

Brief Teaching Portfolio

Dana Charles Leighton, Ph.D.

Summary of teaching experience

I have over six years full-time teaching experience across the discipline.

Teaching Experience (as instructor of record)			
Course taught	Total sections	Institution	Sections taught
Introductory/General Psychology	49	Tri-County Technical College (2004–06)	25
		Portland Community College (2006–08)	19
		University of Arkansas (2012)	1
		Marywood University (2013)	1
		Hendrix College (2013)	1
		University of Arkansas (2015; Honors General Psychology)	2
Abnormal Psychology	7	Tri-County Technical College (2004–06)	2
		Portland Community College (2006–08)	4
		University of Arkansas (2015)	1
Social Psychology	5	Portland Community College (2008)	1
		University of Arkansas (2011)	1
		Marywood University (2013)	1
		Hendrix College (2013)	2
Senior Seminar (capstone)	2	Marywood University (2012)	2
Stereotyping and Prejudice	2	Hendrix College (2014)	2
Social Cognition	1	Hendrix College (2014)	1
Graduate Introduction to Psychological Testing	1	Marywood University (2013)	1
Graduate Social Psychology	1	Marywood University (2012)	1
Organizational Psychology	1	Tri-County Technical College (2005)	1
Human Sexuality	1	Portland Community College (2007)	1

Teaching Assistant Experience		
Course	Institution	Sections
General Psychology	University of Arkansas (2010–12)	3
Statistics	University of British Columbia (2003)	2
Research Methods	University of British Columbia (2003)	2

Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness

I routinely collect summative and formative evaluation data to help better design curriculum and improve my methods. I provide here summaries of quantitative evaluation data from my classes. Full evaluations are available upon request.

The following are end-of-term student evaluations from my **2013–2014** academic year at **Hendrix College**. six sections were assessed: Introduction to Psychology (1 section), Social Psychology (2 sections), Stereotyping & Prejudice (2 sections), and Social Cognition (1 section). Instructor-related questions are included.

Evaluation questions	Intro	Social	Stereotyping & Prejudice	Social Cognition	Weighted Mean
Number of responses	27	53	50	14	
1. Communicated subject matter clearly	4.3	4.3	3.7	3.0	4.0
2. Well prepared	4.1	4.4	4.0	3.5	4.1
3. Used class time effectively	3.9	3.9	3.7	2.7	3.7
4. Teaching methods appropriate for the course	3.9	4.2	4.0	3.5	4.0
5. Clear and comprehensive presentation	3.9	4.3	3.9	2.9	4.0
6. Command of course subject content	4.1	4.3	3.9	3.4	4.0
7. Genuinely interested in teaching	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.6
8. Showed sensitivity to student needs and interests	3.9	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.4
9. Receptive to student questions	4.3	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.5
10. Perceived as approachable by students	4.1	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.5
11. Created an atmosphere conducive to learning	4.0	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.3
12. Tested and graded fairly	3.9	4.7	4.5	4.1	4.4
13. Objectives & grading procedures clearly explained	4.0	4.6	4.2	3.8	4.3
14. Published and kept sufficient office hours	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.5
15. Work required & number of evaluations explained	4.0	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.3
16. Grading consistent with the instructions given	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.2	4.4
17. I learned a great deal from this instructor	3.8	4.1	4.0	3.3	3.9
Mean of questions 1–17	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.9	4.2
18. Overall, I would rate this instructor as...	3.7	4.3	4.0	3.4	4.0
Questions 1–17 are on the following scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree Question 18 on the following scale: 5 = Excellent, 3 = Average; 1 = Poor					

The following are end-of-term student evaluations from my **2012–2013** academic year at **Marywood University**. Five classes were assessed: Undergraduate General Psychology, Social Psychology (1 section each), and Senior Seminar (2 sections); Graduate Social Psychology and Psychological Testing (1 section each). Department mean: 4.4

Evaluation questions	Undergraduate				Graduate		
	General	Social	Sr Seminar	Weighted Mean	Social	Testing	Weighted Mean
Number of responses	23	24	26		13	14	
1. Instructor encouraged students	4.0	4.4	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.6
2. Presentations clear	3.8	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.5
3. Discussions encouraged	3.9	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.9	4.8
4. Instructor knowledgeable	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.6
5. Purpose and goals clearly stated	4.0	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.5
6. Course objectives addressed	4.0	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5
7. Evaluation process followed	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.4
8. Presentations organized	4.3	4.5	4.8	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
9. Issues identified and analyzed	3.6	4.4	4.7	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3
10. Diverse views respected	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.8	4.7	4.7
11. Concern for students	4.0	4.6	4.9	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
12. Responsive to student feedback	4.0	4.5	4.8	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.6
13. Available during office hours	3.9	4.4	4.8	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.5
Mean	4.0	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.5

Questions are on the following scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

The following are end-of-term student evaluations from my **2011–2012** academic year at the **University of Arkansas**. Two classes were assessed: Social Psychology (1 section) and General Psychology (1 section).

Evaluation questions	Social	General	Weighted Mean
Number of responses	30	33	
1. My instructor displays a clear understanding of course topics.	4.6	4.7	4.6
2. My instructor is readily available for consultation.	4.6	4.5	4.6
3. My instructor explains difficult material clearly.	4.4	4.4	4.4
4. Assignments are related to goals of this course.	4.4	4.5	4.4
5. The teaching methods used in this course enable me to learn.	4.2	4.1	4.2
6. The stated goals of this course are consistently pursued.	4.5	4.3	4.4
Mean	4.5	4.4	4.4

Questions are on the following scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Undecided; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

The following are end-of-term student evaluation responses from **Winter 2007 and Spring 2008** quarters at **Portland Community College**. Items related to instructor effectiveness are included. Three classes were assessed: Introduction to Psychology (5 sections), Social Psychology (1 section), and Abnormal Psychology (1 section).

Evaluation questions	Social	Abnormal	Intro	Mean
1. Well organized and knowledgeable	3.77	3.86	3.77	3.80
2. Presented the course material in a clear manner	3.69	3.57	3.76	3.67
3. Clarified major concepts when I was unclear about certain topics. He/she made difficult topics understandable	3.69	3.83	3.48	3.67
4. Enthusiastic about teaching the course. His/her enthusiasm helped me with learning course material.	3.50	3.86	3.68	3.68
5. Emphasized major concepts, stimulated thinking critically, and promoted problem solving in this course.	3.64	3.29	3.72	3.55
6. Allowed me to ask questions, express my views and opinions, and to disagree.	3.79	3.86	3.73	3.79
7. Shared information about new developments in the field.	3.64	3.71	3.38	3.58
8. Created a supportive learning environment where students were relaxed and willing to risk making a mistake.	3.86	3.57	3.73	3.72
9. Demonstrated sensitivity to student differences.	3.85	4.00	3.70	3.85
10. Available during class and office hours to help me.	3.71	4.00	3.71	3.81
11. I am/was inspired by this instructor to achieve my goals in this course.	3.50	3.71	3.45	3.55
12. Treated me with dignity and respect in this course.	3.86	3.83	3.76	3.82
13. Demonstrated that he/she cared about my learning, personal growth, and development.	3.77	4.00	3.64	3.80
14. Encouraged me to perform my best in this course.	3.64	3.57	3.57	3.59
15. I would recommend this instructor to other students.	3.79	3.86	3.72	3.79
Mean	3.71	3.78	3.74	3.74
Questions are on the following scale: 4 = Agree strongly; 3 = Agree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Disagree Strongly				

Qualitative Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness: Narrative Evaluations

Using informal and formal assessment tools, I gauge my students' learning and their experience in my classes. I am happy to report these selected positive comments from among student evaluations:

General Comments:

- "Dr. Leighton is great. He is personable and down to Earth which makes his communication with students very effective. His classes are organized in a way that allows deep learning. We will be sad to see him go." (Psych Testing, Spring 2013)
- "Assignments as discussion topics were a great way for me to first gauge my understanding, hear class views, and further develop my knowledge of various topics. I found the structure very helpful and conducive to learning." (Psych Testing, Spring 2013)
- "Dr. Leighton is an excellent professor and an excellent man. This class was challenging, but structured well. Dr. Leighton even met with me to help develop better study habits when my grade was plunging He has genuine concern for his students and that made the course enjoyable. Just wish for more grades other than tests." (Social Psychology, Spring 2013)
- "Dr. Leighton is an enthusiastic professor who made class interesting by adding to the typical book lecture with additional information, videos, and captivating Powerpoints." (Senior Seminar, Fall 2012)

- “Instructor was always available and motivated to questions regarding academic material, and was very knowledgeable & enthusiastic” (Senior Seminar, Fall 2012)
- “This instructor displays a strong enthusiasm for the course material and readily invites students to speak about the course topic. Very engaging speech style, interest in student feedback, and explanatory precision are only a few of this instructor’s strong qualities.” (Social Psychology, Fall 2011)
- “Overall my experience with Social psych was a positive one. Mr. Leighton is an excellent professor/instructor. He truly cares about his student success in his class. He covered topics clearly and if students had any questions he answered them directly and if he didn’t know that answer he came back the next class with the answer.” (Social Psychology, Fall 2011)
- “Dana, from the start, showed that our understanding and growth was a personal responsibility and served his students, not the other way around. Props yo. (Introductory Psychology, Fall 2007)

List strengths you feel the instructor brings to this course

- “Variety, creative methods, various assignments. [He] seems to enjoy the subject, and enjoy[s] teaching. It shows.” (General Psychology, Fall, 2005)
- “[He is] very excited about what he is teaching. This gets us (students) excited as well.” (General Psychology, Spring 2005)
- “He is very knowledgeable. You can tell he cares about what he is teaching. He is my favorite teacher.” (General Psychology, Fall, 2005)

What most helped you learn from this course?

- “All of the study support Dana offers.” (Introductory Psychology, Winter 2007)
- “[Psychophysiology] experiments were fun and helped me remember the information they covered.” (Introductory Psychology, Fall 2007)
- “Podcasts, good lectures where Dana was expecting and open to questions.” (Introductory Psychology, Winter 2007)
- “The lectures—well organized, clear, and with lots of opportunities to ask questions.” (Introductory Psychology, Spring 2008)
- “Dana’s attitude and enthusiasm.” (Introductory Psychology, Winter 2008)

Have you learned as much in this course as you anticipated?

- “I have [learned] more ... because I was challenged to excel.” (General Psychology, Fall 2004)
- “Yes ... I thought it would be memorizing basically, but it requires you to think critically and apply definitions and [course] material rather than memorize.” (General Psychology, Fall 2004)
- “Yes, Mr. Leighton is a very good teacher. He truly loves psychology and makes you love it too.” (General Psychology, Spring 2005)

Peer Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

The following comments are from a peer evaluation of teaching conducted by Dr. Brooke Gondara, division dean at **Portland Community College**:

- “It was good to visit Dana’s classroom again as it is always validating to observe an instructor whose teaching aligns with the College mission. Students were actively engaged and Dana was covering the details of research methodology in an effective and understandable manner for a difficult subject.”
- “I think you are doing well breaking [research methods] down into small concrete pieces and working to help students put it back together to complete their understanding and perspective on how it relates to their study of psychology”
- “Perspective of scientifically based research in psychology as a discipline is very clear and apparent to me in observing this class—psychological research grounded in scientific method and experimental research.”
- “Brought current research studies and real world examples into the conversation to help support relevancy and context”
- “Good job of re-directing and keeping class on track regarding discussion/content when some students got off track.”
- Dana continues to make his current courses better serve the students by incorporating the feedback he receives. He is very open to continuous improvement of his teaching, delivery of content. Dana continues to be innovative using technology such as podcasting and sharing his skills with others in the college community. Other innovation and creativity include the psychophysiology labs and incorporation of a service learning component.

Teaching Professional Development

I am constantly reviewing and revising my teaching methods, and seeking out professional development opportunities, both outside the college and within.

Teaching Professional Development Activities

National Conferences	Regional Conferences
2005: National Institute for the Teaching of Psychology 2005: Best Practices Conference: Critical Thinking Across the Psychology Curriculum	2005: Southeastern Society for the Teaching of Psychology
2007: Tried and True: Investigative Psychophysiology Activities for Your Introductory Psychology Course	2006: Southeastern Society for the Teaching of Psychology
2008: Association for Psychological Science (presentation)	2007: Southeastern Society for the Teaching of Psychology
2011: Association for Psychological Science (presentation)	
2013: EDUCAUSE Annual Conference	

Psychophysiology Laboratory Exercises

Since 2007, I have used psychophysiology laboratory exercises to engage students in the process of scientific discovery. These methods were learned at a NSF-funded workshop. These lab exercises are rated by my students as the most significant parts of their classroom experience.

The attached article was published by Portland Community College to showcase my work.



Faculty Innovation: Dana Leighton's psyche out

Photos and Story by [James Hill](#) | [Print this story](#)

Dana Leighton's psychology class knows what you're thinking. Okay, maybe not exactly, but that's part of a research project his students have been taking part in for the better part of the 2007-08 year.

The project began five years ago when two college psychology instructors, Howard Thorsheim at St. Olaf College and Robert Gephart at Itasca Community College met at a conference. Leighton said they realized that there was great potential in bringing the experience of active participation in research experiments to community college introductory psychology students.

"Psychophysiology is the study of the interactive relationships between body and mind — how our thoughts, emotions, and other mental processes affect our physiological state and vice-versa," Leighton said. "Howard had a quite extensive psychophysiology laboratory at St. Olaf College. Bob went to visit the lab, and they formed a collaborative partnership developing the curriculum to bring psychophysiology experiments into the community college's introductory psychology classroom."



Those instructors developed a set of successful activities that worked well in the introductory psychology classroom, and then applied to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a grant to expand the program into a national workshop. That workshop occurred in 2007, where 42 community college faculty members, including Leighton, were selected from all across the country.

Thorsheim and Gephart are collecting data on how these activities are enhancing critical thinking and knowledge of science. One of the PCC core outcomes is to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, [which can viewed here on the PCC Web site](#).

"I immediately recognized the potential value of creating activities using psychophysiology experiments to develop just these skills," Leighton said. "So, I created a series of laboratory exercises my students engage in to use the scientific method to investigate psychological phenomena."

Leighton created an experiment to measure some psycho-physiological indicators of mental and physical

processes, in response to some stimulus. For example, in one lab they measure the brain's electrical activity differences between relaxed states and while they are engaged in a problem solving task. They take existing knowledge about some phenomenon, use that existing knowledge to propose a hypothesis about what will occur when an experiment is run.

“The benefit to the students is that they get to directly experience the research process, which is rare at community colleges,” he said. “They also learn critical thinking skills, some rudimentary data analysis skills, and skills at doing analytical problem solving. In terms of the community, certainly they bring that experience out of the college into their jobs and homes, to help them make better, more informed decisions. They would be better able to make more analytical decisions, collecting and analyzing data, but also to critically evaluate the source of data and the conclusions drawn from that data.”

Leighton said he wants to use the data to create a service-learning curriculum for his class where students would take this technology to area middle and secondary schools, as a demonstration of psychophysiology and how we can measure mental processes and behavior.

About The Author: [James Hill](#)

James G. Hill, an award-winning news and sports journalist, has been the Communications Specialist for the Office of Public Affairs at Portland Community College since November of 1999. He writes the college's official communications that includes ne... [More »](#)



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