Hello Trish,

Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to observe Module 2 of your online PSY 342 course during the Fall 2023 semester. Although my wife is a neurologist of the pediatric variety, I greatly enjoyed learning more about the diseases affecting the older patients that come through her clinic.

Both in Module 2 and the course at large, I feel you have done an excellent job of utilizing multiple forms of media for both instruction and assessment of learning outcomes. In Module 2 alone I observed that students will read text, view images, and watch videos before discussing what they have learned with their peers, testing their understanding with a quiz, and reflecting on how the things they have learned in the classroom apply to “real” situations they encounter each day. This is certainly something you should continue in future courses, both in-person and online, as using one mode of assessment would be prone to measuring test-taking ability or some other skill rather than your students’ learning.

Another strength of your course is your communication with your students. I love the weekly announcements you make because they are not only a good way of keeping students on track and clarifying your expectations of them each week, but they also allow your personality to shine through and remind students that their teacher is in fact a human being! Surveys, like the one in Norman Eng’s Teaching College, show that relationships with students are often a bigger determinant of learning success than anything else a teacher does, so this regular communication is yet another aspect of your teaching that I hope you continue doing in the future.

It is easy for students taking an online course to feel isolated, so I appreciate the abundance of peer-to-peer communication you have fostered within your course. One-third of the available points in the course are discussion- and group-based, meaning it is borderline required for students to work with one another if they wish to earn a passing grade. You also do a wonderful job of outlining your expectations of students’ posts, so it is always clear how they should approach each one and interact with their peers. All in all, there are many great things about your course design that I am likely to emulate as I plan my own going forward.

Even as an outside observer I can see that your course design possesses several strengths, but my position also means there are some aspects that are not readily apparent to me on first pass. I can tell that you are regularly communicating with your students and that they are working with one another, but are your students also communicating with you? If not, you may wish to consider conducting a mid-course survey to gather student feedback as to what has worked for them and what has not. You may find this beneficial because it will provide you with an opportunity to (reasonably) adjust your lesson plan on the fly, but more importantly it will make it even more obvious to your students that you welcome their input into their learning. I would also ask you to contemplate whether formative assessments would have a place in your course alongside the summative assessments you are currently using. Having students collect

their work in something like an ePortfolio may be useful for assessing their growth and strengthening the connections among things they have learned throughout the course.

Your primary concern prior to my observation was the workload required in each module, but I personally believe you have done an amazing job of balancing reading with other forms of instruction. The University of Arizona suggests that a three-credit course like PSY 342 require 135 hours of work, which tracks with the 15 to 20 hours per week you have allotted to your seven-week course.1 This is another reason you may consider collecting student feedback midcourse, as the students will likely know better than either of us how long the work truly takes to complete.

Overall, your course and Module 2 are extremely well-designed. There are clear connections among learning outcomes, assessment, and instruction, communication is encouraged (if not outright required), and students of all backgrounds should find something to take away from the course due to the multiple modes of instruction and assessment used. Thank you again for giving me a chance to “join” your class, as I am quite excited to see where you take your online teaching in the future!

Sincerely,
Alex Whitecotton