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Teaching Philosophy

Introduction
During my graduate work at Florida State University, I was fortunate enough to be a teaching assistant for a professor who valued and excelled at teaching. He was an incredible mentor who instilled in me the idea that teaching is engaging in a constant process of improvement. Although I found him to be an artful pedagogue, I witnessed the work he consistently put into each of his classes. Over several years of professional development, I have added a great deal to the teaching methods he taught me, but the example of his work ethic is at the root of my own pedagogy. It is work that I love, and, after teaching at a variety of institutions for over twenty years, I continue to be energized by the challenge of improving my teaching.

Scope of my Teaching Responsibilities
As a musicologist, I am engaged in the scholarly approach to music, analyzing the history, culture, and theory of musical subjects (composers, pieces, styles, eras, countries, etc.) At the core of all of my courses is a focus on the elements of musical styles (instrumentation, melody, harmony, rhythm, form, and dynamics/expression/articulation) and the historical and cultural context that surrounds those styles. Music History and Style II and III, required for music performance, education and therapy majors, primarily traces the Western Classical tradition from approximately 1680 to the present. I do include coverage of Blues, Jazz, Folk, Rock, and Rap in Music History and Style III. In the Special Topics course on the Western Canon and Black Composers, colleague Meg Stohlmann and I focused on Classical repertoire by Black American composers from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries. I designed Music and Gender and Exploring Music in Culture to be malleable so that I can change the repertoire based on things happening in the world, so the styles range from Old Time Music to Punk to Musicals and Opera to the Blues and to Rap. For example, I have a module on women and rap in Music and Gender, and in the last iteration of the course, I focused on Megan Thee Stallion because she won four Grammys and wrote a powerful piece for the NYTimes, “Why I Speak Up for Black Women.” Students were engaged and invested in the class conversations on the music and the assigned article. When I taught World Music, the content focused on various countries, regions, and ethnicities and their instruments, musical styles, and culture. The course included music of Northern and Southern India, Indonesia, China, Ireland and Scotland as well as various countries and traditions in the Caribbean and Central and South America.

Teaching Philosophy
In my 2011 dossier for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, I sub-titled my teaching philosophy “Facilitating Student-Motivated Transformation.” Ten years later, I still consider that to be at the core of my philosophy; however, I have honed practices that I have found to be effective in facilitating that kind of transformation. While still keeping student motivation and transformation at the center of my teaching, the principles of Backwards Design and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) along with my work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion have elevated my process considerably. Using Backwards Design, I plan my courses with the end goals and objectives first, which has enabled me to streamline my classes. Communication with students has improved as I establish those end goals and objectives at the beginning of the course and frequently reference them in class discussions and connect assignments and assessments to them. Combining this process with UDL has taken my teaching to a more accessible level. UDL provides a framework to help me consider and address aspects of accessibility--from how I structure classroom instruction and discussion to the materials I provide the students. UDL has been particularly useful in improving my completely online courses and the online materials I use for my face to face courses. Videos I use are captioned, other materials have accessible fonts and colors, and are searchable. I also spend a great deal of time considering the organization of materials on ASULearn, making sure items are easy to find and that the site matches the flow of the course without overwhelming the students.

I have also infused my teaching with aspects of the work I have done in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I strive to make the classroom a safe and inclusive space for students by having them introduce themselves with their preferred names and pronouns, establishing group norms, and considering what their identities and previous knowledge brings to the classroom. The assignment I have included for MUS 2023 on Social Identity and Music in the next section is an example of that. My work in DEI also impacts the content that I include in my courses and the ways in which I present that content. I
am very interested in decolonizing the curriculum in general and, more specifically, in the School of Music and have designed courses to address that. In the last section of this document, you will see the plans I have to continue this work.

Mentoring students is an important part of my practice, particularly with music majors. I consider having an opportunity to work with students as undergraduate instructional and research assistants a hallmark of the Hayes School of Music experience. Students are interested in working with me as instructional assistants for all kinds of reasons—from a desire to go on to graduate school, a passion for music history in general or particular topics in music history, or a desire to have a new kind of teaching experience. The ways in which I mentor these students is through helping them find their passions, whether it is music history or something else, and how to approach that passion in order to be successful. I make myself available to these students and share opportunities with them that I think they will find interesting/useful in their own development. I have taken students to regional and national American Musicological Society conferences. I have helped plan AMS and College Music Society regional conferences at ASU and have actively engaged students in the planning process. Some particularly advanced students even chaired sessions at a regional AMS conference at ASU. From what students have told me, these kinds of experiences along with other research or teaching experiences have set them apart from their peers as they move on to the next steps in their careers.

Teaching Methods

Scaffolding is one of the core teaching strategies that I incorporate in my classes. As I mentioned earlier, I reference the course goals and objectives early and often and connect the assignments and assessments to those goals and objectives. In Music History and Style classes, students learn to write about the musical elements of a piece of music and place it in its historical and cultural context. At the beginning of the course, we break down a piece in class together, identifying salient musical elements, and I give students an example of how they would write about the elements we discussed in class. I follow that with an assignment where students analyze a similar piece of music in small groups in class and discuss the elements. After taking notes as a group, they use those notes to write about that piece for a homework assignment. After students feel confident in the methodology of writing about the elements, I introduce them to the process of connecting the musical style to the historical and cultural context. Again, we focus on a piece in class and discuss it. Students work in small groups on another piece and write about it for a homework assignment using their notes from class.

The scaffolding process is bolstered by the feedback I give students in class and on their assignments. I am always striving to give students more feedback and take many opportunities in class to have students ask questions and/or engage in conversation about assignments. Especially early on in the course, I will allow students to respond to feedback and redo particular assignments to help them learn from their mistakes.

I also make a habit of checking in with students, gauging how they are doing, what they are retaining, and how they are perceiving the learning process. Students appreciate this and become more and more comfortable giving me feedback that helps improve the class.

Continuous teaching assessment plans

As I mentioned in my introduction, I constantly work on improving my teaching. I have taken advantage of various offerings of the Center for Academic Excellence at AppState, including the Scholarly Teaching Academy, Course Re-Design workshops, certifying a course with the Quality Matters Rubric, and completing QM’s Teaching Online Certificate (just finished in October 2021!). I participate in the Teaching Music History Study Group in the American Musicological Society, and groups in that society and the Society for American Music that focus on DEI work. I have organized a Teaching Music History conference for the AMS-Southeast Regional Chapter and have participated in pedagogical panels at national College Music Society conferences. I have attended other pedagogical conferences, including the POD Network conference.

I have also offered workshops on UDL and transitioning face to face content to online courses for the CAE. During the pandemic, I served as a Faculty Champion for the CAE, helping faculty with online tools, and I was a coach for three iterations of the new Online Teaching Excellence Institute (OTEI). I particularly enjoyed serving as a coach for the OTEI because participants shared their ASULearn sites with me and the group. I learned so much from seeing the ways in which other people organize their course maps and materials.
In that same vein of sharing classes, I have participated in Teaching Squares as well. You will find that my most recent evaluations are from a teaching squares group from last year. Again, I so enjoy watching other people teach and wish there were more opportunities to engage in this kind of assessment, particularly after one is tenured and promoted.

I also frequently request feedback from students throughout the semester and encourage them to give me useful comments on the end of the semester Course Evaluations. I use those comments to improve later offerings of a course and to improve the course during the semester.

Future Teaching Goals

Beyond the usual professional development in which I continually engage, I am interested in diversifying the courses I teach. I would like to offer the Special topics course on the Western Canon and Black Composers again and eventually create a General Education offering from that course. My colleague Jennifer Snodgrass and I have designed a new Music History and Theory course for the Masters in Music Performance degree that focuses on how performers influenced the process of various composers. We will be teaching that course for the first time during the 2022-23 academic year.

I am also interested in diversifying the repertoire and topics covered in the Music History and Style courses required for music majors. Many conversations are happening in my discipline about the ways the white European male perspective can be decentralized in approaches to teaching these courses. I am currently in the process of creating a database of all the music performed and taught in the Hayes School of Music over the last three years and plan to use that data to inform myself and the faculty about the identities that are marginalized in the curriculum. After the date is collected, I am going to create a curriculum map that reflects where diverse identities are being taught and where they might be included. I am always interested in making the courses I teach relevant, and, therefore, am continually engaged in revision on micro and macro levels.