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Teaching Statement

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Music can be a powerful tool for fostering communication, dialogue, and connection. My approach to the classroom stems from my prior experience as a performing musician, particularly in group settings like choral and orchestral ensemble performance, where I learned to recognize the importance of each individual's contribution to a whole. Students have much to contribute to every lesson, through their observations, reactions, ideas, questions, and sharing their experiences. The task of the teacher should be to nurture an environment that feels supportive. I work to produce a comfortable space in which students trust one another and myself to be vulnerable with their ideas. In this way, I aspire not to be the soloist in the room, but in ensemble with my students.

I approach the classroom as a space for dialogue and discussion. Within this space, I am in equal parts moderator and lecturer, supplying students with content and questions for contemplation and guiding the conversation. I create a space with this social rhythm, in which students are asked to engage actively and participate often by speaking in class and writing on discussion boards. I present the topic of music as a shared social experience, and I seek to produce a social rhythm and flow of conversation in the classroom that reflects this principle.

I firmly believe that students' learning is most successful in inclusive, safe, and supportive spaces. A class that is a burden to students who may be experiencing difficulties outside the classroom is not one that will foster learning and growth. I seek to gain the trust of my students so that they are comfortable asking me questions, expressing concerns, and sharing when life interferes with coursework. To this end, I hold anonymized check-ins with students (in the first few weeks and at the half-way point of my courses) to give students the opportunity to ask questions, clarify course requirements and assignments, and share what has or has not been working for them in the course thus far. When I have used this in my past courses, students have shared lingering worries that are impacting their performance (e.g. family member currently infected with COVID), questions about deadlines and late work, and other school pressures like clashing deadlines. I have adjusted my due dates for affected students, reassured them that I will always accept late work, and collaborated with students to

produce timelines that will work for them. Students with whom I have worked I-on-I in this way have demonstrated a high degree of engagement with course content, submitted great late work, and have done very well in my courses.

I design courses to center the interests, skills, and learning styles of my students. I have the benefit of teaching music, a topic that most students engage with as listeners outside of the classroom. As such, many students come to the music classroom with a great deal of lived experience relevant to music, but perhaps less experience thinking critically about music and their experiences of it. I ask them to listen to music, contextualize their listening through cultural, social, and political contexts that I present in readings and lectures in written assignments and discussions. My goal is to equip my students with a toolkit to do cultural analysis of the past and present – to be critical participants of contemporary culture.

I urge my students to think broadly and, when possible, to draw on their expertise to inform their engagement with music. I have taught four courses at this point in my teaching career: two versions of Introduction to Music, A History of Song, and Music & Humor. These courses have been offered to non-music major students, so each roster has been made up of students from a wide variety of disciplines. As such, their interests and approaches to music differ, informed by their major, hobbies, or neither. What drew me to study musicology is my interest in thinking about music as a contextualized cultural practice, through which to consider politics, technology, economics, and identity. These intersections can prove engaging for students and can provide them with a helpful foothold as they consider music critically. I provide experiential assignments and research-oriented project assignment to give students opportunities to research a topic of their choosing. Through my assignments and I-on-I project advising, I guide students to leverage their experiences, interests, and strengths as they critically engage with music. My students have produced papers, podcasts, and videos with interdisciplinary connections to education, economics, history, communications, theater, film, psychology, rhetoric, linguistics, African American studies, among other disciplines.

In terms of assignments, I assign a combination of reflective and analytical writing: informal in discussion board postings and more formal in a research-based project assignment. For any written assignment, students are permitted to submit spoken audio or a video presentation, depending upon their preferred mode of curating their thoughts. I believe that equity in mode of presentation is important to allow students to represent their thoughts in a

way that best suits their learning style. I have had students discover a project topic in reflective writing, engaging with their peers on discussion boards. In some cases, this kernel became a podcast-like presentation of original research that they were able to share with peers in a presentation.

I like to assign a research project assignment to my students. While still connected to the theme of the course, I offer students the opportunity to select and explore a topic that interests them. I want my students to get something out of my course that they will carry with them—especially a synthesis of material and concepts from the course with their own research topic. Given the many disciplines from which my students have come, I encourage students to seek out a topic and ask questions of it that connect with their interests –academic, musical, or other.

I prioritize formative assessment to promote process-based learning and thinking in my curriculum. I am less concerned with strict due dates or grades than with completed work that demonstrates thoughtful consideration within the prompt and rubric guidelines. My goal is to get students to think differently and critically. Through a variety of guided and open prompts, reflective writing assignments, and a guided final paper assignment, I give them space in which to demonstrate and develop their ideas. I believe strongly in the project proposal as a key stage for individual feedback, guiding students through the process of asking critical questions of musical material. Along with discussion boards, I also use peer review: creating curated spaces in which students can engage with one another about their ideas. Through creating such spaces, I can track student interaction with prompts, one another in peer review, and determine grades based upon engagement.

My desired outcome is that students will leave my classroom with a vocabulary of musical concepts and terms, an ability to ask critical questions about objects of culture—music or not—and a greater appreciation and understanding of new and familiar music. I hope to instill in my students a sense of intersectionality and interpenetration—that everything in culture is entwined within a network of people, and their values, aspirations, politics, and feelings. I hope that through my classes, students might become more curious, open, and interested in viewpoints and experiences unfamiliar to them.