

APS Microgrants Fund Innovative Teaching Projects

September 30, 2020

The [APS Teaching Fund](#) Committee has selected 25 projects for funding through its [Microgrants for Online Learning](#) program, launched in June in response to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). The program, which is meant to facilitate the rapid development and dissemination of best practices for teaching psychological science online, was designed to provide grants of up to \$1,000 to support projects in four general categories, including webinars and virtual meetings, support for individual classes, scholarship of teaching and learning, and antiracist curricula.

Fifty-six individuals and teams applied for the program, with an average funding request of \$960. From those applicants, the APS Teaching Fund Committee selected 26 projects for funding. Here's a closer look at three.

Promoting community in an asynchronous online course using written versus spoken modes of interaction

Citing research on the importance of engagement and active learning, [Mona Ibrahim](#), a psychology professor at Concordia College, will compare the effectiveness of two options for asynchronous online courses: allowing students to participate in class discussions via written responses or short video responses. "The written interaction format may afford a way for students to formulate and respond to reflections in more depth, but students who are not strong writers may find it difficult to engage frequently in that format," she wrote in her application. "The short video interaction format may afford a way for students to formulate and respond to reflections more spontaneously, but students who are self-conscious in front of a camera may find it difficult to engage frequently in that format."

Ibrahim will use a quasi-experimental between-groups research strategy to compare the two formats in an undergraduate educational psychology course taught online this fall. The grant funds she was awarded will be used to support dissemination of the research findings resulting from this project, potentially via a presentation of the research at an upcoming conference.

Livestreaming from head-mounted cameras to facilitate blended lab team collaboration as part of a brain and behavior course

When students are learning remotely, how can they get the experience of being in a lab and interacting with its equipment? And how to encourage their real, collaborative participation in classroom discussions?

[Alison Young Reusser](#) and [Paul Young](#), of the Department of Psychology and Criminal Justice at Houghton College, intend to achieve these goals in a core lab-based brain and behavior course that will be delivered in a blended format. Some students will be consistently remote, some will be physically present, and others will flex between the two. Of the course's 13 weekly labs, roughly half will involve

hands-on physiological measurement experiences (e.g., an EEG sleep lab, an EMG facial expression and emotion lab). Students will form blended teams of four, with two of them remote in a given week and two of them physically present. A remote student will be team director to ensure collaboration, and the two physically present students will use technology such as a GoPro camera and electrodes. Teams will collaborate to produce cloud-based lab reports, create and share video summaries, and evaluate each other.

“The project will help address the need for equitable laboratory experiences for online students, a challenge in all STEM fields, including psychology,” wrote Young Reusser and Young in their grant application. “Although our online program in psychology is small, it has already served two students in international settings, and we hope that more international students will benefit in the future.”

A novel conference format for promoting academic activism in pedagogy

The Graduate Center at the City University of New York (CUNY) will host the 11th annual [Pedagogy Day Conference](#) on October 16 to support graduate students and other faculty in their pedagogical development. This year’s theme, Academic Activism in Pedagogy, will focus on developing anti-racism curricula. Conference organizers [Jill Grose-Fifer](#), an associate professor in the psychology departments of John Jay College and The Graduate Center, CUNY, working with doctoral students Nawal Muradwij and Tashiya Hunter, will use a novel online flipped-classroom model format where participants listen to short videos in advance, allowing the Zoom synchronous workshops to be focused and highly interactive.

“We aim to arm participants with the necessary skills for dismantling institutional oppression within their teaching practices, particularly in online learning environments,” the three wrote. Besides a keynote address, there will be workshops led by interdisciplinary speakers, arts performances addressing activism, and a host of therapeutic practices to improve mindfulness and increase racial awareness. “In centering activism in pedagogy, this conference not only provides a structural model for effective student-centered online learning, but workshops will create space for troubleshooting issues, including teaching practices that fail to acknowledge inequities in online learning spaces.... [Pedagogy Day] follows the lead of the Academics for Black Lives movement, by training instructors to address the racial inequities within academia, and in society more broadly, by giving both students and instructors the tools that they need to become agents for change.”

Conference resources will be posted online, and conference highlights will be shared in a brief report.

APS will continue to report on these grants and the project results in the months ahead. In the meantime, [learn more about the APS Teaching Fund and other teaching resources from APS.](#)