

## Teaching and Mentorship Statement

*The same thrill, the same awe and mystery, comes again and again when we look at any question deeply enough.*

—Richard Feynman (1955)

*When a scientist doesn't know the answer to a problem, he is ignorant. When he has a hunch as to what the result is, he is uncertain. And when he is pretty damn sure of what the result is going to be, he is still in some doubt...Scientific knowledge is a body of statements of varying degrees of certainty—some most unsure, some nearly sure, but none absolutely certain.*

—Richard Feynman (1955)

### Philosophy and Approach

Feynman, a Nobel laureate physicist, captures two themes that permeate my teaching and mentorship philosophy:

1. **Inspiration.** The best science is infused with a sense of magic, revelation, and wonder. It is inspiring, counterintuitive, and eye-opening.
2. **Perspiration.** Science is not an established body of facts, but a practical set of methods for estimating and reducing uncertainty, an on-going process, at times messy or tedious, of grappling with nature and our preconceived notions about how it works.

This philosophy motivated me to design two undergraduate courses and a graduate seminar from scratch—existing textbooks proved sterile and outdated—and it cuts across my classroom instruction, mentoring, and informal interactions with students.

### *Inspiration*

The best teachers are passionate story tellers, wiser and more experienced co-conspirators who can lift veils and expose secrets. Inspiring and engaging students is essential for motivating learning and study. My lectures are dramatic narratives. Each story begins with a conceptual roadmap outlining the fundamental questions that we, as a class, will wrestle with for the next 75 minutes (e.g., *We have been brain-washed by our culture to think in terms of heritability, to blame the genes of a family or a race—But what are the limitations of heritability? Why do we so often succumb to temptation—Why is there such a tension between what we do and what we want to do?*). The body of the lecture describes the current state of the science. Lectures are leavened with case histories, bad jokes, examples from the popular media, and film clips, with plenty of time for classroom probes (*Students—what would you predict?*), questions, and discussion. Of course, no one likes to be left hanging, certainly not with an upcoming exam, and so the story invariably ends with a dénouement encapsulating the most important facts, conclusions, and future challenges. Written Learning Objectives, in-class review sessions, cumulative examinations, and homework assignments reinforce these key points. In addition, many of the homework assignments ('Critical Thinking Questions') provide an opportunity to critically integrate material covered in class with students' own life experiences and personal narratives (e.g., <https://preview.tinyurl.com/ShackGradSeminar>).

The best teachers establish a bond of interpersonal trust and mutual respect with their students. Cultivating a climate of psychological safety enables students to actively engage, take intellectual risks, honestly express confusion, and seek guidance and assistance with other components of their professional development (e.g., letters of recommendation, advice about professional development). This philosophy guides all of my interactions—formal and informal, face-to-face and digital—with my students. It's why I begin each semester with a roundtable discussion about the fundamental questions that frame the courses. It's why I strive to

respond to student emails promptly, with humor and charity, even when I am in the midst of grant deadlines and other personal and professional responsibilities. And more recently it motivated me to create a new opportunity for informal conversation with undergraduate students. During the Spring 2016 semester, I instituted 'Snack with Shack, Man' (SWSM) in my large, introductory level course on temperament and personality. Each week, I invite six students to have a coffee and pastry, on me, after class at the Student Union. SWSM provides students with another opportunity to reveal their challenges and aspirations, enabling me to fine tune my courses to their needs, and allowing them to feel heard, respected, and understood.

### ***Perspiration—Learning to Think Like a Scientist, Even if You Never Become One***

My courses are designed to prepare a small minority of my students for careers as researchers and all of them for living more effectively in a world where decisions and public policy are increasingly made on the basis of data, evidence, and quantitative reasoning. In short, to *Think Like a Scientist*, even if they never become one. Lectures and readings are designed to promote a healthy sense of skepticism and to cultivate the intellectual habits required to critically evaluate the assumptions and observations that underlie *The Facts* in the biomedical and social sciences. Emphasis is placed on seminal observations—particularly those that are prospective or mechanistic in nature—and a deeper understanding of the methods underlying the claims, including the relative strengths and weaknesses of introspective report, animal models, molecular genetic approaches, and brain imaging techniques. Issues of rigor and reproducibility are introduced, and meta-analyses and large-*N* studies are emphasized, particularly those that have overturned earlier versions of the canon. Readings come from some of the most exciting researchers working in the field today and include landmark studies and reviews from top-tier journals in biomedicine and the social sciences (e.g., *Science*, *Nature*, *Psychol Bull*, *Annual Reviews*, *Nature Reviews*) as well as lighter, more intuitive commentaries, essays, and interviews drawn from the popular press (*NYT Magazine*, *New Yorker*, *Slate*). My overarching emphasis is an interdisciplinary perspective, in which research at different levels of analysis, acquired using different techniques, species, or populations, is seen as complementary and mutually informative. Homework assignments and 'flash' talks provide additional opportunities for learning to synthesize and critically evaluate evidence and develop engaging oral presentations.

### **Continuing Education and Improvement**

I am committed to becoming a stronger, more effective teacher. My classes have been immensely rewarding and very successful, with student evaluations at or above Campus benchmarks and a very strong faculty peer review evaluation (Spring 2016), as detailed in the Teaching Portfolios/Evaluations appended below. Syllabi and slides have been shared through public repositories (<https://tinyurl.com/BrentPersonality>) and have elicited positive feedback from faculty at other institutions.

Like science, teaching is always a work in progress. I have taken advantage of several continuing education workshops organized by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Teaching and Learning Transformation Center at Maryland. Each semester, I carefully review refine my courses based on pupil and peer teaching evaluations. For example, in the Fall of 2015, I incorporated formal Learning Objectives for each module to guide and enhance the efficiency of self-study and learning. I use Clickers in the undergraduate courses to encourage regular attendance, and have gradually introduced flash talks as a mandatory component of all my courses. I have continuously updated the material covered in the classroom and readings to reflect the current state of the science. Consequently, the median year of publication for the articles assigned to students enrolled in the Fall 2017 semester of my graduate seminar is 2014. Finally, I have co-edited a forthcoming book, *The Nature of Emotion* (Fox, Lapate, Shackman, & Davidson, 2018), that was partially designed for adoption in my courses.

## Mentorship

Outside the classroom, I provide mentorship in a variety of formal and informal contexts. Every semester, my laboratory provides training opportunities for roughly a dozen undergraduate research assistants—including a mixture of volunteers and students enrolled for course credit—and two full-time post-baccalaureate researchers. My lab provides students with a number of opportunities for honing their scientific skills (e.g., IRB/HIPAA training; hands-on experience with screening, scheduling, and data collection; data blitzes; journal club; oral presentations; SPM mini-bootcamps). In this context, I have mentored a Summer Research Initiative (SRI) Diversity Fellow, a Research Internship in Science and Engineering (RISE) Scholar, a Biological Sciences Honors Intern, and several members of the Integrated Life Sciences (ILS) Honors Program. I am currently supervising a senior thesis as part of the Biology Honors Program. My work with undergraduates and post-bacs has led to an intramural award (Undergraduate Researcher of the Year award), co-authorships (Barstead, DeYoung, Anderson, & Shackman, *in prep*; Shackman, Weinstein, et al., *in press*), and poster presentations at the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) and Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) meetings. My former students have been very successful, securing competitive internships (Lumir Research Institute, USAF Research Lab), post-baccalaureate research positions (e.g., Lieber Institute for Brain Development/Danny Weinberger's group; UC Davis/Cam Carter's group), doctoral program admissions (e.g., Economics at Purdue, Psychology at LSU, Medicine at Hopkins, Pharmacy at Maryland), and industry positions (e.g., Deloitte Consulting).

I directly supervise one clinical doctoral student (Tillman)—a second student very recently ended with a terminal master's degree (Kaplan)—and co-supervise two others, one in Human Development (Barstead), the other in Hearing & Speech Sciences (Stockbridge). The clinical students have successfully defended their master's projects and are actively involved in externships (NIH and Children's National Hospital); the remaining student is actively collecting data for her dissertation. The co-supervised students are actively writing their dissertations. My graduate mentorship has led to several papers and chapters (Barstead et al., *in prep*; Okon-Singer et al., *in press*; Shackman et al., *in prep*; Shackman, Kaplan, et al., 2016; Shackman, Stockbridge, LeMay, & Fox, *in press*; Shackman, Tromp, et al., 2016; Tillman et al., *accepted pending minor revisions*), a highly competitive National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (NSF GRF: 1 awarded, 1 honorable mention), travel awards, presentations at international scientific meetings (SFN, SOBP, SRP), and a poster award (SRP). In addition, I have served on numerous masters, qualifying examination, dissertation, and related student committees at UMD and elsewhere (University of Victoria, Canada; University of Haifa, Israel).

## Introduction to Temperament & Personality (PSYC 210)

<b>Description</b>	<p>What makes each of us unique? Where do these differences come from? How do they contribute to enduring differences in health and wellness?</p> <p>A background in biology, genetics, neuroscience, statistics, or other ‘STEM’ fields is not necessary to enjoy and benefit from this gentle introductory course.</p>
<b>Syllabus Format</b>	<p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/y9z3pn9g">https://tinyurl.com/y9z3pn9g</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 x 75-minute meetings per week.</li> <li>• 70-110 students per term (1 TA).</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminal reports and landmark reviews written by the most exciting researchers working in the field today (1995-present)</li> <li>• Essays, commentaries, and interviews drawn from the popular press</li> <li>• All readings are available via the course website on Canvas</li> <li>• <i>‘Snack with Shack, Man’ offers students an opportunity to develop a personal relationship with the instructor and receive guidance on professional development</i></li> </ul>
<b>Meetings</b>	<p>Each meeting begins with a conceptual roadmap outlining the fundamental questions that we, as a class, will wrestle with for the next 75 minutes (e.g. <i>We have been brain-washed by our culture to think in terms of heritability, to blame the genes of a family or a race—But what are the limitations of heritability? Why do we so often succumb to temptation—Why is there such a tension between what we do and what we want to do?</i>). The body of the lecture describes the current state of the science, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. Lectures incorporate case histories, examples from the popular media, and film clips, with plenty of time for questions and discussion. Each meeting ends with a recap of the most important take-home points. Written Learning Objectives, in-class review sessions, and written assignments reinforce key points. In addition, many of the assignments provide an opportunity to critically synthesize material covered in class with students’ own experiences.</p>
<b>Learning Assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-stakes quizzes using Clickers to encourage attendance</li> <li>• Low-stakes written assignments for each lecture or module</li> <li>• 3-4 cumulative, multiple-choice examinations</li> <li>• Individual or group oral presentation (‘flash talks’)</li> </ul>

### PSYC 210—Spring 2016 Faculty Peer Evaluation (Professors Hanges, Norman, Lemay & Brauth)

- *The course syllabus was appropriately detailed...We really liked that your syllabus provided tips to help students with regard to the major project as well as explicit information on extra credit.*
- *I was particularly impressed by the “Snack with Shack, Man” group that you established. As you indicate in your syllabus, large lecture courses are impersonal. To counteract this, you choose 6 students per week to go with you to The Coffee Bar on campus. The purpose of this excursion is to increase students’ connection with one another as well as provide intellectual and professional development in a non-threatening setting. Quite simply, I thought this was a fantastic idea. It clearly goes beyond what is required as an instructor and it is a manifest indicator of your concern for your undergraduate students.*

- *Classroom Observation: Two class sessions were visited...First, it should be noted that both classes that we observed were structured in a fashion consistent with your teaching philosophy...We both found the presentation of the material to be engaging and informative. We also observed you actively trying to engage students by asking questions and being attentive and responsive to their questions. Your PowerPoint slides were well constructed and engaging. We both liked the use of stories and personal references that you made regarding the course content. Congratulations on successfully enacting your teaching philosophy. It was a pleasure to see it enacted.*
- *The bottom line with regard to our classroom observation is that you are an effective teacher who has a passion for the material.*
- *Overall, our observations suggest that your teaching performance is very good. You are effective at engaging students and creating a stimulating, comfortable, and stimulating learning environment*

**PSYC 210—Spring 2016 Student Evaluation (83 students; 72% response rate)**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Course Mean</b>	<b>Campus Mean (Benchmark)</b>
Intellectually challenging	3.02	2.92
Learned a lot	3.05	2.99
Treated students with respect	3.73	3.48
Well-prepared for class	3.65	3.42
Overall, an effective teacher	3.32	3.14
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>3.19</b>

0 – Strongly Disagree, 1 – Disagree, 2 – Neutral, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree

<b>The standards were</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Too low	8.3%
Appropriate	90.0%
Too high	1.7%

**PSYC 210—Spring 2016 Select Student Comments**

- *This class is the best and Shackman is awesome!*
- *The professor got me to learn the material without overwhelming me or stressing me out*
- *Lectures were kept fresh by the use of new studies, simple analogies, and only the bare necessities. Wonderful professor.*
- *I really appreciated the learning objectives and feel that they really helped me prepare for the course.*
- *Really enthusiastic teaching style, which made it very enjoyable to come to class.*
- *Dr. Shackman was an excellent teacher!*
- *Snack with Shack is fun, I really enjoyed it. Keep doing it.*
- *Dr. Shackman was the nicest professor I've had. Really cared about the material and the students. Super helpful, would give him a 10/10*

## Advanced Topics in Temperament & Personality (PSYC 435)

<b>Description</b>	We will selectively review cutting-edge research in humans and animal models aimed at understanding the mechanisms underlying enduring individual differences in personality as well as their implications for risk and resilience. We will discuss the developmental origins of temperament, measurement issues, fundamental dimensions, stability/plasticity, heritability, as well as implications for psychiatric disease and public policy. A major focus of the course will be on the neurobiology of trait-like differences in shyness, fear, and anxiety (behavioral inhibition and neuroticism) that confer increased risk for the development of common mental illnesses (anxiety, depression, and substance abuse).
<b>Syllabus Format</b>	<p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/y7xhw2dx">https://tinyurl.com/y7xhw2dx</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 x 75-minute meetings per week.</li> <li>• ~75 students per term (1 TA).</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminal reports and landmark reviews written by the most exciting researchers working in the field today (1995-present)</li> <li>• Essays, commentaries, and interviews drawn from the popular press</li> <li>• All readings are available via the course website on Canvas</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings</b>	Each meeting begins with a conceptual roadmap outlining the fundamental questions that we, as a class, will wrestle with for the next 75 minutes. The body of the lecture describes the current state of the science, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. Lectures incorporate case histories, examples from the media, and film clips, with plenty of time for questions and discussion. Each meeting ends with a recap of the most important take-home points. Written Learning Objectives, in-class review sessions, and written assignments reinforce key points. The assignments encourage students to critically synthesize material drawn from the assigned readings. There is also an opportunity to present a short “flash talk” to the class.
<b>Learning Assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-stakes quizzes using Clickers to encourage attendance</li> <li>• Low-stakes written assignments for each lecture or module, with half the assignments focused on the assigned readings</li> <li>• 3 cumulative, multiple-choice examinations</li> <li>• Individual or group oral presentation (‘flash talks’)</li> </ul>

### PSYC 435—Fall 2016 Student Evaluation (67 students; 96% response rate)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Course Mean</b>	<b>Campus Mean (Benchmark)</b>
Intellectually challenging	3.11	3.28
Learned a lot	3.36	3.26
Treated students with respect	3.78	3.62
Well-prepared for class	3.69	3.51

Overall, an effective teacher	3.59	3.28
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>3.39</b>

0 – Strongly Disagree, 1 – Disagree, 2 – Neutral, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree

<b>The standards were</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Too low	1.6%
Appropriate	98.4%
Too high	0.0%

**PSYC 435—Fall 2016 Select Student Comments**

- *Dr. Shackman is very enthusiastic about his work and about this course, which made it fun to come to class. He was very fair in grading, and his in class clicker review sessions helped me to determine what I needed to focus on studying for the exams. This was a fun class and I would recommend it! Although there was some overlap from psyc210, this course delves deeper into certain topics, and I am glad I took it in my last semester.*
- *I'm a night owl, so a 9:30 class is actually way too early for me. But these lectures were so interesting that I stayed awake (almost) all the time!! This is actually a very big deal if you know me. I can't recommend this class enough to other PSYC majors. Although I'm not in a personality/anxiety lab per se, I think one of my individual projects is going to sway towards that direction--and that's partly because I took this class.*
- *I feel like the goal of this class was to learn, and not to memorize. I really appreciated that. It's the first class I've experienced like this at UMD and it's my last semester.*
- *Dr. Shackman is a gem, so kind and wonderful and genuinely cares about his students. He really took time to listen to us and made sure everything was fair, and never hesitated to answer questions. He was super responsive to student concerns, and it's so clear that he's really passionate about what he teaches and brings that enthusiasm to his lectures!*
- *I didn't intend on taking this course on Day 1 of the semester. Something happened with another class, and I had to drop that one. As a result, I needed to sign up for another 400-level PSYC class that worked with my schedule. PSYC435 was the only one that worked. It didn't seem like the topic would interest me at all. I came into the class with an attitude since I never was planning on taking it. But, boy...I was proven wrong. I absolutely loved this class. The instructor was incredibly engaging, enthusiastic, kind, and intelligent. He knew his subject incredibly well. He knew research in the field of personality, and more specifically anxiety research, like the back of his hand. His lectures were so well done. He started with the assumption we were all critical skeptics. He first presented an unsubstantiated claim, then supported it with research until there was no doubt in our minds that some type of effect was real or truly existed (i.e. behavior is more than just a product of the situation).*
- *I thoroughly enjoyed this class and the materials that we learned throughout the semester. It gave me a new understanding about the different personality traits and how they develop through individuals. I appreciated the wide variety of materials that were selected that allowed for the most up-to-date research to be presented through class and truly make sure that we know what is going on in the psychology world currently.*
- *I love professor Shackman, he really taught me a deeper understanding of what temperament and personality means as well as a million other things I could list. His style was so fun and energetic and his corny jokes were the only thing keeping me awake at 9:30am. I've never had a more exciting psychology professor other than Curtis, I can't say enough good things about this class and I'm sure my classmates feel the same.*
- *Shackman really made coming to class a positive experience. He was kind, funny, and always approachable.*

**Graduate Seminar on Affective Science Perspectives on Temperament & Personality (PSYC 612)**

**Description**

What makes each of us unique? Where do these differences come from? How do they contribute to enduring differences in health and wellness? We will selectively review cutting-edge research in humans and animal models aimed at understanding the mechanisms underlying enduring individual differences in personality and their implications for risk and resilience. We will discuss the developmental origins of temperament, measurement issues, fundamental dimensions, stability/plasticity, heritability, as well as implications for psychiatric disease and public policy. An extensive background in biology, genetics, neuroscience, statistics, or other ‘STEM’ fields is not necessary to enjoy and benefit from this course.

**Note: This course draws students from a wide range of Colleges and Departments, including Business, Psychology, Counseling/Ed Psych, Human Development, Kinesiology, and Neuroscience**

<https://tinyurl.com/ybkqna76>

**Syllabus Format**

- One meeting per week (9:00—11:45 AM Mondays).
- 8-22 students per term.

**Resources**

- Seminal reports and landmark reviews written by the most exciting researchers working in the field today (1995-present)
- Essays, commentaries, and interviews drawn from the popular press
- All readings are available via the course website on Canvas

**Meetings**

Each meeting begins with a conceptual roadmap outlining the fundamental questions that we, as a class, will wrestle with for the next 75 minutes (e.g. *We have been brain-washed by our culture to think in terms of heritability, to blame the genes of a family or a race—But what are the limitations of heritability? Why do we so often succumb to temptation—Why is there such a tension between what we do and what we want to do?*). The body of the lecture describes the current state of the science, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. Lectures incorporate case histories, examples from the popular media, and film clips, with plenty of time for questions and discussion. Each meeting ends with a recap of the most important take-home points. Written Learning Objectives, in-class review sessions, and written assignments reinforce key points. In addition, many of the assignments provide an opportunity to critically synthesize material covered in class with students’ own experiences.

**Learning Assessments**

- Low-stakes written assignments for each lecture or module, with half the assignments focused on the assigned readings
- 3 cumulative, multiple-choice examinations
- Individual or group oral presentations (‘flash talks’)

**PSYC 612—Fall 2016 Student Evaluation (14 students; 79% response rate)**

Item	Course Mean	Campus Mean (Benchmark)
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Intellectually challenging	3.09	3.39
Learned a lot	3.45	3.37
Treated students with respect	3.91	3.74
Well-prepared for class	3.91	3.60
Overall, an effective teacher	3.82	3.45
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>3.51</b>

0 – Strongly Disagree, 1 – Disagree, 2 – Neutral, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree

<b>The standards were</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Too low	9.1%
Appropriate	90.9%
Too high	0.0%

**PSYC 612—Fall 2016 Select Student Comments**

- *The teaching was great...I really appreciated the focus on the current state of neuroscience/personality research as opposed to dry theories which we have all heard of.*
- *I thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Shackman's class. I loved the way that he gave us relevant examples and always pushed us to think about correlational/prospective/causal studies.*
- *This was an excellent course. The instructor was engaging and helpful. The readings were informative and not excessive. I learned a lot in the lectures (they were worth attending and didn't just rehash the readings).*
- *I like the cumulative path of the course.*
- *Dr. Shackman is an extremely engaging instructor that made material interesting - even during lectures whose topics were not aligned with my own particular interests. The modules covered during lectures are divided in ways that often make intuitive sense in answering certain big questions in the field, and the lectures are informed by recent theoretical research rather than outdated general knowledge from the field from many years ago. In that way, the course feels fresh and useful, and the instructor puts great care in the course material.*

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