

# Teaching Reflection

## Fall 2024

### **As a few general notes:**

I aim to address diversity and inclusion in my teaching through course content, course policies and pedagogical strategies, service, and scholarship. I bring new content and new approaches to current content to all of my classes, whether it is teaching a course such as “Music, Gender, and Sexuality” or in the music history core, where I incorporate both new repertoires and new frameworks to teaching well-trodden works.

In terms of classroom climate and mental health, I start out the semester in all courses with a confidential check-in document, where I ask students to fill me in on pronouns, any mental health concerns or issues they may want to alert me about, etc. Then, midway through the semester, I do another confidential check and ask them to let me know how things are going around week 7 or so—I always learn a lot from these check-ins, and it allows my students to keep me in the loop of things that are just helpful to know or sometimes allow an entry point for further conversations or office hours.

In terms of accessibility, I aim to find a good balance between the need to be in-class to participate and form part of the classroom learning community and the obvious need for flexibility. Each semester I experiment with different policies aimed at providing this supportive and open atmosphere around flexibility, both in terms of attendance and assignments. I always provide flexibility for students when possible, and I also have expansive discussions about access needs (going beyond just accommodation paperwork) and trauma-informed pedagogy). Please see my syllabi for more detailed statements on accommodation, accessibility, and policies in each course.

For each of my courses, in addition to the online teaching evaluation forms used through Brightspace, I also ask the students to complete a reflection assignment at the end of the semester, which helps them synthesize their learning throughout the semester. I began doing this in Spring 2023, and continue the practice each semester—these are usually very thoughtful ways to synthesize our work together at the end of the semester. It helps increase a sense of student growth and understanding of how their perspectives have shifted over the course of 15 weeks. I ask them to consider how our class materials and takeaways may impact their musicking in other areas of their work (education, performance, business, etc), encouraging them to forge connections between these areas of inquiry. I also draw on their suggestions for additional material in these reflection questions, so that I can incorporate new topics in subsequent semesters.

### **Music History III: Music Since 1900, sections 001 and 002**

Throughout my thirteen semesters of teaching “Music History III: Music Since 1900,” I have consistently stressed the importance of critiquing the musical canon and have worked to ground discussions about 20th and 21st century music in theories about race, gender & sexuality, class, exoticism, colonialism, authorial intent, and the changing role of performance. I have also expanded my incorporation of works by women, composers of color, and other underrepresented groups each semester, as well as added

new units or themes based on student interest. I tried to include various repetitive threads throughout the semester, to allow students to have something to hold on to as overarching ideas throughout the 120-year span of the class. One of these was "Music and Politics," and really digging into this topic also allowed us to have some information with which to push back against the ubiquitous "music transcends politics" discourse.

I always try to incorporate some element of student choice in the semester; some of this occurs through the daily "Guest DJ" options where a student shares a listening of their choice at the beginning of each class. But each of the small projects throughout the semester also have choice built in—while they have instructions and a broad theme (music and politics, for example), the example the student chooses to explore is up to them.

To quote from a few student evaluations:

Student #1: This course content was a truly enjoyable and relatable experience because so much of this music has influenced our lives and learning at some point in time. It was interesting to connect this material to things I learned in my music history classes or even composers I had researched/performed music by on my own.

Student #2: I really like how this course is framed, and I believe it is a lens that most people can engage with and appreciate some aspect of the course. It asks a lot of meta questions that are more concerned with how history is actually studied, which is a very fascination endeavor. Most people will like this course.

Student #3: I felt that learning about the more modern issues in the music industry. I really liked learning more than just the classic music before 1800. Learning about issues like music in politics and classism in music was so intriguing, especially learning about how it still relates to the music world today and what we can do to prevent it.

Student #4: Course content was engaging and well spread out. I enjoyed that we did not learn chronologically, and instead focused on prominent topics and the periods in which they were most prevalent. The presence of BIPOC, queer, and women composers in the curriculum was important to me, and I felt this made the course very well rounded.

Student #5: Music History III has been the most engaging and relevant music history course I've taken, especially for my career as a music educator. The course was organized into thematic units rather than a strict chronological order, which made it more interesting and allowed me to explore connections between different musical movements. This structure helped me see how historical trends overlap, which is something I can apply when teaching students about music's development. The course topics were highly engaging and felt directly connected to what I might teach in the classroom. I particularly liked the "Opening the Door" projects, which encouraged active learning, and the quizzes that reinforced key concepts. This setup made the material feel both interactive and memorable, giving me valuable tools to incorporate into my own teaching style.

Student #6: This course was definitely the most interesting music history class that I have taken during the progress of my degree here. Topics were very interesting and I am glad that the assignments and quizzes were related to exactly what was discussed during class.

### **Music, Gender, and Sexuality, post-1800**

This is an upper-division seminar of my design, and the fourth time I've taught this specific iteration of this course. In changing this course each time I offer it, I made changes in both content and in

structure. Among the content I was happiest to have incorporated in this iteration was a month-long focus on New York City and gender and sexuality—it really allowed us to dig in to the ways gender, sexuality, and music have shaped lives from the 1800s to today. The NYC unit culminated in a collaborative midterm project centered on online archives—the students produced some truly interesting and innovative projects, some of which they think they’ll use in their future work as performers and educators.

To note a few student evaluation comments:

Student #1: Dr. Brooks is a fantastic resource for conducting groundbreaking research and having insightful discussions. Her passion for the coursework and material shines through in every lesson, and she is always available to help students in a meaningful way!

Student #2: Dr. Brooks knows so much about this topic and it is clear in her lectures and discussions. This is one of the few classes I have taken that has held the attention and interest of students consistently. She has a wide range of knowledge on topics connecting with gender and sexuality, and she is a very engaging lecturer. Dr. Brooks cares about her students beyond just being available to us. She is very mindful about workload and timing of assignments. She keeps open space for our interests and inquiries about everything we discuss. She is always happy to talk and help with research outside of class requirements. It is clear that she puts a lot of thought into making this course fresh, relevant, and exciting no matter how long she has been teaching it. We are lucky to have her at Crane!

Student #3: Dr. Brooks is an amazing professor and I would absolutely take another course with her! She makes her course accessible to all students, which I really appreciate! She is very accommodating of students when they need extensions, which is so helpful. She is also so knowledgeable and teaches everything in a culturally responsive way. She is so passionate about everything she teaches, and it is inspiring to learn from her!

### **Music, Power, and Politics, post-1945**

This is an upper-division seminar of my design, following a roughly chronological progression throughout the semester. I focus on power and politics since they are large-scale topics of perpetual interest, and ubiquitous discourse about how music allegedly “transcends” politics (or musicians should “stay in their lanes” and avoid politics) is an ongoing public discussion which music undergraduates can use some help navigating. I choose to ground the topics in musics after 1945, since that is often the area of most interest in the traditional music history curriculum. Much—though not all—of the geographical coverage focuses on Europe and the United States, though there are a few examples outside of those areas (and students are encouraged to work on whatever topics they would like).

This is the third time I’ve taught this course as an undergraduate upper-division seminar (I regularly teach a graduate version of this course for summer MM students in Music Education). I’ve applied for permanent numbering, and this course is now a listed course in the history area. I’ve made substantive changes each time I teach the course, trying to find the best balance between amount of readings and pacing. I felt it went pretty well this semester in terms of reading balance, and most students did a good job of participating and engaging with the readings. I added several new topics and readings, including Jill Sullivan’s work on women’s military bands in World War II, Abby Anderton’s work on denazification/re-education in the post-WWII Berlin Philharmonic, a larger unit on Marian Anderson’s role in desegregating musical institutions, and a unit on *nueva canción* in Chile.

One of the ways I organize this particular course is that I try to divide the semester pretty equally into each era since 1945 (so that we give a pretty even coverage to the 1970s, 1990s, etc). At the end of each of these eras, every student presents a small "Open the Door" research project (basically an abstract, preliminary bibliography, and 5 minute presentation) for their peers. This turns out to be 5 presentations throughout the semester, and the students get a ton of great ideas from each other during these presentations. The engagement and enthusiasm was terrific, and the students presented a number of fascinating topics during our 15 weeks. They also developed an increasing fluency with navigating research and topic challenges, and I think these kinds of small-scale research projects really help with that almost more than longer projects. Students also take one of these "Open the Door" projects and develop a slightly "Deeper Dive" version as their final project.

Overall, I was really pleased with how this newest version of MPP went in Fall 2024. To quote from a few student evaluations:

Student #1: I loved the variety of topics that we covered, and I really enjoyed the structuring of the Open the Door projects, and how those were our assignments of primary focus. It helped the course feel fluid and unified.

Student #2: I have taken many classes and this is my last. I just want to thank you for being such a wonderful professor and person, and I always enjoyed taking your class and participating in discussions. I will remember these classes and times after I leave. Thank you for everything <3

Student #3: Dr. Brooks is so kind and enthusiastic about the content and in general just so good at what she does. This class felt seamless and was structured very intuitively on her part. I have nothing critical to say about her!

### **Research Project Capstone**

In Fall 2024, I taught a capstone musical project to Zachary Phipps. Based on our previous work together and his personal interests, he pursued an innovative project combining ideas about composition, environment and ecomusicology, and video games. Zach produced a strong writing sample, and plans to develop this project further for potential graduate school or employment in the future.