

# BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

## PROGRAM 2021

MONDAY, 5 JULY, 2021

Student evaluations of teaching are invalid, biased, unfair, and harmful. Why are we still using them, and what might we use instead?

Bob Uttl

Mount Royal University, Canada

**Abstract:** Student evaluations of teaching (SET) are used to measure faculty's teaching effectiveness and to make high-stakes personnel decisions about hiring, firing, promotion, merit pay, and teaching awards. Although SET have many desirable properties (e.g., they are quick and cheap to administer, they "look" scientifically precise), they do not measure teaching effectiveness: First, experts do not agree on a definition of effective teaching. Second, students do not learn more from more highly rated professors. Third, SET depend on numerous factors not attributable to professors (e.g., class size, quantitative vs. nonquantitative courses, students' intelligence and motivation). Fourth, SET depend on attributes of professors that are unlawful to consider (e.g., accent, beauty/attractiveness). Fifth, SET can easily be manipulated by distribution of chocolates, cookies, and other tasty treats. In the first public case of its kind, the arbitrator Kaplan recently ordered Ryerson University in Toronto to stop using SET in high-stakes promotion and tenure decisions. In this session, I will (a) review key research demonstrating that SET are not valid and subject to numerous biases, (b) discuss the reasons for SET's widespread use in higher education, (c) discuss legal and ethical issues arising from their continued use, and (d) discuss what might be potential ways forward towards evaluating faculty's teaching rationally, objectively, transparently, and fairly.

**Biosketch:** Bob Uttl is Professor of Psychology at Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He is a cognitive psychologist with main research interests in memory, intelligence, aging, research methods, and assessment and psychometrics. He has published over 50 research papers and given hundreds of conference presentations. He has taught and/or conducted research in a number of academic institutions including the National Institutes of Health, USA; Oregon State University, USA; Tsukuba University, Japan; Tamagawa University, Japan; Red Deer College, Canada; and Mount Royal University, Canada. He has accumulated extensive experience with SET and faculty evaluations both as a faculty member whose "teaching effectiveness" was evaluated primarily if not exclusively by SET scores; as a member and a chair of promotion and tenure committees; and as a co-chair and chair of the Mount Royal Faculty Association's Faculty Evaluation Committee. Moreover, he has published several high impact papers examining validity and biases of SET ratings. Most notably, one of his recent papers "Meta-analysis of faculty's teaching effectiveness: Student evaluation of teaching ratings and student learning are not related," co-authored with two of his undergraduate students, Carmela White and Daniela Wong Gonzalez, has been cited over 300 times and amassed an Altmetric attention score of over 2,700. Professor Uttl's SET related research has been featured in a number of media outlets including Inside Higher Ed, University Herald, The Guardian, and elsewhere.

TUESDAY, 6 JULY, 2021

Trigger Warnings and Beyond: Input from Theory and Data

Matthew Kimble

Middlebury College, USA

**Abstract:** Trigger warnings are statements that warn students, particularly those with a history of mental health problems, about the fact that the instructor will be presenting potentially disturbing material. These warnings are most commonly employed in higher education in the United States. Recommendations for providing trigger warnings have generated significant debate among academics, students, and administrators, but there is as yet very little evidence from empirical studies as to how students actually, and typically, respond to potentially triggering material. This talk will focus on relevant theory and emerging data that can guide our understanding of what those responses are likely to be. I will suggest that psychological scientists should be at the forefront of efforts to determine whether trigger warnings might attenuate or exacerbate potentially negative student responses. I will argue that future research could and should address questions such as: (1) What percentage of students are actually triggered by typical course material? (2) Do trigger warnings lead students to avoid learning about warned material? (3) Does the nature and extent of a trigger warning have an impact on students' emotional responses? Having evidence-based answers to such questions should help to inform a debate that has become highly politicized and ideological in North America. It should also help bring perspective to discussions of a number of other student-protection policies, including providing "safe spaces" and limiting free speech on campus.

**Biosketch:** Matthew Kimble is Professor and Chair of Psychology at Middlebury College, Vermont, USA, where he teaches courses in introductory psychology, psychological disorders, psychological trauma, and happiness. He received his doctorate at Boston University and completed his postdoctoral training in psychological trauma at the National Center for PTSD located at the VA Boston Healthcare Center. His primary research interests focus on how PTSD effects attentional processes and expectancies in trauma survivors using EEG and eye tracking technologies. Recently, his work has turned to bias and stigma associated with PTSD as well as research relevant to the topic of trigger warnings. Professor Kimble is an author or co-author of over 30 peer reviewed articles and has received grants in support of his research from the National Institute of Mental Health, Veterans Administration Merit Review Grants, and the Vermont Genetics Network.

WEDNESDAY, 7 JULY, 2021

Desirably Difficult: The [Counterintuitive] Science of Successful Learning

Veronica Yan

University of Texas at Austin, USA

**Abstract:** We all have an enormous capacity to learn, but—despite being engaged in learning throughout our lives—decades of cognitive research have shown that our intuitions are oftentimes exactly wrong, leading learners and instructors alike to choose suboptimal learning

strategies over more effective and efficient ones. Despite the temptation to make learning feel easy, research has proven that durable and flexible learning results when it is more effortful. The strategies that enhance learning—through engaging learners in more effortful and elaborative processes—are referred to as “desirable difficulties.” They range from how one distributes out their study time to the activities they engage during that study time. We will cover what these strategies are, why they promote deeper learning, how they may be incorporated into classroom instruction, and future directions in research.

**Biosketch:** Dr. Veronica X. Yan is an assistant professor of educational psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. Bridging social, cognitive, and educational psychology fields, Dr. Yan's research explores how we can empower people to become motivated and effectively self-regulated learners. Dr. Yan is presently focused on examining the mechanisms underlying 'desirably difficult' strategies and the motivational mindsets that encourage learners to not just study harder, but to study smarter. Her own educational background has spanned three continents, with schooling in Hong Kong, undergraduate studies in England, and postgraduate studies in America.

THURSDAY, 8 JULY, 2021

The cultural context of mindset-inspired education transformation

Dr. Chi Yue Chiu

Chinese University of Hong Kong

**Abstract:** Researchers have debated the extent to which growth mindset school practices can enhance student motivation, performance and well-being in schools. In this presentation, I will present evidence for the beneficial effects of growth mindset practices in Hong Kong kindergartens, grade schools and middle schools, highlighting the positive effects of growth mindset on students' academic performance, learning motivation, intellectual openness and well-being. I will also review the contextual and cultural factors that need to be considered in the design of growth mindset practices in Chinese contexts. These factors include the heavy emphasis on peer competition and public examination performance in schools, as well as the cultural tendency to attribute students' learning problems to systemic (vs. personal) factors in vertical collectivist social systems. I will present a theoretical framework of culture and mindset-inspired education to guide future research on cross-cultural applications of mindset theory in education transformation at all levels, including in higher education.

**Biosketch:** Dr. C.Y. Chiu is Dean of Social Science, Choh-Ming Li Professor of Psychology, and Co-Director of the University Services Center for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He received his PhD from Columbia University. He was previously Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Head of Psychology at the University of Hong Kong, and Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois. In 2008, he was appointed by Nanyang Technological University as Director of Research and PhD Studies, Director of the Cultural Science Institute and Research Director of the Asian Consumer Insight. Prof. Chiu's research covers the social psychology of education, culture and psychological processes, human motivation and intergroup dynamics, and he has made major research achievements in these areas. After joining the Chinese University of Hong Kong, he established the Center for Positive Social Science. With sponsorships from the Hong Kong Jockey Club and Bei Shan Tang, he started to promote

systematic, innovative and science-informed positive education in the primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong.

FRIDAY, 9 JULY, 2021

PARTICIPANT POSTERS AND INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Invited Presentations

- 09:30-10:00 Maya Khanna  
Creighton University, USA  
Do Students Learn Concepts Best from Generating Examples or from Reviewing Provided Examples?
- 10:05-10:35 Leslie Cameron  
Carthage College, USA  
Prevalence of Misconceptions about Behavior and Mental Processes among Students Who Have Just Taken Introductory Psychology: A Multi-Site Survey
- 10:40-11:10 Lisa Dierker  
Wesleyan University, USA  
Passion-Driven Statistics: Creating a Welcoming (and Empowering) Place at the Table for Psychology Students from Diverse Academic Settings
- 11:10-11:45 Coffee Break
- 11:45-13:30 Poster Session (poster abstracts are posted on the BISTOPS website at [www.bistops.org](http://www.bistops.org))