

Written Feedback from PSYC 101 and 102 SEoTs, 2015/2016 Academic Year

These two courses are pretty consistent in how I teach them and the reception they get from students. In both cases, I think the things I need to keep strong are **enthusiasm and care for students as humans**, as well as a **variety of activities during classes, including engaging students with each other, but also lecture, videos, demos**. My area for growth is around assessments (i.e., the least fun part of teaching, but an essential part of learning!). **Two-stage exams are here to stay** – they make test day fun, offer students feedback, and help them learn. After all these years I still haven't quite managed to **find the right balance between textbook-only and class-only material** (and **do I unassign portions of the text that won't be tested?**). And students have long been calling for **representative practice questions**. Fingers crossed that MyPsychLab can help with that. [Follow-up: As I suspected, questions in MyPsychLab are not challenging enough. Erg.] Regarding the **written assignments with peer assessments, I got a mixed bag of feedback that really only point me at something's not quite right for some students**. I wonder if I need to devote more class time to the exercise (e.g., show examples of papers, feedback, including the grade range to be expected by peers)? Not sure. **Time to consult the experts!** If you're interested in a distilled version of student comments, all summarized in a table that sort of compares 101 and 102, interjects some of my thoughts and recommendations for students, here you go...

PSYC 101 Sept-Dec 2015, about 370 students	PSYC 102 Jan-Apr 2016, about 270 students
In-Class	In-Class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fun, interesting, engaging, easy to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caution: sometimes that ease of in-class understanding might be deceptive when it comes to exams, and might be leading some people to feel like exams are much harder than lessons prepare them for. It's (partly) because these are two different sets of activities: In class I'm guiding student learning in the moment, whereas on a test students are showing what they've learned and consolidating that knowledge (ideally for later use). The experience of test day will undoubtedly be more difficult than lessons (and, one could argue, should be). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fun, interesting, engaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These were the most used terms to describe in-class experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slides are clear, useful for review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slides got mixed reviews. In the few cases where students mentioned them, some mentioned that they had the right amount of detail to help with studying, and others mentioned they lacked sufficient detail to help with studying. It seems the latter case was specifically after having had to miss class.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation: if you must miss class, please get notes from a classmate; don't expect to be able to rely exclusively on slides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class questions that spark discussion, measure learning, keep students engaged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Should we use the (TopHat or iclicker) app version of the <i>personal response system</i>? Based on some students' responses (i.e., everyone who mentioned the particular system), no, just use iclicker devices. The reasons people gave for <u>not</u> endorsing the app include: relies on internet connection which doesn't always work, assigning questions for completion after class results in a lot of forgotten participation points, it's costly for just an app rental, and – most importantly in my view – <i>having your device out is tempting and distracting</i>. Therefore, in the future, I'll just use the iclicker device (which can be re-used, purchased used, etc). ○ Can the questions be more difficult? <i>I'll try!</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class questions using i-clickers were helpful for learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One person mentioned that Piazza was a nice complement because it was a place for longer questions (without the complexity of TopHat). ○ One person missed TopHat's ability to review questions and answers before midterms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGEMENT and interactive participation was mentioned a lot as a positive for helping students learn, stay motivated, and have fun in class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Caution: a few people mentioned they didn't like participation, discussing ideas with peers, or spending time on questions and answers in class. One student noted that they came to appreciate how much more they learned after being invited to articulate the concept rather than just passively listen—but that at first they didn't like it. Recommendation: keep an open mind, and trust that I only ask you to engage in activities that I think will help you learn. And if you really just want to sit and listen without ever participating, you might ask yourself why that's so and if it's something you might want to challenge yourself about. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people mentioned engagement, interaction, active learning, in-class discussion as positive contributors to learning and motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At least three people mentioned that discussion worked in such a large class because of the respectful climate that was created.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting, relatable examples help illustrate concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting, relatable examples help illustrate concepts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos and images, Demonstrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos, demonstrations, analogies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-prepared, organized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caution: a few students didn't agree that lessons were well-organized. About half a dozen students mentioned that we kept running out of time... and I agree that frustrates me too. This gives me the sense that it's time to re-boot my lesson plans so I'm not just working from old versions that inevitably get longer and longer. Instead, I can create whole lessons that actually fit in 50 minutes (like these used to). This will be a ton of work and I'll need to roll this out over the next couple of years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-prepared, organized, easy-to-follow and stay focused, integrated, insightful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A couple of students specifically mentioned how well-integrated the Research Methods Moments were. Instead of trying to teach the chapter as a separate chapter, I sprinkled topics throughout the course. <i>I was thinking of doing away with this practice, but I wonder if this approach might actually work in both 101 and 102?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include more guest lessons. <i>Can do!</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idea: Add a panel about careers in psychology, bringing in people who have succeeded.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall sense that large class isn't limiting to student engagement or to how I treat students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall sense that large class isn't limiting to student engagement or to how I treat students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary take-away: Variety is the spice of our course! Keep a variety of lecture, participation, peer-to-peer, demonstrations, videos; keep up the enthusiasm! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary take-away: Variety is the spice of our course! Keep a variety of lecture, participation, peer-to-peer, demonstrations, videos; keep up the enthusiasm!
Course design/overall	Course design/overall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages collaboration 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable workload for 1st year course 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stated learning objectives are a reasonable indicator of expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stated learning objectives are a reasonable indicator of expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caution: One person seems to have missed that the LOs from the textbook were also important – that person mentioned there were no LOs regarding textbook only material, however, those are to be used.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of in class questions and participation/activities, papers, question and answers, exams is helpful for learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caution: a couple of students mentioned too many websites, especially those that need payment. I'm going to puzzle on what I can do to simplify the tech in this course. Our new Learning Management System might help with this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similarly, one student mentioned that the Connect page was too busy (easy to miss things) and that there was a lot going on (wanted more reminders)
Assessments	Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four exams help students stay organized and learn smaller chunks of material at a time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four exams help students stay organized and learn smaller chunks of material at a time

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-stage exams are helpful for learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students want the group portion to be worth more points than the individual (currently 10% group, 90% individual). That's a tension I can't really do much about. Group portion helps with learning, but the individual portion is what ensures the course average is what it must be (between 63 and 67%) and (I think) ensures that the incentive freeloader is minimal, keeping that practice down to a minimum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-stage exams are helpful for learning, immediate feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 10 students mentioned timing. 50 minutes for two stages can be tricky sometimes. Some noted the timing and transition is perfect. Some noted that it was too quick and shouldn't do it at all. Some wanted more time for individual, less for group. Given this mixed and conflicting feedback on timing, I don't see any major reason to overhaul.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mini-Papers are helpful for learning. Peer reviews are helpful for written work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, not many people brought up the peer reviews or the mini-papers. Of those who did, not everyone agreed the peer reviews were helpful, and some people wanted some instructor and/or TA feedback on them (which misses the point of peer review). Some people didn't want the peer review average to count toward their grade. Given how few people mentioned this, it seems the amount of grades given in this way was so small it wasn't a big deal for most people. Recommendation to students: If you're not up for practicing peer review and being patient while other people practice it, you might want to think about switching sections. <i>On my side</i>, I'll make a note to remember to bring up a few good examples in class to help everyone get a better sense of expectations, and will work to figure out other adjustments or supports I can offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mini-papers are helpful for learning, including doing the peer assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various complaints make it a bit difficult to pinpoint the source of what's not quite working well. Here are the topics that were mentioned... Receiving peer assessments: difficult to interpret because wide variation in scores and feedback; what's written is sometimes not helpful Doing the writing: just choose one concept (the second isn't marked anyway); helpful for learning Overall: good that there are many smaller, low stakes assignments; hard to keep track of all the deadlines; too much work for so few points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exams are challenging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caution: exams are challenging. People brought this up in both a positive and negative way. As an educator, while I'm ok with exams being challenging, a couple of specific comments are giving me pause. Tests are more difficult than lessons (addressed above). Exams end up testing only some of what's studied, because I assign both the lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exams are challenging. A few people mentioned that exams are fair, reflect learning objectives, and are balanced across text and class. People liked the frequency of the exams for keeping on track. Criticisms had three themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too many questions from material not covered in class (i.e., textbook only), sometimes perceived as tricky. <i>This was the most frequent complaint about the whole course.</i>

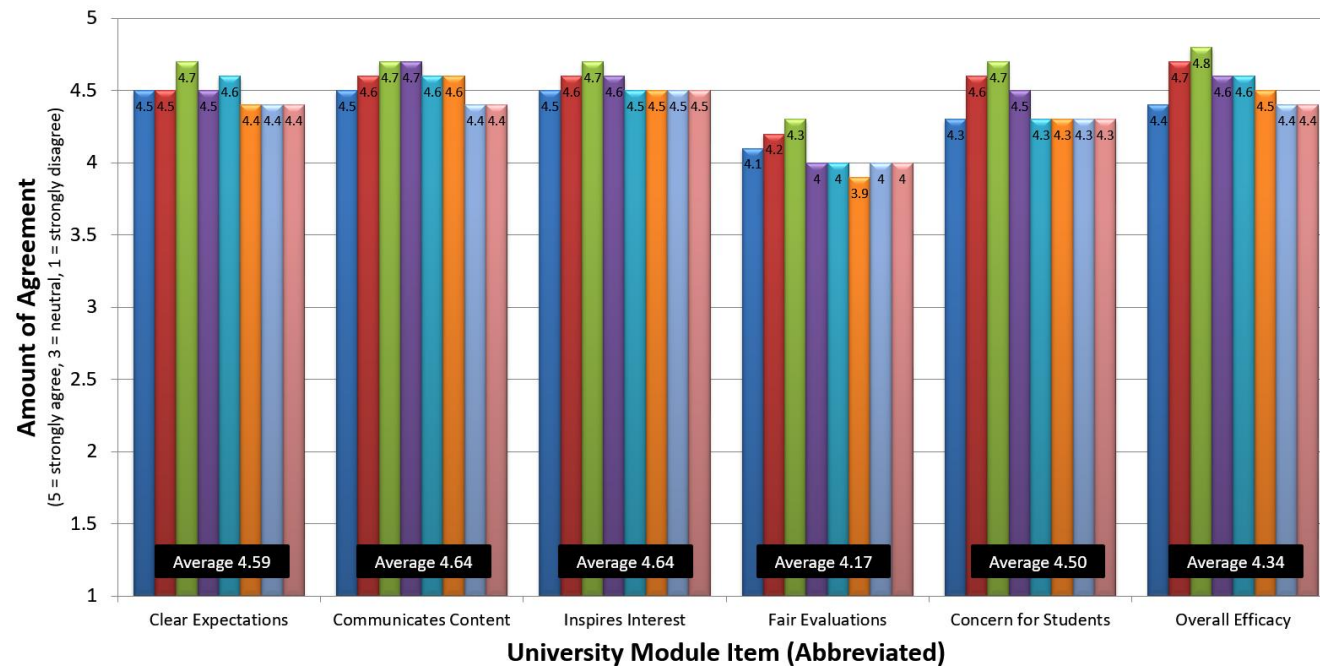
and the textbook chapter but don't "cover" all the chapter in class. I wonder if there are a few parts of some chapters that I can safely recommend "not tested"? I'll work on that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some answer options have ambiguity/nuance to the point that TAs sometimes couldn't tell the difference. ○ Too many questions from material just in class (so if don't/can't come to class, can't get what is needed from slides). ○ My thoughts: as with 101 I'm ok with challenging, and the complaints aren't unanimous so that's a bit tough. Again, though, I wonder if there are a few parts of some chapters I can safely recommend "not tested"? I'll work on that across both courses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a variety of ways to show learning (papers, exams, participation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Caution: not everyone thought this variety was a good thing. A few people found it overwhelming to keep up on all the components of this course. Recommendation to students: Put all deadlines in your calendar immediately and consult it regularly. And I'll look at how I might simplify what's happening. 	
My Personal Qualities	My Personal Qualities
• Enthusiasm (number 1)	• Enthusiasm, passionate (number 1)
• Clarity	• Clarity of communication
• Motivating	• Dedicated
• Smile	• Detail oriented, organized
• Approachable	• Friendly
• Knowledgeable	• Knowledgeable
• Prepared	• Prepared
	• Put effort in
	• Genuine, honest, vulnerable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional and positive even in challenging circumstances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These last two sets of qualities are probably because I had a personally challenging semester. My Aunt, who was one of my mom-figures growing up, died fairly suddenly over spring break. Many days I could barely keep my life together and I worked hard to make my classroom an oasis where I thought of nothing but my students and their

	<p>learning. It was a good distraction for me personally. I also asked for students' patience if I couldn't get back to them right away, and I explicitly used my experience as examples (e.g., of emotion, stress, coping).</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distracting use of <i>um</i> and <i>uh</i> mentioned by one student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Fascinating! I haven't had this feedback in years and now within one year I have it twice (once in the context of a presentation to colleagues). I'm not sure what to do about this!
How I treat students	How I treat students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful, inclusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students often mentioned that I clearly <i>want students to learn</i> and that I <i>care about students as human beings</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students often mentioned that I clearly <i>want students to learn</i> and that I <i>care about students as human beings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitational Office Hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitational Office Hours – want to get to know students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available for answering questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly reminder emails with mental health moments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly reminder emails with mental health moments are encouraging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember some names 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember some names
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In one case, a student mentioned I was “unwilling” to see an exam question from his or her perspective, and they thought this meant I didn't care. I don't remember this happening. What I suspect happened is a human error on my part: every once in a while, and sometimes without me realizing it, I don't handle a student's issue/complaint/complication/challenge in an ideal way. If it happens, it's late in the term, and I'm overly stressed and fatigued. I need to be on the lookout for these moments and <i>take my time</i> responding, delaying as needed so I can think clearly.

- I offer many resources and study aids to help students succeed
 - That said, the most common request (by about a dozen students or so) was for practice questions, especially those that were as difficult as my tests. I'm looking into MyPsychLab this summer, and potentially incorporating it more deliberately than I have before. I hope that their questions are challenging enough to help as a study tool. [Follow-up: they're not challenging enough!] Otherwise, I'm not sure what else to do. Maybe PeerWise is a thought (but that adds another task and another website).

- Again, the most common request was for practice questions that are representative of my tests (and are free)
 - I've always felt pretty overwhelmed by this request. How can I make even more questions when it takes me an hour to make each one for the test? As with 101, I'm going to look seriously to see if MyPsychLab can help with this. It's not free, but I can get access codes and it comes with the textbook (which is in its new edition anyway). [Follow-up: they're not challenging enough!]

Student Evaluations of Teaching University Module Items for **Introductory Psychology** *Last Five Years*



■ Sept 2011 - Apr 2012 Terms 1&2 (172/369 responded) ■ Sept 2012 - Apr 2013 Terms 1&2 (158/254 responded)
 ■ Sept-Dec 2013 Psyc 101 (159/344 responded) ■ Jan-Apr 2014 Psyc 102 (122/271 responded)
 ■ Sept-Dec 2014 Psyc 101 (194/349 responded) ■ Jan-Apr 2015 Psyc 102 (120/263 responded)
 ■ Sept-Dec 2015 Psyc 101 (195/367 responded) ■ Jan-Apr 2016 Psyc 102 (144/283 responded)

Note: averages are weighted by number of responses and credits, such that two term courses are counted twice.