



Teaching the Most Important Course in the Field: An Introduction to the NOBA Instructor Manual

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Psychology is unique among all academic disciplines in that it is the study of people—how we think, feel, and act. As such, it is easy to personally relate to the core concepts of psychology in a way that might not be as true of mathematics, astronomy, or supply chain economics. What's more, Introduction to Psychology is a primer for life, equipping students with a basic understanding of learning, research, emotions, and social interactions that might be useful to them for the rest of their lives. Introduction to Psychology is, arguably, the most important course in the field. For many students it is a first taste which could lead to a life-long passion for the discipline. For others, it will be their only contact with psychology and, therefore, their one chance at understanding and learning this science. For everyone, Introduction to Psychology is the foundation—a broad survey of the most important and interesting scientific findings—that will set the tone for more advanced study.

In this opening section you will find:

- 1) an explanation of the unique and desirable features of Noba,
- 2) brief overview comments regarding teaching psychology,
- 3) suggestions of 'where to begin'
- 4) a brief overview of what you will find in this Instructor's Manual (IM).

Why Noba?

Whether you are skimming this introduction in order to decide if NOBA is for you or are already committed to NOBA, consider the following:

- **Noba is written by experts:** Psychology has made significant technological and methodological innovations over the last 100 years. New areas evolved and pre-existing areas merged. Most Introduction to Psychology textbooks are written by generalist authors and contain traditional topics with very little change in content. NOBA module authors, by contrast, are experts in their fields. Every day, they immerse themselves in the nuances of their topic areas. While Noba

covers the same classic canon of psychological topics it often presents material that is fresh as well as responsible.

- **Noba is concise.** It is an understatement to say that psychology instructors are trying to cover too much material. Students often fail to remember much of the content of the course after it is over. Landrum and Gurung (2013), for example, found that introductory psychology students only remembered 56% of the material two years later and, perhaps more concerning, even senior level psychology majors only remembered 62.7% of the material at two-year follow-up. Perhaps psychology misses out on having students remember anything at all by trying to have them remember too much. NOBA modules are focused on the most important theories and concepts in contemporary psychology.
 - Note: this does not mean a new instructor, ad hoc or graduate student, needs to have more background knowledge to teach with NOBA. There is enough in each module and the IM to aid even the novice teacher.
- **Noba is designed based on pedagogical research:** The NOBA team is passionate about great instruction. We want motivated and engaged students and we aim to create materials that help reach that goal. We conduct classroom and lab-based research on all NOBA materials. This is not large-scale market research of the kind conducted by many publishers (often run by non-psychologists). Instead, we partner with our colleagues on faculties of colleges and universities of all sizes who are experts in the scholarship of teaching and learning. We don't focus on bells and whistles; we focus on current best practices and emerging research results.
 - Note: this is why the modules are free of clutter and 'aids' that could be dangerous detours to student learning.
- **Noba is current:** When new studies are published or when the DSM is updated, Noba quickly incorporates these developments. An example can be seen in the publication of the module on "[The Replication Crisis in Psychology](#)" which addresses a timely concern.
- **Noba includes instructor support:** We have learned that it is not so much the quality of the text itself (although that is important) that leads to learning so much as it is the way the text is used. Noba provides a wide range of ancillary materials to support instructors of all backgrounds and levels of experience. These include test banks, adaptive quizzes for students, PowerPoint presentations, a blog with an emphasis on the science of teaching and learning, and a richly detailed instructor's manual.
- **It's free.** Enough said.

Teaching Introductory Psychology

Colleges and universities appear to see the value in an introductory course on psychology. That is why it is a general education requirement at so many schools and why close to two millions students enroll in it every year. Oddly, most graduate programs offer too little by way of preparation to teach such courses. Too few graduate students are trained in formal facilitation or taught how to keep abreast of emerging research in teaching and learning. Much of the current instruction is a shoot-from-the-hip mixture of tradition and personal passion. We can do better.

“Intro Psych,” as it is often referred to, not only provides students with the fruits of years of psychological research—findings that can help a person to live a happier, healthier, more productive life—it also directly hits three of five of the [American Psychological Association \(APA\)’s learning goals](#) (APA, 2013).

Many graduate programs have extensive teaching assistant training in which advanced students are given cursory training and then offered the opportunity to be a teaching assistant, a lab instructor, or to teach a handful of courses. Although some schools even have “Preparing Future Faculty” type classes, teaching Intro Psych well is a challenging endeavor. If you are reading this, it is likely that you are some combination of the following: you are up for the challenge of teaching, you want to do a good job teaching, you find yourself obligated to teach, or you are surprisingly bereft of anything fun to read.

If you have never before taught any type of course, have never taught Intro Psych before, or if you are a seasoned instructor looking for fresh innovative ideas and pedagogical excitement, this manual is for you.

In short, this manual will do a number of different things with varying levels of complexity. You can pick how much you need and when. Whereas we provide you with the fundamentals to help you design and deliver the Intro Psych course – PowerPoint slides, lecture frameworks, demonstrations and activities, test item banks – we also include a variety of additional pedagogical aids. We include essays on [motivating your students](#), [teaching large class](#), and [an overview of the science of learning](#).

WHERE DO YOU EVEN BEGIN?

As an instructor you likely fall into one of the three categories below. You can use these as a simple guide to help you know where to begin and what to do:

- If you have never taught before and you **have little time**:

- Look at our sample syllabus for a ready-to-go course.
- Use our PowerPoint slides for the modules you teach.
- Skim our Instructor Manual for
 - An overview of the section and modules
 - An outline of the content
 - Additional activities to supplement those in the PowerPoint
- If you have never taught before and you **have SOME time**, in addition to the above:
 - Modify the content from our stock set using the essay on what to cover
 - Consider the class design recommendations
 - Modify the PowerPoints with suggestions from the lecture frameworks
- If you have **taught before** and have some time, you may want to:
 - Review the APA recommendations for Intro Psychology
 - Skim the essays on engagement and motivation for new ideas
 - Send us activities or demonstrations you use that would be helpful to the Intro Psych Community (reach out to us with ideas at <mailto:info@nobaproject.com>)

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS IM

This Instructor's Manual has been specifically created to serve as a companion to the learning modules available through the Noba website (www.nobaproject.com). Our learning units cover the same topics and contain standard features such as those you would find in any traditional textbook. The Instructor's Manual for each Noba learning module includes the following:

Overview

- A big picture view of the whole section

Learning Objectives (LOs)

- Module LOs with corresponding APA Guidelines 2.0 LOs

Abstract

- A summary of the NOBA module

Class Design Recommendations

- Wondering how much time to spend on a module/section? Answers here.

Outline

- A quick way to see what the module covers with a detailed summary of the material.

Difficult Terms

- The terms students find the most challenging based on research studies and our teaching experience.

Lecture Frameworks

- Detailed suggestions for how to structure class presentations including active learning suggestions for student engagement. A playbook/lesson plan for the class tied to the NOBA PowerPoint slides.

Demonstrations/Activities

- Our selection of the most effective/engaging activities relating to the topic at hand. We've included all you'll need to conduct each activity.

Evidence-Based Teaching suggestions.

- Curious about what the scholarship of teaching and learning has to say about teaching the specific topic? Want some evidence on successful activities? We present an annotated bibliography of relevant research.

SPECIAL FEATURES IN THIS IM

Going beyond the basics we also have the following essays revolved around fundamental issues in teaching and for Intro Psych in particular:

- [How do you decide what to cover?](#)
- [How do you engage large classes?](#)
- [How do you motivate students to learn?](#)
- [What are the best ways to write and assess learning outcomes?](#)
- [How can I effectively teach the biological aspects of psych to my students?](#)

To make teaching this class and using NOBA as effective and easy for you and your students, we also have a syllabi template (you can quickly add your personal information and be ready to go).

We are cognizant of the fact that most instructors have a limited amount of time to prepare a new course or even revise an old one. To that end, we give you exactly what you need in a concise, pragmatic, ready-to-use format.

Our goal was to cull the BEST resources into one place. We used our own years of teaching experience and a variety of high-quality sources such as material from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (e.g., Office for Teaching Resources in Psychology, Project Syllabus, TOPIX), issues of *Psychology Learning and Teaching* (PLAT), *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology* (SoTLiP), and *Teaching of Psychology* (ToP), together with many volumes on teaching Intro Psych (e.g., Dunn & Chew, 2005; Dunn et al., 2010; Goss Lucas & Bernstein, 2005).

We also know that most passionate teachers also like to hone their craft. To that end, we have a number of recommendations to additional useful resources you can use as time permits. If you want even more, we refer you to the classic *McKeachie's Teaching Tips* (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2013), *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009), and *Effective college and university teaching* (Buskist & Benassi, 2012). These handbooks are particularly useful as teaching suggestions are broken down by different teaching situations (e.g., syllabus and test writing, classroom management).

Most importantly, at Noba, we walk the walk. Psychology is a science. Science is based on evidence and good teaching should be evidence-based as well. Throughout this Instructor's Manual we cite best practices from resources such as *Evidence-Based Teaching in Higher Education* (Schwartz & Gurung, 2012) and *Best Practices for Teaching Beginnings and Endings in the Psychology Major* (Dunn, Beins, McCarthy, & Hill, 2010).

If you want to change how students live, how they learn, and how passionate they feel about psychology teaching Intro Psych may just be the single best educational way to do so. There is probably no larger scale implicit intervention underway. For many students, Intro Psych is the only psychology course they will ever take.

Let's make it a great learning experience.

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