CHARLES LANFEAR RECEIVES EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD FOR 2020

Submitted by Ari Asercion on May 4, 2020 - 11:17am

The University of Washington has awarded Sociology PhD student Charles “Chuck” Lanfear an Excellence in Teaching Award, the university’s highest honor for excellence in instruction, mentorship, and leadership. Over the past several years, Chuck has taught over 350 students in his Introduction to R for Social Sciences course. Chuck takes an innovative student-centered approach to teaching by prioritizing the value of making mistakes, collaboration, and peer review to emphasize the multiple ways of solving a coding problem.

It’s not uncommon for students in the social sciences to come to a data sciences course feeling intimidated by the prospect of coding, but Chuck sets students up for success by building their confidence and competence, and sharing his own early difficulties in learning. Throughout the quarter, he makes himself accessible to his students any time of the day, and through multiple platforms. Not only does he ensure they leave with a new and competitive skill set, he also connects them to the rich online community of R users, which gives them access to resources and a sense of community and continuing education beyond the class itself.

Because of this, it is no surprise that Chuck has received high praise from students, including many current students who refer to him as the “single best teacher” they have had at UW, as well as others who attribute their success in graduate school and in the workforce to what they learned in Chuck's courses. His course materials, all publicly available on the web, have enabled UW students and students from around the globe to learn from his courses. Beyond his extraordinary performance in CSSS 508, Chuck has brought his dedicated teaching to the Sociology department’s interdisciplinary graduate statistics sequence and, on his own initiative, recently redesigned an existing SOC/STAT/CSSS course to make it an exciting and useful introduction to data science for undergraduates.

We are proud to see him recognized for his achievements, and are lucky to have him as part of our community. Congratulations!