

Get to Know the Teaching Committee

Teaching Committee Members



Aya Shigeto, Chair of the Teaching Committee, 2023-2027

Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Nova Southeastern University

Dr. Aya Shigeto is an associate professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Nova Southeastern University. Her primary research area revolves around sexuality among college students and

sex education on college campuses. Her secondary research area is various aspects of family relationships and functioning, including parenting and family relationship dynamics. Dr. Shigeto regularly teaches introduction to psychology, life-span human development, and multicultural issues in psychology. Her pedagogical approach emphasizes the power of personal narratives and experiential learning, fostering an engaging classroom environment where students are encouraged to share their own stories, forging connections, and cultivating empathy, compassion, and respect for one another. Furthermore, she utilizes active learning methods in her classes, providing students with opportunities for collaborative exploration and learning. Through activities such as idea brainstorming, open dialogue, and peer-assisted comprehension checks, she nurtures a dynamic and interactive learning environment where students actively participate in the acquisition of course content. Dr. Shigeto's commitment to education goes beyond the classroom. She provides learning opportunities for undergraduate research assistants by leveraging her research and lab as a transformative platform to help them grow as a person as well as achieve their career goals.



Gabriela Chavira, Teaching Committee Member, 2021-2025

Professor of Psychology, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at California State University Northridge

Dr. Gabriela Chavira is a professor of Psychology at California State University Northridge (CSUN). She earned her doctorate in developmental psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Currently, she is the lead principal investigator for BUILD PODER, funded by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), where she developed and implemented an undergraduate research experience (URE) that provides culturally responsive undergraduate training in the biological sciences. She was recently awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) HSI STEM grant to create an office of undergraduate research called ESTUDIO. She is also a Senior Personnel on an NSF Advance grant to increase and retain the number of minoritized women faculty in Engineering.

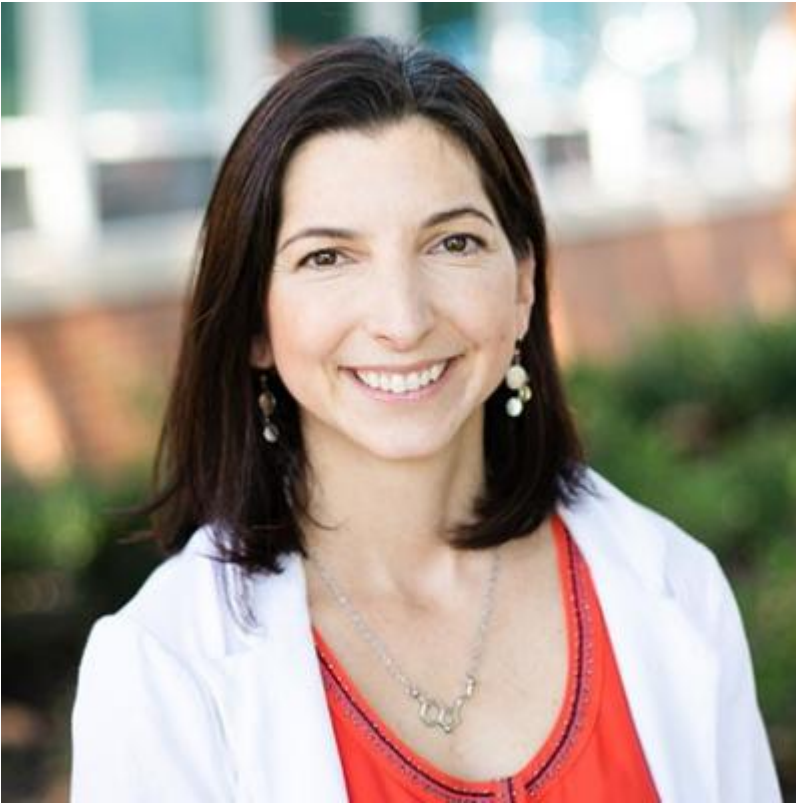
She uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) as framework to engage over 360 undergraduate minoritized students, primarily of Latinx descent, in preparation for doctoral studies through year-long faculty mentored research. Her interdisciplinary research examines the factors contributing to the well-being and achievement of immigrant youth in the US. Chavira started as an NIH Minority Biomedical Research Support (MBRS) scholar at CSUN and is a passionate and committed advocate for student access and success, receiving the campus-wide Don Dorsey Award for Excellence in Mentoring in 2013, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) 2020 Outstanding University Mentor, and CSUN's 2021 Outstanding Faculty Award.



Brenna Hassinger-Das, Teaching Committee Member, 2021-2025

Associate Professor of Psychology at Pace University

Dr. Brenna Hassinger-Das, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Pace University. She teaches students at undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students in developmental psychology courses, such as Lifespan Development and Child Psychology, as well as Research Design and Statistics. She is particularly interested in using problem-based learning methods in both face-to-face and online learning environments. She is committed to creating equitable and welcoming communities of students in all of her courses. Her research currently investigates the effects of both play and digital media on caregiver-child interactions and child learning.



Jamie Jirout, Teaching Committee Member, 2021-2025

Associate Professor of Psychology, School of Education and Human Development at the University of Virginia

Dr. Jamie Jirout (she/her/hers) is an assistant professor at the University of Virginia, where she is in the Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy in the School of Education and Human Development. Dr. Jirout's research focuses on the role of curiosity and related intellectual character virtues in children's learning, as well as the influence of educational contexts and experiences on curiosity and learning. She is also very interested in researching playful learning and early STEM education. Her research informs her teaching and she designs her courses with intentional goals around promoting student curiosity. Dr. Jirout teaches courses on child development, educational psychology, and cognitive psychology and education, using innovative methods such as specifications grading that support student autonomy. She has recently merged her teaching and scholarship by conducting SoTL research on her own courses. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Miami and a Ph.D. in Psychology from Carnegie Mellon University.



Gigliana Melzi, Teaching Committee Member, 2021-2025

Professor of Applied Psychology at New York University

Dr. Gigliana Melzi is a Professor of Applied Psychology and affiliated faculty of the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University. Using mixed methods and emic approaches, her research aims to uncover how Latine/x immigrant parents nurture their children, the role of language in that process, and how classroom instruction can leverage these culturally and linguistically grounded practices to support children's school-based learning. Dr. Melzi has taught various subjects to diverse audiences, including Spanish to high school students, and literacy to adult learners. In her university teaching, Dr. Melzi aims to create an engaging learning environment that builds from students' prior knowledge and lived experiences by integrating information from multiple sources and fostering student self-awareness and autonomy. As a Latina scholar and educator, Dr. Melzi also brings awareness to language and cultural issues in her interactions with students, both inside and outside of the classroom. For 18 years, Dr. Melzi was the Director of NYU's Undergraduate Program in Applied Psychology, which gave her the unique opportunity to establish and grow a 4-year undergraduate psychology program of study that centered human development, cultural diversity, and the connections between theory, research, and the practice of psychology. In 2015, Dr. Melzi received NYU's University Distinguished Teaching Award.



Eva Chian-Hui Chen, Teaching Committee Member, 2023-2027

Associate Professor in Department of Psychological Sciences at Benedictine College

Dr. Eva Chian-Hui Chen is an Associate Professor in Department of Psychological Sciences at Benedictine College. She received her doctorate in Developmental Psychology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2011 and joined Benedictine College as a faculty in the same year. Dr. Chen is committed to bringing diversity into our understanding of human development via undergraduate teaching, advising and mentoring, as well as collaborative research.

She teaches General Psychology, Developmental Psychology I (Prenatal to Late Childhood) & II (Adolescence to Late Adulthood), Lifespan Development, Cultural Psychology, and Research Seminar. Collaborative learning is essential to my teaching philosophy as it makes the classroom a place where everyone can cooperate, challenge, contribute, encourage, and support one another. In her teaching, she strives to inspire students to be self-directed lifelong learners.

Dr. Chen's research seeks to take an interdisciplinary approach to studying human development in cultural contexts. One area of her research focuses on understanding Vietnamese-Taiwanese transnational marriage

families in Taiwan. Another area of focus is on examining teaching effectiveness in developmental psychology.



Soo-Young Hong, Teaching Committee Member, 2023-2027

Associate Professor of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Dr. Soo-Young Hong is an associate professor in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and her research focuses on early childhood science teaching and learning and inclusive early childhood education practices. Dr. Hong has taught various undergraduate and graduate courses related to human development and early care and education over the last 14 years including Human Development and the Family, Theories of Human Development and Family Relations, College Teaching Seminar and Practicum, and Cognitive Processes in Children. She has extensive experience in teaching online, in-person, and hybrid courses and always seeks opportunities to learn about research-based inclusive teaching strategies and their impact on student learning. For the last several years, Dr. Hong has invested significant amount of time and effort to learn about, implement, and reflect on equity-minded approaches to assessments, Universal Design for Learning, inclusive teaching strategies, and Learning

Paradigm College to provide students with meaningful learning experiences that enable all students to meet their learning goals and outcomes.



Rebecca Martin, Teaching Committee Member, 2023-2027

Professor at South Dakota State University in the School of Psychology, Sociology, and Rural Studies

I am a Professor at South Dakota State University in the School of Psychology, Sociology, and Rural Studies. I earned my Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Connecticut in 2004. Courses that I normally teach include Child Psychology (Developmental Psychology), Child Psychopathology, Psychological Gender Issues, and History and Systems of Psychology. I have also taught General Psychology and Research Methods and Statistics. I serve on my university's teacher education faculty committee. My current research topics include 1) examining the role of gender stereotypes on preschoolers understanding of basic emotions, 2) the impact of feedback, type of test, sex, and trait gender on performance and performance expectations, 3) the influence of gendered rewards on competitive behavior in preschoolers and adults, and 4) creating a new assessment instrument to assess trait gender.



Helena Mawdsley, Teaching Committee Member, 2023-2027

Clinical Assistant Professor in the College of Education at University of South Florida

Dr. Helena Mawdsley is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the College of Education at University of Florida. She earned a Ph.D. in Applied Developmental and Educational Psychology from Boston College in 2010. Currently, Dr. Mawdsley teaches, coordinates, and/or supervises the human development and adolescent development courses within the COE. Additionally, she coordinates the Bachelors of Education Sciences (BAES) – Educational Psychology and Research specialization within the College of Education. Her research focuses on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) by integrating research with duties as the course supervisor of Human Growth and Development. Specifically, she is interested in a) impact of service learning on student motivation and b) student motivational changes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. She has been a member of SRCD for over 15 years, is a regular presenter at the biennial meeting, and a Teaching Institute attendee in 2017-2023. As part of the Teaching Committee, Dr. Mawdsley hopes to support new instructors as they navigate the pedagogical world of developmental science.

Lucia Alcalá, Governing Council Representative, Ex-Officio, 2023-2029

California State University, Fullerton

[Read more about Dr. Alcalá here](#)

Ashleigh Aviles, SECC Representative to the Teaching Committee, 2023-2025

New York University

[Read more about Dr. Aviles here](#)