

WAYS 103 Reflection Questions—Fall 2025

Overview:

Why are we reflecting?

- Typical worksheet, drill-and-memorize, and test preparation approach to classroom teaching actually makes it difficult to retain the myriad bits of information you encounter during the school year. More effective is an instructional method that requires you to use important information repeatedly in complex and meaningful ways such as writing papers or completing projects.
- articulate and verbalize what you are learning—helps better digest and apply what you are learning in the course.
- self-reflection enhances learning and deepens connections and understanding with and between you & your colleagues.
- helps ME get descriptive feedback that I can use to improve my practice and the course itself.

Okay, so the actual questions to answer!

- These were a graded assignment completed in class in the last week of the semester.
- The questions were as follows:
 1. Reflect on how you thought about music, gender, and sexuality before you took this course and how you think about it now that the course is (almost!) over. What's **ONE** thing that changed for you?
 2. Name one thing that surprised you about the topics in this class.
 3. If you had to pick **ONE** of the class topics to research for a longer project, what would you pick and why? [SEE HANDOUT to review these]
 4. If you could pick **one** musical example to add to this curriculum, what would you pick and why?
 5. What is one thing that you learned in this class (or at least thought about in relation to this class) that connects with **other work** that you do? (this might include performing, teaching, scholarship in other disciplines, etc)

Anonymized student responses:

Student 1:

1. I don't know if anything changed for me, although I definitely was given space to expand upon knowledge I already had, and learn about things that I didn't know about subjects that I'm already interested in (music, music history, queer history, feminism activism, gender and sexuality, etc) BUT I really enjoyed that this class was kind of a re-

energizing class for me. Like, when I was burnt out and beaten down by the majority of things that I've been doing this semester, it was nice to be able to come into a space that reignited an excitement and "zest" that I have for learning.

2. I think "surprised" is the wrong word, but I was definitely intrigued by just how queer the 1920's were, and I was really intrigued to learn about the ways that queerness in NYC was squashed due in part to ww2 and the 1930's and 40's

3. Probably either ethics of care and the patriarchy, or riot grrrl

4. I'd probably add an assignment where we got to analyze the lyrics from a song of our choosing. I absolutely love analyzing song lyrics, and it would have been really fun to be able to do that here

5. I loved hearing about how Coney Island was intentionally dismantled by Trump's father. I love (in a kind of morbidly fascinating way) learning about how larger entities dismantle communities, or cause different groups to implodes. Like, learning about them is definitely disturbing, but I find it fascinating to know how people in power are able to cause communities to crumble without being detected, or setting off anyone's alarm bells. (An example of this is the race riots in Peekskill, that despite being 15 minutes from me, I only just learned about the horrors of what happened, and how the impact still lingers in peekskill today.) I really wish we got to learn more about how Coney Island was ironed out, and about how often times when you hear of places getting "nicer" or "safer", we don't often question what goes on behind the scenes in order to make that happen.

Student 2:

1. Despite being an instrumental music major, I tended to think more about discrimination in the vocal aspect of music. I have now tended to consider more discrimination in the instrumental aspect of music, like gendered instruments.

2. One thing that surprised me was that even as we got further in time, the discrimination didn't always get better. We discussed the fact that things would get better, then worse, then better, like a wave. I never really thought about history in that way, but it makes sense.

3. I think I would look more into the Nuns that we discussed in class if I were to research more. Although this is a disgusting practice, I would look into it to see if I could not only learn more about these specific nuns, but also to find more examples of women being shunned in the world of music.

4. I think I would add the topic of goth music to the curriculum. The presentation on it brought up many good points within gender and sexuality, giving us a new perspective on it.

5. I think that learning about the misogyny in music connects to what I do, especially as a woman who is going to be teaching music as a career. I might not be taken as seriously, and the things we learned in class can help me prepare for it and also find

different ways to fight against it.

Student #3:

1. Before I took the course I did not really notice when the gender or sexuality of a artist would affect their music. Now I do notice when the gender or sexuality of a artist affects their music and if they had changed when making the music.
2. I was surprised with certain topics that pertained to religion such as how nuns were separated from society.
3. If I had to pick one class topic to research for a longer project it would be on the different ways technology was made to exclude women.
4. I would add rock in New York because I am interested in how rock changed in New York.
5. I learned how queer people express their sexuality through different forms. This does relate to the information I have learned on the struggles of queer people in my psychology classes.

Student #4:

1. When coming into school I thought I was genuinely excited, but one thing that has changed for me was being more vocal to professors. When coming to your class, it feels like I can talk to you and it makes me feel good doing that with others also.
2. Disco! I love disco! So hearing about what disco was like I really enjoyed it!
3. Different genres, like disco, jazz, etc. I would've loved to learn more about it (hip hop histories!)
4. Earlier, I feel people don't truly know the possible queer representation of *Wicked* and I feel people would love to hear more about it.
5. It is taught me about how to cite sources on assignments. But it has also taught me that our world needs to recognize that all people are important.

Student #5:

1. Before, I typically just thought of representation now. Throughout the course I've started to understand the history of why this representation is possible and how the fight for queer voices led us to the point we're at today.
2. Voice was something I wasn't expecting to learn about. I think I sort of had an idea that it was connected, mainly knowing a good amount of trans singers whose voices were more aligned with the range of their sex rather than gender presentation, but it was cool to learn about the other connections with gender.
3. I think I'd choose to research hip hop. Gender and sexuality is not something there is a crazy high level of representation in hip hop, and I love whenever I see it. Being able to better

understand how someone like Lauryn Hill made it so big in hip hop seems very fascinating, and I honestly might look into it on my own time.

4. Pop might be interesting. There's been an increase in the amount of queer representation as of late, and I'm not sure if it's too recent for this type of course, but there certainly is a history.

5. The public speaking aspect definitely helps with a lot of things I plan on doing. As a music ed major, this will help when I teach, and with my end goal being a professor, this would be helpful for conferences I may go to.

Student #6:

1. I have more of an appreciation for women in music as they helped start and popularize many genres but never got the public recognition they deserved.

2. How much queer people have affected music and culture in general.

3. I would do a project on blues music because it interests me and I felt like there was more to learn about.

4. I would add at least a mention of David Bowie for his impact on the queer community.

5. I learned that anyone could have amazing talent and they shouldn't be judged for their gender or sexuality. This will connect with my work in the future because I'm entering music business so I should give everyone a chance.

Student #7:

1. Before I took this course, I didn't really think much of gender and sexuality and I did not realize that most of the important and fascinating history of how queer music came about, after taking this course I have realized that queer music and the oppression of being queer or different was so strong back then and even sometimes now.

2. I was very surprised about when we learned about old music and back then how woman was 14 or 15 and being forced to sing love songs even though they don't even know what being in love is.

3. I would research the girl groups because I find it interesting to see how they broke from the norms of society and branched off and found their own voices.

4. I would pick the musical *Hairspray* because the musical shows defying racial and gender stereotypes.

5. When we learn about the sound walk, I will use that in teaching to get people or the students to think about the sounds around them that we typically drown out.

Student #8:

1. One thing that changed for me is that I didn't realize how deep rooted the experiences of gender and sexuality is rooted in a lot of music, and how we don't really hear about much of it because of how much people tried to hide queer history

2. I think what surprised me the most was the topic of control in week 6. Hearing about the nuns and castrati voices and thinking about gendered sound was interesting to me! Especially the stuff about the phonograph and women's voices.
3. I think I'd like to do a longer presentation on topics like counterculture, hip hop, riot grrrl, punk, and everything kind of related to those topics. Especially the birth of riot grrrl and giving power to women and their own spaces
4. One topic I'd love to see in this class is more modern ties with queerness and music. I feel that many people nowadays try to put labels on a lot of music (and also try to out artists as queer), and maybe how we went from hiding queer voices in music scenes to objectifying it in a way
5. I think I learned a lot about new music, and how many voices in history were shoved out of the public eye because of their identity. I want to research more about women and queer composers and perhaps play their music or teach it in the future as a music educator!

Student #9:

1. Before taking this class, I never really thought deeply about how gender and sexuality showed up in music. I just saw songs and performances as entertainment, without realizing how much identity and expression are tied into them. Now, I think about how artists use music to challenge norms, represent communities, and tell stories that aren't always heard. One big thing that changed for me is realizing how queerness and gender fluidity have always existed in music, even when it wasn't openly talked about. The idea that performances themselves can be political or empowering really stuck with me.
2. One thing that surprised me was how much history there actually is behind queer representation in music. I didn't realize how coded certain performances used to be, or how artists had to hide their identities while still finding ways to express them.
3. I would like to research the Victorian piano stereotypes more because I thought it was interesting how women played the piano in houses to entertain their family, while men played piano in public performances. I would also like to re-explore the presence of women in early music ensembles as well.
4. If I could add one musical example to this course, I'd pick *Little Shop of Horrors*. It shows a lot about gender roles, power, and performance in ways that go beyond its dark comedy. Audrey's character, for example, reflects how women were often written to be fragile or submissive, but her songs, especially "Somewhere That's Green," reveal a deeper sense of hope and self-awareness. The musical also plays with the idea of control and ambition through Seymour's choices, which ties into how society shapes people's roles based on gender and class.
5. One thing I learned that connects to my other work is how performance can be a form of self-expression that goes beyond music itself. As someone who's into both

science and the arts, I think a lot about how people express ideas differently, and music connects to that in a big way. It made me realize that understanding identity and culture helps in any field, because everything we do has some kind of human meaning behind it.

Student #10:

1. I believed I already was fairly versed in gender sexuality and music, but I do feel more enlightened regarding those topics after completing this course, especially with how they correlate with one another. I would say the main thing that has changed for me is that I feel like I am better versed and
2. One thing I was surprised about in this class was the discussion on how we create stereotypes-based voices and how stereotype certain physical attributes with voices. I already did this subconsciously and had not offered the concept much consideration until this course and it is now something that I will consider forever.
3. One topic that I would pick to research more would be the idea of sonic patriarchy and the concept of 'insulting' music. I found this incredibly interesting because who hasn't heard a bad rendition or cover of a song and felt it be a little sacrilegious in a way, I most certainly have. I would love to ask and discuss with people, especially my composition professors, what their opinions on sonic patriarchy are.
4. I think it would be very fun to discuss folk artists a lot and the analysis of their lyrics. As a lyric nerd I absolutely adore the idea of dissecting and examining folk lyrics and then seeing how the songs were received or used as anthems for certain groups.
5. Since I am a composition student and the main genre I write for is musical theater, I felt very connected with the Broadway portion of our studies because it is something that I wish to do. Additionally I am also a lyricist and the idea of viewing lyrics in a conceited or subtext sort of way is very interesting and useful to me.

Student #11:

1. I think that I can now think about timelines before the 1900's, as often anything before that being queer wasn't something I thought people would really consider. Thinking about history not as a continual line up but being full of ups and downs in progression and the meaning of words is another large consideration I can now think about.
2. Stereotyped piano playing was a large surprise to me, I did NOT think that playing a duet could be seen as anything like 'courting' in a public setting.
3. Riot Grrl!! I personally enjoy the music; I would like to highlight the good it's done as well as how damaging it has been. I would like to pair it with Sista Grrl and why that movement exists.
4. Add Sista Grrl with Riot Grrl! I think highlighting the racism within the movement is also important to discuss. As much as I love the music of Riot Grrl, it wasn't as inclusive as many people think. It was more of the opposite in a lot of cases.

5. I think as someone who would like to go into teaching, being conscious of the early sexism and stereotypes of music can allow me to push against them, hopefully making room and encouraging future students in their expression.

Student #12:

1. I knew that gender, sexuality, and music were closely related before this class, however now I know more about specific ways they are related, such as how voices are used for expression and how technology has been used to either provide or deny access to music for certain groups.
2. Something that surprised me was how much we discussed race and the Civil Rights Movement in the beginning of the course, since that topic hadn't crossed my mind when thinking of gender, sexuality, and music.
3. I would probably choose to research the queer community in New York City in the late 1800s/early 1900s, since I found what we discussed quite interesting, and I don't know much about the topic past that.
4. I would include more about activism in the 1960s, shifts in music in the late 60s and early 70s, and how it ties to the advancements in civil rights for various groups.
5. I learned a lot about public speaking and different methods I could use in the future, and I got some good practice with public speaking and figuring out what works best for me when giving a speech.

Student #13:

1. One thing that I realize now about gender sexuality and music is that society was more accepting of it than I thought pre-1930. I used to believe that drag and gay bars etc were more recent, but they have a long history.
2. One thing that surprised me was how much we talked about history in this class.
3. I would pick soundscapes to research because I thought it was a very interesting way to hear sound in a whole new light.
4. I would pick more opportunities to talk about specific songs that are important to us.
5. One thing I learned from this class that connects with my other work is that it's okay to not have a super refined and perfect voice. There is beauty in other styles of singing.

Student #14:

1. One thing that changed for me is the way I look at Broadway now after the group project.
2. One thing that surprised me in this class was the way women were looked at in the music industry back then. I knew that it was rough, but after learning about it, I saw how rough it really was.

3. One class topic I would choose for a longer project would be women in the music industry.
4. I don't know what musical example I would want added to this curriculum.
5. How music changes lives, whether it be in a musical or actual music itself.