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**Sifana Sohail***Teaching Philosophy & Values*

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My teaching philosophy is rooted in the kind of education that first made me want to become an academic. At Wesleyan University, my professors were invested in my success—both short- and long-term; they knew my goals, checked in during difficult stretches, and continued mentoring me long after I graduated. That level of care and intellectual partnership stayed with me—and it shaped what I believe good teaching and mentorship should look like. Today, my teaching grows from those early models. I strive to create classrooms where students feel known, where they learn through doing rather than memorizing, and where research is something they can participate in regardless of background or prior experience. These commitments form the foundation of my pedagogical values: mentorship, active research engagement, and equitable access to psychological science.

**Teaching Experience & Pedagogical Practices**

I approach teaching and mentoring with a liberal-arts mentality which prioritizes active learning, close mentorship, and intellectual ownership, regardless of institution size. This approach shapes the research-methods course I am currently teaching as Instructor of Record in Spring 2026—a hands-on, lab-style class that gives undergraduates the experience of working as “mini graduate students.” We are offering the course through Yale’s Associates in Teaching program, one of the few opportunities for graduate students to teach a class at Yale, which requires a competitive application that balances disciplinary requirements with Yale College philosophies. Inspired by my formative research experiences at Wesleyan, the course uses active learning, scaffolded assignments, and collaborative inquiry to help students design meaningful research questions while building early expertise with methods and analysis.

I believe that scientific fluency develops best when students are given accessible entry points that complement disciplinary rigor. This is the culmination of multiple years of in-depth teaching experience and training, which began at Wesleyan, where I served as a teaching assistant for both Research Methods in Developmental Psychology and the elective course Myth, Magic, and Movies, a critical media analysis class with an emphasis on social psychology and cultural impact. Simultaneously, I completed a Creative Writing Certificate, for which I developed a practical guide to reading empirical papers, complete with annotated articles, sample student writing, and structured frameworks such as QALMRI (adapted from Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2001). The project grew out of a gap I noticed in how scientific literacy is taught: professors each have their own effective approaches, but students, especially those new to psychology or STEM, often need a single, coherent place to begin. My guide was designed to complement these varied methods and provide an accessible, dependable resource students can return to as they build confidence with empirical reading.

Across courses, I aim to create learning environments that are inclusive, structured, and responsive to students' varying levels of preparation. I have continued to develop depth as an instructor through teaching fellowships in both small seminars and large lecture courses at Yale. In Introduction to Psychology, I drafted exam materials and supported a diverse set of learners; in my largest section of Developmental Psychology (50 students), I mentored students through a semester-long research paper from initial literature review to a full manuscript with simulated results, meeting individually with a majority of these students despite the class size. My summer teaching—four online, flipped-format courses—has given me additional pedagogical flexibility: I have designed and led weekly sections, built active-learning exercises, and adapted materials to support engagement in a virtual environment. Alongside this hands-on teaching, my work toward Yale's Certificate of College Teaching Preparation has strengthened my grounding in inclusive pedagogy and universal design learning (UDL). I have had the opportunity to implement these skills both during summer classes and in two guest lectures: in Developmental Psychology focusing on my research expertise, and in an English 102 class at Quinnipiac University, focusing on academic inquiry and research.

I view effective teaching as inseparable from the often-invisible administrative and collaborative work that supports student learning. As a Head Teaching Fellow, and in my work with Yale Summer Session, I have gained experience with the administrative and structural side of teaching: grading policies, workload and teaching team coordination, student feedback, and collaboration with support staff. These roles have broadened how I understand what it takes to create effective learning environments and have made me a more thoughtful, organized, and responsive instructor.

### **Mentorship & Research**

As a graduate student, perhaps my most significant interactions with undergraduates have been through research mentoring. From the beginning of my academic journey, I have been committed to making research accessible and addressing pipeline barriers through consistent, equitable mentorship. Over the past decade, this commitment has only strengthened as I have guided students at varying levels of experience—many of whom have gone on to pursue post-graduate research themselves and have shaped how I teach and scaffold fundamental research skills.

My experiences as an undergraduate TA, lab manager, and now graduate mentor, combined with training in equitable teaching and inclusive pedagogy, have prepared me to support students with little or no prior exposure to research. These roles have taught me how to model the research process in a way that is transparent, confidence-building, and grounded in the kind of close mentorship I valued in my own liberal arts education.

As I take on new opportunities to work directly with undergraduates—especially through designing and teaching my upcoming course—I am eager to bring this mentoring-centered approach into the classroom. This sustained dedication to individualized guidance and undergraduate research preparation is central to what I hope to contribute as a future faculty member at a liberal arts college.