

Teaching Philosophy

I create a classroom where the study of ethnomusicology is a hands-on experience. My goal is for students to understand music as a powerful force through which people express themselves. The courses I teach stress critical thinking, working with primary sources, writing, and in-depth understanding of specific musics and cultures.

I envision ethnomusicology courses as inherently collaborative and comparative. As the instructor, I bring my experience in archival and ethnographic research in the United States and in Portugal to the classroom. My background as a performer—as an oboist, saxophonist, wind conductor, and gamelan member—also influences the way that I present music to students. However, I expect my students to bring their own life experiences and intellectual interests from music as well as other academic disciplines to the course. Students bring their ideas into dialogue with one another through classroom discussions, oral presentations, and musical performances. I design classroom activities to help students look at their backgrounds and understand how their beliefs and experiences shape their ideas. I also want students to stretch their imaginations and move beyond their comfort zones. In a course on American music history, I have asked students to try singing hymns from a shape-note hymnal to encourage them to look more closely at connections between aesthetics and religious beliefs in nineteenth-century America. In a discussion of ethics, multiculturalism, and musical borrowing, I use role-playing and roundtable discussions to encourage students to see issues from diverse viewpoints. In my classroom, I also emphasize mutual respect as a ground rule to promote open discussions and student experimentation in classroom presentations.

As the instructor, my goal is that students learn to apply the ideas and methodology from the classroom to intellectual questions that they may encounter outside the context of the course. In both introductory and upper-level classes, I have found that hands-on projects using sources such as archival materials, musical performances, or oral history interviews conducted by class members stimulates students' enthusiasm and interest in a topic. In my own experience as an undergraduate music major at Brown University, a course project working with Duke Ellington's sketches of his first extended work *Creole Rhapsody* led me to consider ethnomusicology as a discipline. Moreover, as an instructor at Washtenaw Community College and a graduate student instructor for the School of Music at the University of Michigan, I found that students were much more creative and engaged when they took the role of researcher. The cultural significance of musical genres and styles became more accessible as they became immersed in their projects. In the music appreciation course at Washtenaw, I assigned students to work in groups to research and prepare a thirty-minute presentation related to themes addressed in their textbook. Students assumed responsibility for course material and in the process gained research and presentation skills applicable outside the classroom.

Research and writing are key components of any course I teach. College writing—especially writing about music—can be difficult and sometimes intimidating for students. I envision course projects as a series of short writing assignments that emphasize both academic and creative thinking. I find that integrating research and writing early in a course project can help students understand that good writing does not

happen overnight but that thesis statements, supporting evidence, and conclusions grow as they work with the subject matter. I also favor listening and concert journals and on-line discussion groups as tools for teaching writing about music. Students can refine their ideas and practice writing, and these informal writing exercises serve as warm-ups to the heavier lifting of research projects. Research and writing skills lay the foundation for other college courses and future work or study after they finish their college degree.

Teaching plays a central role in what I do as an ethnomusicologist. Many of the courses that I would teach will allow me to further refine ideas from my research in the classroom. My research experiences contribute to my musical knowledge, enrich my ability to teach methodology, and prepare me to lead discussions of the intellectual ideas that underline core tenets of ethnomusicology. Themes from my own research—such as musical expression in the context of migration—can serve as the basis for a course, and students' perspectives and questions broaden my own thinking on the topic. The courses that I have suggested resonate with a mission to foster creative thinking, critical reasoning, and effective communication through a strong background in the liberal arts.