

Let the Students Decide! A Student-Centered Approach to Music Appreciation for Honors Students

Marie Labonville, School of Music
January 9, 2008

In recent years I have taught honors music appreciation, a general education course with an enrollment capped at 25. My teaching evaluations revealed that, although the students appreciated my enthusiasm, they did not always find the material relevant to their interests. This past semester, therefore, I decided to ask the students what musical topics *they* wanted to learn about, and then shape the class around their interests instead of following a textbook. Many of the topics that intrigued the students fell into two general subject areas: Music and the Mass Media, and Music and Technology. These became the “themes” for the semester.

Because a large percentage of these students were studying to be teachers, I let them design the grading tools, guidelines, and course requirements. I asked the students to immerse themselves in their chosen topics, and then to make two presentations—solo or group—on separate topics. Following each presentation, classmates provided informal, anonymous written feedback. Finally, quiz questions were written by the students themselves, based on their own presentations.

For the most part, I was impressed with these students’ enthusiasm and responsiveness, and with the quality and creativity of their work. Their feedback at the end of the semester showed me how I might refine this approach in future semesters, and I plan to follow their suggestions.

Attachments in this packet, in order

* = *Designed entirely or mostly by me*

** = *Designed entirely or mostly by the students*

*** = *Designed collaboratively by me and the students*

Syllabus*

Tentative Schedule of Class Presentations***

Basis of Final Grade**

Guidelines and Rubric for Presentations***

Confidential Peer Evaluation**

Informal and Confidential Feedback Form**

Confidential Student Opinion Survey**

Guidelines for Presentation Handouts* (not referred to in my talk)

Quiz Question Form* (not referred to in my talk)

Experiencing Music

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TTY).

Instructor's Contact Information and Office Hours

Office: CVA 214E
Telephone: (309) 438-2011
E-mail: melabon@ilstu.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30–3:00 p.m.

* * * * *

Prerequisites: None.

Goals:

- To listen to music intelligently
- To maintain an open mind toward unfamiliar musical styles
- To improve writing, speaking, and thinking skills
- To enhance understanding of the educational process by means of direct input into the design of the course.

Objectives: As a result of this class, students will...

- Expand their listening habits to include unfamiliar music
- Be able to recognize and describe key elements of music (melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, timbre, texture, instrumentation, form, etc.) when listening to familiar and unfamiliar music
- Be able to speak and write articulately about familiar and unfamiliar music, from a musical and cultural point of view
- Gain experience in designing a course, including content selection, creation of assignments and examinations, and establishment of standards.

Content: Since this is a both an honors section and a general education class, students will select the content with the instructor's approval. In general terms, the course will introduce students to the elements of music and the study of music as a cultural phenomenon. Class presentations will be illustrated with a diverse group of musical examples that can be examined on the basis of function, cultural significance, structure, and the like.

Textbook and Assigned Listening: There is no textbook for this class. Once students have decided upon the content, reading and listening may be assigned by the instructor or by the students.

Concert Attendance: Since this is a music class, attendance at live concerts is expected. The number and nature of these concerts will be decided jointly by the students and the instructor. Attendance at live concerts may be preceded by a presentation designed to enhance appreciation of the music to be heard, and followed by a written report that discusses the performance in light of what has been covered in class.

Activities: With the instructor's approval, students will select activities suitable for the class. Possible formats include:

- Discussion
- Debate
- Live performance in class
- Presentations by students (individual or group)
- Presentations by the instructor
- Guest speakers
- Participation/observation
- Attendance at concerts
- Keeping a musical journal
- Fieldwork (e.g. interviews of musicians, recording of observations, and the like)

Assignments, examinations, and standards: These will be agreed upon jointly by the students and the instructor.

Class Policies

Courtesy

- Please keep cell phones and pagers turned off when class is in session.
- While you are in class, please be quiet unless asking/answering a question or engaging in class discussion. Conversing with your neighbor is distracting to the instructor and disturbs those sitting close to you who are trying to pay attention. If you are unclear about something do not hesitate to ask the instructor (instead of the person next to you).
- Anyone who persists in disrupting the class, or in distracting the class or the instructor, will be asked to leave the room for the remainder of the period.

Attendance

Attendance will not be taken, but you are responsible for finding out what you missed on days when your absence is unavoidable.

Ethics

You are expected to do your own work at all times. If you are caught cheating on a quiz or examination, you will receive a zero on that test. Likewise, if you plagiarize on a concert report or presentation handout, you will receive a zero on that assignment. All academic dishonesty will be reported to the office of Community Rights & Responsibilities (CR&R), in accordance with university requirements. For more information about ISU's definition of academic dishonesty, see "Academic Integrity" in the current undergraduate catalog.

Schedule for the Semester

Note: *This schedule is subject to change.*

Weeks 1–2: Students and instructor decide upon content, activities, assignments, examinations, and standards.

Weeks 3–15: Coverage of content and participation in activities as selected by the students and approved by the instructor. Quizzes and examinations if appropriate.

Week 16: Final examination, if appropriate.

Tentative Schedule of Class Presentations (Draft 2, August 29, 2007)

Music and the Mass Media, Particularly Film

Monday, September 17 and part of Wednesday, September 19

“The Process of Scoring for Film”

Jason Mielcarek
Michael Weitekamp
Keegan Bunner

Friday, September 21

“Trends in Recent Film Soundtracks”

Kyle Johnson
David Cermak
Ali Ackerman

Monday, September 24 and part of Wednesday, September 26

“Classical Music in Films”

Bria Noel
Andrew Benning
Emily Backhus
Erin Yancey

Friday, September 28

“Opera into Film”

Marie Labonville

Monday, October 1: Guest lecture by Prof. Pete Guither, music director for the rock opera *Tommy*, to be performed at ISU beginning October 5

Wednesday, October 3: Open

Friday, October 5

“The Film Composer Hans Zimmer”

Michael Weitekamp
Keegan Bunner

Monday, October 8 and part of Wednesday, October 10

“Music for Disney Films”

Katie Adell
Jin Kyung Hwang
Malory Isaac
Megan Hoover

Friday, October 12

“Music for Disaster Movies”

Sarah Torbeck

David Cernak

Monday, October 15 and part of Wednesday, October 17

“Musicals into Film”

Katie Smith

Tracy Murphy

Erin Yancey

Emily Backhus

Friday, October 19: Open

Monday, October 22

“Irish Folk and Popular Music in the Media”

Megan Hoover

Maggy Gleason

Wednesday, October 24

“‘Oscarworthy’ Film Scores”

Katie Bettendorf

Friday, October 26

“Influence of the Media on the Evolution of Hip-Hop”

Matt Koster

Chris Denly

Tyler Bianco

Monday, October 29

“Slavic Music in Film”

Sarah Torbeck

Wednesday, October 31: Lecture by Prof. Labonville on music for orchestra
(in preparation for the ISU Chamber Orchestra concert on November 1)

Friday, November 2

“Classic Rock in Films”

Dan Temple

Katie Bettendorf

Jason Mielcarek

Week of November 5–9 (flexible date in case of presentation on Encore! that week)

“Country Music in Film”

Maggy Gleason

Tracy Murphy

Monday, November 12

“The Evolution of Music Videos”

Tyler Bianco

Katie Adell

Sarah Davies

Music and Technology

Wednesday, November 14 and part of Friday, November 16

“The iPod Phenomenon”

Katie Smith

Andrew Benning

Ali Ackerman

Dan Temple

November 19–23 is Thanksgiving vacation

Monday, November 26

“Music and Gaming”

Chris Denly

Kyle Johnson

Sarah Davies

Wednesday, November 28 and part of Friday, November 30

“Music and Children’s Toys”

Bria Noel

James Kristoff

Matt Koster

Jin Hwang

Monday, December 3

“The Influence of Technology on the Way We Experience Music”

James Kristoff

Wednesday, December 5

“Music and Nature, with a Little Help from Technology”

Malory Isaac

Friday, December 7: Open

Basis of Final Grade (as drawn up by the students in the class)

Presentations (each presentation worth 20% of final grade for a total of 40%)

Each student will give two presentations; presentations may be solo, or as part of a group.

- Presentations will be graded according to a rubric drawn up by the students.
- Each presentation will receive informal, confidential feedback from the class.
- Group presentations: Each group member will complete a confidential peer evaluation sheet about each of the other members, in order for the instructor to know whether the work was shared equitably and whether the quality of the work is due to solid effort by every team member.

Quizzes (quiz average worth 30% of final grade)

Quizzes will be based on the student presentations, and on the instructor's lectures.

- Each student will compose a minimum of two quiz questions based on each of his/her presentations.
- Questions composed by students will cover important points—e.g. what the student hopes his/her classmates will remember about the presentation a year later—rather than trivial details.

Four quizzes will be given; each will include an extra-credit essay-type question. The fourth quiz will take place during the scheduled final examination time.

The lowest quiz score will be dropped when calculating the final average.

Live concerts (concert report average worth 30% of final grade)

Everyone will attend three live concerts: (1) *Tommy*; (2) the ISU Chamber Orchestra on Thursday, November 1; and (3) the Encore! vocal jazz ensemble on Wednesday, November 7.

- Concerts will be preceded by an in-class talk by a guest speaker or the instructor
- Concerts may be followed by in-class discussion.
- Each student will submit a written concert report.
- Students will determine the format and rubric for the concert reports.
- One additional concert (of the student's choice), with corresponding report, will be allowed for extra credit.

Guidelines and Rubric for Presentations

(drawn up by the students and the instructor)

Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	
			<u>Stage presence</u>
			Each group member introduced himself/herself before the talk
			Presenter(s) projected confidence and comfort with the topic
			Presenter(s) made frequent visual contact with the audience.
			Movements were appropriate, according to individual style. No stiff appearance or exaggerated movements.
			Other
			<u>Timing and pacing</u>
			Well-paced, with variety to hold the audience's attention (presenter[s] kept track of audience attentiveness)
			Not too long or too short
			Time was allowed for questions afterward (or during)
			Time was allowed for students to complete feedback forms
			Other
			<u>Logistics</u>
			Audio, video, and Internet were cued ahead of time
			Volume levels on playback equipment were checked ahead of time
			Subtitles were activated on foreign-language DVDs
			Other

			<u>Content</u>
			Content was of high quality
			Content was presented in an organized, clear manner
			Presentation was visually interesting and illustrated with items such as movie clips, instruments, photos, web sites, or other items pertaining to the topic
			At least two audio, video, or Internet examples (other types okay too) were presented per student
			Pictures or images were included where appropriate, in the handout or on the screen
			Presenter(s) obviously felt prepared to answer questions from the class
			Other
			<u>Handout</u>
			Instructor saw and approved the handout at least two days before the presentation
			Good-sized font; room for note-taking; no dense appearance
			Handout parallels presentation
			Unfamiliar words defined, either as they occurred or in a glossary
			All audio, video, Internet, etc. examples are indicated in the handout, in the place where they occur
			All illustrations are accompanied by a caption
			Any appendix is referred to in the handout, in the appropriate location
			Bibliography is present, in proper format
			Appendix is present, if appropriate
			Other

CONFIDENTIAL PEER EVALUATION

Due the first day of class following your group's presentation

Your name: _____

Title of presentation: _____

Name of person you are evaluating: _____

Please assess each teammate thoroughly, honestly, and accurately. I need to know whether or not the group work I see is a result of solid effort of each and every individual on the team.

Criteria	Satisfac- tory?	Comments
Attends group meetings regularly and on time		
Open-minded; good listener		
Takes initiative—doesn't wait to be told what to do		
Does his/her share, and on time		
Willing to take direction when appropriate		
Speaks up in meetings; contributes ideas (even if they are not used)		
Well organized		

Good communicator, in person as well as by phone, e-mail, etc.		
Forthcoming about his/her own problems regarding the project, at every step of the way		

Please use the space below for additional comments:

INFORMAL AND CONFIDENTIAL FEEDBACK FORM

Title of presentation: _____

Date: _____

Please help your classmate(s) by providing feedback that can be valuable for later presentations or research projects, whether in this class or in other venues.

INFORMAL AND CONFIDENTIAL FEEDBACK FORM

Title of presentation: _____

Date: _____

Please help your classmate(s) by providing feedback that can be valuable for later presentations or research projects, whether in this class or in other venues.

**CONFIDENTIAL STUDENT OPINION SURVEY
ON THE FORMAT OF MUS 152, FALL 2007
Marie Labonville, instructor**

Most of the questions on this survey were contributed by the students themselves.

In this experimental section of honors MUS 152 (“Experiencing Music”), the students selected the content in lieu of a textbook, drew up the course requirements, designed the rubrics, and created the quizzes. Your instructor is very interested in your feedback, to learn whether this experiment was valuable and to suggest how the format might be improved in future semesters.

1. What do you feel that you learned in this class, in comparison to other Gen Ed or music classes? (Your answer may refer to *anything* you learned, even if not music-related.)

2. Please comment on how this class met (or did not meet) the expectations that you had before the first day of class, and after the semester was underway.

Before the first day of class:

After the semester was underway:

3. Have you enjoyed learning in this manner? If so, why? If not, why not?

4. Do you feel that the course requirements were fair? Please explain why or why not.

5. Did you appreciate having your classmates' feedback on your presentation? If so, was it helpful? Why, or why not?

6. How did you feel about the quizzes, in which the questions were authored by the student presenters themselves?

7. What did you like the most about this class?

8. What did you like the least about this class?

9. Do you consider the format of this class to be a success, a qualified success, or a failure? Why?

10. In your opinion, what should the instructor do differently if she decides to use a similar format in future semesters?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR FEEDBACK!!!

Guidelines for Presentation Handouts

General: Handout should be designed so that a classmate who is absent will easily understand, from reading your handout,

- what you talked about
- what the important points were
- the meaning of unfamiliar words or terminology
- what examples you played or showed—and at what point in the presentation you played/showed them
- what your sources were.

Keep in mind that any classmate who misses your presentation is still responsible for knowing the material on the next quiz. Let your handout help him/her.

Required elements

- Title
- Names of all group members
- Course number and date
- At the end, a bibliography of your sources—including all of your audio, video, and Internet examples—cited according to a single style manual of your choice

Instructor approval: The instructor must see and approve the handout at least two days before the presentation.

Appearance: Use a good-sized font; avoid a dense appearance (e.g. blocks of paragraph-style text); leave room for note-taking in the margins or elsewhere.

Specialized terminology: Define all unfamiliar words or terms, either as they occur in or a glossary.

Examples and illustrations

- Indicate all of your audio, video, Internet, and other examples in your handout, at the place where you presented them. Provide dates. Consider a different font or typeface for reference to your illustrations. Example:

Bla bla bla bla bla bla . . .

Video example 2: Shower scene from *Psycho* (1960)

Bla bla bla bla bla bla . . .

- Illustrations (drawings, cartoons, photos, etc.) in your handout must be accompanied by a caption that explains what is being illustrated, and provides a date. Cite the source either in your caption, or in your bibliography. Example of a caption without a citation:

Bla bla bla bla bla bla . . .

Figure 3: Image of Bugs Bunny from *What's Opera, Doc?* (1957)

Bla bla bla bla bla bla . . .

- If you have an appendix (e.g. with images, lists of names or titles, statistics, and the like), refer to the appendix in the handout at the appropriate location. Example:

Once animators began drawing dinosaurs larger and thicker (see appendix 1), film composers wrote correspondingly fuller orchestral textures.

(Appendix 1 contains dinosaur drawings showing increase in stature over a specified time period.)

Quiz Question Form

Due the first day of class following your group's presentation

For each presentation, group or solo, you will compose a minimum of two quiz questions. These questions will cover important points—e.g. what you hope your classmates will remember about the presentation a year later—rather than trivial details such as “What was the name of Susan’s dog in the film *John Doe Goes to Jail?*”

Before submitting your questions, check with the other members of your group to make sure there is no duplication. If there is, someone must write a new question.

Your name: _____

Title of presentation: _____

Date of presentation: _____

1 _____

2 _____

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL QUESTION
