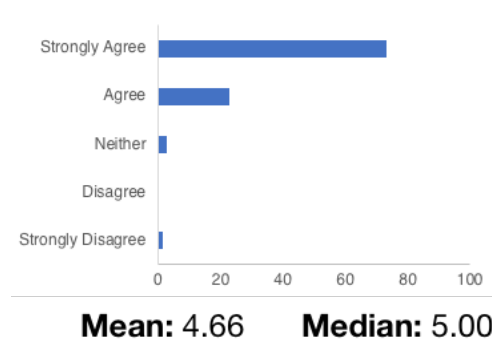
The instructor displayed **proficient command** of the material:

3 (1.4%): Strongly Disagree  
0 (0.0%): Disagree  
2 (1.0%): Neither Agree nor Disagree  
41 (19.5%): Agree  
164 (78.1%): Strongly Agree



The instructor **clearly explained** the course material:

3 (1.4%): Strongly Disagree  
0 (0.0%): Disagree  
6 (2.8%): Neither Agree nor Disagree  
48 (22.6%): Agree  
155 (73.1%): Strongly Agree



## STUDENT COMMENTS

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- Professor Schurgin is my favorite teacher so far at UCSD. He cares a lot about students learning and his exam style makes testing less stressful. He is very understanding and genuinely cares about his students.
- I'm really grateful to have the opportunity to take this psychology course and especially with Professor Schurgin. He is extremely prepared, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and a lovable guy, and I think that was one of the main reasons why I loved this class and was able to do fairly well. This may be my only psych class here as I begin to take upper division courses for my own major, but it definitely got me thinking on continuing to take the more psychology classes. I felt as if this course offered me an understanding that I could have not gained in any of my other classes nor by experience.
- Very caring, and willing to help. He demonstrates that he wants the people that are taking his class to succeed.
- Professor Schurgin is one of the nicest and one of the most knowledgeable professors out there. He is incredibly kind, and as a freshman, I know I have many more classes to take and professors to meet, but by far and so far, he is one of my favorites. He explains questions thoroughly during office hours, and really wants the best for everyone.
- Professor Schurgin lectures are interesting and interactive. Students can tell that he really enjoys teaching this subject which leads them to be more engaged in class.
- Excellent instructor, by far my favorite for this quarter.
- Dr. Schurgin is extremely intelligent and it shows during his lectures. He answers questions very informatively and to the best of his ability. His lectures are usually very engaging and he makes class funny and interesting.
- He is definitely a great professor. I knew that I liked psychology but taking this course with him made me more interested in the cognitive aspect of psychology.
- Schurgin is an excellent instructor and shows a lot of passion in his teaching. I appreciate how engaging he makes the lectures and how he put mild humor in his presentations.
- Prof. Schurgin shows proficiency of the material. His slides and lectures are clear, concise, and to the point. Very, if any, source of confusion in the course material.
- The professor is awesome. His lectures are well prepared and organized. He explains the material in lectures clearly and he can answer students' questions in details effectively. Specifically speaking, he has interesting in-lecture demos for students to better participate in class and better understand the material.
- I loved Professor Schurgin. The way was taught was very captivating, but using various different psych experiments the class could participate in during the lecture to reflect what we were learning. He truly cares about his students actually learning the material, not just memorizing topics for the test. He also teaches at a good pace, one that isn't too slow that it seems boring, and it isn't too fast that the class becomes overwhelming.
- Wonderful teaching energy! Very passionate about his work and succeeds at catching and holding the class's attention.

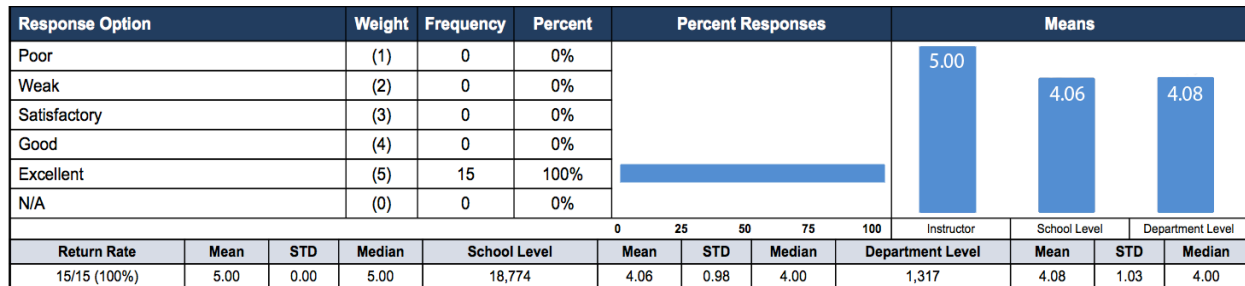
**The Illusion of Perception**  
**Instructor (15 Students)**  
**Fall 2016**

Course Description: “This course examines two unintuitive and possibly troubling conclusions of modern cognitive science: we often perceive things that are not actually ‘out there,’ in the real world; and we often fail to perceive what is there, even right in front of our noses. We consider the empirical basis for these conclusions and their broader theoretical and humanistic implications. Specific topics will include visual attention’s role in controlling what we see (and may not see), how memories misrepresent the past (and perhaps the present), and the extent to which we may process stimuli that we are never consciously aware of. Lectures and reading will be focused on empirical articles, which we will learn to interpret critically in order to inform larger class discussions based on each main topic.”

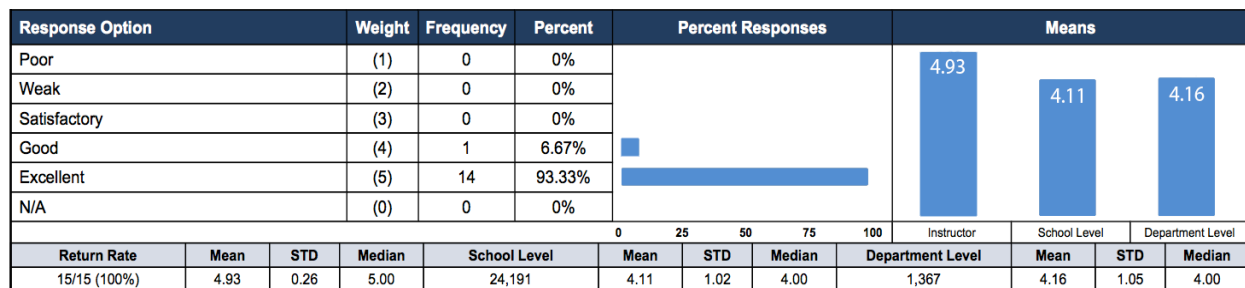
I designed this course independently from the ground up, which was offered as an upper-level undergraduate course to 15 students. The demographics of the class were broad, containing both undergraduate and graduate students with majors such as Astronomy, Art History, English, Computer Science and Psychology. The class started off lecture-based, but slowly transitioned to a discussion format as students acquired skills and built an atmosphere of dialogue and mutual respect.

## STUDENT EVALUATIONS

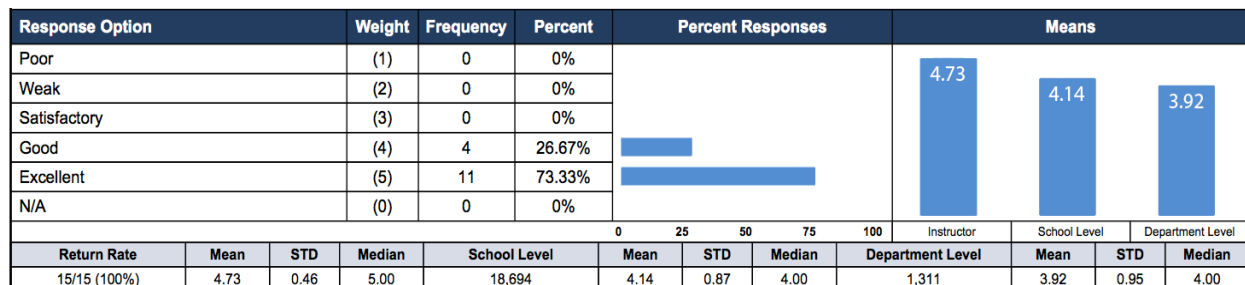
The **overall quality** of this course is:



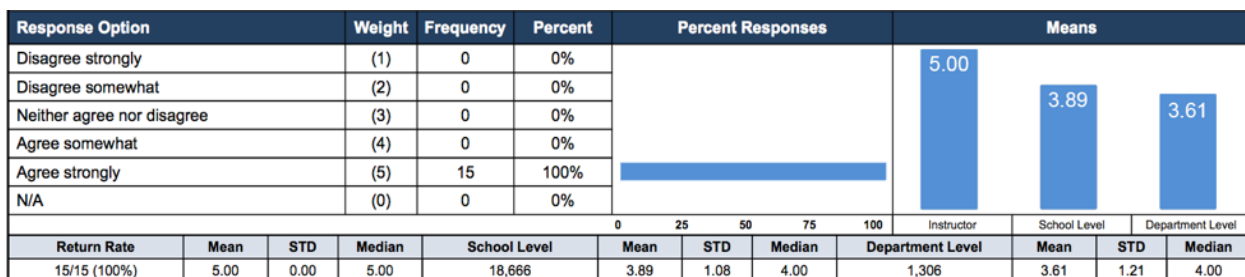
The instructor's **teaching effectiveness** is:



The **intellectual challenge** of this course is:



The instructor provided **feedback that was useful**:



## STUDENT COMMENTS

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- The material is fascinating! Mark is a great teacher who brings a lot to class discussions. I really liked our class discussions and being able to delve into ideas with my classmates. I also appreciated the emphasis on improvement and growth throughout the course.
- This course covered a very interesting topic and Mark did a great job of teaching and presenting the material. The best aspect might be how passionate Mark is about his work in psychology and how that reflects itself in the class.
- The material covered is extremely interesting. Every topic that we talked about in class made me want to do more research or read more.
- Take [this course]! No matter what your greater interests are, this class will be fascinating. The readings are relevant, and you will really learn how to break down and analyze a scientific study. This was one of the best courses I have ever taken at Hopkins.
- The instructor is very passionate about the materials that he teaches, and has a nice way of organizing all the lectures, readings and assignments. The class size is perfect for discussions, which were always inspiring. The grading is very fair, and the tests are there to help us understand the materials and always well-written. The gradual switch from full lectures to discussion-oriented of the classes is a great way for us to learn and read the scientific papers by ourselves.
- This class was amazing in that it was heavily based on discussion. The questions that were being discussed was very thought-provoking and the professor did a good job picking exciting topics for the class to discuss. The classroom had a very friendly environment. The professor gave awesome feedback that challenged me as a student. He was generous with his compliments which always encourages the students and instills the joy in learning.
- Really interesting topics, great people and great conversations.
- Very engaging conversations and cool lectures.
- Discussion based nature of the course helped (as far as I could tell) every single student learn and obtain a comprehensive understanding of the material.
- Excellent professor, material is very interesting.



**Research Methods in Experimental Psychology**  
**Assistant Instructor (22 Students)**  
**Fall 2014**

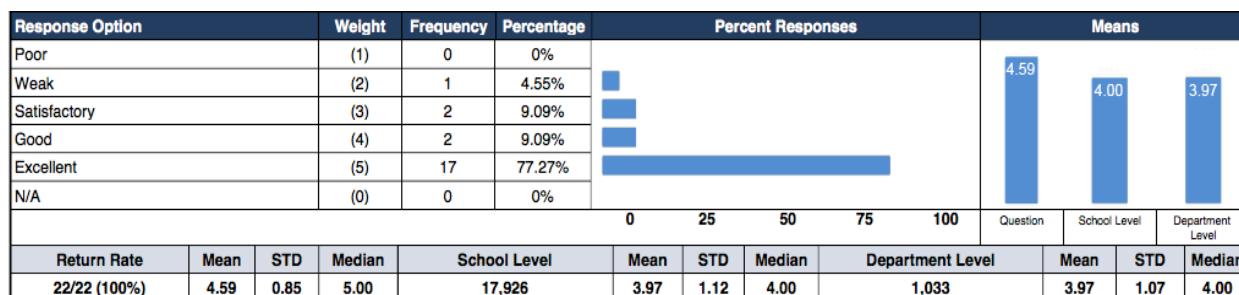
Course Description: “This course is intended to guide you through the research experience, including the selecting of an appropriate design, analyzing data, learning about the ethics of research, proposing an original experiment, and writing an APA-style research paper. Three APA-style papers will be assigned based on in-class experiments, providing practice in scientific writing. The class should provide a better understanding of psychology as a science, of hypothesis testing, as well as of other research issues such as ethical considerations and real world applications.”

In the course I lectured my own section, which consisted of 22 students. Course materials, including the syllabus, lectures, assignments and in-class experiments were designed in conjunction with Dr. Egeth (the professor in charge of the class) and other section instructors. The majority of the class was spent in individual sections, but occasionally all the sections would meet together in a larger, shared lecture that was team-taught by the section instructors.

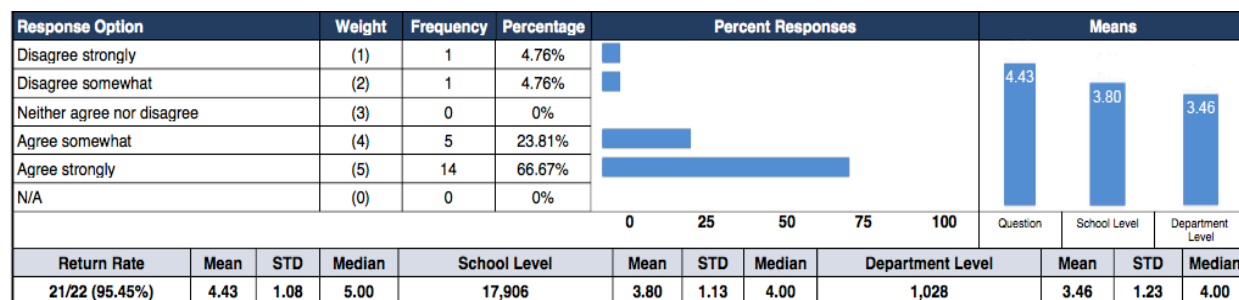
Students participated in, collected, and analyzed data for two experiments throughout the semester, writing a laboratory report for each experiment. I gave extensive written feedback on early drafts of the laboratory reports (assigned as homework), in order to assist students in writing their final reports. Additionally, each student completed an individual research project on a topic of his/her choosing as a part of course training. I met regularly with students to assist in identifying an appropriate topic, as well as to discuss the design, analysis and write-up of the project.

## STUDENT EVALUATIONS

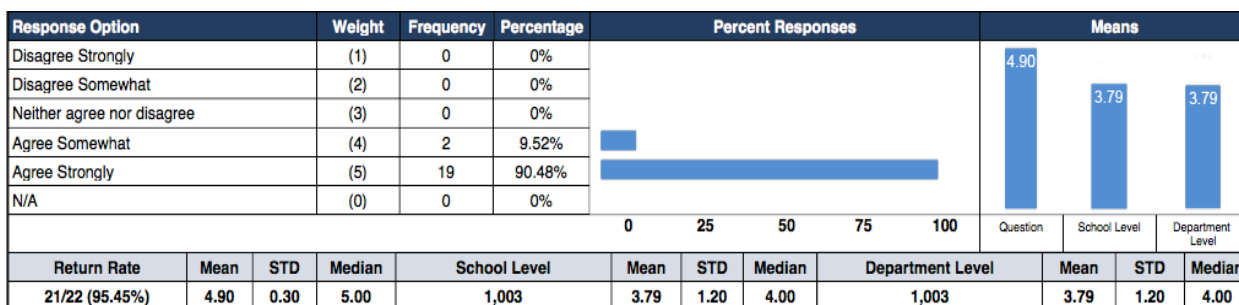
Evaluate your instructor overall:



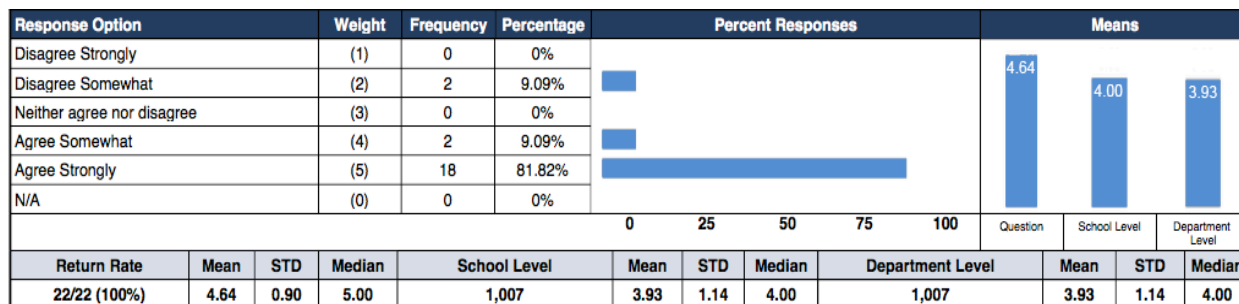
The instructor provided **feedback** that **was useful**:



The instructor **was effective** in helping me learn the material:



The instructor appeared **focused, organized, and engaged** during class:



## STUDENT COMMENTS

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- Mark is great! Provided great feedback and was always very open and approachable. I always felt that I could go to him with any questions or concerns.
- I love Mark. He was amazing. He is the best [instructor] I have ever had for any class so far.
- Mark was very helpful in explaining any unclear topics and answering any questions. He provided clear feedback on assignments, and made lectures engaging.
- Mark was very keen on being a supportive and easy-to-understand resource throughout the semester.
- Best [instructor] I've ever had. He was extremely helpful with all the feedback he provides and his lectures (although long) were easy to follow. He made this class way better for me.
- Mark was really the only positive aspect of this class. He clearly worked really hard to get us interested and always put a lot of thought into his grading.
- Mark Schurgin was an amazing [instructor] who worked really hard to make extremely boring content somewhat bearable.
- [Mark] made learning fun and provides great feedback.
- Mark was helpful, kind, and funny. He always tried his best to keep students interested in the section despite the dullness of much of the material. He always provided thorough and thoughtful feedback on assignments and was very accessible during office hours and by appointment when students had questions.
- Mark was very keen on being a supportive and easy-to-understand resource throughout the semester.
- Mark is cool. Best thing is how much effort he put into his [teaching] – meeting with us and being open to receiving questions.
- I learnt a lot because of him.
- He had more hope in me than I had in myself.
- Without him, we all would have failed.

## GUEST INSTRUCTOR EXPERIENCE

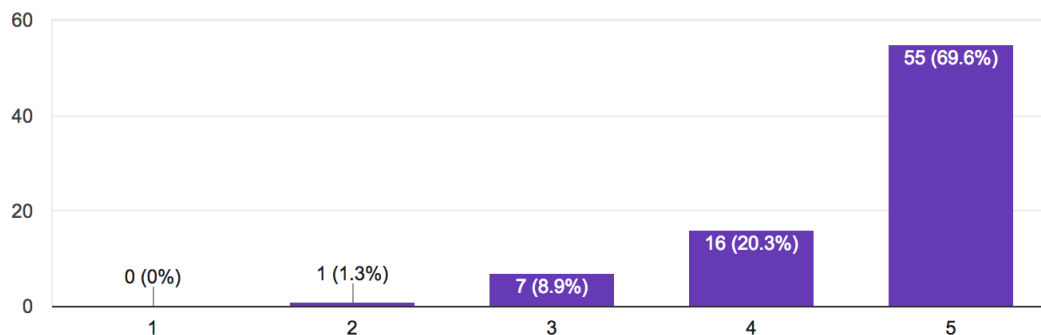
### General Psychology: Biological Foundations – PSYC 2 (250 Students), Spring 2018

Course Description: This course provides an introductory survey of the relationship between human behavior and brain function. Specific areas of emphasis include vision and other sensory processes, memory, motivation, attention and cognition.

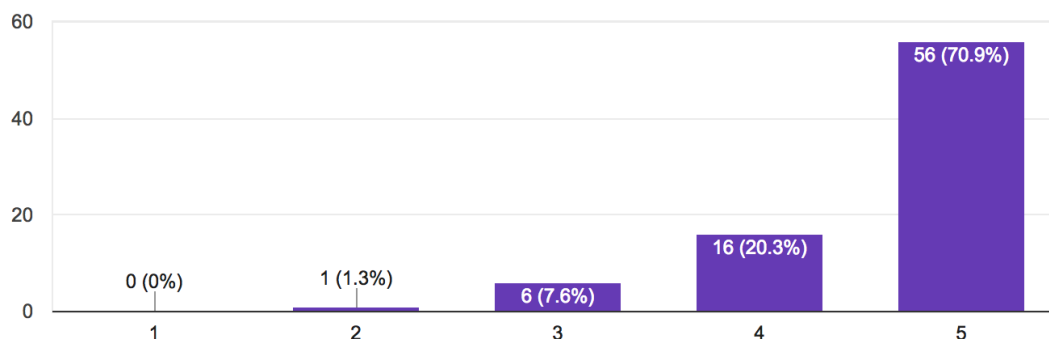
Guest Instructor Description and Role: I was invited by the primary instructor, Dr. Viola Stoermer, to give a lecture on the neuroscience of memory. This included discussion on the properties of both short- and long-term memory, their neural substrates, and specialization within brain areas supporting these systems (including discussions of potential neural codes for creating memories). I created all the material for the lecture and assisted Dr. Stoermer in designing exam questions for a midterm exam based on the material I discussed. Dr. Stoermer also collected feedback from students immediately after the lecture, provided below:

### STUDENT EVALUATIONS

The instructor **was effective** in helping me learn the material (avg 4.58 / 5):



The instructor appeared **focused, organized, and engaged** during class (avg 4.61 / 5):



## STUDENT COMMENTS

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- Dr. Schurgin was a wonderful guest lecturer. His speech was clear and confident throughout the entire lecture, making it easy to pay attention and learn. He gave very good explanations, all of which matched with his slides that had good visuals of what he was talking about. He seems to really care about what he was teaching. I would definitely enjoy being in a class that he taught.
  - I really liked the speed he went at and the amount of information he included. It wasn't too much and he used a lot of examples so that we could understand it better. He was also a great speaker and used humor to keep everyone engaged. Way to go!
  - Loved having Dr. Schurgin for a guest lecture today. He was dynamic, engaging and obviously very passionate about the material. If he is available for another guest lecture, please invite him back!
  - It's really nice and fresh to have a guest speaker like Dr. Schurgin. It is also much appreciated that he shared his research with us at the end of the lecture.
  - I enjoyed the energy he brought to the lecture and the passion he had for the material. I also enjoyed his illustrations of the content with the mouse video, the amnesia case studies, etc.
  - I liked the manner that he provided illustrations and really was communicating with the class which made me want to hear what was being taught, and feel intrigued. He was really comfortable which made it feel more easy to understand what he was saying.
  - I enjoyed hearing from someone who specialized in the subject and how passionate he was about the subject.
  - His graphs and visuals were amazing. Great job!
  - [Mark] was very funny and made learning this easier through connections.
  - Fun guy! I enjoyed the lecture a lot.
- 

## Visual Cognition – PSYC 174 (120 Students), Spring 2018

Course Description: This course provides an overview of high-level visual perception, and of how visual perception intersects with attention, memory and concepts. Topics may include an introduction to the visual system with an emphasis on high-level visual regions; object recognition, face recognition, scene recognition and reading; visual attention, including eye movements during scene perception and during reading; and visual working memory.

Guest Instructor Description and Role: I was invited by the primary instructor, Dr. Timothy Brady, to give a lecture on visual long-term memory. This included assigned reading and discussion of primary research articles. I created all the material for the lecture and also assisted Dr. Brady in designing exam questions for a final exam based on the material I discussed.

No individual evaluations of my performance were collected. However, Dr. Brady collected feedback at the end of the semester asking students about each class (how effective they were, strengths/weaknesses, etc) and informed me my lecture was highest rated of the course.

## TEACHING ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

### **Advanced Statistical Methods - AS.200.314 (14 Students), Fall 2015**

Course Description: “Topics in applied probability and statistical inference; analysis of variance; experimental design. Intended for graduate students in psychology.”

TA Description and Role: This is a graduate-level course that is a requirement for graduate students in both the department of Psychological & Brain Sciences and the department of Cognitive Science at Johns Hopkins University. There was no evaluation for this course, so ratings are unavailable.

I was nominated by my department to be the TA for this course, as a result of my statistical expertise and previous positive course feedback. I assisted the instructor with the design of the course, specifically integrating resources such as web-based applets that allowed students to explore statistical distributions in order to learn concepts such as the central limit theorem. In addition, I graded all assignments and tests, and held extensive office hours, as many students met with me one-on-one after class to discuss the previous lecture and upcoming homework assignments.

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### **Introduction to Cognitive Psychology - AS.200.110 (180 Students), Spring 2014**

Course Description: “Introductory survey of current research and theory on topics in cognitive psychology. The course will cover a range of topics in perception, attention, learning, reasoning, and memory, emphasizing relationships among mind, brain, and behavior.”

TA Description and Role: This was a large, lecture-based introductory course. I was one of two TA’s for this course, so I did not receive individual feedback in the course evaluation.

In the class students completed three exams, in addition to 15 quizzes throughout the semester. The professor decided to redesign the course this semester, and put myself and the other TA in charge of creating the new quizzes and exams for the course. We worked collaboratively on designing these materials, which included multiple choice and short-answer questions (which we also graded). In addition, we co-taught review lectures to the class before each of the exams, which included a lecture and open-question format.

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## **Mind, Brain & Experience - AS.200.363 (16 Students), Fall 2013**

Course Description: “How do nature and nurture shape the human mind? How does experience contribute to the development of visual perception, language and social reasoning? This course explores insights into these age-old questions from neuroscience and psychology. Studies of infant behavior reveal rich knowledge about objects and people in the first months of life. At the same time, experience has profound effects on behavior and neurobiology. For example, temporary absence of vision (i.e. blindness) during development permanently alters visual perception and the visual cortex. Key evidence also comes from studies of naturally occurring variation in human experience (e.g. blindness, deafness, socioeconomic and cultural differences). We will discuss what such studies of cognitive and neural function tell us about the origins of human cognition. This is a writing intensive course with weekly lectures and seminar style discussion of primary sources. Students will be required to write weekly responses to readings and a term paper.”

TA Description and Role: I was the only TA for this course, which was writing intensive with weekly lectures and seminar style discussion of primary source literature. I graded weekly responses to these readings as well as the final paper. In addition, I held office hours and held an individual seminar lecture on how to write a science paper and the way to structure and approach writing the term paper.

As the sole TA, I received individual TA ratings in the course feedback. My overall effectiveness rating as a TA was 4.00, which was significantly higher than the instructor’s overall effectiveness rating of 3.56. Comments included:

- Very considerate and offered a lot of help/feedback when the student needed it – definitely helped clear many issues in a casual manner if one is not comfortable speaking directly with the professor.
- Very good, very knowledgeable and always willing to help.
- Fantastic. Knowledgeable and explained things well.
- Awesome.

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## **Human Sexual Orientation - AS.290.420 (23 Students, Spring 2013)**

Course Description: “This course will examine the historical and current theories of sexual orientation and sexual variation development by examining the biological, psychological and social contributing factors that influence the development of sexual orientations and variations along with treatment and modification of problematic sexual behaviors.”

TA Description and Role: I was one of two TA's for this course, taking over as the sole TA after a month when the other TA went on maternity leave. There was no evaluation for this course, so ratings are unavailable.

This was a writing-intensive course, consisting of multiple research papers (in addition to a final research paper assignment). I graded all assignments, providing extensive feedback on early drafts. I held office hours and also met individually with each student when giving back their graded papers, so that they could understand and address my comments in subsequent assignments. Once the semester ended the professor, Dr. Kraft, wrote an email thanking me: "Mark.... you have been an outstanding TA and I very much enjoyed working with you. Hope we get to work together again."



# TEACHING HONORS AND AWARDS

## **Walter L. Clark Teaching Award**

**2017**

Johns Hopkins University award recognizing a graduate student who has demonstrated an aptitude for instruction in the classroom, leveraging their knowledge and communication skills to enhance the undergraduate education experience. I was given this award in part for acting as an advanced TA for the graduate-level statistics course, the work I conducted as an assistant instructor for my Research Methods section, and the Illusion of Perception course I designed and won the Dean's Teaching Fellowship for the year prior.

## **Dean's Teaching Fellowship**

**2016 - 2017**

I independently designed a course, approved by my department's chair, to submit for the Dean's Teaching Fellowship at Johns Hopkins University. The fellowship is highly competitive, with hundreds of applications throughout the university. I was one of the few graduate students offered the fellowship, and subsequently taught the course I designed, "The Illusion of Perception" to 15 undergraduate and graduate students in Fall 2016. The fellowship provided a portion of my tuition for the year my course was offered and came with a generous salary of \$11,500.

# JHU TEACHING INSTITUTE CERTIFICATION

I attended a teaching institute program offered at Johns Hopkins to develop and enhance my university-level classroom teaching skills. The curriculum included examining the benefits of active learning, ongoing assessment, responsiveness to diversity, and examining a variety of teaching practices and principles (backward design, formative / summative assessments, etc), including:

- Exploring and testing multiple teaching methods that engage and assess diverse students
- Creating peer-reviewed instructional materials
- Developing skills and strategies to continue growing as reflective instructors who employ teaching-as-scholarship methods
- Identifying strategies that help prioritize teaching practices
- Working in teams to share ideas, build new skills, and cultivate partnerships in teaching and learning



# SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Please see attached syllabus on the following pages.