

Teaching Skills Enhancement Program

This certificate program is offered to graduate students as an introduction to teaching in a university setting, offering theoretical and practical experiences. It takes place over two semesters with an apprenticeship component in chamber music coaching in the second semester. The following writing samples are taken from online discussion posts that reflect on course readings.

[Week 1 - Beliefs about teaching and learning](#)

Kathryn Stewart posted Sep 21, 2017 9:48 PM

Given my background as a music teacher, privately and directing group or class band workshops, my experience is that good teaching must ignite the interest and attention of learners to achieve maximum engagement. I try to model the techniques and behaviors that I believe are crucial for musical growth; I believe in creating a safe and inviting environment that encourages risk taking and exploration. Classes are centered around the students wants and needs, often coming up with goals together in discussion and offering choices as often as possible so that the students feel like they are in charge of their learning. Repetition and having students exercise memory retrieval are very beneficial to music learning and in creating independent learning strategies. I may offer my experience, a different perspective, or opinion to the discussion, but the student decides what information they find useful and I honor their freedom of choice.

[Week 2 - Effective Teaching. Teaching Adults](#)

Kathryn Stewart posted Sep 21, 2017 10:41 PM

The reading this week provided some concrete strategies for establishing a productive learning environment. Some of the examples reminded me of past and present professors who have taught me, with varying levels of engagement and admiration. We know that first impressions are very important when meeting new people, so the first day of class provides a lot of information to students about how the semester will go. My take-aways from the Iannarelli et al. article is that I would start by getting to know my students, why they are taking the course, and what they expect to get out of it. This would help me relate the content back to their learning objectives. It seemed that utilizing open dialogue right away was important to creating a sense of community within the classroom. After

introductions, I would open dialogue by asking questions, perhaps by introducing one or more of the foundational philosophies that underlie the coursework to get them thinking right away about bigger picture applications while I assess their current knowledge of the topic. As a student, I know how much I value knowing the course expectations and how to access course content and the professor between class meetings. I would make sure to take time to discuss any evaluations or research and how to get help when in need. If my plan is to use a teaching style that is going to be outside of their normal experience, I would explain my methodology and briefly state why I value that approach.

[Week 3 - Teaching Dossier](#)

Kathryn Stewart posted Sep 29, 2017 2:20 AM

When putting together a teaching dossier as a professor of music, or aspiring professor, I would be sure to include a detailed discussion of my personal teaching philosophy and outline how my methodology is unique. So far in my graduate studies, I have learned a lot about the "growth mindset" and the values of a process-focused approach to learning. I would describe how I have, and plan, to apply that concept to maximize learning as well as expressing my goal of encouraging learner independence. In music, most of the growth happens outside of instruction hours. Students can be introduced to concepts that will help them address problems that they encounter so that they can become resourceful in developing their own strategies to deal with these problems.

As with a CV, I would include any professional development pursued and try to include relevant teaching experience. I might include work experience I have in management (unrelated to music) since it has provided me with organizational job skills, experience with employee evaluation and regular opportunities where I was a trainer to new employees.

[Week 4 - Adult Learning](#)

Kathryn Stewart posted Oct 5, 2017 11:51 PM

Constructivism is an approach that I find valuable and incorporate in my teaching style. When I begin teaching young students, I have them fill out a questionnaire and outline their reasons and goals for taking music lessons. I will try to center the experience around these goals and encourage independent learning by approaching music in an experimental and exploratory way - something they can continue at home once their curiosity is piqued. It's not just adults that benefit from a teaching environment that encourages autonomy, but I've learned that, when it comes to curriculum, kids and young adults are more engaged and committed to their learning when they are involved in the decision-making

process. I learned this first from studying the research of Dan Pink on motivation, where he insists that the three core ways of accessing intrinsic motivation are through achieving a sense of autonomy, mastery and purpose. Autonomy is where I see the overlap with the readings on andragogy, and now I feel that it is especially important that it is used genuinely and transparently with adults, knowing now that adult learners tend to have pre-existing goals for their learning outcomes and need to know that what they learn will be beneficial to them.

Week 5 - The Learning Environment

Kathryn Stewart posted Oct 13, 2017 12:26 AM

I think what most stood out to me from the reading, that I could use in designing a course, would be the idea that students should be offered a variety of ways to demonstrate their knowledge. Specifically, in an area as subjective as music, I find that testing for knowledge with standardized or written tests are actually a sure-fire way to create unnecessary struggle for students. Students who have developed the skills to operate the creative parts of their brain may not be able to demonstrate their learning through writing or class participation. In my experience I have seen many non-verbal people in music who are fantastic instrumentalists and composers yet would likely not make it through their degree if they were forced to perform tasks such as class presentations, or group work.

Through the apprenticeship portion of this course, I plan to teach undergraduate student courses on chamber music. I would serve as a coach and help a small group of 2-4 musicians learn to work together and prepare for a performance. It would be crucial to allow the students to determine some goals together as well as agreeing on a process for the course to follow that would allow for constructive peer feedback. If later in my career, I can plan the whole course, I would make sure that the course objectives are clearly outlined, and available online, as well as making myself available to the group for questions outside of class time. While it is inherent in the course structure that the students will learn and put into action the collaborative rehearsal skills that they pick up, I might also give another opportunity for them to demonstrate the strategies, with choices including a written project, creative visual display, teaching demonstration, or video submission of them talking about or acting out the process. It would also be valuable for the students to learn about the composer of the work they are preparing to add context, so I might provide an assignment option where they can do an investigation, presentation, program notes, or timeline of that composer's life. Peer feedback would be encouraged and facilitated, it would not be solely the teacher's job to offer constructive criticism.

Week 6 - The Learning Environment, part 2

Kathryn Stewart posted Oct 19, 2017 10:24 PM

For this week, rather than writing or reflecting, I decided to make a sample assignment that includes some of the SDT concepts that stood out to me. Namely, that of providing freedom for students to have control over their own learning. My assignment includes many opportunities for students to make choices about the direction of their investigation and encourages certain concepts to consider without being overly directive. The central question asks them to reflect (employing metacognition) and clarify their own goals towards mastering a performance style of their choice. Asking why these skills are beneficial to their craft could assist in clarifying each student's goal motives. By offering students the choice to pick an assignment out of several options, they will be able to tailor their investigation around developing knowledge in an area that can be relevant to their own musical study. The purpose of the exercise is to determine what qualities are associated with a high level of skill in a certain genre, and to explore how artists achieve that level of mastery.

Consider a musician that you admire and tell me 3 reasons why you might want to emulate their playing. Why are those things important to your study/performance of music? For your assignment, after listening to several recordings of this artist, you may choose one project from the assignment options below:

1. Investigate that artist's life as a student and how that person built up to the skill that they have now. Write a reflective essay about the context of their learning (home life, social situation, etc.) and how it relates to their growth as a musician. See if you can relate your life and aspirations to their story if possible.
2. Contact a local music teacher who is fluent in that style and inquire about the recommended training and practice requirements to get to that level of playing. Interview some students who are learning that style and look at how closely their training matches the suggested path proposed by the expert.
3. Design a training regimen for a student of yours that may wish to learn this style of playing. Be detailed about the specific exercises and learning materials that they will require as well as the time requirements. You may wish to plan for adding difficulty as the student grows and consider the economic resources that are needed. How will your student be able to measure their progress?

Week 7 - Student Centered Learning

Kathryn Stewart posted Oct 27, 2017 12:14 AM

I am on board with the proposed Learning Paradigm, I think that shifting towards a more meaningful and interactive and accessible educational system would greatly improve the actual learning and retention that students experience at university. I can directly relate to having taken courses that were not related to my interests, and I managed to pass to get the required credit, yet don't recall

much of any material from those courses since it was not contextually mapped in a way that made it applicable to my primary discipline. I believe that a student-centered overhaul of the university system would allow for much more productive knowledge building, as well as improving the mental health of an already stressed-out population of young adults. The fact that the learning is holistic, and embedded with life skills, social and career skills, makes it pack a punch with all the benefits it purports to offer. A system like this is a socially responsible model which I believe offers much more benefit to our society than the current paradigm. I am lucky to have a few professors who really understand this and model their classroom activity around what produces the most learning rather than what is comfortable or traditional.

[Week 8 - Instructional Strategies cont.](#)

Kathryn Stewart posted Nov 6, 2017 2:31 AM

I currently teach a group class of beginner clarinet students through Project Grace, a cost-free program for youth in St. John's. I was excited to hear that this year we have 6 students in the class, up from having just 1 last year, however it's been chaotic considering the noise and complexity of playing a full-size clarinet when some students are too small to hold it correctly! The first challenge was noticing that my one returning student was bored by class activities because he already knew more than the others. Noticing this, I decided to employ him as an assistant to help the others. My aim with the class is that it can be exploratory, allowing them to test and discover things on their own through making sound. I realized quickly, however, that there needed to be ground rules in place and that no matter what I did, trying to "teach" them (in the traditional sense) would be challenging due to the range of attention spans. Anytime I try to talk, there is always someone chatting and people honking on their horns. Last week, rather than teach them where to place their fingers on the holes verbally, I decided to bring in some drawings of the key systems, in a type of match game, so that they could work together to relate the chart to the instrument and color coordinate the matching keys. I was surprised at how fast they figured it out, and they chatted together to make sense of the images. I can see how problem-based learning could be more effective here, I just need to get creative and plan ahead by bringing some materials with me each week. Even demonstrations are not as effective as I thought they'd be. I think some peer teaching or splitting the class into pairs to try to figure out how to play a tune together or trying to decipher written notation would be effective. They seem to respond well to high pace challenges and hands on puzzles, and the activity doesn't always have to involve the clarinet for them to be learning useful musical skills. In all activities, I ask that the students who finish early help the others. I feel that this has really helped to create a community atmosphere. This group was on my mind when we covered the topic on classroom

incivility, so I've tried to change my approach so that the kids are more active in their own learning.

Week 9 - Course Planning

Kathryn Stewart posted Jan 14, 2018 3:18 PM

When I look at my private teaching, I can say that I use several categories from the taxonomy in my strategy, but some aspects more than others. To help memory retrieval, I ask my students to summarize key take-away points at the end of each lesson, I have them role play to pretend to teach me, I ask them to vocalize some key points about what they are going to focus on or ask them to *Remember* and choose practice strategies that would work in that context. For *Understanding*, I believe I can do more here, but in a small way I do ask them to compare what they see in new music to anything they may have seen in the past. Students must interpret markings and instructions from the composer that is in the music and look for patterns or overarching structure. They *Apply* the strategies in real time, since the lesson inherently involves putting ideas into action, we always take time to try something out to see if it works – lessons can be quite experimental. *Analyze* – this is maybe a lesser used area for me, but I can see the value of having students look at the music critically and look at their behaviour and execution more thoughtfully – this includes a metacognitive approach as well. I engage my students in an *Evaluation* of their playing, this often requires a reminder to look for positive as well as negative qualities, since often negative criticism can dominate a student's internal monologue (negativity bias). These judgements, however, are useful in determining future choices for where they want to focus their attention. *Create* – another area that I under-utilize. An idea I have is to have my students create original compositions for the clarinet, however, I think there are other ways that they can be creative in their own learning, such as creating a practice strategy to deal with a specific problem or planning a performance situation that would meet certain goals.

The lesson plan I have created is focused around developing efficient rehearsal techniques. For my apprenticeship, I will be coaching chamber music ensembles, and the students will spend most of their time learning independently. The goal of this lesson is to develop those independent skills, as well as strengthening diplomatic communication skills which are crucial for working in any type of group setting where individuals share their observations and build relationships. (Lesson plan in attachments)

Week 10 - Learning Technologies

Kathryn Stewart posted Nov 20, 2017 11:47 PM

When we discussed this topic in class, I had a lightbulb moment when a student of neuroscience said that the use of these visual technologies could be used to show a 3D model of a brain. In teaching music, particularly with wind instruments, there are muscle groups that we can't see or point to, and which students are not used to consciously controlling. Examples are oral cavity, diaphragm, soft palate, lungs, cheek and lip muscles. A visual animation or cross section of the head and oral cavity would be helpful for students to know where to direct their focus when executing proper form. The diaphragm is a major player in air control, and because the muscles work in a counterintuitive way, it is often misunderstood and incorrectly engaged (or not at all). I would use an animation to demonstrate this, and I would book-end it with the overarching concept of air support and how it affects sound. I have a method learned from my teacher as a way to test to see if it's working properly, so I might get students to do this at the end so that they have a "feel" for what they just saw depicted in the animation.

Week 11 - Assessment

Kathryn Stewart posted Nov 21, 2017 2:05 AM

One form of plagiarism that worries me is the paraphrasing without citation. Since taking time off between my undergrad and masters, I was concerned that I had forgotten how to cite properly, or that I would paraphrase or summarize without acknowledging a source if there was something I considered common knowledge. Sometimes when I'm researching, I might forget where I read an idea, and confuse it as an idea I constructed by linking information together. I'm sometimes not sure if I came up with the idea on my own (or gathered through life experience) or if I read it somewhere in the massive stack of resources I collected. I think that presentations, reflective essays or journals are interesting ways to cope with the problem of plagiarism, and I can see those working in course I might teach. These online discussions posts, for example, are a way to see if we are engaged with the material and learning the gist of the readings, while engaging in reflective thought. I am often more motivated to do a reflective post than an essay, and I'm beginning to get used to the idea that academic writing can be in first person (it was very weird at first!).