

# 2015 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION TOPICS

---

## THURSDAY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

### **1) Are “Best Practices” Really the Best Practice in Teaching the Introductory Psychology Course?** *Led by Victor Benassi*

The roundtable leader will first ask participants to discuss the meaning of a number of related terms—best practice, evidence-based practice, research-based practice, and scientifically-based practice. To what extent are best practices based on strong research versus teacher anecdotes and plausible, but unsupported, claims? Next, the roundtable leader will ask participants to consider ways in which teachers of introductory psychology can sift through best practices claims and make decisions about when the application of these claims are warranted and when they are not. Finally, the roundtable leader will share resources with participants on teaching and learning informed by science of learning.

### **2) Teaching College Freshmen** *Led by Brittany Nielson*

Freshman students are entering college courses for the first time and may not be prepared for the level of work required. Many students are coming unprepared for multiple chapters on an exam, critical thinking, studying on their own without prompting from a teacher or parent, or knowing how to utilize tools and information to help guide studying. Introductory psychology courses are usually required for freshman students, making instructors uniquely able to help prepare students for college level courses. This discussion will help facilitate ideas and questions about how to help freshman students become prepared for college courses without losing sight of the material to be learned in an introductory psychology course.

### **3) Taking Introductory Psychology Online** *Led by Garth Neufield*

This will be a general discussion on best practices in online teaching, specifically as they relate to Introductory Psychology. We will define the elusive term “student engagement” and brainstorm how we might assess it. We will also discuss how to maximize affordances in the online classroom through course policies and course construction. Finally, we will survey how an online class offers unique opportunities for students to learn psych one content, while acquiring technological and interpersonal skills that will serve students beyond this course.

### **4) Essential Skills for First-Time Instructors of General Psychology Courses**

*Led by Jessi Hill*

Our prior research indicates that the skill-set novice teachers need before entering the classroom for the first time is different than those already possessed by more experienced instructors or master teachers. Although the majority of faculty and graduate students agree on the kinds of skills needed prior to teaching, their opinions diverge more on how those skills should be learned. An additional layer of complexity arises when undergraduate students are trained to act as lab facilitators or discussion section leaders. This discussion will center on critical skills needed before teaching for the first time as either an undergraduate or graduate student in the context of a general psychology course.

## **5) Course Management Challenges for Large-Enrollment Sections: Coordination, Collaboration, and Engagement** *Led by Nicole Bies-Hernandez*

Teaching introductory psychology presents many challenges, which are amplified when sections are large (e.g., 100+ students). The foci will be how to implement collaborative work and encourage in-class student engagement in large sections of introductory psychology. Collaborative learning and student engagement are highly important pedagogically, however, both become difficult as course enrollment increases. Additional discussion will include effective coordination among sections and faculty, keeping in mind a balance between instructor freedom and standardization. Engaging with colleagues who teach this course will help generate ideas regarding how to address these challenges.

## **6) High School Collaboration** *Led by Kelly Horan*

Collaboration amongst discipline specific teachers at the high school level is commonplace. However, as teachers of introductory psychology, we are often the lone wolf in our field. This isolation makes such professional enrichment difficult. This roundtable discussion proposes to be a place to collaborate, share best practices, discuss challenges, and establish a foundation for a professional network of high school psychology teachers. While this is open to both AP and non-AP teachers, college professors are also encouraged to join. It would be valuable to converse about the skills expected of students in Introduction Psychology classes in college so that we can start building those skills at the high school level.

## **7) The Addition of Psychological Science on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT): Potential Impact and Responses** *Led by Dawn Albertson*

Every student applying to medical school in the U.S. and Canada must submit scores from the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), results of which are a major factor in determining an applicant's admission. This high stakes exam has undergone a massive revision and, as of 2015, now includes a section on the Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Human Behavior. Though perhaps outside of our normal field of view, these changes likely have tidal implications for Psychology departments across the country. Not only are Introductory enrollments anticipated to increase significantly, but these students require content that emphasizes the intersection and dynamic relationship between psychology and medicine - and we will be expected to meet this need. Proactively addressing this situation puts faculty and departments in charge of crafting responses that keep their interest and goals for Introductory Psychology in the forefront. Roundtable participants can expect to discuss what changes face us, and how we as individuals may position ourselves for successful outcomes.

## **8) Enriching Students' Understanding of Psychological Concepts via Popular Films** *Led by Maya Sen*

Popular films can serve as powerful educational tools in our classrooms. Many include concepts relevant to psychologists, such as resilience (Harry Potter), bioethics/ nature & nurture (Gattaca), adolescence (The Perks of Being a Wallflower), memory (Memento), social psychology (The Hunger Games), sexual orientation (But I'm a Cheerleader), psychopathology (The Silence of the Lambs), and historical treatment of disorders (One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest). Film can also serve as a mechanism for teaching about perceptual concepts such as motion perception, Gestalt principles, the phi phenomenon, and depth perception. In this roundtable, we will discuss methods of integrating popular films into our courses, the benefits and challenges of doing so, and material that can be covered for specific films. Brainstorming welcome, and feel free to come with your own ideas!

# FRIDAY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

## **1) Incorporating Cultural Diversity into the Teaching of Introductory Psychology**

*Led by Neera Pant*

Behavior and psychological thought evolve within a sociocultural context. To what extent does psychology vary across cultures, and how can we make students more aware of the influences of their own and others' culture? Participants will share ideas on ways of incorporating cultural psychology into the course. The discussion leader will also share her personal experiences teaching introductory psychology in an Indian cultural context. Indian psychology offers a different perspective on many core concepts of introductory psychology, including the structure of personality, cognition, and emotion and motivation.

## **2) Teaching Metacognitive Skills: Task Assessment** *Led by Raechel Soicher*

It is often in college courses that students submit work that misses the goal or purpose of the assignment as written. In some cases, students rely on previously learned strategies which have served them well in the past, such as completing a research paper as an informational report rather than an evaluation or analysis. They seem to disregard directions altogether. Task assessment is a critical first step in effective metacognition, but it is an ability that students often lack (or do not put into regular use). However, it seems obvious to instructors that accurate task assessment can avoid a host of complications and position students to perform better overall in their courses. This roundtable discussion will focus on concrete activities which can be employed by instructors to assist students in developing task assessment skills.

## **3) Getting Students to Follow Instructions: Barriers and Possible Solutions**

*Led by Margaret Lynch*

This discussion will focus on strategies for getting students to follow instructions to get the most out of their coursework. Tools such as examples, check lists, reminders etc will be discussed, as well as rewards for students that do follow instruction and penalties for those who do not. Getting students to follow instructions can be a very frustrating area of teaching and I look forward to all the ideas you can share from your experiences.

## **4) Talking About Race and Privilege in Introductory Psychology: Can We, Should We, How?** *Led by Erin Hardin*

In today's context, issues of race, white privilege, prejudice, and so on are particularly salient. These issues are clearly relevant to psychology and to general education; however, discussing them in any context is often challenging, but may be even more so in introductory psychology due to the characteristics of students (in terms of the range of backgrounds, maturity levels, and experiences students bring) and the course itself (in terms of class size, instructor experience levels, and breadth of content to be covered). Further complicating the issues is research that suggests such conversations can backfire and actually lead to increased racism among at least some white students (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Schiffhauer, 2007). So what is an instructor to do? In this discussion, participants will be invited to share our ideas and experiences addressing these issues in Introductory psychology. What can we learn from each other's successes and failures and from the research in this area?

## **5) What Are Our PSY 101 Students Truly Learning? A Discussion on Assessment Practices** *Led by Julie Lazzara*

After a student completes an Introductory Psychology course, what do we hope that they have learned? How do we know that students across all of our sections and different professors leave with a similar learning outcome? This discussion will be on what we think are the most important concepts and skills for graduates of Introductory Psychology to master. Oftentimes, our courses are filled with non-majors and this may be their only exposure to a psychology course. Does your department use a common assessment that is given across all sections to measure student performance? Opportunities for collaboration and future research across college will be encouraged. Ideas and rubrics from Paradise Valley Community College in Phoenix, Arizona will be shared. In a typical semester we teach 1000 introductory psychology students across 40 different sections, with 30 different professors.

## **6) Making the Most of Time Spent Outside of Class: What Reading/Viewing/Listening Materials are Worth Assigning to Students?** *Led by Ann Nordmeyer*

Most courses assign readings to encourage students to learn and engage with material outside of class. How do we select materials that enhance student learning? There are many options: Textbooks offer a great deal of breadth, but may lack the depth of analysis that we hope to encourage in students. Empirical journal articles have depth, but may be too narrow in focus and/or too challenging for introductory students. Pop science articles/media are accessible and may encourage students to relate concepts to their own lives, but may gloss over the nuances of psychological theories. In this discussion we will discuss the most effective reading and/or viewing materials we assign students outside of class, and what we hope students will gain from these materials.

## **7) Collaborative Learning in Introductory Psychology** *Led by Dana Narter*

Some instructors have reduced the amount of lecturing they do and incorporated more collaborative learning activities into their courses. If you would like to use collaborative learning in your class, there are a number of things to consider: your students, the physical classroom environment, how groups will be formed, what sorts of collaborative learning activities you will use, how will students be held accountable and evaluated, the role of teaching assistants and/or preceptors and the use of collaborative technology. This discussion is appropriate for those who have already been using collaborative learning and those who would like to try it and have questions about how to get started.

## **8) Lessons from Ken Bain's "What the Best College Teachers Do"** *Led by Jessica Salvatore*

This table will discuss Ken Bain's popular pedagogy book "What the Best College Teachers Do" as it might be applied to Introduction to Psychology. To set the stage for discussion, the discussion leader will provide a very brief overview of Bain's findings about how the most effective and inspiring professors think about teaching and learning, prepare to teach, expect of their students, conduct class, treat their students, and evaluate their students and themselves (each of these is a chapter in the book). Then the discussion participants will talk about how this all relates to Intro to Psychology, in particular and concrete take-aways we can take back with us to apply to the course.