

Dr. Erin Brooks Teaching Observation
Observed by Dr. Douglas Rubio
September 28, 2017

MUCH 495: Twentieth-Century Music:
Music, Politics, and Power, post-1945

The class had nine students, who arranged their chairs in a wide semi-circle before class began.

The class started promptly at 8:01. The topic of the day was Electronic Music in the 1950s & 1960s. Dr. Brooks began by passing out a handout about electronic music. There was also a PowerPoint slide about that topic on the screen at the front of the class. The professor gave an overview of the questions that they should keep in mind as they covered the topic.

Dr. Brooks began her lecture about two important treatises from the early 20th century on the future of music, and soon turned her attention to new electronic instruments like the Theremin and the *ondes martineau*. She then gave a quick overview of Edgar Varèse, the history of tape recording in Germany, and early genres of tape music in France and Germany.

After about 15 minutes of what was primarily lecture (although Dr. Brooks did answer questions asked by the students), the activity changed to an active discussion with the students on two readings she had assigned to them previously. On the first reading about Stockhausen, there was not as much student participation as I might have expected, and I wondered if they had really read the material. On the second reading about the opening of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center in 1955, however, there was a much livelier discussion. The class seemed anxious to participate on that one.

Another discussion followed, but this time with a different format. Specific students had been assigned to talk to the class about the important points of Varèse's *Poème électronique*. They covered the main talking points thoroughly and effectively.

It was then, at 9:05 that I had to leave the class.

This was a very well-taught class. Dr. Brooks was in total control of the subject matter and the classroom environment. Her verbal communication with the students was excellent, and she had clearly developed a rapport with her students. Her PowerPoint slides underscored what she was presenting without being overly dense with information. Dr. Brooks used class time very efficiently. Activities alternated among lecture, listening, discussion, and student reporting in such a way that no single activity overstayed its welcome.

In short, Dr. Brooks proved herself to be a very effective teacher, and it was a pleasure to attend the class.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DRUBIO', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Dr. Douglas Rubio
Professor of Classical Guitar
Member of the Crane Personnel Committee