

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

As an educator, I believe the classroom is the most crucial and influential place for the formation of identities. It is of paramount importance to me that I embody my teaching philosophy both in and outside the classroom, as the decisions made within places of learning are instrumental in determining every student's approach to the subject of interest after they have left the institution.

I have organized my teaching philosophy around four main principles: learning is continuous and ongoing; teaching is prescriptive; teaching must acknowledge the past while remaining contemporary; and teaching requires passionate pedagogy. Interwoven throughout these four principles is the core concept of student-oriented learning. My teaching approach incentivizes progress on an individual basis that is driven by intrinsic desire to learn, rather than a predetermined, inflexible curriculum or unsympathetic, rigorous evaluation and content. While curriculum or evaluation centered approach is historically valid, modern music education must push back against these antiquated structures.

As an educator I strive to embody an ethos of process. That is to say, a non-objective oriented approach to learning. The nature of deliverable-driven schools of study are useful for their given fields, but fall short when it comes to study of art. In my experience the creative process is malleable: there are advantages to courses in which a series of projects serve as major assignments because creativity must be exercised, but other students may find the pressure of deadlines crushing and antagonistic to their approach. The nature of institutions generally desire some form of evaluation for the purposes of charting student learning, and while I acknowledge the necessity of assessment, I question what form of learning the assessment is measuring. For a discipline as eternal and ever-present as music, we shouldn't hold it to the same rigors that are required of disparate disciplines. Growth in music is non-linear, and doesn't conform well to curriculum in the classical sense of the word.

As a heart surgeon, it's imperative that you have memorized every detail of the complexity of the cardiovascular system, but why do we think it's important for a jazz drummer to learn figured bass and Shenkerian analysis? The answer is relatively simple: on an individual basis, a student's musical understanding doesn't have to be fully comprehensive, but a modern music education *assumes* that it should be. New England Conservatory's Definition of an NEC-educated musician is one who "... demonstrates knowledge of fundamental concepts of music theory, and a basic familiarity with historical developments in Western music, including a more thorough understanding of at least one specific period or idiom."

(<https://necmusic.edu/mission-statement>) . Music curricula exist to promote a sense of well-roundedness for every musician. The issue here is that within the desire to promote well-rounded musicianship, music curricula ignore the individual, intrinsic interests of the student, no matter how concrete or abstract. This discourages students as the object of interest that has led them to the musical discipline will rarely be encountered in a classroom setting. I incentivize a prescriptive, student-led approach in which the expertise from the instructor is paired with a student or student body's collective interest to facilitate learning in a way that feels intrinsically driven.

Music is not dissimilar from other disciplines in the sense of understanding history and its consequences on the contemporary field. A biologist should understand Darwin's first findings, a physicist should understand the old hypotheses of the atomic model, and every musician should grapple with Bach inventions. Again, the issue here is that music still cannot be taught like these other disciplines. Academic disciplines make their achievements via collaboration with other academics, intellectuals, and leading-fieldsmen, all of which have been steeped in privilege and have had the opportunity and resources to deepen their understanding. They also can make significant advancements after having the ability to study a comprehensive history of their discipline, from its beginnings to modernity. Music exists culturally, and aurally as well as academically, and as such it's unrealistic to apply the methods of pedagogy that work for other disciplines to studying music. Music is born from culture, and culture grows like a root, unlike ivy from the ivory towers. Culture's origins often come from those who live in the poorest conditions. Louis Armstrong is an indispensable, foundational figure in modern black American music, who grew from poverty. He did not study Bach Fugues (which were taught in conservatories during his time), he couldn't play Haydn trumpet concertos in his youth, but yet he originated a musical language completely of his own that is unquantifiably influential. If Einstein were provided the same material conditions as Louis, he probably would've stayed a violinist. In my teaching approach, I strive to incorporate meaningful elements of the history of music because we live the consequences of the decisions made by previous generations. But I also strive to make music relatable and contemporary so the study of music in a classroom setting remains tactile and meaningful rather than antiquated and arbitrary.

I firmly believe teaching must be done passionately, or not at all. I am driven to make sure that students look forward to my class. It doesn't have to always be a joyful look either, it can be an anxious or anticipatory one - just so long as the classroom environment inspires growth in the end. While it is important to me that students find the classroom setting safe and nurturing, I believe that uncomfortable moments are those at which growth can occur the most rapidly. When I reflect on my academic career, I have been taught by over sixty unique teachers. Among them, there are those whom I couldn't tell you one single lesson I learned from them, and there are those that I could quote paragraphs from. I am dedicated to being a teacher of the latter: one who leaves a memorable, lasting impact and one who challenges and reshapes students' approaches to music altogether.