

ELANOR F. WILLIAMS
TEACHING STATEMENT

Every day, I think how lucky I am to have found a field where I can help people, including myself, learn to better understand, experience, and interact with the world around them. The opportunity to help my students navigate their social, financial, and mental worlds has a strong influence on my teaching philosophy. Because of this rare ability, I continually strive to provide my students with the context they need to see the connection between their academic knowledge and their real-world experience. I provide them with hands-on experience that allows them to test what they have learned as well as their own ideas about how the world works. And I push them to effectively communicate what they have learned and what they themselves believe; after all, knowledge is of limited value unless it can be shared and applied.

Context. I believe that demonstrating where the knowledge you are imparting is situated, in both in the Marketing world as well as the “real” world, is very important. My first TA assignment was a seminar taught in conjunction with *Psychology 101*, when I personally designed and taught *The self: Who we are, how we know and what that means*. This course exposed students to an in-depth analysis of one particular facet of psychological functioning, which served as a complement to the broad overview they received in the larger lecture class. One of the aspects of this course that I particularly enjoyed was the ability to take a familiar topic and broaden my approach to it to include areas outside the safe confines of social psychological research, such as philosophy, literature, neuroscience, and clinical psychology. For instance, students in this course particularly enjoyed reading from Mark Haddon’s *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*; this novel, told from the perspective of an autistic boy, really illuminated for them what it must be like to see the world through someone else’s eyes, and how much people rely on their abilities to intuit what others are thinking to successfully navigate life.

In addition, one of the more exciting aspects of teaching courses that in marketing and psychology is the ability to utilize real-world examples of the principles I teach. Students in my classes are constantly given as well as provide to me examples of products, behaviors, and other objects or situations that reflect (or do not reflect, to their detriment) the material they learn in class. For example, students in my *Social Media Marketing* class are assigned to join and participate in new social networks, find and share examples of good (and bad) social media marketing materials, and post on the course blog. These exercises require that they extend what they have learned to other situations, meaning that they don’t just regurgitate information, they understand how it fits into their everyday experience and practice using it in the contexts in which they will encounter it in the future.

Experience. Secondly, I believe that hands-on experience is a vital tool for understanding. Marketing faculty study the consumer experience, and there is no better way to help someone understand that experience than to have them go through it themselves. For three summers I led a supplementary section as part of *The Individual in the Social World*, a summer course for high school students. In section, the students discussed the lectures, learned new material to augment or further illuminate the lectures,

and, most importantly, performed hands-on activities to demonstrate the topics they encountered in class. The activities always prompt the most discussion, and the students' understanding of the phenomena is more nuanced after they realize they may be prone to the same behaviors they learned about in the abstract. One popular activity illustrates the *spotlight effect*, whereby people believe that other people pay attention to them, especially their flaws, more than they actually do, by showing that the students in the class have little awareness of even the most distinctive clothes that their fellow students wear. Many students report that they feel quite comforted by this activity, that they feel more confident now that they really know that their seemingly glaring mistakes are actually much less obvious to others than to themselves.

It is also important that students understand the research process, so that they can evaluate what they learn on its own terms. Students in my classes become familiar with scientific writing and research, so they're able to critique what they read and hear in lecture. Even in my social media course, students are taught the importance of experimentation and scientific testing, and of being able to evaluate evidence in support of or against their ideas of how things should be done.

Communication. I also believe that the ability to share one's ideas is as important as the content of those ideas themselves, and the ability to write and speak clearly is a vital part of being an effective marketer and an effective researcher. With that in mind, I was fortunate to have been given the chance to teach *Writing in the Majors* as a section in conjunction with *Introduction to Cognitive Science*. The course allowed me to give the students a detailed examination of the research method, and how that method should be reflected in one's writing. Students in my classes learn the importance of expressing their own ideas in accessible language, to facilitate their use in career and retail settings. The semester-long process of the group project helps them learn the importance of revision and feedback, and, in order to present their project to the rest of the class, they must learn how to effectively communicate their ideas and findings. In addition, my assignments throughout my social media marketing emphasize effective, concise writing, and provide them with examples from professional marketers about how (and how not) to express one's own and others ideas accurately and interestingly to wider audiences.

Lastly, I believe that access to one-on-one interaction with teachers and mentors is vital to the educational process. In this respect, I have been lucky to interact with undergraduates as a teaching assistant, and to mentor undergraduate research assistants throughout my research career. I make it a point to be available to my students as much as possible, and I look forward to continuing to interact with and mentor students of all levels in the future.

Many people talk about teaching and research as if they are mutually exclusive interests in an academic marketing career, and that excelling in one requires slighting the other. I've found, however, that I am most motivated and excited about research when I am also teaching. It's easy to take for granted the ideas and findings on which our field is based, but having to think about them from an outsider's perspective and be confronted with questions that someone familiar with the material would never consider helps keep the subject matter fresh in my mind as well as in my students'.

Student evaluations for *Social Media Marketing* course at UC San Diego as of 9/14:

Final Evaluation	Mean Rating
Ratings based on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)	(1-5)
1. The instructor was well prepared for class.	4.83
2. The instructor explained difficult concepts clearly.	4.55
3. The instructor was open to student questions (during or outside of class).	4.92
4. The instructor was available for help outside of class.	4.91
5. The instructor was enthusiastic about teaching.	4.75
6. The instructor was very knowledgeable about the subject matter.	4.58
7. Overall, considering the subject matter, the instructor was excellent.	4.37

Selected comments from students:

“I really enjoyed this course. Nora is such a nice and motivating instructor. Before I took the class, I thought, "do I really need to take a class on social media? Isn't it pretty easy?" Thankfully I was proved wrong. Nora introduced many strategies and campaigns to us that most people weren't aware of, and provided more depth on the existing media outlets than I thought were saturated. Overall a great course and great professor!”

“Nora came to class prepared, friendly, and professional - excellent at listening to students and reforming their answer into a more focused and articulate response.”

“Nora made the class extremely interesting. She's a great teacher.”

“Nora is an amazing professor. She clearly loves the fields of Social Media and Social Psychology. Her ability to clearly articulate a difficult subject matter was one of her strong suits. She is very approachable and easy to talk to.”

“Prof is very knowledgeable and considered. Very good class.”

“The instructor knew a great deal about the psychology behind social media trends. I found this to be extremely interesting! The instructor was also truly motivated in having her students understand and learn the material. I recommend this professor for future classes.”

“The professor is extremely nice and pleasant to learn from! GO NORA!”

“I thought that Prof Williams did a great job at tackling this topic and I feel like she gave it a solid structured framework on how businesses can use social media.”

“Ms. Williams is extremely diligent and earnest at teaching. I think the biggest thing I learnt from her class is actually her attitude of doing things.”