

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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Although I have taught music composition, technology and theory since 2006, I first began to work with young adults not in music, but as a youth corps crew leader for teenagers on backcountry trail work projects. Climate controlled computer music labs bear little resemblance to wilderness work sites, yet strategies that I learned by leading young adults in adverse environments continue to inform my approach to music instruction. In particular, I foster a supportive community among my students, based on the respect of diverse backgrounds, and I use hands-on, multimodal, and collaborative projects to maintain student engagement.

Technology is a potent way to enable collaboration and communication of musical ideas. In music technology, I start students with open-source software, such as Pure Data, NoteFlight or Audacity, enabling any student with a computer to create music, while allowing their creations to be disseminated to others easily. For example, I've used NoteFlight as a collaborative online environment, allowing my students to write music together remotely. Students can then apply principles learned from open source tools to proprietary industry-standard applications.

It is important to incorporate a variety of traditions in a music curriculum. Connections can be built between traditions to enhance student understanding through common and contrasting features. For instance, in my course on Renaissance music, I had students compare text painting in late-sixteenth century madrigals to contemporary songs of their choice. In my course on video game music, I compared fantasy game scores to the music of Debussy and Wagner, illustrating the lasting influence of late-Romantic orchestration and harmony.

Incorporating popular music improves the representation of groups typically ignored in the academy. The electronic avant-garde is dominated by white males, but house music began as a distinctly black and queer tradition emanating from the incorporation of synthesizers into disco music. To teach this and related topics, I use Shapiro's *Modulations* as a guide for popular idioms, alongside Holmes' more academically oriented *Electronic and Experimental Music*. Audio-visual experiences can also connect students with unfamiliar styles. For example, students respond better to Ligeti's textural music through its appropriation in the “star-gate” sequence of Kubrick's *2001 Space Odyssey*, rather than as isolated sound alone. Though not as the composer originally intended, this presentation serves as a gateway to student appreciation.

My students are now in graduate programs, such as Temple University's music therapy Ph.D. program, or they work in industry, for instance, composing music for Steam Greenlight games. At the University of Colorado, I revised the Introduction to Music Technology syllabus to include units on Reason for synthesis, and web design for performing artists, innovations that were recognized and incorporated in later years. By emphasizing collaboration through technology and making connections between traditions, I equip my students with the knowledge and strategies needed to navigate an increasingly diverse and digital musical world.