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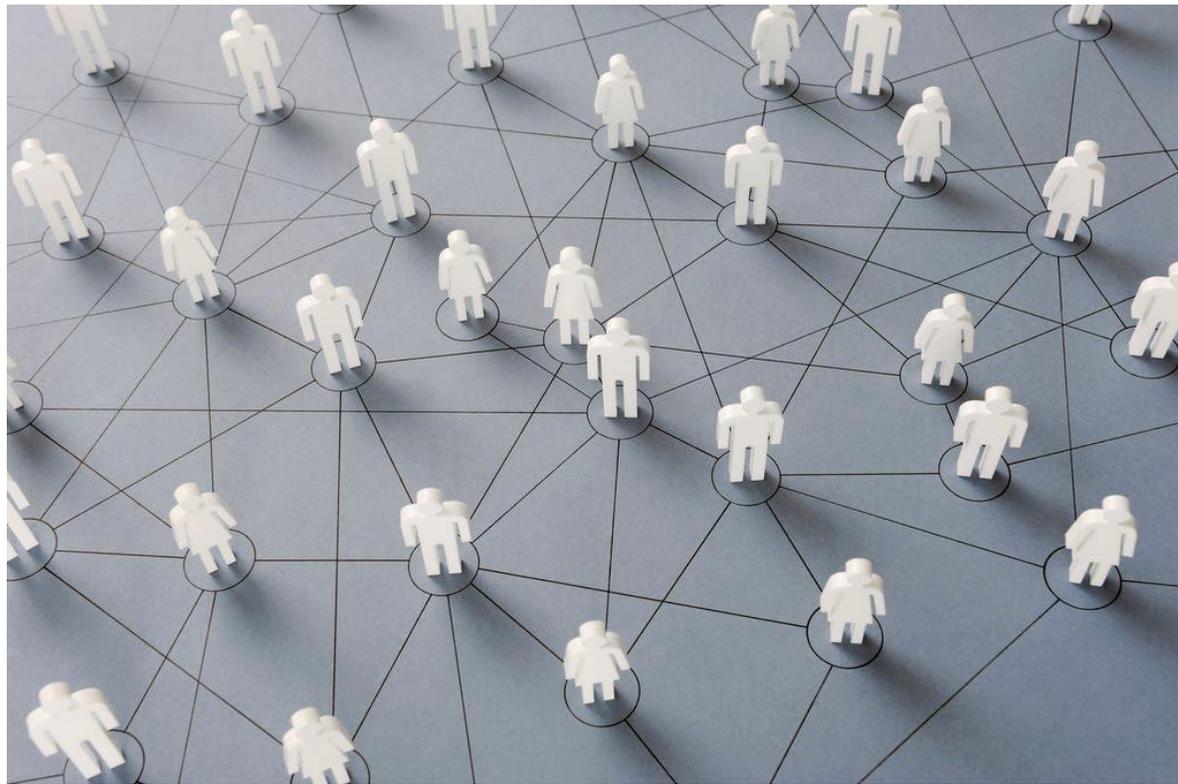
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When *Contagion* Jinxed Us into the College Experience No One Asked for

by Isabelle Rohlfing

Movies centering around college life are plentiful, usually funny, and completely and utterly inaccurate. One thing that most movies about college have in common is that they rarely depict the studying aspect of college, even though getting an education should be the main reason any person goes to college. Despite the inaccuracies of these movies, they are often entertaining. *Legally Blonde* (2001) is a certified classic that provides laughs, inspiration, and quotable lines perfect for everyday speech. For example, "What like it's hard?" is easily used whenever someone dares to question your ability. However, despite the sparingly few life lessons that can be gleaned from college movies, not once has a college movie ever explored what college looks like amid a pandemic. Instead of living the glamorous Harvard life like in *Legally Blonde* or the no work all play life of numerous college movies, my experience in college was more reminiscent of *Contagion* (2011) in which a virus originating from China spreads rapidly, infecting and killing millions, and causing panic and lockdowns all over the world. [continued next page]

I began college in the Fall of 2019, and I will graduate in the Spring of 2022, which means that every one of my three years at Creighton has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The closest I came to the normal college experience was Fall semester 2019 when COVID was not even a topic of conversation yet. In the Spring of 2020, I have vivid memories of discussing COVID with my best friend and speculating what would happen as cases began to pop up in the U.S. I remember thinking that COVID was not much different from the flu and that there was no reason for classes to be moved online. Fast forward a few years and it seems crazy that there was a time before masks and social distancing and anxiety over COVID.

Spending half a semester at home taking all my classes online, was, in short, extremely challenging for my barely existent time-management skills. I developed a bad habit of waiting until the end of the day to do all my homework, going to bed around 3 am, and not rolling out of bed until noon. Not to mention when I tried to do my schoolwork, I was so easily distracted that it would take me three times as long to accomplish even the simplest of tasks. To document the historic event of living through a pandemic, I journaled about the experience. In a journal entry dated March 20, 2020, only a few days after starting online classes I wrote, "I can't wait to fail online school, because I cannot focus on anything when I'm here at home so yay!" Fortunately, I did not fail my classes, but I did miss out on a lot of proper learning and quality time with many of my friends.

Finally returning to campus for classes in August of 2020 was a relief after being cooped up with my family for six months straight (I love them, but still); however, arriving back on campus offered its challenges. First, there were hybrid classes, which were both easier than fully in-person classes and harder because zoom classes are only minimally engaging at best. Taking exams online using Respondus LockDown Browser was nice because no one was present to see me cry while taking my Medical Spanish exams, but also not fun at all when my neighbors decided that 10 am on a Saturday was the perfect time to start blasting music while I was trying to remember how to say sickle cell anemia in Spanish (it's "la anemia drepanocítica" if you were curious). The new visitor protocols for the residence halls at Creighton made it difficult to visit friends despite living only a 15-minute walk away. On the plus side, the strict visiting protocols did allow many Creighton students to practice their stealth skills by sneaking into forbidden residence halls, which might come in handy for a future career as an international super spy. Then there was the weekly email that everyone feared, "You have been randomly selected to participate in Creighton University's mandatory COVID-19 surveillance testing." I swear I

received that email five weeks in a row.

The shortened semesters for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 packed so much information into such a short time that I think at most I obtained about five percent of the information I was taught. In my opinion, the best part of college during the pandemic was the two-month-long winter break after the Fall 2020 semester. Being done with finals by Thanksgiving was something I missed this year, although the tradeoff was fall break. The worst part of the pandemic college experience was the possibility of quarantine. If you managed to survive both semesters without having to quarantine at the DoubleTree Hotel, then props to you. Thankfully, my quarantine experience only lasted a few days because I had not been exposed to COVID, and my symptoms were likely just a cold. Is it bad though, that I kind of enjoyed it? Like a short little COVID-cation but without the COVID.

Luckily by the Spring of 2021, vaccines were being rolled out, and the vaccine mandate at Creighton allowed students to return to fully in-person classes in Fall 2021. Of course, COVID's impact did not magically disappear with the vaccine. Masks were still required in classrooms for a short time as the Delta variant spread rapidly. Now going into my last semester at Creighton, Delta has been replaced by the Omicron variant, so Creighton once again required masks. COVID has become a constant in the news cycle, and I am so used to seeing it in my emails that it is so odd to remember there once was a time when college was normal. In many ways, I have missed out on a normal college experience, but my experiences pale in comparison to those who have lost loved ones to COVID or suffered long-term health issues from COVID. College is still college, it still involves a lot of late nights cramming, procrastination, continuously stressful weeks, hanging out with friends, and studying. At this point, COVID is a normal part of college and life. My journal entry dated January 19, 2021, announces "COVID update- It's still happening, surprise!" A year later and it still rings true.





Lessons I Learned from Creighton's Psychology Department

by Marika Marklin

The band plays "Pomp and Circumstance" as you march up the stage and pose for an overpriced photo. You smile at your parents, who have tears in their eyes because they simply cannot believe that their baby is old enough to be a college graduate.

Okay, I'll be the first to admit that it's corny, but we've all imagined our future graduation procession before. It's what gets you through those late-night study (read: cram) sessions, minimum 4-sentence responses to repetitive discussion posts on BlueLine and writing papers on books you hardly skimmed. Everyone says that those stressful, sleepless nights are worth it once you don the one-size-fits-all cap and gown, so you blindly follow their advice and finish your degree right before the graduation ceremony... So that's what normal people do. Except if you're Marika, then you choose to graduate a semester early in December- a time when Creighton does not even have a graduation ceremony. So, you have an anticlimactic end to college and miss the psych department so much that you decide to write about the lessons the department taught you. You even go so far as to share those lessons in a newsletter because your motherland-Wisconsin-does not stack up to Creighton's psychology department. Without further ado, here are those lessons:

Be On Time

If you've ever been in a Dr. Huss class, you'll know the importance of this one. There's nothing quite like running into the classroom 10 seconds before class begins to avoid Dr. Huss's silent stare as you quietly shuffle to your seat. And just when you think the awkward silence couldn't be any worse, Dr. Huss breaks it for you! What a giver!

Creighton Leader Navigates a Challenging Time

by Sally Hand

2020 brought the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also brought a social justice movement in response to the continued mistreatment and killing of Black people in America. About two months after being sent home from Creighton, leaving the majority of my belongings in McGloin Hall to gather dust, I was keeping myself busy working in a bakery (essential business?) in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was on my 15-minute break that I saw the video of Derek Chauvin killing George Floyd. By the end of my shift, it felt like the whole world knew what was happening just a few minutes away from where I grew up.

That summer was a summer of accountability, growth, and hard conversations. It was a summer where I could feel myself living in a historical moment. City-wide curfews and sirens all night, the gas station I had visited days before being burned to the ground, and the most peaceful and impactful visit to George Floyd Square. Everything felt like it was happening right around me, but Omaha was having issues of its own. I spoke with Sunny Washington, a junior in the Heider College of Business and former president of Creighton University African American Student Association (CUASA).

Sunny became president of CUASA right as the pandemic was kicking off. "Formerly CUASA was a much more quiet club, the presence on campus wasn't super big," Sunny remembered. "But last year it kind of got put to the forefront of everything due to the political situations going on in the world. It was also my first big leadership position. I was constantly being asked to do interviews about how to be anti-racist...It was definitely a position I felt like I was put in, but I just felt so repetitive. It was a lot, but it made me happy that so many people were trying to learn and trying to have more of an open mind and trying to educate themselves." Sunny, an Omaha native, was just blocks away from the scene when James Scurlock, was killed.

James Scurlock, a Black man, was killed by a bar owner just days after George Floyd's murder. Sunny was walking to join a protest with her friends when she heard gunshots. After making it back to their vehicle safely, and returning home for the night, they realized that the noise they had heard had been the shots that killed yet another Black man.

Social media became a huge source of news and a place for people to show support for various groups. Sunny and I spoke about the polarity of these times and the difficulty of navigating performative activism and the importance of sharing certain graphics or important pieces of information. "I knew that [posting Black Lives Matter content on social media] was definitely going to potentially cause tension or some broken relationships coming back to school. But I feel like some of the things that people were saying, the people that argued with me, really showed a lot to their character and their morals, and that might just not be someone I want to surround myself with," Sunny said. "It sucks that I had to learn that through this instance, but I am grateful that I did. Coming back to Creighton, it was iffy, but I did feel a lot of support, and especially because CUASA was a lot bigger and a lot more prevalent at the time." We spoke about the pressure of being a spokesperson during such an important historical time, especially being a part of a minority group on Creighton's campus.

The deaths of James Scurlock and George Floyd took place during a time of quarantine and lockdown, where people had more time to spend on social media. This impacted the attention these cases got, which can be seen as a positive, but not everybody is aware that these issues are still going on. For example, Lauren Smith-Fields's case was much slower to reach public dialogue and had not received half the media attention that the Gabby Petito case had. Even after we have returned from our lockdown lifestyles, we should be cognizant of why different news stories are given priority.

Sunny explained that she has been involved in a project with Dr. Tanya Winegard, the Vice President for Student Life at Creighton University, to include a module on being anti-racist that will be required of Creighton freshmen to complete. She looks forward to the results of the annual Climate Survey and hopes that Creighton students remain open to being educated on topics regarding racial bias. We hope that the institution, as well as the people that represent it, continue to strive for accountability and understanding of barriers that people of color face, and how on individual and university levels we can be better.

Embodied by Tweed: What is the "Professor" and why would one want to be one?

by Conor Strumberger

The cliché: the debonair and edgy professor with the tweed jacket and a rock-band t-shirt beneath. Maybe they arrive to class fresh off their moped, rock music blaring on their phone, replacing their egg-shaped helmet for an Irish flat cap that makes them look even balder than the story their hairline tells. What is the allure of the life of an academic? Is it their whimsical nature? Their depth of knowledge in a singular field?

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Except wait, he breaks it by making a sarcastic, yet comical, comment about why you were late. And don't expect him to forget that you were late that one time. He will bring it up every single class. By the end of the semester, The Giver has taught you not to be late.

Psychology Is So Much More Than Freud

Nearly every psych class briefly goes through research methods and theories in the first week of school. It's apparently an unwritten rule, and you just have to suck it up. That being said, Freud's section is hardly touched. This is because psychology is so much more than Freud. Theories are constantly evolving, and Freud's libido talk just doesn't stack up. And even though you hardly talk about Freud in your classes, every non-psych major at Creighton will tease you about Freud. If you thought this would end upon graduation, let me be the first to inform you that, no, it most definitely won't. People in the real world will ask you how much you talked about Freud during school, so I advise you to nod along and smile. If the spirit moves you, feel free to gently inform them that Freud's libido nonsense is not taken seriously among professionals and certainly not a key point of study for undergraduate students. If you don't want to get into a tussle, nodding along and smiling seems to do the trick—that's how I got through college!

Being A Psych Major Does Not Make You a Therapist

The number of disclaimers that psych profs need to give psych majors before covering theories and diagnostics is overwhelming. Time and time again, profs drill the point into our brains that we are not professional therapists nor psychologists after learning about theories and the DSM. Although the redundant disclaimers can be irritating, profs need to repeat them because even though we don't consider ourselves therapists, our friends certainly do. You probably didn't sign up for becoming your friends' free and personal therapist in this major, but that's what many non-psych majors believe. So here's a life lesson from me to you: In Becoming A Psych Major, Your

For me, it was not merely riding a moped while wearing tweed but was molded by professors like this that left transformative effects. I knew early on in college that I ultimately wanted to stay in academia, what troubled me was identifying an area of study that I was passionate about. I endeavored on a journey to become a jack-of-all-trades, or more aptly named, the master of none. I have studied economics, theology, and psychology. I took classes that fulfilled the fine-art requirement that allowed me to be completely removed from painting like Picasso, instead crafting instruments from leftover boxes and rubber bands. The classes that I took were diverse in content but shared one commonality: they all were what I liked and enjoyed.

After realizing I loved Economics, particularly behavioral economics (emphasis on behavioral), by being allowed to write about my interest at the time by a moped-riding professor, I pursued more psychology classes. I took to learning about Freud, basics of learning, cognition, and the slathering of information an introductory psychology class offers. I loved it; though, I was unsure where to go next. I switched my major to Psychology and pursued research in Social Psychology with Dr. Budesheim. We studied Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) and genetic essentialism and their relations to prejudice. While I enjoyed my time in that field of research, I finally had the proverbial “aha” moment. Upon taking Behavioral Neuroscience and seeing the application of the principles I learned about in class executed in a laboratory setting, I was on board like a neurotransmitter on a receptor. I had stumbled upon a love of physiological psychology and found a way to unite my interests in chemistry, biology, economics, math, and social psychology.

While most of my professors did not fill the stereotypical role of “tweed” whimsicalness like that of Robin Williams in *Good Will Hunting*, they all provided me with important lessons on how to be me and find my potential (just like Robin Williams). I learned that the best professors I have had at Creighton offered an opportunity to not only learn the material abided by the class title but to enter dialogue with the material. They were open to all questions, and, most importantly, offered an avenue of whimsical freethought when it came to proposing new ideas for material or research. They considered all things, and instead of treating students as repositories for information, they sought to build critical thinkers. Their passion exuberated the classroom, and their niche became our niche. With this in mind, the ability to teach is not filling the tweed-jacket persona. Instead, it is initiating the free-loving thought in all students as the professors at Creighton have done for me.

Friends Automatically Make You Their Free Therapist. And don't even get me started about friends asking for personal diagnoses.

Everyone Awkwardly Knows Creighton's Psych Department (and Dr. Leak)

The number of times I've run into a Creighton alum or parent is ridiculous. I once got stopped at the Miami airport by a Creighton parent whose kids attended Creighton decades ago. They knew all about the psychology department and mentioned how they wished their child would have studied psychology during their tenure there. I nannied for a family that frequently and proudly mentioned their niece that also attended Creighton (who, unfortunately, was not a psych student). But I think my funniest Creighton connection is that the senior medical director at the mental health treatment center I work at in Wisconsin is also a Creighton alum. After interviewing for the job, he personally called me to chat about all things Creighton, informing me that not only is he a proud Creighton alum, but also a fellow member of Psi Chi and former student of Dr. Leak. If I can impart any wisdom on you, it's that apparently everyone—including those who live hundreds of miles away—knows Dr. Leak.

The Future is Female by Abby Slyter



Since its establishment at Creighton in the 1950s, the Department of Psychological Science has never had a female-majority faculty - until this year. Dr. Gary Leak's retirement and the hire of Dr. Amber Witherby has tipped the gender ratio of the department in an unprecedented way. The first female professor in psychology at Creighton, Dr. Betty Dahl, was hired in the early 1970s. At that time, the ratio of male-to-female psychology majors at Creighton was 3:1. Now, for the first time, a female majority student body will be joined by a female-majority faculty in psychology.

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I spoke to the women faculty in the department about their time at Creighton, how being a woman intersects with their professional careers in psychology, and about this new female-majority in the department. In all of the responses I received from these women, I was met with honesty, authentic reflection, and hope. I am grateful to our female faculty not only for their time in helping with this article, but for their examples of leadership and mentorship in my four years at Creighton. Having female faculty and women in leadership has not only been meaningful in my academic journey, but also in my growth as a woman. I first want to thank them for engaging in this incredibly important dialogue and reflection with me.

On an institutional level, many professors noted the changes in parental leave policies as the biggest change in their time at Creighton regarding the equitable status of women on campus. When Dr. Amy Badura Brack started her career at Creighton in the late 1990s, she describes female faculty trying to get pregnant in September so time was guaranteed at home after a May delivery. If a pregnant faculty member was unlucky enough to give birth in one of the other eleven months in the year, she might have been expected to teach extra classes in subsequent semesters or complete extra committee work to “make up” for time away from campus spent recovering from birth and caring for a newborn. Dr. Laura Finken similarly described these policies as providing no support for parents and instead adding the stress of finding a balance of parenthood, work, and making up for time away from campus. These policies not only increased the burden of new mothers, but they also unfairly assumed that women were always the primary caregivers, sometimes at the expense of male faculty who were not granted any parental leave. Given Creighton’s Jesuit ideals, the support of family life is essential, said Dr. Finken. Drs. Badura Brack and Khanna both agreed that the adoption of Creighton’s new parental leave policy alleviates some of these issues for faculty who are new parents.

However, it is not just having leave after childbirth that is important in the lives of full-time parents and professors. The intersection between a female identity and professional career is not singular, and as Dr. Jill Brown noted, it is sometimes hard to unweave its impact. For some professors, raising children while pursuing their professional careers created clear dual role responsibilities and occasional conflict. Drs. Badura Brack, Brown, and Khanna all noted that there are some issues on campus in which parents or primary caregivers are not properly accommodated or considered. The experiences of our primary caregiver faculty all demonstrate the resilience of our professors who are parents.

Many professors also spoke about the increasing number of women in leadership positions, though many areas on campus still contain a male leadership majority. Drs. Brown, Badura Brack, and Khanna all mentioned the hiring of Dean Keegan in the College of Arts and Sciences and Provost Wilson as evidence of women in prominent leadership positions at Creighton. Additionally, more women have been promoted to full professor and a lot of the cabinet is now female. Dr. Khanna said that the proportion of women in leadership has grown enormously in her time at Creighton, and she hopes to see more work towards racial equity as well. Dr. Brown spoke about the student body also making more positive changes to be informed, inclusive, and in solidarity with one another, especially in regard to the LGBTQIA+ community.

When asked about the new female majority in the department, Dr. Khanna said she was happy about it. While she has love and respect for her department colleagues regardless of gender, Dr. Khanna mentioned the female majority student population in Creighton’s Department of Psychological Science, saying that it is nice for students and faculty to see themselves in one another. It’s important for young women to see themselves represented in professional psychology, and as Dr. Khanna says, “The more models they have the better.” Dr. Vanessa Minervini agreed, saying it is essential for women in science to see models of success. Importantly, however, numbers aren’t everything. As Dr. Brown notes, “The real meaning is found in how we in the department support one another and are able to use our voices to speak our truths and reflect the needs of each other in the workplace.”

Our female faculty gave remarkable advice for other women in or entering psychology. For all parents balancing home and work, Dr. Badura Brack said, “Think of your career trajectory as having some ebb and flow along an upward trajectory and allow yourself some grace when life is more important than work.” Dr. Minervini spoke to the many accomplishments of female faculty and students within the department, saying she was incredibly proud. Dr. Brown emphasized continuing to learn and unlearn as we grow, pulling inspiration from the women around us, and trusting our intuition. Keep your head up, Dr. Khanna says, “We have to advocate for ourselves. Even though women are the majority of students, the leadership is still mostly men. We need to dig in and ask ‘why?’ What can we do to make doors more open for women? I think it’s best to enter the world with your eyes open and know that you have to advocate for yourself.”

Welcome to the Creighton Department of Psychological Science, Dr. Amber Witherby, and thank you for helping us tip the scale. The future is female.

New Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Amber Witherby

by Abby Welu

Dr. Amber Witherby will be joining the Creighton Psychology Department in the Fall of 2022. She grew up in Colorado and later attended Colorado State University in Fort Collins to obtain her bachelor's degree. Dr. Witherby attended Texas Christian University for her PhD in Psychology and is currently completing her post-doctoral research training at Iowa State University. She is super excited to move to Omaha just a few hours away! I had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Witherby to discuss her hopes for professing at Creighton and a little bit about herself.

Welu: What classes will you be teaching?

Witherby: Memory and Cognition and Research and Methods I, but I hope to be teaching Intro to Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience in later semesters.

Welu: What is one thing you want your future students to know about your professing style/ your classroom?

Witherby: I really try to put students' interest first. When I create my teaching material, I try to think of things that will be relevant to the students at the time. I put a lot of effort into my courses to make sure that the students are able to apply what they are learning in class to the real world. I try to incorporate a lot of activities that will take the abstract concepts they are learning about and show how they really apply in practice!

Welu: Favorite Professor that you had in college and why?

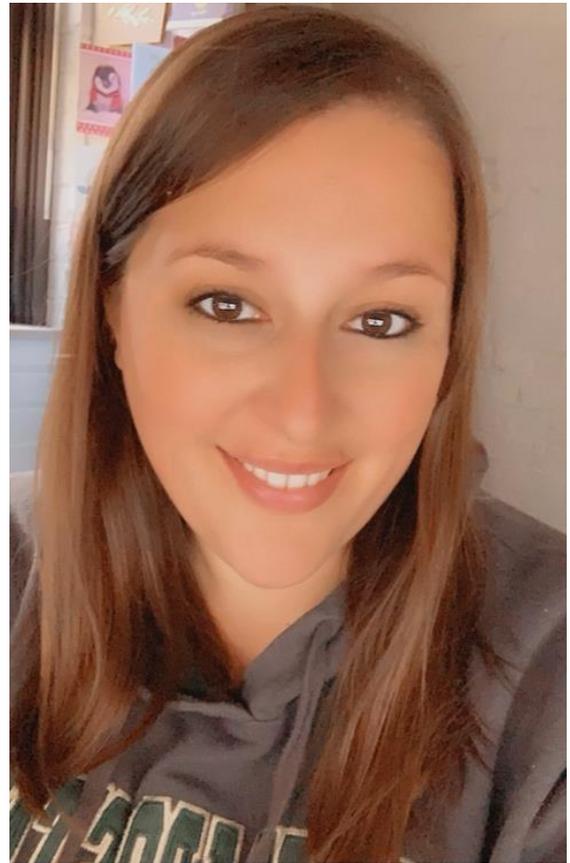
Witherby: My Cognitive Psychology professor. He was the one that got me involved in research and reached out to get me into the lab. I was able to get involved in the higher-level research tasks as an undergrad. I know research isn't for everyone, but it is so important to be able to receive those opportunities and ability to get into the nitty gritty of research to know if it's for you. I hope to be able to extend the opportunity of getting involved in research to my students and bring them to conferences as well!

Welu: What is your type of research?

Witherby: My research broadly focuses on ways to improve students learning. Particularly focusing on students' metacognition (what students think about how their memory works) and comparing it to student performance. A little hint for studying... the best way to study is to test yourself on the material. Make test questions, quiz yourself, but try to avoid rewriting your notes.

Welu: How do you incorporate your research into helping your students learn?

Witherby: I do a lecture right at the beginning to see what learning strategies my students use currently and report how effective different strategies are. A lot of students recopy notes, which is an ineffective strategy! I try to show empirical evidence to show what is effective and how you can study better!



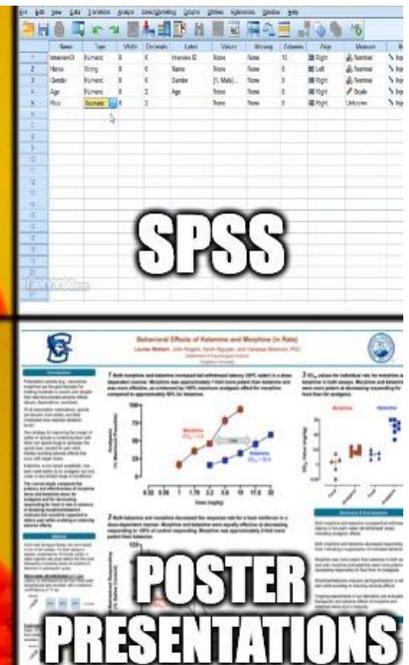
Welu: What will your class schedule look like in relation to exams? What is your policy on extra credit?

Witherby: I add a little bit of leeway into each of my classes. I typically have 4-unit exams and a cumulative final in my classes, and you get to drop one exam. If a student has a bad exam, they have the ability to take the cumulative final and alternatively, if a student is happy with their unit exams, they do not have to take the cumulative final. I understand people have bad days! I will occasionally throw in little extra credit opportunities throughout my exams as well!

Welu: Do you have any pets? Favorite football team? If you could have any superpower what would it be?

Witherby: I have one dog who has special needs that will eventually cause her to be blind. We go on plenty of walks and play plenty of frisbee, enjoying her sight while we still have it; Denver Broncos; Mindreading (it would really come in handy when teaching!)

Psychology Memes by Kevin Nguyen



Psychology Student



What society thinks I do.



What my parents think I do.



What my professor thinks I do.



What my friends think I do.



What I should be doing

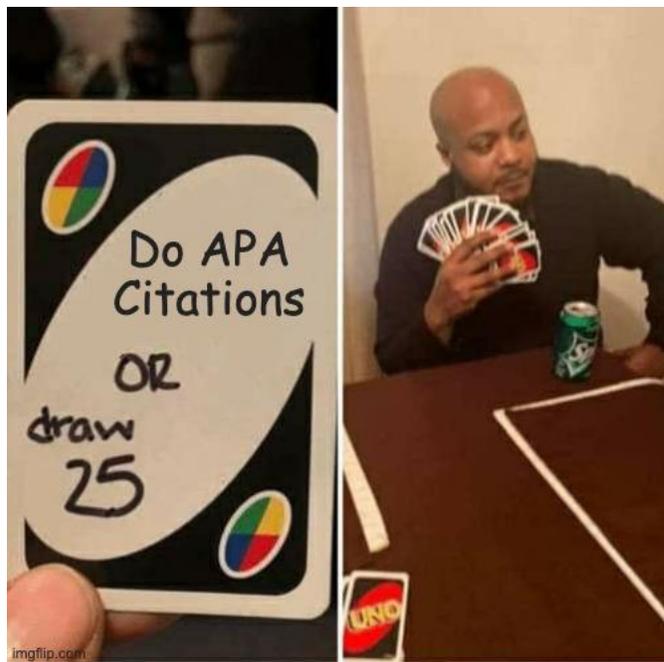


What I actually do.

**WHEN ALL THE PARTICIPANTS
WALK OUT BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR
RESEARCH AND STATISTICS PROJECT**



**WHEN YOU ONLY READ THE ARTICLE'S
ABSTRACT BEFORE CLASS DISCUSSION**



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