# FSU College of Music Online Teaching

## Documentation for Online Courses

These materials provide a guide to teaching the large online non-major courses at FSU that were created by Christopher Witulski between 2014 and 2016. Please send any questions to [cwitulski@fsu.edu](mailto:cwitulski@fsu.edu). These documents are designed to be easy to edit and update using Markdown syntax converted to HTML with [Pandoc](http://pandoc.org). There is a [DOCX version](InstructorHandbook.docx) as well, though it is 15 pages of single spaced type and therefore not set up for easy navigation. See [Editing this Documentation](#edit-docs) for directions on using Markdown, converting to DOCX, and editing this website.

If you are a teaching assistant, there is [information for you below](#ta)!

## About these Courses

This suite of courses includes classes focused on world music, popular music, and Western music history. They exist simultaneously at a number of levels so that different offerings are available depending on department need. As of summer 2016, we have been focused on IFS2072 *A Social History of American Popular Music*, IFS2073 *Music in the World*, and MUL2010 *Music Literature, Listening, and Understanding*. These choices are largely based on recent changes to the FSU liberal studies program, but as that adaps and evolves, other levels of each set of content may become necessary. The same content can be used in approved versions of MUH2019 *Modern Popular Music*, MUH2051 *Music in World Cultures*, and MUH2512 *Music in World Cultures-Majors*. These have been approved by the Faculty Senate and can run with minimal adaptation to the current online structures. The main changes would require adjustments as appropriate to the projects: as those courses are not approved for E-Learning designations, there is more flexibility for the instructor to change or remove collaborative multi-stage projects.

This documentation focuses on the procedures for directing these courses. Specific concerns regarding each individual course [follow](#courses). To view and begin setting up the courses for a given semester, use the Blackboard course copy tool. See [Teaching the Online Courses](#teaching).

### Liberal Studies and E-Series (as of now) at FSU

As tempting as it may be to describe the E-Series program at Florida State, it is currently in flux. As of now, the focus of the program is in creating and offering courses that develop "interdisciplinary and flexible thinkers." As such, the courses labeled IFS are required to:

* engage students in broad, critical, and creative thinking about contemporary problems,
* include substantive writing that includes feedback, revisions, and reevaluation,
* require a range of assessments from essays to hands-on team projects, and
* include weekly opportunities for discussion and interaction.

The most up-to-date descriptions of this and other requirements are at the [FSU Liberal Studies](http://liberalstudies.fsu.edu) page.

Notably, these IFS courses are currently approved through the Faculty Senate as they currently exist. At their start, they were the only online courses that achieved this designation and the intensive, multi-stage collaborative projects were one reason that they were granted E-Series status. If (when) the E-Series program adapts, they will need to be revisited to meet any new requirements. At the time of their approval, there were substantial financial incentives to creating these classes. If those cease, it may not be worth the effort for students during the semester to complete the collaborative projects from distance and, therefore, these classes may be better situated in their original forms (as non-E-Series general education courses for major and non-major students). The E-Series designation currently fuels a great deal of interest and enrollment, but that may not always be the case.

Similarly, because of this designation, *any changes to the projects that make up IFS2072 or IFS2073 need to be made with careful attention to current E-Series requirements.*

Each class also satisfies the following other liberal studies designations:

* IFS2072: E-Series, Cultural Practice, Diversity: Western Experience
* IFS2073: E-Series, Cultural Practice, Diversity: Cross Cultural Studies, Scholarship in Practice
* MUH2010: Cultural Practice (also part of the state core curriculum)
* MUH2019: Cultural Practice, Diversity: Western Experience
* MUH2051, MUH2512: Cultural Practice, Diversity: Cross Cultural Studies

## Course Documents

Course documents in PDF and DOCX format for these classes are downloadable using the following links. The schedules are from the last time that each course ran, but they will provide a clear and easily updatable template for future semesters.

Each syllabus includes required FSU language, but also contains language specific to online courses concerning participation, expectations for online interactions, explanation of policies regarding issues common to online courses (such as problems with technology and missed deadlines), and the required information regarding each liberal studies designation. These can obviously be heavily adapted, though some elements like the liberal studies materials must stay as is.

Other documents for each course, including project directions and rubrics, are under [Specific Information on Each Course](#courses).

IFS2072 *A Social History of American Popular Music*: \* Syllabus [PDF](CourseDocs/IFS2072-Syllabus.pdf) | [DOCX](CourseDocs/IFS2072-Syllabus.docx) \* Schedule [PDF](CourseDocs/IFS2072-Schedule.pdf) | [DOCX](CourseDocs/IFS2072-Schedule.docx)

IFS2073 *Music in the World*: \* Syllabus [PDF](CourseDocs/IFS2073-Syllabus.pdf) | [DOCX](CourseDocs/IFS2073-Syllabus.docx) \* Schedule [PDF](CourseDocs/IFS2073-Schedule.pdf) | [DOCX](CourseDocs/IFS2073-Schedule.docx)

MUH2010 *Music Literature, Listening, and Understanding*: \* Syllabus [PDF](CourseDocs/MUH2010-Syllabus.pdf) | [DOCX](CourseDocs/MUH2010-Syllabus.docx) \* Schedule [PDF](CourseDocs/MUH2010-Schedule.pdf) | [DOCX](CourseDocs/MUH2010-Schedule.docx)

## Teaching the Online Courses

### Best Practices for Online Teaching

"Best" practices are quite fluid and depend on the goals of a class or assignment. There are a few trends that these classes follow that are worth articulating directly.

#### All course documents and project descriptions are in both DOCX and PDF format.

One potential useful change would be the creation of HTML versions for easier access by students. It is worth keeping PDFs available as they are easily downloaded and printed (while preserving formatting to avoid one mode of potential confusion). DOCX files allow for screen readers and other adaptive access-related technologies. I provide DOCX and PDF for all course materials for these reasons, though additional HTML may streamline some elements of teaching and taking the classes. That said, they also introduce a third variation that would require an update whenever changes are made.

#### Details must be consistent throughout the course materials.

Any confusion will be found by students and may result in 150 email questions coming your way the next morning. For this reason, most details are in one and only one place within the course content. Students are directed to the schedule (PDF and DOCX) for information on deadlines, for example. None are hard-coded into the content of the online interface nor do they appear in project descriptions. Similarly, assignment directions are only in one downloadable document, also a PDF and DOCX. They are not posted online except for in a few rare instances because of the submission method.

#### Announcements are frequent and detailed.

Student engagement depends on instructor engagement, which is most frequently through announcements. I have found frequent, single-subject announcements to work better than large lists of minor ones. This may be irritating for some students as their inboxes fill, but it makes it easier to (1) not miss an announcement buried at the end of an email and (2) delete or store announcements when they are not (or not any longer) relevant. A call-to-action, if necessary, should be clear and early in the announcement.

#### Announcements should be emailed.

There is a choice to send an email directly from the announcement page. This is far more dependable than hoping that students are studiously checking the online course materials each morning for updates. It meets them where they are: always a necessary consideration for these types of courses.

#### Interactions with students always go through the instructor of record.

This is a personal preference for me (Christopher Witulski), but it has worked well. It is advice that does not need to be followed. Other than grading, I believe that all interactions with students should come through me directly, shielding my TAs from any potential issues. Most student questions are not content related in a course of this type and I would prefer to have had the entirety of the interaction with students when it comes to making difficult decisions about missed deadlines, technology-based exemptions or extensions, or grade-related questions.

### Preparing for the Semester

These are general steps to be taken before the beginning of a given semester.

1. **Create the course** using the online tool through Blackboard. As of this writing, it can be found through the main [Blackboard page](http://campus.fsu.edu) by clicking Request a Course/Dev Site in the upper left-hand corner. From there, select "Request a Course Site." Here, you can choose an individual or cohort page. Cohorts work well for courses split among different sections. For example, IFS courses often include independent sections for main campus students, Panama City students, and honors students. Cohorts make these multi-section courses far easier to maintain. Choose your sections (the list populates from registrar information), and click "Next." If your section is not appearing, you may need to speak to the College of Music. This process can take a few days, so do it early as there is not much to do until it is complete.
2. **Update the course syllabus** heading information, any textbook changes (such as edition), and the course schedule for the current semester's dates.
3. **Read through these materials** and share relevant sections with your readers.
4. **Copy the course into the new location** once Blackboard is up and running. You can use the aptly named "course copy tool."
5. **Replace old course documents** (syllabus and schedule) with the update versions.
6. **Add your teaching assistants** by selecting the Users and Groups tool near the bottom of the left hand menu from within the new course. Select Users and use the Find Users to Enroll button to search by Blackboard username. This is usually the same as the first half of the teaching assistant's email address, but if not, you may just need to ask the TA over email.
7. **Click through all pages of the course, checking for dead links**, both for embedded video content and external web sites. You may need to contact the Office of Distance Learning to work out technical issues with embedded videos. They are constantly updating their video library collection interface, which is good, but during some semester breaks, that causes trouble with importing media content into new course sites. Replace any missing videos or fix any dead links, including any descriptive text related to the now changed content. Things change on the internet and, even more frequently, things change in how Blackboard's inner workings deal with different content. Media will break or links will stop working throughout the semester, but you will be better off having found as many of those problems beforehand as is possible. Otherwise: hundreds of emails at once.
8. **Assign quizzes by updating the due dates.** In most of these courses, the assessments are grouped together, making this task easier.
9. **Clear out any old materials** like announcements, discussion posts, or other remaining content from the assignments portions of the course site.
10. **Determine a grading schedule** and send it to your teaching assistant so that she has a clear set of deadlines for when you expect grades to be complete. This will also help in ensuring that too many grades are not due simultaneously.

### First Day of the Semester

FSU's first day attendance policies are not well-suited for online courses. There is a tool in Blackboard, but I have been warned that it does not work as expected. Overcoming this issue while also ensuring that all of your students are properly set up is tricky. Here is one method that I have used successfully, though you can try a different way if you prefer.

The goals here are to:

1. Notify students that the course exists, reminding them to check in and get started,
2. Keep track of incoming students who add the course after the semester begins, and
3. Compile a list of students who are not responsive, the best equivalence of missing the first class period that we have in an online setting.

This list gets reported and non-responsive students are automatically dropped from the course. "Playing it safe" and keeping everyone may have consequences for students' financial aid when the semester ends.

#### One procedure for dealing with "first day" issues

1. On the first day of the semester, save the course roster. Exporting from the Grade Book is the easiest way to do this. Save the downloaded file as spreadsheet that you can edit in something like Excel. (Much of running these courses involves dealing with CSV or TSV documents and Excel.)
2. Ensure that there is at least one assignment due by your first day reporting deadline. This information will come through email multiple times before the beginning of the semester.
3. Announce the course to students and direct them to the Blackboard website (currently http://campus.fsu.edu). Have Blackboard send it as an email since few students think of their online courses during the first week. Specifically direct them to complete the "first day" assignment. It can be a basic course introduction quiz. I include one that is based on the syllabus and is full of true/false questions that they can retake until they are all true. (Things like "I own, have access to, or have ordered the textbook.") This is a good time to remind them that they need to provide documentation if they require accommodations in the course.
4. In a day or two, send another announcement, also over email, welcoming recent additions and reminding all students of the first day assignment and accommodations. Reiterate that failure to complete the first day assignment (which is easy!) will get them dropped from the course.
5. Repeat every other day until the deadline with more red bold and dire phrasing each time. Students who add near the end of the add/drop period may not look back through old announcements and may, therefore, not realize these issues. For this reason, I consider adding the course late as an act of attendance. But those students may still need an email reminder to go into the course and get started.
6. When the deadline arrives, compare the current roster with the one that you saved from the first day. If a student WAS on the first day roster and IS STILL in the course, plus that student DID NOT complete the assignment, add him or her to an absentee list. Follow directions from the many First Day Attendance reminder emails that have been flooding your inbox to submit the list.
7. Invariably, one or two students will ask to be let back in. Sometimes the main office can accommodate these requests for late (re-)adds. They should contact the office themselves.
8. Remind the remaining students (both new and old) that they still have other upcoming deadlines so that the online course does not get lost in early-semester confusion for each of them.

### Setting up Groups

Both E-Series courses require extensive group work and at least one group project in each course involves extensive technology usage. I created and posted tutorials that scaffold skills with programs like GarageBand and iMovie, but learning software is not the purpose of these assignments. Instead, I prefer to have some students with familiarity with each type of media technology in each group. To this end, one of the early assignments is a group organization survey.

Note that the name is problematic for students because of the way Blackboard deals with surveys. Surveys are anonymous, which makes them useless for group setup purposes. Therefore, the survey is a quiz that is graded. If you hide the grade (set it to not release when you create the quiz link and update the deadline), students *should* not be able to see their score. This gives you the opportunity to change all completed surveys to perfect scores before you release the results. It works as a sort of bonus point toward their quiz grade, though you could make it worth nothing if you prefer.

You can download the results from the Blackboard Grade Center, though they are in a computer formatted (HTML) markup. The easiest way to rid yourself of the bulky code is to use a text editor that allows for something equivalent to *Regular Expressions*. On an Apple computer, have found TextEdit (which comes pre-installed) to be especially good at this.

#### Organizing Groups

* Open the downloaded document in TextEdit and convert it to plain text using Shift+Command+T. Use Command+F to open the Find dialogue, and check the Replace box.
* Clicking the magnifying glass that is in the search bar brings up a menu. From here, choose Insert Pattern. Choose Any.
* HTML is written using angular brackets, and you want to remove any text that is *between* these brackets. So now that you have Any in your search bar, put an angular bracket on each side: < to the left of Any and > to the right (so you have <Any>, where Any is in a box).
* Leaving the Replace bar empty will simply remove the markup.
* Click Replace All and viola.

You may need to do similar Find/Replace edits to remove other artifacts of the code, depending on how you exported the file. Other programs have similar functionality, though the system for doing this with Microsoft Word is more complicated. I have found plain text editors that are geared toward programing, like GitHub's Atom.io, to be useful for these kinds of tasks.

Using the process above, you can turn each response into easily sortable code. Replace the text for the response saying that the student is in the Honors program, for example, with the word Honors followed by a comma. Same for Panama City, whether the student has iMovie experience, etc. By splitting these with commas, you can turn the document into a CSV, which will open in Excel or another spreadsheet program for easier organization.

I prioritized location (in Panama City, in Tallahassee, or working from distance) and Honors status (enrolled in the proper section of the course) when creating groups. That is not necessary, but worked well. Then I began sorting groups within each of those categories by splitting up the students who had the most rare experiences (usually music and film editing). From there, I moved the rest around until each group had an even(-ish) number of students with each skill set. Groups of five or 6 worked well and allowed for a few dropouts without greately affecting the workload.

Actually creating the groups is fairly tedious and is a good job for a teaching assistant. You need to manually create each and enter the members individually. Blackboard's group tool is good, if slow. I allowed for discussion boards and file exchange, but few other skills as I wanted the groups to work out their own systems through the group contract assignment.

#### Group Contracts

Once groups are set, announce them to the course. Students can access their groups through the My Groups tab. It is worth notifying them that they have the option to subscribe to discussion forums: they will receive emails upon any updates.

During recent semesters, I tried letting students work out their own expectations for group members. This was the goal of the Group Contract assignment. It forced groups to work together to come up with systems that would orient their semester. It also eased any accountability issues that came later, as I could refer to these contracts when students failed to do their part later in the course. I suggest keeping this system, though you can easily create your own expectations for how and when groups will communicate. (Communication is, not surprisingly, the most difficult challenge for group work in a distance learning course.)

### Project Grading

Unit or Semester-long projects comprise the bulk of grades for E-Series courses. They are currently set so that the majority of each grade is for individual work, though they remain group projects at their core. There is information on the specific projects for each course in the [Specific Information on Each Course](#courses) section below.

Grading for these multi-stage projects is easiest outside of Blackboard. When working with a reader, create clear Google Docs spreadsheets to use throughout the course and share them with the team. Blackboard's tools are neither well-designed nor are they well-suited for this kind of grading. Some tools (like the Needs Grading tool in the Grade Center) are notable exceptions worth using for individual submissions. Using Google Docs allows for the grader to have two windows open and quickly move between them without reloading pages, but as always with an online course, initial setup and structure is worth thinking about beforehand to avoid confusion later in the semester.

I required that all final submissions go through Turnitin, directly through Blackboard submission links. If you submit drafts through this tool, then final products will report high degrees of copying (drawn from the draft). Students don't always look to their Turnitin pages for comments right away, but the interface is far stronger to use than other online tools.

### Quizzes

As noted in the syllabus for each course, students get three attempts at quizzes. The quizzes are open book, primarily because there is no way to ensure that the book is closed. Requiring the use of testing centers makes it difficult for students working from distance to enroll. Timers set for each quiz attempt, and rotating questions, render it necessary for students to read and take notes before the quiz, which is the aim, right?

The three attempts are not for improving low grades. Some students will try to do so, but I always make it clear in announcements and other course materials that taking a test a third time for the sake of grades will not be an excuse enabling a fourth attempt if there is a technology problem. Taking it three times because of a recurring issue (or documentable terrible luck) could be. To attempt an enforcement of this policy, I have chosen to delay the release of grades until after the deadline passes. Similarly, students can only see a subset of answers, an effort that I hope preserves these quizzes from the types of online resources that sell quiz results. Also to that end, deliver quizzes one question at a time when publishing them and setting the deadlines.

After the deadline passes, you will need to go through and give unsubmitted quizzes a grade of zero. Otherwise, they will be averaged into the student's grade.

I generally announced upcoming quiz deadlines two or three days early, though this is something that you could automate by creating announcements at the beginning of the semester and delaying them through Blackboard.

### Discussions and Blogs

I have found keeping a spreadsheet to be a far more time-effective way to grade discussion posts and blogs when compared to the built-in methodologies that Blackboard offers. As above, it is quicker to open the entire thread in one page and scroll while switching between the web browser and a spreadsheet than it is to reload individual pages as is required by the Needs Grading tool.

As you will see in the directions, I set pairs of deadlines for each discussion and blog assignment. The first is for an initial post and is usually on a Friday evening. The second is for comments and is usually on a Monday evening. This prevents the situation where a student logs in early to complete the work and has no (or few) other posts available to comment on. It has worked well and I have had no complaints from students about logging in twice. It also spreads the discussion around via comments on more different posts.

### Musical Event Reports

World music and music appreciation makes use of a "musical event report." In an attempt to get away from the standard "concert report," these musical event reports take a more broad view of what counts. First, for at least one of them, a student must be actively involved in a way other than listening. As stated in the directions, this can be almost anything from singing to helping set up and tear down the event. I am drawing from Christopher Small's "musicking" here. For the other, students have the option to attend and describe a concert, but the directions require a more ethnographic description than the standard. In part, this is because I developed these reports for the world music class, but this type of ethnography-ish report is also useful for music appreciation students who have little or no experience with the classical music community.

* Musical Event Report Directions [RTF](Assignments/MusicalEvents.rtf)

## Honors Students

### About the Project

The E-Series courses have generally been offered as Honors-Augmented, meaning students from the Honors program can take them for credit, provided they complete a reasonable project or otherwise earn the credit. I have chosen to require an ethnographic fieldwork project that has them go out into their community and study a way in which people engage musical activity. This may overlap with other projects in the course, but any relationship must be articulated in the early-semester proposal along with how this research design differs to the point where it is independent of the similar group work.

If an Honors student is enrolled in the regular (non-Honors-Augmented) section, she does not need to complete the assignment, but will not receive Honors credit. Similarly, if a student enrolled in the Honors section does not complete the assignment or does not do so satisfactorily (I put a cutoff at a grade of 70%), you can contact the Honors program directly to have them switch her into the regular section near the end of the semester.

### Stages

The project is divided into three main segments: the proposal, the draft, and the final paper. First, however, students need an introduction to fieldwork methods. I generally have done this as a one-hour live session. You can get a room in the Honors building, a place that most of the students know well, and schedule it via email (or just post a few options). The live meeting session allows for the instructor to give feedback on ideas that are especially broad, problematic, or narrow. This is also a good opportunity for a graduate reader to create and teach a session on ethnographic methodologies, heavily distilled.

My slides from the video that is currently posted in IFS2072 are below. This video can also be used for IFS2073. I provide examples from past students on Blackboard. Relevant materials, taken from the popular music course but largely identical to those in the world music class are here:

* Honors project directions [PDF](Honors/Honors-Directions.pdf) | [DOCX](Honors/Honors-Directions.docx)
* Honors project rubric [PDF](Honors/Honors-Rubric.pdf) | [DOCX](Honors/Honors-Rubric.docx)
* Video Slides [PDF](Honors/HonorsSlides.pdf)

## Specific Information on Each Course

These courses are largely structures to work similarly, but the project-based components are quite different. For most assignments--including introductory ones, group discussions, blog posts, musical event reports, and others--directions are clearly outlined within the Blackboard interface. I will include links, however, here for the major projects. These documents are meant for students to download and keep available. Smaller assignments are described in Blackboard itself. Examples for all major projects are also posted to Blackboard.

I provide a written extra credit opportunity for the two E-Series courses. It is primarily a listening assignment that requires students to reflect back on the concepts they learned throughout the semester. This is described on Blackboard for each course, but here are the directions for the popular music version. The world music version is largely identical, but draws from past Grammy nominees from the world music category (or something else as approved).

* IFS2073 Extra Credit [RTF](Assignments/EC.rtf)

### Popular Music

The popular music course is divided into four major units. Each has its own project. The projects build from mostly individual work to mostly collaborative work, which allows the students to get used to working together over the course of the semester. This does not prevent all group issues from arising, but does alleviate most.

The last project (hip hop culture) involves creating a hip hop music video from scratch. This one may need some guidance and there is a wide range of quality. Usually three or four are outstanding while many others are pretty solid. I provide a YouTube playlist of examples on Blackboard. Using a tool like KeepVid, you may want to update that playlist as great projects come and go each semester.

* Unit 1 Project: Blues and Tin Pan Alley Directions [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/1-Directions.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/1-Directions.docx)
* Unit 1 Project: Blues and Tin Pan Alley Rubric [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/1-Rubric.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/1-Rubric.docx)
* Unit 2 Project: Music and Race Essay Directions [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/2-Directions.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/2-Directions.docx)
* Unit 2 Project: Music and Race Essay Rubric [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/2-Rubric.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/2-Rubric.docx)
* Unit 3 Project: Social Movements Directions [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/3-Directions.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/3-Directions.docx)
* Unit 3 Project: Social Movements Rubric [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/3-Rubric.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/3-Rubric.docx)
* Unit 4 Project: Hip Hop Culture Directions [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/4-Directions.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/4-Directions.docx)
* Unit 4 Project: Hip Hop Culture Rubric [PDF](Assignments/IFS2072/4-Rubric.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2072/4-Rubric.docx)

### World Music

Unlike the popular music course, the world music one operates through one major project that is split into segments. This is also a video project, but revolves around local ethnography. Groups submit a proposal and other materials through the semester as they work toward their final video submission.

If groups who are working from distance struggle to think of a feasible project, you may want to suggest something comparative: different settings of the same type of activity. Or they can split their roles and responsibilities in a way that does not require them to be in the same space: one person does all of the video work, for example. It will be up to them and, on occasion, the extra organization required for a project from distance may contribute to a stronger final product.

* Ethnographic Video Project Directions and Rubric [PDF](Assignments/IFS2073/Video-Directions.pdf) | [DOCX](Assignments/IFS2073/Video-Directions.docx)

Information on other course requirements are posted directly in Blackboard. See [Musical Event Reports](#musical-events) for a description of that assignment type.

### Music Appreciation

Unlike the E-Series courses, MUH2010 does not revolve around major group projects. Because it does not satisfy those requirements, I try to keep the assignments more simple. Writing is still important, but understanding and working with the main concepts is far more so. Therefore, this course operates on quizzes and blog posts. The blogs are largely identical to what a discussion board posting would do, but the interface is more straightforward and easier to scroll through for reading and grading. Many of these are creative in nature, forcing students to listen and think about sound as narrative, in contemporary contexts, etc. Directions for each are on Blackboard.

The blogs operate on a similar two-part deadline as the discussion posts above. Initial posts are due by a certain deadline and two comments are due a few days later. I generally build an informal rubric based on the directions where each element of the initial post is worth 1-2 points, adding up to 6 or 8. Each comment is then worth 1 or 2 to add up to 10 total. Comments, as stated in the directions, must be substantive to get full credit. Students generally do well, unless they simply do not make their comments or miss deadlines. Thus is the nature of responsibility within an online course.

For a short description of the musical event reports, see [Musical Event Reports](#musical-events) above.

## Editing this Documentation

Perhaps it is because I am a nerd, but I find Markdown to be far simpler than struggling against Microsoft Word when creating documents of this sort. Because this document is particularly long, I also wanted to enable links and a menu, things that Word does not do very well. For that reason, I wrote these pages in Markdown and structured a small web page around them. You can access the page through the index.html file. I wrote a JavaScript function that the page calls which retrieves the Markdown file, converts it into HTML (using marked), builds a navigation menu from it, and links the sections of the document together. In my opinion, this is far more "user friendly" than a very long Word document, but you may not agree. For that reason, here are some guidelines for updating this document and, of course, for simply turning it into a Word file and leaving it all behind.

### Getting the Website Version to Work

At the outset, I am posting these materials as a website through my own GitHub account. I will leave this up for at least a year, in case you prefer referring to it there. If you want to move this documentation to your own computer, follow these steps:

1. Download the [ZIP file of these materials](Handbooks.zip).
2. You can unzip the documents from this folder and access the individual PDF, DOCX, and RTF files that way. If you want to use the website version of this documentation, however, you will likely need to set up a local server. This is easy to do from the command line using Python, which is pre-installed on Apple computers. Use the terminal to navigate to the handbooks folder and enter python -m SimpleHTTP 8000. You can find the Terminal on OSX using Command+Space to bring up a search bar and typing in... terminal. Other systems have similar command line programs. Then open a web browser and go to localhost:8000. I have streamlined this process using a small bash script (it navigates, opens a browser window to the correct page, and runs the server) that I leave on my desktop. I would be happy to share that with you if you are interested.
3. To post these documents online, perhaps for ease of use or so that you can share them with your teaching assistants, you will need a hosting service. FSU offers free space through their IT department. You can find information (as of now) at [their web site](http://its.fsu.edu/Web-Services/Web-Sites-for-Individuals). Once that is running, you should be able to follow their directions to mount the drive from your computer. Then just copy the folder into the page and navigate your browser to the index.html file.

### Editing the Instructor Handbook

Markdown is an intentionally simple plain text editing format. To create a header, you put "hashtags" (pound signs?) in front of your text. The more you use, the smaller the sub-heading. To create a bulleted list, you just put an asterisk in front of each line. You should be able to pick up the pattern by editing this document, but if you want more complete instructions on using Markdown (I recommend learning it if you are not already familiar), try a Google search or a site [like this one](https://github.com/adam-p/markdown-here/wiki/Markdown-Cheatsheet).

I use [GitHub's Atom plain text editor](https://atom.io) to create and edit this type of file. It has a built-in markdown previewer. You can use whatever you would like, however. Google Chrome has extensions that read Markdown files that is useful for previewing your content as well. [Markdown Preview Plus](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/markdown-preview-plus/febilkbfcbhebfnokafefeacimjdckgl) allows for "GitHub flavored" rendering.

By editing the file InstructorHandbook.md, the index.html file and its associated JavaScript files will auto-magically render your new content and create an appropriate menu bar. I wrote the page to work on a regular computer, but you could modify it to read more effectively on mobile by using some of the features of Bootstrap and jQuery, both of which are already attached to this site.

**One important note:** the script generates links from first- and second-level subheadings. This means that you need to use the first-level subheading for sections (two hashtags: ##) and second-level ones (three hashtags: ###) to ensure links show up. I use the top level heading (one hashtag: #) for the page title only and four hashtags (####) to give me some more subsections that do not deserve dedicated links. Just copy the pattern within the file as it currently exists.

### Creating a Microsoft Word Document

If you prefer to just work within a Word document, I provide that in these files here [MS Word, DOCX Version](InstructorHandbook.docx). If, however, you are like me and dislike Word, and want to continue life in Markdown, but need an edited Word version to share, it is shockingly easy to make the conversion.

You need a program called Pandoc. It runs from the command line. If you have a Windows computer, your directions may differ from these. See [Install Pandoc](http://pandoc.org/installing.html). To get it, open the Terminal (Command+Space should bring up a search, just type in Terminal).

If you have an installer program (like homebrew), it is very easy: just type:

brew install pandoc

If you don't have homebrew installed, you can get it by copying this into the terminal window:

/usr/bin/ruby -e "$(curl -fsSL https://raw.githubusercontent.com/Homebrew/install/master/install)"  
brew install pandoc

The beauty of Pandoc is that, to convert your Markdown file to a DOCX, all you need to do is navigate to your folder and type one command. Here is an example, just copy and paste it while changing the relevant items. The first line navigates, so change that to reflect where you put the Handbooks folder. The second line does the conversion. You can choose the new file name (InstructorHandbook.docx here), but leave the rest alone. And suddenly you have a nicely formatted Word file.

cd /Volumes/MacintoshHD/Teaching/Handbooks  
pandoc -o InstructorHandbook.docx -f markdown -t docx InstructorHandbook.md

## Important Contacts

Teaching these courses situates you between a handful of departments. The people and departments below have proven to be invaluable in negotiating some of the complexities borne of the position.

* The Office of Distance Learning runs online courses. Their site is useful, but the people who work there are more so.
* John Crow ([jlcrow@campus.fsu.edu](mailto:jlcrow@campus.fsu.edu)) is the main project manager at ODL for these classes. He is familiar with them and can help to navigate any administrative difficulties arising from auxiliary budgets and whatnot.
* Michelle Pohto ([mmpohto@fsu.edu](mailto:mmpohto@fsu.edu)) can assist with similar financial questions arising from the College of Music side of things.
* Christopher Witulski (me!, [chris.witulski@gmail.com](mailto:chris.witulski@gmail.com)) developed the courses and is happy to provide any answers, insight, or advice as you move through teaching them.
* Colin Creasy ([ccreasy@campus.fsu.edu](mailto:ccreasy@campus.fsu.edu)) directs the media team at ODL. He has resources to assist in the creation of new video content. If and when you decide to build new lessons, he can help to make them look professional and give guidance on how to ensure student engagement.

## Teaching Assistant Handbook

### So, I’m a reader for online classes…

Welcome to the new semester. This will give you some direction as to what you can expect for your workload and schedule. Your main responsibilities will include some combination of:

* Reading and grading discussion boards and/or blog entries and comments,
* Reading and commenting on project drafts,
* Reading and grading project submissions,
* Reading and grading other essay submissions.

### Expectations

My expectations for students of online courses align closely with those I have for graders. These courses are tricky in that it feels as if you have infinite time to complete assignments, but success is really measured by your ability to manage your workload.

I expect you to grade assignments quickly when they are due. It is incredibly important for students in online classes to feel like they are getting the attention of instructors and graders. Otherwise these can feel like robo-classes. Assignments are usually due at the conclusion of units and in some classes this is only a few times each semester. That said, a big pile of work can appear suddenly once those deadlines hit. I expect you to plan ahead so you can attack that pile when it comes. Deadlines are posted in the calendar, so you should be aware.

I expect you to keep track of your hours spent on this work. Your assistantship exists to support your education. It should not get in the way! You don’t get paid enough to work “overtime.” You should never go over your allotted hours, but recognize that some weeks will be very full while others may be nearly empty. Plan accordingly.

I expect you to maintain contact and respond to emails within 24 hours during the week. I do this for the students, but I do not expect that you stay tethered to your phone or computer at all times.

I expect that you run any student concerns or other issues through me. Your role in these classes does not require you to engage students directly in any way other than commenting on their work. If you have any questions or suspect anything like plagiarism in your charges’ work, point it out to me, give me some details, and let me deal with the student. This is to protect you from any fallout or administrative concerns that may arise.

I expect you to be respectful and helpful when commenting on student writing. Comments and responses to student work should be constructive and supportive. If you have real concerns with a student’s work and feel that you cannot respond to it in a constructive way, or you feel that it is, in turn, derogatory or otherwise unacceptable, point it out to me and let me deal with it instead.

I expect you to point out any potential instances of plagiarism, bullying, inappropriate responses, or other concerns on the part of students directly to me. As above, you do not need to deal with these issues when they come up, but you will need to bring them to my attention quickly so I can speak with the student and remove any questionable content from the course site.

I expect you to have your technology in order so that you can access the course’s Blackboard interface and complete your work within it. If your computer is struggling, you are free to use the one in the online graduate TA office in Kellogg 314.

If you have any questions about these expectations, let me know.

### About These Classes

E-Series courses are generally group project based, by design. This has to do with requirements for the new liberal studies regimes. MUL2010 and other non-E-Series courses focus on individual assignments.

Individual assignments range throughout the different online courses. Some require multi-step group work while others are individual essays. Grading rubrics for the different assignments are posted in Blackboard along with the directions.

### Getting Started

These courses are set up to allow for students who join at the very end of add/drop to participate right away. That means that there are no substantive reading or writing assignments in the first few weeks of classes (as we wait for people to get their textbooks). There are lectures to watch and musical examples to listen to, but you will not need to grade until the third or fourth week of the semester. Use that time to get your own world in order, but also take a few minutes to look over the Blackboard site, read the syllabus, note the deadlines, determine ways to ensure that you will be able to grade quickly after due dates, and get your own copy of the text if you do not have one already.

I do not expect you to watch all of the lecture videos, just as I would not expect you to attend every period of a live class, but you should do enough to get an idea of how the instruction works. If you cannot access the Blackboard page, let me know so that I can make sure that you are an active user.

If you notice any broken links on your exploration or other technical problems, please bring them to my attention. As different services update and move around, little issues are always popping up.

### Types of Assignments

**Discussions and blog posts:** For these assignments, students are required to post a substantive response to a prompt within a given word count. They have a few days after the initial post due date to make substantive comments on two peers’ posts. Their score is a result of all three submissions and you can grade them together. The easiest way to do this is using the “Needs Grading” tool within Blackboard’s Grade Center. This allows you to filter groups (if applicable) and by assignment. You can then work right down your list of students.

**Musical Event Reports:** These work a bit differently than you may expect as students are required to participate in some way (beyond listening) for at least one of the two. Read the assignment directions on Blackboard to familiarize yourself with the requirements. You will grade and comment on these through Turnitin’s tools or SafeAssign. For the second set, due near the end of the semester, you will need to ensure that at least one of the two submissions were participatory. If you are grading a submission that is focused on listening, check the student’s previous one to confirm that it fulfilled the requirement. If a student fails to submit at least one that involved participation in a way other than as a listener, notify me and I will work it out with the student.

**Major projects:** The ethnographic video project in IFS2073 is a semester-long endeavor. IFS2072 features a number of shorter unit projects. Each of these require multiple steps and, in some cases, multiple stages of submission, revision, peer review, etc. Groups members will be defining their own roles, submitting group and individual responses to different prompts, and otherwise working independently and together. Even though this is the nature of the E-Series program, some students will complain about its application to an online setting. If any come to you, forward them to me (though this is rare).

You will be responsible for a set of groups that may or may not rotate. On occasion, and especially after due dates, take a quick browse through the group discussion to ensure that no “funny business” went down. If there are major complaints about group members who are not participating, or if it seems that one or two people are doing all the work, bring it to my attention. You do not need to do a thorough accounting of the division of labor. This is the responsibility of the groups themselves and there are ways in which group participation issues percolate into the course grades already. Any glaring problems, though, you should bring to my attention.

Contact your instructor about how to get enrolled in the class, started with the semester, and if you have any questions!