

**NICOLE T. BUCHANAN**  
**TEACHING STATEMENT**  
**(November 2008)**

During my tenure at Michigan State University I have taught graduate and undergraduate courses as well as practicum and clinical supervision of graduate students. Through my teaching, I strive to foster academic excellence by offering innovative, interdisciplinary courses, infusing diverse content into course materials, and creating a learning environment that is inclusive for all students. I believe that I have achieved these goals in each of my courses and enhanced student learning as a result (please refer to the last page of this statement for student ratings and comments).

My Abnormal Psychology courses typically have 250 students. Despite its size, I strive to maintain a welcoming environment and I use multiple methods of instruction to maximize learning across all students. For example, I use interactive powerpoint presentations to reinforce course material. Similarly, I utilize a variety of media resources to increase student engagement, such as videos from contemporary media and programs produced for psychology instruction. Together, these efforts keep students engaged and interested, which enhance their learning and integration of the course materials. I have also taught a graduate level course on Couple, Family, and Group therapy from a systems theory perspective. This course addressed ethics, research, diversity, clinical, and theoretical literature, as well as providing students with a solid foundation for clinical interventions grounded in empirical research. Each class addressed factors influencing many types of families and couples (e.g., lesbian parents, Muslim families) and culturally-competent adaptations for current therapy paradigms (e.g., conducting a trauma group for Black women). This course was highlighted for its exceptional integration of diversity material by Dr. Madonna Constantine, a noted expert on multicultural psychology and faculty member at Teachers College, Columbia University.

The course that brings me the most pride is the Multicultural Psychology course I developed upon arrival to campus. To my knowledge, this is the first course of its kind offered in MSU's Department of Psychology and in the years since its inception, it is increasingly sought after as a unique learning opportunity for students. This course is important not only because of its content, but also because it fills an important gap in the educational programming for students. As evidence of its value, it was highlighted by the Lansing State Journal as one of the unique diversity experiences available for MSU students (August, 2005). The goal of my multicultural course is two-fold: 1) to teach students scholarly writing (this course fulfilled Tier II writing requirements), and 2) to challenge students to think critically and broadly about ethnic, gender, religious, and sexual diversity and the manner in which they interface with the field of psychology and society as a whole. I also help students explore their personal experiences regarding diversity and their intersecting identities (e.g., race, gender, and social class) that can simultaneously be a source of privilege and oppression. In order to challenge students to explore these issues personally and critically, I go to great lengths to foster a safe learning environment that is welcoming to *all* students. This requires that I be proficient in connecting with students representing any race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and religious backgrounds. This is truly a unique challenge as an instructor and one in which I am almost uniformly successful. In addition, I incorporate a unique final project for the course where students create a 10 minute film on an issue related to the course material. These films have addressed a wide range of topics from Michigan's role in the eugenics movement and the holocaust, to experiences of transgendered college students, to perceptions of morbidly obese individuals. In the few years since its inception, my Multicultural Psychology course is increasingly sought after by students.

In addition to these formal teaching experiences, I have been a mentor and advisor (formally and informally) to approximately 20 graduate and over 35 undergraduate students, dedicating a considerable portion of this time working with non-traditional students, such as ethnic minority men and women, first-generation college or graduate students, students with children, and students with mental illness. I have worked with graduate students by acting as a chair (4) or member (7) of their graduate committees, assisting them with research, publications and presentations, writing letters of recommendation for awards, fellowships, and faculty positions, and informally mentoring them across a number of professional development domains. With undergraduate students I have chaired (2) or been a member (1) of honor's thesis committees, supervised summer research projects (12), guided their development or research skills in my lab (21), assisted them with applying to graduate school, written recommendation letters, and informally guided them through a variety of academic concerns.

In working with these students, I strive to find a balance between providing support and encouraging their independent thought and conceptualization of their research. By providing support while encouraging students to wrestle with the conceptual and methodological constraints inherent to research, they emerge from the process as strong researchers who have a much better understanding of the meaning of research and their findings. Several of the undergraduates I have worked with have matriculated into graduate school. To date, I have co-authored twenty presentations and fifteen papers with graduate and undergraduate students. Further, several of the students I have worked with have won awards to support their research and travel to present their research at national conferences. Most recently, my advisee, Krystle Woods, won the American Psychological Association's (Division 12) Dalmas A. Taylor Award for Outstanding Student Research based on this paper based on our research together.

## STUDENT EVALUATIONS & RATINGS

Below are student ratings for several of the courses I have taught in recent years. My formal graduate and undergraduate teaching has been very well received by students. I believe this reflects my continued effort to strive toward academic excellence by providing superior instruction.

A=instructor involvement B=student interest C=student-instructor interaction D=course demands E=course organization

Course#	Course Name	Term	A	B	C	D	E
<i>Averages for all MSU Psychology Assistant Professors</i>			1.95	2.67	2.12	2.42	2.26

### Ratings for N. Buchanan

1-5 scale: 1 = Superior. 5 = Inferior

Psy 280	Abnormal Psychology	Su2008	1.22	1.79	1.30	1.83	1.41
Psy 280	Abnormal Psychology	SP2008	1.40	1.88	1.46	1.91	1.45
PSY 493w/992	Multicultural Psychology	FA2007	1.43	1.79	1.41	1.97	1.82
Psy 280	Abnormal Psychology	FA2006	1.45	1.87	1.53	2.00	1.49
Psy 280	Abnormal Psychology	SP2006	1.63	2.10	1.63	2.20	1.72
Psy 493w/992	Multicultural Psychology	SP2006	1.89	1.87	1.71	2.79	2.35
PSY 493w/992	Multicultural Psychology	FA2005	1.48	1.71	1.46	2.69	1.98
Psy 280	Abnormal Psychology	SP2005	1.80	2.14	1.86	2.49	2.03
PSY 953	Couples, Family, & Group	FA2004	1.50	2.25	1.16	2.33	2.21

### **Sample comments from Student Instructional Ratings Surveys include:**

#### ***From Multicultural Psychology (493w/992).***

- “I am graduating and feel lucky to have been a part of such a real course. This was a critical thinking, creative, and deeper level course. Also, the chance to film our own documentaries on injustice was a unique opportunity.”
- “Dr. B was a joy to have as our prof. She was open in many ways in regard to opinions. I hope that MSU has the foresight to see that more classes like this are available to a majority of the students here. Thanks for helping me understand.”
- “This course needs to be a university college requirement for all students.” “One of the best classes ever-great class discussion, format, thought-provoking readings, good assignments. THANK YOU!” [capitalizations by the student];
- “This is a memorable class that has challenged my perspective on life and has changed me as a person. Thank you for this opportunity.”
- “This semester has proved to be more thought provoking in this class than I had expected...It amazes me that this class made me think so much. P.S. Thank you Dr. Buchanan for an awesome class!”
- “Prof. Buchanan brings out topics that are in need of discussion. My perspective on the world has changed.”

#### ***From Abnormal Psychology (Psy 280).***

- “Professor Buchanan is extremely engaging. She is one of the best professors I’ve had at MSU and certainly the best psychology professor I’ve had. Love her and love the course material!”
- “This instructor is an asset to the psychology department in particular and MSU community in general. Thanks so much for making the learning experience so rich.”
- “One of the best professors I have had a MSU. Genuine, excited, organized. All profs should learn something from Professor Buchanan!”
- “Great teacher, she really cares about her students and not only wants them to learn the material but excel also. One of the most enjoyable courses I’ve taken thus far at MSU and I’m very sad it’s coming to an end.”
- “I really enjoyed this course, learned a lot, and you have a wonderful, very natural teaching style. I really appreciated your organization of the course and use of real cases you’ve worked with as examples. Thanks! Great semester!”
- “I really enjoyed the class. It was also part of the reason I changed my major to psychology.”

#### ***From Social Systems (Couples, family, and group therapy; Psy 953).***

- “I have been bragging about how wonderful this course is to everyone in my program...This class is, by far, one of the best I have taken—from assigning comprehensive readings to facilitating candid class discussion—I know that I have grown from your teaching. Thank you for challenging us to think critically.”
- “Superior instructor-allows students to express opinions, repeatedly asks for feedback and incorporates responses [to feedback] quickly, challenges students to think critically. She is very approachable and flexible. This is a necessary course that should be taught regularly. She presents a fun perspective. The readings were interesting and improved knowledge base in this area. I enjoyed the course and the instructor. I would recommend this class to anyone!”