TEACHING STATEMENT

I believe that my role as an instructor is to teach students how to think critically in an environment of mutual respect, while showing them that sociology applies to almost every aspect of their daily lives. I also think that my obligation as an instructor includes my research. I teach in areas in which I perform research, and students have commented that this makes for a better classroom experience.

I have three overarching objectives as an instructor: (1) to give students the tools to understand and critique sociological research (2) to create a safe space in my classroom and (3) to help students recognize how sociological concepts apply to their daily lives. I strive to achieve all of these objectives in every course I teach, and I outline how I do so below. Thus far, these courses include *Introduction to Sociology* (SOCI 1101), *Sociology of Gender* (SOCI 3280), and *Gender and Work* (SOCI 3290).

I want students to leave my class with the ability to understand how sociologists gather and analyze data. I use a variety of techniques to accomplish these goals. All of my classes utilize daily reading assignments and discussions of current sociological research. My students often express concern about their ability to comprehend research articles, but I assure them that my focus is on process, not content. To help students understand sociological data, I have them take part in small projects where they gather data that is relevant to their future careers. In my *Gender and Work* class, I ask students to use data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to discover the average wages that men and women earn in the careers that they are interested in pursuing. Then, all the students write their data on the board, and as a class, we see that there is a gender wage gap in virtually all jobs. I remind students that I am not concerned with their ability to memorize how much each occupation makes, but rather that they can understand the concept of the wage gap. From there, we begin a semester-long discussion of the mechanisms of this inequality.

Beyond an understanding of research methods in sociology, I want students to be able to critique this work. In each class I teach, we discuss the appropriateness of the methods and measures in every piece we read. In my *Sociology of Gender* class, I developed an assignment to help students hone this skill. Students take a gender stereotype (e.g., women are more emotional than men) and use current research to debunk the myth. In writing this piece, students have to be able to understand sociological data, but they also have to be able to critique the assumptions of outdated research that have been used to justify stereotypes about men and women.

As sociology can often cover controversial topics, it is my goal as an instructor to create a culture of respect in my classroom. Some of the most memorable learning moments for students come about through the expression of ideas. In my gender class, I have students work in groups to present a current event concerning gender that is relevant to class material. Once, a group of students chose to present a couple who decided not to reveal the sex of their child to anyone to prevent their child from experiencing gender role socialization. This presentation was the most controversial of the semester--many students vehemently disagreed with the parents’ decision and stated that the child would not be able to interact with others without a gender. While the statement was considered by many students to be offensive, it provided a teaching moment, as I was able to use that comment to show how ingrained gender is in our society. The teachable moment came about when students realized that the potential difficulty of those interactions did not lie with the person who did not identify with a gender but rather with a rigid system that only recognizes two genders. While this was a very challenging time in the classroom, students learned through this debate as they were actively engaged in the process.
Finally, I use active learning assignments to show students that sociological research applies to their daily lives. I developed an activity in which students find examples of emotional labor in the TV shows and movies they watch. Students work in pairs to present their clips to the class and, afterwards, we discuss larger themes, particularly that women and men are placed into statuses that require them to perform different types and amounts of emotional labor. Pre- and post-tests around this assignment suggest that students’ understanding of the gendered nature and consequences of emotional labor significantly improves as a result of participation in the assignment. I have taken the data from these tests to show that this activity is an effective way of promoting student learning. As there is a dearth of research regarding effective ways of teaching emotional labor, I have a manuscript under review that outlines the assignment and its effectiveness.

Teaching Preparation and Plans

I have received considerable training in graduate school that has prepared me to succeed in a teaching career. Before I began teaching my own courses, I took a graduate-level teaching seminar designed to help students develop pedagogical strategies. Due to my outstanding performance in this course, I was asked to serve as a teaching assistant for it in my own department to help my fellow graduate students hone their teaching skills. Since I began graduate school, I have been the only student in my department asked to be a teaching assistant for this course. Additionally, I served as a teaching assistant for Global Gender, a small, writing-intensive course. I also served as a teaching assistant for Social Structure and Personality, a very large social psychology course. Therefore, I have experience in a wide variety of classroom settings, and I have strategies to promote learning in both large and small classes.

Course work in graduate school prepared me to teach a variety of Sociology courses. I received a graduate certificate in Women’s Studies, which led me to teach one section of Sociology of Gender and three sections of Gender and Work. I could also teach a variety of other gender and/or Women’s Studies courses, including Gendered Interactions and Gender Stratification. I completed my comprehensive exams in Social Psychology, which prepared me to teach a variety of courses in this field, including Self and Identity, Social Interaction, and Social Structure and Personality. Given my general training as a sociologist, I am also well-prepared to teach Introductory Sociology (which I have taught once) or Social Problems.

I have received substantial training in research methodology and statistics preparing me to teach a wide variety of methods courses. During my time as a graduate student, I have taken several upper-level statistics courses. These include Categorical Data Analysis, Structural Equation Modeling, Hierarchical Linear Modeling, and Social Network Analysis. I also served as a teaching assistant for Categorical Data Analysis. In my time in graduate school, no other graduate student has been asked to serve as a teaching assistant for a graduate-level statistics course. I have also had the opportunity in my own research to learn techniques for longitudinal data analysis including fixed effect regressions models and group-based trajectory modeling. In addition, I helped design several experiments and gathered data for these in the Laboratory for the Study of Social Interaction at the University of Georgia. These experiences have prepared me to teach research methods and statistics at the undergraduate and graduate level.
Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

I have taught three sections of *Gender and Work* (SOCI 3290) and one section each of the *Sociology of Gender* (SOCI 3280) and *Introduction to Sociology* (SOCI 1101). In each of these courses, I have consistently received strong student evaluations. Below are my quantitative course evaluations and selected qualitative comments.

### Overall Course Evaluations on a 5-point Scale

(1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

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<th>Course</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
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<th>Concern</th>
<th>Overall Ratings</th>
<th>Clear Explanation</th>
<th>Helpfulness</th>
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<th>Organized Course</th>
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### Selected Qualitative Comments

**SOCI 1101: Introduction to Sociology** (from mid-course and final evaluations)

“Extremely effective teacher! I took this course as a requirement for future schooling, but I'm happy to note that the content will be very applicable to my life in various ways. Classes were well-organized, assignments were graded quickly and fairly, and extra help was always available.”

“Instructor knows her information amazingly well, and does not hesitate to let students know when she does not know a random statistic (she was asked some very random questions!) offhand; this actually builds confidence in the teacher because I trust that she is more interested in helping us learn correctly than sounding like she knows everything, which no one can. But she sure comes close to knowing everything!”

“Ms. James is really excellent at presenting the course material in an understandable and relevant way. Her use of differential media and facilitation of discussion allow for students of many different learning styles to comprehend the topics at hand. This class has taught me a lot about other people in
general, and I hope to use this knowledge to be a more compassionate, open-minded person in all my future endeavors.”

“She is an amazing teacher. I wish I had more time and hours so I can take more courses for sociology especially with Katie.”

**SOCI 3280: The Sociology of Gender** (from final evaluations)

“Professor James was very prepared and well versed in the material. Interesting class, readings and discussions.”

“Excellent teacher. I really liked the articles [we] read and the way in which she maintained control of the classroom.”

**SOCI 3290: Gender and Work** (from mid-course and final evaluations)

“One particular element of the class I like is your attentiveness when students are participating in class. It promotes learning and demonstrates respect of the opinion of others.”

“I like that we discuss a lot. I like that you ask for our opinion because it lets concepts sink in better and I’m able to apply them in life.”

“I enjoy the readings, normally professors assign readings that aren’t interesting, but in this class, I like to read the articles.”

“I thoroughly enjoy your lectures. I love reading something before and coming to class to have you better explain what it is we read. Everything is very closely related and leads to excellent class discussion. I really enjoy coming to class once I get here.”

“Professor James constantly asks for our opinions and facilitates discussion, while also making sure we all understand concepts before moving on.”

“Katie James, took her gender class last semester and taking gender and work this summer. I like her teaching style, tests are reasonable and have come to really enjoy her class as we focus on work in terms of gender. I foresee her excelling greatly in the academia world.”

“Katie was very helpful and proved to be a very important asset to my success. I enjoyed the activities she held and I was comfortable asking her for help and she was an excellent resource in my development as a student.”

“I love how we have group discussion and class discussion. I also like how the teacher incorporates videos, pictures, and graphs to teach important concepts.”

“She’s amazing. Her lessons were well prepared and extremely interesting. She helped me better understand and gave me a deeper knowledge on certain information.”

“Katie was an excellent instructor. Perhaps the best I’ve had at UGA. Made me wish I’d minored in sociology. UGA should try to get her on staff permanently.”
“Great teaching style, good personality. Really enjoyed the classes I have taken with Katie. Fair amount of work, clear directions and really able to explain materials. A+++!!”

“She was very well-prepared for class and the assessment reinforced instruction. Everything discussed in class allowed students to be open and provide their own insights. I really loved this course.”

“I was impressed at how much the professor was able to cite research that she is doing for her masters and relate that to the material we were learning in class. It made me feel extremely confident about the material and the class. …Also, the professor was ALWAYS helpful and basically had an open door policy when it came to office hours. She would take the time to sit and talk about the class, assignments, grades... whatever I needed, without question. I felt like she genuinely cared about the success of her students and I could tell she wanted us to not only achieve a good grade but also really learn something new.”

“(Katie) has a way of remembering even the smallest comments that students make during class, and she will refer back to them days later as if it's no big thing. It is. It shows she appreciates when people speak up and interact during lectures and that she actually listens to what students have to say.”