

**i>clicker Pedagogy Case Study**  
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**COURSE OVERVIEW**

**Course Title/Subject:** Personality Psychology (PSY240). This course examines methods of personality research, various approaches, and theories (specifically: psychoanalytic, humanistic, trait, biological, evolutionary, gender-based, and cognitive approaches), as well as contemporary research in personality (eg, personality change, personality judgment, and self-perception).

**Typical Enrollment/Student Information:** ~350 students per class. The majority of students are freshmen and sophomores. Most of them have not yet declared a major, so it is probably fair to assume that both psychology majors and non-majors take the course.

**Course Structure:** I lecture twice a week for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Each lecture focuses on a specific aspect of personality psychology (eg, Freud's theory of personality development). Students are asked to prepare for lectures by reviewing required readings that are relevant to the material being addressed. Aside from these readings and studying for exams, there is no homework for the course. I use PowerPoint in my lectures and post the slides online prior to each class so students can follow along and take notes on the actual slides. The teaching assistant (TA) teaches a 1-hour review each week during which she goes over the material addressed in class the previous week and encourages dialogue. The TA also writes the exams, reviews them with students, holds weekly office hours, and responds to students' e-mails. I use clickers in lectures to recreate relevant psychological studies and to allow students to anonymously take personality assessments. Clickers are not used in the TA's review.

**Course/Student Challenges:** Students tend to struggle most with preparing for exams, even with the TA's optional weekly review sessions. As for me, like any professor, I find some of the material I teach to be much more fascinating than other subject matter. My greatest challenge in teaching this course is finding a way to present material that I am less passionate about in as interesting a way as I present the material about which I am passionate.

**Course Grading Policy:** Students' grades are derived from exams and a research project. The course includes 4 multiple-choice exams, the best 3 scores of which determine the total exam grade (each exam merits 1/3 the total exam grade). Students can drop any of the exams for any reason, but they must pass the final exam; if they do not, their score on the final must count as 1 of the 3 exams that go toward the total exam grade. If they do pass the final exam, then the best 3 grades will be used (irrespective of their score on the final). Students must also participate in 6 hours of experimental research or complete an equivalent alternative assignment. If this is not completed by the end of the semester, students receive one letter grade lower than that derived from their total exam score (eg, a B- would become a C+).

## **MOTIVATION FOR USING i>clickers**

My primary motivations for using clickers in my classroom are as follows:

- **To make the course more interactive and interesting.**
- **To recreate psychological experiments in a way that would not otherwise be possible.**
- **To generate honest feedback from students by providing an anonymous means of communication.**

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

**Obtaining/Registering i>clickers:** Clickers were strongly recommended but not required for the course. Students could purchase them from the university bookstore. In the classroom, I advised students not to register their clickers so as to encourage honest responses to personal questions.

**Classroom Technology:** Other technology used in the class included PowerPoint slides, personality inventories available on the internet, and videos. Clickers worked well with PowerPoint, and I was able to incorporate questions directly into my slides.

**i>clicker Grading Policy:** Clickers were not used for grading (they couldn't be, as they were not a course requirement). I was more interested in using the devices to gather anonymous personal information for such purposes as personality assessments rather than using them to assess knowledge of factual material.

**Daily Use/Questions Asked:** I used i>clickers about once every 3 weeks. During those times, I used PowerPoint to present 5–20 questions for students to answer using their clickers. There were generally 2 ways I used clickers: to administer personality assessments (anonymously) and to recreate relevant psychological experiments. Students were asked to respond to each question without talking to others. At the end of a series of questions, I would ask the class about their experiences and encourage discussion.

**Sample Questions.** The following questions, asked of students, were taken from a personality assessment:

## My significant other got drunk at a party and kissed someone else

A = Would me cause severe anguish  
B=Would bother me very much  
C=Would bother me somewhat  
D=Would bother me a little  
E=I wouldn't care



## My significant other fell in love with someone else, but did not go to bed with him/her

A = Would me cause severe anguish  
B=Would bother me very much  
C=Would bother me somewhat  
D=Would bother me a little  
E=I wouldn't care



As previously mentioned, I also used clickers to recreate psychological experiments; afterwards, I would analyze the data and present them to the class during a subsequent lecture.

### *Sample Data Slide:*

### Results of Jealousy Experiment - 2008

(Lower Scores are more Troubled)

	Males	Females
Kiss	2.2	1.9
Intimate Relat	2.6	2.3
One-Nighter	1.4	1.2
Attracted	3.9	3.5
Platonic Love	1.7	1.3
Conversation	3.7	3.3
Make Out	1.8	1.6

This was an experiment about whether men and women differ in their experience of sexual jealousy. The hypothesis was that women are bothered more by “relationship infidelity” (forming an intimate but non-sexual relationship with someone), while men are more troubled by “sexual infidelity” (the converse). The responses ranged from 1 (severe distress) to 5 (not at all

bothered). The numbers in the slide are means. As it turned out, the hypothesis was not supported in these data.

## **RESULTS**

### *Successes*

**Increased Participation and Discussion.** Using i>clickers definitely increased participation and encouraged discussion in an otherwise primarily lecture-based course. Because this was one of my motivations for using clickers, I was very pleased with this result.

**Generated Honest Feedback.** Not only did clickers allow me to give students a true taste of psychological questionnaires, the devices allowed students to fill out those questionnaires in a fast and anonymous manner. Thus, information provided was honest and gave credence to the subsequent personality assessments performed.

**Gained Student Interest.** Students seemed to genuinely enjoy using i>clickers. They also enjoyed applying scientific questions about personality to their own lives.

**Increased My Own Interest.** My greatest challenge in teaching this course was being able to present less-interesting material in an interesting way. Clickers certainly helped me to “spice up” some of my lectures, so this was no longer an issue.

### *Challenges*

During the semester, students sometimes forgot to bring their clickers to class on days they were asked to (about half the class brought them). I would like to find a way to make sure students actually have clickers with them on days when they would be used. Perhaps I could keep a set of clickers in the lecture hall for students to use for the class period and then drop off after the lecture. Alternatively, I could ask students to bring their clickers to every lecture and perhaps use them in some way during each class. In addition, because my class was so large, there was often a minute or 2 between clicker questions during which we had to wait for slower students to respond (this tended to result in student chatting and loss of focus).

There was also a lag time in setting up the equipment, but this was not a major issue. I also think it would improve the system if there were standard routines to read clicker data files directly into standard computer packages (eg, SAS, SPSS) so results could be displayed immediately. I understand that no PRS system currently does this, but i>clicker is addressing the issue and will keep me informed of continual developments.

## **CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION**

I believe that using i>clickers made the class more interesting, and I will definitely use them again in this class and any other large lecture course that I teach. Clickers helped me to spice up topics that may have otherwise seemed dull, and they did an excellent job of fostering discussion. In smaller, seminar classes, I might opt for other, perhaps simpler ways of

encouraging discussion and participation, such as responding to each other's written work. Overall, I was very pleased with the benefits of using i>clickers in my classroom, and I would highly recommend them to my peers.