What Constitutes Core in the Conservatory Curriculum?

AMS Minneapolis-Virtual November 2020

SPEAKERS

Erica J. Scheinberg, , Sara Haefeli, Melanie Lowe, Andrew F. Dell'Antonio

Erica J. Scheinberg 00:00

Hi, everyone, welcome to our Roundtable, "What constitutes core in the conservatory curriculum?" Our discussion today will explore the question of what it means to position a course as core. And we'll also ask what might or should be positioned as core, and why. None of us today is going to offer concrete, one size fits all answers to any questions that we're posing. But I think I can speak for all of us and say that we see the value in posing these questions about core courses, and in thinking through these questions together. This session is being recorded. And for those of you who might be watching a video of this roundtable discussion in the future, I just want to say we're live right now at 5pm Central time, on Saturday, November 7, Biden was just declared the winner of the US presidential election this morning. And so I know that we're a little bit... some of us are a little distracted. And, you know, we're trying to focus here. So I have a general plan for how we're going to spend this time together. I'm going to pose broad questions for the panelists to respond to, and I'm going to post these questions also directly into the chat. I think it would be useful... you know, for all of us, we're going to take turns speaking, we're going to try to keep our comments brief, so that there is a lot of time for us to read comments that are posted and to respond to questions. Please use the Pathable chat, even if you're viewing this webinar on zoom, I know that's an option. And it would be ideal to use the Pathable chat just so that all attendees can see all the comments and questions -- if you post to the zoom chat, only the panelists will see them. And I think what we're going to do is pause periodically to actually give everyone a chance to read all of the comments and the questions in the chat. I'll read the comments aloud. And at that point, we'll also respond to questions that are put into the chat that are related to whatever we've been discussing. This webinar, unfortunately, is not set up to allow attendees to speak, it would have been ideal for this to be a meeting and not a webinar. Because I know there's a lot of people who are attending this meeting who have been thinking about a lot of the issues that we're going to be talking about today very deeply, have implemented a lot of curricular changes in their own departments. So I really want to hear from you if you're out there, and you're willing to share your own experiences and ideas. And we're going to try to make a lot of

room for hearing from people in the chat. Okay, so the four of us have uploaded short videos, which tell you a bit about us and what the core courses that our respective institutions look like at this moment. I'm now going to ask each panelist to introduce themselves briefly and give us a short summary of their video. Sara, you want to go first?

Sara Haefeli 03:06
Sure. So I'm Sara Haefeli. I teach at Ithaca College. And my video is about teaching what I call a signature pedagogy that really gives students the idea of the habits of mind and the disciplinary methods of musicological thinking. It's not based so much on the content of the courses. But I didn't tell you what the curriculum looks like. So we currently have three semesters of a music history survey from ancient Greece to yesterday. And we are changing to two semesters that are based on the contexts where music making takes place, we're calling those institutions of music. And the third semester is going to be a deep dive writing intensive, research intensive seminar. So that will constitute our new core.

Erica J. Scheinberg 04:08
Melanie, do you want to go next? I'm sorry, I couldn't hear...

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 04:11
It's not a Zoom meeting until somebody's muted!

Melanie Lowe 04:17
Hi, I'm Melanie Lowe. I teach at Vanderbilt University. I've been here for I can't believe it 22 years now. So I've seen our core go through many changes and iterations over the two plus decades. I won't take you through too much detail in what we have in our core because the description from JMHP 2015 is still pretty accurate. And I have a feeling a lot of people are familiar with that. So I'll mention just a couple of changes that have happened since that article came out kind of explaining how things work. One of the biggest changes that has happened since that piece came out is we've switched global and Western as we call them as our shorthand. So music as global cultures is our first course. And then it is followed by music in Western culture, rather than the other way around. The third course is still 20th and 21st century. And the last course is still a flexible course that the students choose from a menu of course offerings. One of the things that I talked about in my video was that probably the biggest change, I think, to our concept of a core is that the flexible course offerings have expanded to include what we're not really introduced in the proposal in our curriculum, as we planned this 12 years ago. When we got the proposal passed, in the proposal was language that said, that fourth course, this flexible course would be a seminar in common practice period

canonical music. And that was a way of, honestly, kind of making everybody happy that we're still going to teach our Bach and Beethoven and Brahms. And don't worry, we're not voting those guys off the island. So okay, um, so and we did that. But the interesting thing is the language that was in the proposal never made it into the course catalog. I didn't have anything to do with that. But that's just how it played out. So what that allowed us to do in the future was gradually put a few other offerings into that menu. So when things on early music were put in, that wasn't common practice period. So that expectation kind of fell away. And then, just recently, one of my new courses is music and the environment. It's basically a course in sound studies and ecomusicology that got approved for the fourth core course. So all of a sudden, what used to be kind of common practice period Western art music, you know, canon stuff, those courses are still there, but the menu has a lot of other offerings as well. So I think that flexibility is ultimately what's changed in our core.

Erica J. Scheinberg 06:59
Thanks, Melanie. Andrew, you want to go next?

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 07:01
Sure. I'm Andrew Dell'Antonio. I teach at the University of Texas at Austin. I've been there about as long as Melanie has and have also seen a fair amount of curricular change. But until just a few years ago, we had a fairly standard three semester, nominally cavemen to the present, but not really because we didn't get really into the 20th as much as we could. But I don't want to get too much into the details, because you may have seen that there's a handout I went overboard. And I gave you lots and lots of details, both about the general shape of our curriculum and a couple of syllabi of what we're doing now. I guess what I will put out there right now is that, as we experiment, make mistakes, try different things, we are finding that our students are extraordinarily more engaged in a critical sense, now that we have a first year -- second semester first year course that asks the big questions and not only goes sort of topically, sort of the way that Sara was describing, but actually asks the students to think about themselves in the context of their studios, of what they want to do in the future. And this was part of the way that we framed this course, that it not only introduces students to ethnomusicology, to musicology, to various methodologies in the research of music and culture, but asks them to think about what they're going to do for the following three years, to become more rounded and more successful musicians going forward. So I'll have more to say. But we've been very pleased. It's also been complicated, because in raising some complicated questions of race, of identity, and so forth, some students are overjoyed and others are extraordinarily resistant. And so the question of how we manage change, not just from our

colleagues and ourselves, but our students, has arisen, and maybe we can talk a little bit about that later. But I'll stop there.

Erica J. Scheinberg 08:59
Thanks, Andrew. And I'm Erica Scheinberg. I've been teaching in the musicology department at Lawrence University, the Conservatory of Music since 2009. When I started teaching at Lawrence, all music majors were required to take a chronological survey of Western classical music, which used the Burkholder textbook, the Norton anthologies and the Weiss-Taruskin source readings. And then after students completed those core requirements, they would choose two or three upper level seminars which we offered on an array of topics. In 2017, we decided to replace the old survey. And I want to acknowledge that although I'm speaking today, because I submitted the abstract and the proposal, I'm really speaking on behalf of not only myself, but of my three colleagues in the Lawrence musicology department who are here as attendees I believe, Sarah Ceballos, Sonja Downing and Julie McQuinn. The four of us worked together closely to develop new core courses and we call these courses Introduction to Musicology. And we've been teaching these courses since the fall of 2018. And in the new sequence that we teach, students are reading scholarly articles on an array of music topics not at all limited to music of the Western classical canon. And students do a lot of informal writing, to generate ideas about what they're reading. And the course is really discussion based, we do almost no lecturing. So we describe the course more, the four of us describe it in our video. I've also posted a handout that includes information about the upper level seminars that we teach, and the course readings we've assigned in the courses. And also I summarize some of the concerns that were expressed to us. And some of the statements of support that were expressed to us by our conservatory colleagues, when we first proposed the new courses back in 2017. So without further ado, now that we've introduced ourselves, I think it's time for us to get started on our discussion. I think before we do that, I've noticed there's a lot of comments in the chat. So I'd like us to just take a few moments to read through the chat and maybe we'll respond to a few things. Okay, so discussion about tokenism. I think we'll probably talk about that at some point. ... Mistakes. ... Gwynn Brown is saying students sometimes experience case study courses as random and confusing. That's something we should definitely talk about. ... Okay, there's a lot of comments here. I think ... Let's get started with a couple of just general questions, and I hope we'll answer some of these and then we'll maybe come back to some of them later. Okay. So the first general question that I want to pose, I'm going to copy this into the chat, also, is, what does it mean to talk about courses as core or to position certain courses as core, and others as advanced or as elective or as non required? Sara, do you want to kick off our discussion of this topic?

Sara Haefeli 12:52

Sure. I mean, this is such a central question because core insinuates a hierarchy, insinuates what's most important, right, and we're all struggling with this question of how to decolonize our curriculum, how to broaden the diversity, the inclusiveness of it. So, we at Ithaca College have really been thinking about what is it that we want the students to be able to know and do at the end of their four years? And, and this idea of musicological thinking, just like, you know, Erica, your classes, Andrew, what you were doing, Melanie, what you were doing, what we're all trying to move toward, is more about the skills of critical inquiry, skills of media literacy. And having those basic, the core classes, really teaching those ways and those skills and especially the ability to pose a musicological question, and start to be able to find out an answer to that question, is really core for us. And then what becomes elective or non core becomes more and more content oriented, and less skill oriented, so to speak. And that way, we really try to avoid the hierarchical Western white male Canon and the rest.

Erica J. Scheinberg 13:10

So what are the things that we feel -- just to sort of dig in a little more specifically, here? What are the things that we feel like we're responsible for teaching students in core courses? And Sara, you're already talking about methodologies and kind of big questions. Anybody else want to add to that?

Melanie Lowe 14:45

I'll say just one, one kind of ... I don't know really if it's a skill, but curiosity about context. And however we can get to that point. Some of it is skills, some of it is approach, some of it is critical situations. And all of those things -- what, to me, that's the kind of umbrella that sits over all of these other things that we're doing. And when you inspire the students to become curious, then very often, they can kind of take the lead and determine what skill set they need to answer the question they are curious about. And then our job becomes making sure that they are equipped with those skills. And they're going to be individual and they're going to be unique -- to the student to the situation to the context of the music. So to me curiosity, and fostering that is sitting on top of all of it.

Erica J. Scheinberg 15:35

Yeah, I agree with that, for sure. Andrew, did you

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 15:38

Yeah, I actually I was gonna, I was going to connect up with what Melanie just said, I think curiosity is really essential. Choice making is something that I try to put in place to scaffold the

setup. And I guess one of the things that I've ended up doing over the last few years in changing my approach to survey course, is kind of doing the paradoxical thing of not looking for everybody to learn the same thing, which, you know, is certainly the way I learned through a survey, we all learn the same repertory. We took the same test on the same repertory. But I've actually eliminated all recognition tests in my semester, which my colleagues don't necessarily like me for. And I have, you may have seen in the handout, this exercise called make your own canon where students are choosing themselves out of the anthology examples -- we're still using the Norton Anthology, but they're choosing what pieces should represent the unit. And making a case; they're describing them, they're talking about the detail, making a case why those pieces are worth keeping, as it were. So part of it is also I think, to teach them that the -- not just the provisionality of the canon, which sounds fancy, but the fact that that we are always changing repertories that we're engaging with, but that there are reasons we choose, and there are ethical decisions and as well as aesthetic ones. And again, one of the things I'm grateful for is that our first semester course, our first year course, before we get into the chronology that I begin, it talks about ethics all over the place. And so the students are primed to think about ethical considerations. So I think, again, thinking about big questions of why we do what we do, right connecting to what Melanie was saying about the curiosity of why should we be doing this? Because the I told you so method -- I have, I have a 14 year old person in my household and the I told you so method doesn't work for 14 year olds or for college students. And resentment creeps in and then learning doesn't happen.

Sara Haefeli 17:36
Erica, do you mind if we go to Gwen's question right now about that?

Erica J. Scheinberg 17:40
Yeah, let's do that. Do you have it in front of you? Can you read it?

Sara Haefeli 17:45
She said that students, I'm going to paraphrase it because I don't want to try and scroll through that. She said that students often find a case study curriculum random and confusing. So what I've proposed is having some kind of frame and making that frame explicit. So whether you want to frame the cases in central questions, musicological questions, like what is notation? Or what does it mean to to be a composer? You know, these kinds of musicological questions, we've framed with contexts, you know, so music, music that serves a religious or transcendent purpose, music that happens in academies, right. Or you could even frame it with a kind of typical time period kind of frame. But making the frame explicit to the students, I think, really helps with this perception that it's somehow random. And I think just super quickly, the second

thing that helps with the randomness is making sure that everything you're doing with the students, like what Andrew was saying, is an authentic task. So were those listening exams really authentic tasks? Or were they just trying to police the students into listening to the examples? Right, I think of everything that they do is stemming out of their own inquiry, their own curiosity, as Melanie was saying, then that sense of randomness or arbitrariness falls away.

Erica J. Scheinberg 19:14
I want to offer a kind of counter to that if I can, only because the course I teach is extremely random seeming to the students, right. And of course, we did organize it in a very deliberate order. But the students don't, as much as we say to them, here's what we're doing. And as much as we're transparent, they don't always see the connections right away. And yet, there is a moment when they're making all of the connections, where they realize how free they have become, to be thinking creatively. And so actually not being tethered to a chronology or to... Even in some cases, kind of bigger picture questions, has allowed them, has empowered them to draw the connections themselves, which is kind of a funny thing. There are these moments of frustration, sometimes, where students, and I've experienced this less and less as the course has gone on and developed a reputation. And we've explained it more and more in class. But there is this alternative experience where if students just let go of an idea, that a course has a linear order, then they're much more creative in their thinking, they're much more playful with connections. And the point isn't all music is the same. And so we can draw connections between everything. It's not about universalism, it's about viewing this case study through some of the more theoretical or conceptual lenses that we've already applied to this radically different thing. De emphasizing the content and really emphasizing the bigger ideas. So that's, it's not going to work in every context. But that is something that I think is actually working for the courses that that I'm teaching.   Melanie.

Melanie Lowe 21:10
I was just gonna say really quickly, I'm really upfront about my students, with my students to say that I can't tell you what you're interested in, I can tell you what I'm interested in. I can model being interested and curious and coming up with good questions, whether they're research questions or critical interpretive questions and things like that. And so kind of, and I'll say, look, I designed this class. And if it's random to you, maybe it's because you are not living in my brain when I'm not living in your brain. So I'm just going to model for you this way of thinking and give you some tools. And then at some point, they are empowered to decide what they're interested in. And so I kind of tell them right up front, if it feels random, it's because

you're not me. And I've designed this by the questions that I think are important and interesting for me. And then you will learn some of these skills, and I'm punting. Now it's your job.

Erica J. Scheinberg 22:02
Yeah.

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 22:04
If I can really briefly jump in here and taking a quick tangent here, because I saw there were a number of questions circling around content related to the graduate, graduate study and graduate exam. And I don't necessarily I think too much time on this. But I think what everybody's saying is correct, that what we're doing in the survey at the undergraduate level, absolutely needs to be connected. If we do have graduate programs, with what we're expecting at the graduate level, this is something that we at Texas, have just -- it's taken this long, but this year, we've actually completely redesigned our graduate placement exam. It's not an admission exam. It's a placement exam, in order in order to make it actually work with the idea of flexibility, and we're all very happy about this. There's no reason why this couldn't happen elsewhere. But it's a reasonable tension. I appreciate folks asking about. I think it is absolutely essential that we change expectations, entering graduate programs, at least, maybe even graduate curriculum, but certainly entrance exams, skills exams for graduates, we can't be testing things that then we're not willing to teach at the undergraduate level.

Erica J. Scheinberg 23:14
I think this would be a good time, I personally would like to look at a couple of comments in the chat. Can we take just a minute or so to look here, and then we'll move on. One sense that I'm getting is that people are, you know, as we know, teaching in a lot of different types of institutions. And some people are teaching really big classes, some people are teaching performance majors, some people are teaching in a BA music program. So again, I just want to emphasize, I think we all acknowledge that there's not a one size fits all approach. Maybe part of the problem that we're trying to address here is that historically, those core courses have been taught and kind of similar ways across the board regardless of the goals of, you know, students in a given degree program. Sam Dorf says "I'd love to hear how everyone frames and shapes their core music curriculum based on the mission of their institution."

Sara Haefeli 24:34
I could speak to that. Do you want to talk about that for a little bit?

Erica J. Scheinberg 24:37

Sure.

Sara Haefeli 24:40

Our School of Music mission is to transform the human condition through the art and practice of music. And so we've been, you know, we've really taken that to heart -- What does it mean to transform the human condition? And for me, it meant not only changing the curriculum of the class, but changing the assessment practices as well. So my course is now designed by the principles of Universal Design so that students don't need any accommodations. Such as, you know, extra time for tests or extra time for assignments, because the courses already designed so that students can be working from areas of strength. They work collaboratively and collectively, they are not assessed in in any kind of outside arbitrary way. And that has been really transformational. And, and I think the collaborative work methods in the class have mirrored what we do as musicians, collectively and collaboratively as we're working as musicians in the world.

Erica J. Scheinberg 25:51

Yeah, Melanie?

Melanie Lowe 25:52

Yeah, we're in a kind of unique situation, because we just got a new dean. And with a new dean comes a new vision and a new mission statement. And we are in the process of kind of coming to terms with what our future will look like. It will in many ways be different from our past. And then it's kind of an interesting moment, because when you couple that with sort of new macro historical thinking and decolonization, educational initiatives, social justice education, what I think of active conscious anti-racism, all of these things that are going around in the kind of broader University, and academic culture, and the world. And then a new dean comes in with a new mission, that seems to be taking up even more strenuously issues of diversity and inclusion. And those kinds of bigger issues that we in musicology, I think, have been trying to pull some of our curricular choices and offerings towards. So I don't know, other than I do also think our curriculum now that it's 12 years old is kind of dated. And I see that we're at a kind of unique opportunity that perhaps the new mission and vision of our School of Music might be the launch pad to kind of reinvent or reinvigorate our curricular design. So I don't know, but it's obviously crucial.

Erica J. Scheinberg 27:18

I want to -- oh, Andrew were you going to say?

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 27:21

Really briefly, we're doing something similar at Texas. And we are also in a moment where anti racism is very, very important. And also in a moment where existing tensions about curriculum and what is important and what is canonic, being in a large conservatory style School of Music, have been tricky for a very long time. And the students are helping drive the conversation right now, which is wonderful. And so I think we are also poised to make something of a change. I, by the way, Melanie, I'm delighted that you have a new dean, because he used to be my colleague. So it's wonderful to see how things go around.

Erica J. Scheinberg 28:01

I want to -- if we can switch gears a little bit here. And there are so many wonderful comments and questions in the chat, I have to be honest, and say I'm really trying to keep up with them. And I'm finding it very challenging. But I want to draw attention to a comment by Edgardo Salinas. That's high up in the chat. But I just thought, who writes in my experience, it's very hard for students to make sense of isolated case studies, without a general historical framework that first allows them to place and connect case studies in their imaginary temporal grid, the very concept of history and context often eludes them. This is taking us back a little bit to this question about case studies, perhaps, free floating case studies versus, you know, a sort of framework. But it also takes us into a direction where I hope we can talk more explicitly about the way that in fact, the western classical canon has been centered in so many core courses, by default, in many cases, and so I want to pose a question that I hope will get at these issues. How might students approach and understand the music of the European classical tradition if we taught the composers and works of the classical canon in courses that were not positioned as core, but were positioned as other types of musicology courses? So I'm posting this also in the chat here? Andrew, do you want to...

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 29:38

Sure. And I would say, we have not yet done this. And we may be a ways from doing this. But I think one of the things that HAS been very important to me and I know in my colleagues as well, is finding ways... so also speaking to the question of chronology, right. Students, in fact, are often very hungry for chronology but that's also because they've been taught that history is something that ... and it's more than just that. And many of our colleagues in other disciplines have long abandoned the notion of students needing to have a whole chronology before being able to go deeply into particular situations. And so it's true, it's a trade-off. But our students do come in with relatively little historical knowledge, world historical knowledge, these students who come work with me, but in a way, they also come in very curious about all that is out there. And I think what again, what's worked well for us is we have this first freshman level,

first year course, and we are very careful not to talk about canonic individuals this first year, and we present a lot of possible case studies. I mean, I don't think we do it quite the same way, maybe not quite as elegantly as Sara does. But we bring them things to think about and work with that are not in any way centered in chronology. And right away, the course is not chronological. And so the students are overwhelmed, of course, because it's an overwhelming course, but there's not any pretense of chronology. And they're not troubled by this. And in a way, actually, I'm finding myself as I move into the chronology course, as I, starting this year, I've started actually putting the Western chronology in second place and having the initial assignment before each session, being something that is not, in fact, canonic or chronological or "great-composer-ly" . And then, oh, by the way, also take a look at the anthology. And that has worked to decenter things rather well. And it's also created this idea of -- Wait a second, what is "the story"? And I can at that point, say, there is no "the story." There is no "the chronology," there are many different ways of thinking about time. And one of the things that even I am learning things about -- for example, we just had a session where we talked a bit about Native American traditions. And the idea that time, linear time and time that is demarcated a certain way, is in fact a very European thing in its own way, or at least, it is not a universal thing. And once you start thinking about tradition being something that's actually cyclical, as opposed to linear, then again, some of the students are Mind blown, and others are, seem to really be opened up to the possibility that they might be able to choose a bit more how to structure their own stories. And that's been my goal. Now, the tricky thing there, of course, is that if you give them responsibility to structure their own stories, do they have the tools to do that? Initially? No, of course not. None of us did. None of us do now. But until you give them the opportunity, and the chance to experiment and try and see what happens when you try to create a story that isn't "The Story," then they'll be stuck in the story that we were handed that we now realize was insufficient for us, I think.

Erica J. Scheinberg 32:53
Sara?

Sara Haefeli 32:54
There's a fantastic episode in that podcast Weird Studies that Phil Ford hosts, on Nietzche's essay on the uses and misuses of history. And Nietzche distinguishes between three types of history. One is what he calls the monumental, which is a kind of a great man history, great man and monuments and music or monuments of you know, our historical moments, you know, the wars and heroes kind of history. The second is a critical history. So the people who have been left out or harmed by that monumental history, have the need to critique it and they should. And then the third is this kind of what I call like the hoarder history, like the antiquarian. We're

just going to save everything and look at everything. And I think the early music movement is a lot like that, right? You know, we're going to ... playing it this way is valuable, just because it was historical, right? I think teaching students those three different approaches really helps frame how the lens that we're looking at when we talk about core or core canon. Yes, I think it's important to study canon Masterworks, and let's look at it in a monumental way. And then let's take a critical approach and look at that same thing from a critical lens. So whether that's happening in our core courses, or outside the core courses in elective courses, I think making those lenses explicit is very helpful.

Erica J. Scheinberg 34:26
It may be something that we can discuss, though, this this question that you brought up right at the end of whether or not it is actually important if the Canon is positioned as the core thing that students are supposed to learn before they go on to do anything else, versus the Canon being something that is worthwhile studying, maybe not for all students. Maybe not all students need to study the Canon before they can go do anything else. How might core courses that focus on Classical music function as kind of gatekeeping courses, you know, who do our core courses and power or exclude if they're, if they are focused on the Canon, no matter how we're critiquing or deconstructing these ideologies and narratives, Melanie?

Melanie Lowe 35:19
Yeah, I thought I'd just speak to that with a really quick anecdote. I'm teaching a course called the string quartet. And I'll be really honest. And I offered that to the string department when we launched our curriculum as kind of a peace offering. As our -- This is the central plank in our compromise. I will teach a string quartet class, and it will be like, right down the middle heart of the Canon. Here's the interesting thing. 12 years later, I'm still teaching this course every other year or so, and this year, I have no string players in the course, I have a singer, I have a trumpet player, I have a pianist and two saxophone majors. And just last week, they played a transcription of Dvorak's American quartet for us. First time I've heard live music since February, in our hall, 10 feet apart in masks. And it ... so it ended up like the second half of my class became this discussion of what does the string quartet mean, in 2020, in the current cultural context, with these instruments with the COVID, the whole thing just kind of turned into something that I totally did not expect. And it was largely student driven. They just came and said, Can we play this music? And I said, Sure, let's do it. And all that to say it kind of -- something that right might seem right down the middle of what would constitute core, all of a sudden, still is core, but not the way I think any of us expected to define it.

Erica J. Scheinberg 36:46

Well, and is that class, part of your core sequence? Or it's...

Melanie Lowe 36:50
It is, it's the flexible course, anybody can take it and it counts for... you know, normally it's a lot of string players, but today, just saxophonists.

Erica J. Scheinberg 37:00
Yeah, well, that's sort of different that's sort of, sorry, similar to the situation... You know, I taught a 19th century "Sounds and Spaces of the Public Concert in Europe" course, last winter, just before everything shut down, feels like forever ago. And that was a course that was focused on, you know, common practice repertoire, although we were looking at it through the kinds of lenses that we were using when we looked at stuff in our current core courses. So we were thinking about audiences and listening and people and power and ideologies. And you know, all these other questions. It wasn't just about composers and works. But the students were approaching it so differently, because they had opted into it, because it was a chosen course, even if they opted in only because it fit in their schedule. And also, because it wasn't positioned as the required course that you must take before you can take jazz history, or before you can take a popular music course. So I guess that's, that's part of the question there. And it seems like in a string quartet course, also, the mindset is totally different. If you go in because you recognize that you're choosing to take an elective versus you must know all string quartets or, you know, you must know this repertoire before you're entitled to go explore other stuff that you might be more interested in, which is, I think, part of this issue of what is positioned as core as opposed to how we teach our core courses. So it's kind of two different issues. You know what, I'm seeing...

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 38:47
Can I, Erica, can I jump in here. There was a ... there's, again, there's so many great things here and I hope there's hope it'll be legitimate in some way to capture folks' comments for us to all process down the road. And, and we'll see what the logistics of that might be. But I wanted to -- I think Douglass Seaton raised this question, and several people sort of connected to it, about core as a concept being the real problem. . And I think that's a great point. And let me give you my thought about that.

Erica J. Scheinberg 39:20
Actually can I find that comment so I can read it? Because I saw it myself. And I was thinking we should go to it. Okay, so Douglass Seaton writes, "Should we say directly that what we want to do is subvert core as a thing in the first place. We can change the types of courses, the

content / skills, and the pedagogy -- but at what point is "core" as a concept the real problem, what we really want is for the powers that be and our colleagues to leave us alone to float freely, respond nimbly to new issues and ideas, etc. Is that even possible? Okay, Andrew,

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 39:54
So, thank you. So that's super well phrased. So on the one hand, we were talking about questions of choice. Right? Erica was talking about choice; students choose a course. And if you choose the thing, I mean, this is all of us. If you choose it, then it's -- you're not going to be resentful of it. And the idea that a student has to take a course, of course, there are a lot of fields that do this. But there's no reason why we have to do this, because the students are going to resent having to learn, we have to work against the student's wishes to do something else. However, I do think it's a relevant question -- it's more complicated, but it's a different way of thinking. I think it's a legitimate thing to think about skill sets, right. And Sara has talked about this, you know, it's sort of like playing the violin. Absolutely, there are a lot of different ways that you can play the violin and a lot of different techniques you can develop. And there may not even be one set of techniques that everybody should learn. But there should be some techniques that should be available for people to learn, they should be evolving, but we should be able to articulate what they are. And to articulate to students, you should be taking courses that are helping you learn these skills, and we are going to provide those, because in a way, if we don't do that, then we're not giving students tools. And ultimately, we do need to give students tools -- now those tools might change. And hopefully we are nimble -- and thank you Douglass for that -- we're nimble in changing what tools should be, and we don't get stuck in teaching always the same course. And I know I've been guilty of that. And so that's tricky. And somebody -- I'm sorry I forgot who -- points out that if we have contingent faculty or one faculty member teaching many courses at an institution, you may not have the bandwidth to do this. And so it is very privileged for some of us to be able to think about this. And so there may be ways for those of us who have privilege to provide resources and ideas on how somebody might do this, even if they don't have if they're overloaded and overworked. But I do think we need to think about what we're trying to accomplish. And then we may be able to accomplish it with a lot of different topics. So that's sort of the way Melanie, you folks go with your last course, right, you're accomplishing the same thing with that course, I don't know, I'll stop here.

Melanie Lowe 42:04
I'm just gonna jump in and say, for me, flexibility is really kind of the heart of the matter, because -- you can call it a core, but if it has some flexible components, whether it's a flexible course that you choose, or you can have the same course music in Western culture, Oh, my gosh, you can approach that from so many different ways. And if it's not mandated or

articulated, that it has to cover X, Y, and Z, we have different people on our faculty who approach it really, really differently. I spoke a little bit in my little video introduction about how I've been approaching lately, which is to just make contact between hot political topics now, and music from various points in Western musical history. And I can do that, because I'm not obligated to do anything in particular. So it's core, but it's flexible. So to me, you can have flexibility at different levels. And it's still a core, even if some parts are decentralized.

Sara Haefeli 42:59
Right, so what that's what I was going to say is that what is core is actually a disciplinary perspective, right? We want students to do some musicological thinking, what we want them to do some music-analytical thinking. And so ... maybe what Douglass is saying is, well, maybe we should even give up on that, right? And just let them choose. And so maybe a student goes through without taking any musicology classes at all, or music history classes. And I don't know if that's what he's suggesting. But I think all of us are moving... if we're thinking about decolonization, we're moving towards more flexible content.

Erica J. Scheinberg 43:35
Well, and I think that what we still need to kind of talk about is this question of the relationship between core and the Canon. Because that's really what core means. A lot of people have posted comments in the chat or questions in the chat asking about how we explained our new courses, our new approaches to our colleagues. And that's definitely something we should talk about, we should, I'm sure we've all had different experiences. Andrew, you address this a little bit in your video. And I can talk about our experiences at Lawrence. But you know, the assumption that we're not quite saying in a straightforward way here is that core is a repertoire course that exposes students to the chronological Canon of Western music. And I don't think that we all agree that that is what it should be. But that is oftentimes what... the assumption about what the function of that course is, that it's essentially a repertoire course and, you know, a history of musical styles, history of composers and works. And so, you know, that, I guess that's something that I want us to kind of talk about, is if we're teaching students specifically in conservatories, and schools of music, where they're coming in to perform classical music or they audition with classical music, and maybe they go on to do other things even before they graduate, but certainly after they graduate, to what extent should the classical Canon be the main thing that core courses are doing? You know, introducing the Canon, critiquing the Canon, whatever it is, how much should the Canon itself be aligned with the idea of core coordinates? Melanie?

Melanie Lowe 45:30

Yeah, I was just gonna say I'm, at least at Vanderbilt, I'm not seeing as many students coming in, maybe they audition with, you know, Bach, Beethoven, and something from the 20th century. Who knows. So they play their very traditional audition, and they get into a nice competitive performance degree program. My sense, once they get here is they're wanting something else. They do want that, but they want something else on top of that. And so I'm not saying we should just give the students you know, all the power and let them just tell us what they want to learn. But on the other hand, I think it's really crucial that we listen to what it is that they feel is important to learn, and actually acknowledge, okay, they need some things, but I can also learn from them what it is that they need to know. And when you kind of offer these courses that might seem to be kind of outside the more traditional core framework, at least my experience is those are the ones that are really filling up. And those are the ones that my violinists, my pianists that come in with the most traditional background, are thirsty for those other musical, musicological thinking.

Erica J. Scheinberg 46:46
Yeah. Anybody else? Andrew, Sara, do you have thoughts about this?

Sara Haefeli 46:52
Oh, I'm sorry, I got caught up in the chat...

Erica J. Scheinberg 46:55
I know, it's very hard to... Can we take a moment to look at the chat? Or do you want to?

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 47:01
Yeah, Let's do that.

Erica J. Scheinberg 47:02
Let's do that. I know, I feel like there's all this great conversation going on that we're missing.

Sara Haefeli 47:07
And after we do that, let's... I want to give people a moment to read. But I want to talk about this issue of writing, if we can.

Erica J. Scheinberg 47:15
Sure.

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 48:24

So if I can, if we can dive in really briefly, maybe we can sort of do a little bit of a back and forth because folks have asked about English language learners. And I'm going to take this as meaning students, for whom writing skills are not very well developed. Is that legit? A different level of experience and preparation regarding writing skills. Thank you so much, Steven. Okay. And so what I would say is, every single one of my students has a different level of preparation, language writing skills. And I gave up a while ago trying to measure them against a same standard, because, first of all, I don't know how to do that; I'm... I write okay, maybe, but I don't know how to teach writing particularly well. So again, I mentioned earlier that I draw on the writing center of my University, but I found it really helpful just to give opportunities for process. Now I'm privileged in that there are graduate students who work with me who are phenomenally helpful in helping to nudge process along, but none of us really intervene very strongly in the language ability. We just ask students to keep trying and keep writing and try again; sometimes revising, sometimes writing very short things, because as we all know, the way you learn is by doing -- you read, you write, you read, you write and eventually your skills build... one hopes, the level that you need. And I think there again, folks were saying things, Julie Cummings was one of the folks who mentioned ... Yes, writing is very intensive, takes a lot of work -- but not if you don't grade it. I mean, I hate to put it that way. But you know, whether we're doing peer review or whether we grade it as -- Yes, you did it: good. Do it again. Yes, you did it: good. Do it again. And then for larger projects, build, and then go to the writing center. And we're going to try to create something bigger. I don't know. I mean, I don't want to be flippant, but there are ways to facilitate certain kinds of work that come to bear when we talk to people who are really good at certain kinds of pedagogy in other fields. And I try to do that. But also when we give up on the idea of covering chronology, and I'm still struggling with that, right, I was trained through chronology, I taught chronologically for years, and years and years. And now, I'm still teaching chronologically, because that's all I've got. And a lot of students seem to think they need it. But this first year course that we teach is not chronological, and the students come out of it with the most amazing skill sets and knowledge. And so what we really need to do we -- haven't done yet -- is take that course, and the skills that gives and that gives us a set of skills, which then some students have gained very, very well, because they came in with the privilege, and they knew how to write already. And they had really good High School, and so forth, and some students really struggled with because they had not been taught -- whether because they're first, English second, third language or other reasons, but they've moved along. So how do we continue doing that for several semesters? And is it ... do we do it through a chronology? Or do we punt on chronology? And think about kinds of things, we want to accomplish semester two, semester three, semester four, and then sort of, as Melanie was saying, leave it up to the individual of how they're going to do that, except that there is a sort of a set of goals, of skill set goals, and

hopefully drawing on the Writing Center and others. I don't know, we haven't figured this out yet. But the first semester course is awesome. And I'm finding myself feeling stymied, because I'm not giving the students as much vibrancy in the second semester, you know, I used to be a good teacher, and I'm not anymore. Dammit.

Erica J. Scheinberg 52:17
Melanie?

Melanie Lowe 52:18
I just wanted to make a really quick comment about writing, I think it's important that we don't have a monolithic conception of what writing is, there isn't just one type of writing for one type of purpose. And I think so, you know, we were all trained, you know, midterm / final / research paper. So I think we think of writing -- Oh, they don't know how to write, they can't write the research paper, well, maybe they can't, but you know, they're writing really, really great blogs, they're writing doing great like brain dumps on Instagram, I know that that might not be what *we* think of as writing. But if you think about writing is basically to communicate in .. you know, like this, they're actually pretty good at it in certain fora, and they're not so good at it in others, but I think it's just important to empower where their writing strengths are, even if there aren't what we traditionally value as good writing. And then that can actually kind of be an ego boost, and then all of a sudden, they're loosened up. And they're not so intimidated by a more formal writing project, because we validated that they actually do know how to throw words around in other ways,

Erica J. Scheinberg 53:15
And to use writing as a way of developing ideas, you know, that that becomes the most important use of writing in my classes. And I again, I mean, yes, all of us here who have had opportunities to develop new courses are in a very, you know, certainly an extremely privileged position. On top of that, my courses are small, you know, and that's an extra privilege. So I do assign daily writing assignments, but it's all informal writing. And I read them and I give the students feedback, although I'm doing an ungrading thing this year. So it's just -- you did it or you didn't do it, which is been great. But anyway, that's a side note, writing as a way of developing ideas, gosh, I see such a difference over two terms of how students are using writing to think -- we say, think to a new place for you, think beyond what you know. And so writing can be actually a tool that empowers students so much, and gives them things to say and lets them develop their ideas. Sara?

Sara Haefeli 54:19

I was just gonna say that we often think of people who have trouble writing as having deficits and writing, but I often think that it's a deficit in thinking, and so what we're trying to do with case studies is getting people to really think clearly and effectively, critically about music. And I don't remember who it was, but they said, well, but what about even reading, right, so, one of the things that my book that I shamelessly plugged in the chat tries to lay out is explicitly describing what it means to articulate a musicological question. How do we gather sources? How do we analyze and interpret sources? How do we draw conclusions? How do we articulate what they mean? Right? So breaking down each one of those steps, instead of just assuming that students know how to write, because most of us learned how to write by just, you know, kind of being thrown into the deep end of the pool, and we read a lot, so we could do it, right. But we can't assume, especially for English language learners, that they're just going to tacitly have those skills when they come into the class. So I explicitly teach reading skills, and I explicitly teach all of those writing skills. And like Melanie, I think that writing can come in a lot of different forms. And like Andrew, I'm no longer expecting that they all can do it in the same way.

Erica J. Scheinberg 55:54
One thing I'm noticing, is this on everyone's end, or just on my end, that the chat is actually disappearing after a certain point.

Sara Haefeli 56:02
It's all of us.

Erica J. Scheinberg 56:04
That's disappointing. Okay. All right. Let's talk. I did see some questions earlier. And I'm sorry, I didn't write down who posed these questions. But let's, let's talk about this practical concern that has been raised about how to make changes, or to overhaul core courses, in a department, how you're communicating with performance faculty, with music theorists, with administrators, about your new courses; how you're communicating with them, about changes you're making, and why those changes are necessary. Melanie,

Melanie Lowe 56:52
I think, compromise; compromise and valuing what the other departments see as important. And I think that's actually been the kind of secret to our curricular success. And literally the kind of logistics of getting things passed, to actually having colleagues that respect what we do in the classroom and kind of respecting this is, you know, kind of my jurisdiction and that's yours, I'm not going to tell you how to do that. And the kind of trust that we've established

because I'm not going to sit here and try to tell them what I think their students need to learn, even though I will do some of that. I think it's a give and take. And it's the flexibility and the art of compromise. That's the only way that anything gets done. We can't take their instruments out of their hands, and we can't vote Beethoven off the island, nor should we. I think, acknowledging it, and then, you know, reframing it with all of our kind of critical or historical questions is the way to do it. Compromise.

Erica J. Scheinberg 57:51
Anyone else want to chime in?

Sara Haefeli 57:53
We had Black Lives Matter protests on our campus in 2015, we had a vote of no confidence in a president that had made some serious blunders with racial tensions. And so when we proposed a new curriculum that did away with canon, the performance faculty embraced it wholeheartedly. And this isn't, I mean, it's a conservatory, basically. We have 500 students, you know, very, very straightforward kind of conservatory-model curriculum otherwise.

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 58:27
Yeah, I'll echo that. A lot of conversations. And frankly, if -- and I think somebody had asked a question related to this, if we frame this on what do students need today, particularly some of my younger performance colleagues, who've been out who are deeply connected in the professional world, understand that there's all sorts of different skill sets that students might need today. And they even if they -- I mean, I think part of the issue has been that we know what worked for *us*. And some of our colleagues may say, Well, this is how I learned music history. And this is what music history is, and, how dare you say that it's not that. But I think some of our colleagues can see that learning certain kinds of approaches, skill sets, the ability to -- somebody was talking about, speak briefly before playing a piece, or write program notes, that is going to be a skill that is going to be much more effective than a research paper. Now, of course, you may need to learn basic research skills to be able to say things that are not totally false, you need to know that Wikipedia is awesome in some cases, and not in others, and things like that. So that kind of critical assessment of sources -- Yeah, absolutely. But then the writing, people were saying blogs; there are podcasts; and so one of the things I tried to -- somebody was asking, I think we talked about this too, students who find it hard to read, and it's true. But again, we musicologists find it hard to read our graduate students trying too hard to read some of the things that we read in a scholarly context. So Part of it is finding things that are more accessible writing. And so thank you to those of you who are writing things that are accessible to undergraduates, which is not a bad thing. You know, there are different levels.

And I think part of it is finding other things, there are so many cool, smart videos out there, right? There's so many other media that students actually find really compelling. Even if they're kind of gnarly, you know, the Early Music Sources videos, I don't know if any of you know those, some of those get into the really gnarly sort of things about tuning, and students are eating them up because they are presented in a really compelling way. So that's a thing too, right, is that -- reading, listenings, resources and of course, it's a lot of work to gather these, right. And so again, those of you who have very heavy course loads; who are, you know, who do not have the kind of privilege that I do teaching relatively lighter loads, having had 20-some years to gather this stuff, I think we need to help sharing, to share these resources, just like the four of us have been in communication. Thanks to Erica. But in general, that, you know, we've known each other we've, you know, some of the things that you see in the syllabus I've stolen... I'm sorry, Sara has given very generously, for example, some of the things that are on the syllabus that I use, and people pass things around. And it's essential to have that. The question is, how can we make that more visible to folks whom we don't yet know, right? Some of you all, we know -- some of you, we don't. And we do need to think to have more opportunity for those who do not have the resources to develop them themselves.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:01:27
I want to also give a shout out to Louis Epstein, who got in touch with all of us also, when he was overhauling his course at St. Olaf. And we all shared materials at that point, also. One thing that I experienced when we proposed our new core courses was that a lot of faculty at Lawrence, who were resistant to change, when they were communicating with us about their concerns, it became clear that they really didn't have a clear sense, necessarily of what we were already doing in our, in the old fashioned survey that we were teaching in a very old fashioned way. Because we were already, you know, critiquing the Canon and asking students to think critically, and we were already approaching it in a very different way than the way that they had experienced. And so a lot of our colleagues had in mind, the courses that they took, and I should just say, I mean, I was, you know, I was an undergrad at Berkeley. And then I was a graduate student at UCLA where there was, you know, at that time, you know, 18 years ago or so, very standard lecture courses, and I loved those lecture courses. And I got to see these amazing lectures on all these topics. And that was, you know, what I really, what, what brought me into musicology in the first place, and in fact, most of my students do not want to sit in lectures that were like the lectures... like they don't have that interest, they don't have the interest in taking notes, they want something that's more interactive. And so there's, that's one way that things have changed. I'm also teaching at a small liberal arts college after going to big public research universities, you know, myself, so that's different. But in many ways, it became clear when we started talking about our new courses that our colleagues didn't really

have a clear sense of what was happening in our old courses. And so that communication, that is a place to start, because we heard one colleague said, Is it true that you teach your courses in reverse chronological order? Like there were rumors, you know, that that actually had nothing to do with what the courses actually looked like when we changed them. So just having that communication with colleagues was a really important first step explaining to them what we were already doing, Melanie?

Melanie Lowe 1:03:58
Yeah, I was just gonna say, kind of responding to the chat over there as well. It's kind of what was on my mind. Invite them in, invite your performance colleagues into your classroom, have them come -- open door anytime you want, I might have them come in and perform. But I also have come in sometimes to talk. This little saxophone thing I was just talking about, I don't know much about saxophone transcription and arrangement of classical string quartets. But our saxophonist does. And so I pretty much just turned my class over to him for the class period that we were talking about that. So I think it's, you know, not just making people feel that you're hearing their perspective, but actually involve them literally in the conversation in your classroom, because then it builds trust, they see what you're doing, you're giving them a voice. And I think that can kind of open up things in a very positive direction.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:04:45
Yeah, there's also so many ways in which students, I will say my experience in our new course is that students are really seeing so many more connections to the work that they're doing. And Andrew had said this also, I think, so many connections between their work in their academic classes and what they're doing in the rest of their lives as conservatory students, and ideally the faculty will also see those connections, I think involving them is really important. Sara, you're saying that question -- I missed the question about contingent faculty. But this is a question about labor in terms of putting a course like this together, or is it a question about having the authority to make changes within...

Sara Haefeli 1:05:26
I think it is I … and, again, we can't scroll all the way back. This was a question that came up earlier in the session that I think it'd be worth coming back to, you know, doing all of these things. It does require, you know, like I said, in my little video, it does require work. I have to say that once I changed my class into a universal design class, that is ungraded, I will not look back. The students, you'd think, well, they're not being graded, so they're going to be less motivated. It's been absolutely the opposite, I've had far more engagement. Everybody has their camera on in the zoom classes, because we're still remote. And other faculty are just like,

how do you do that? Well, I'm not policing them, right? So ... but adjunct faculty, or contingent faculty often don't have the freedom to decide which textbook they get to use, the framework of the class. But I think we can, even in small ways, introduce these kinds of critical methods, even in kind of a textbook-oriented or lecture-oriented classroom. And even in a course that's ostensibly graded, there's ways to introduce peer review or self reflection, that becomes the majority of the grade instead of, you know, a teacher assigned grade. So I want to encourage contingent faculty or adjunct faculty to think about it from a standpoint of empowerment as well, you know, in what ways am I empowered to make changes or make decisions in my class? Where do I not have the ability to do that? And if anyone needs resources or ideas or has questions, please reach I'm sure all of us would be happy to talk with anyone.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:07:24
Anybody else want to weigh in on this question? I have another question from the chat that I wanted to return to. But yeah. I would like to have us address a question that was raised so long ago ... It is tragic that the chat is disappearing, I agree. I saw that comment go by. Somebody was raising a question, I believe, that was about expertise. And I think that's a really important thing for us to talk about. I think that's something that has come up a lot in conservatory conversations, you know, that I've participated in at my institution this past summer, when performance faculty are talking also about how they might make some changes in terms of their approaches to teaching or the repertoire that they're teaching. And there's a lot of anxiety about not having expertise to teach topics that are considered new, or kind of expanding beyond what we've always taught before. And this is a sort of different way of looking at the question about teaching new things -- not so much, are we empowered to make changes? Or do we have the time and the, you know, the bandwidth to implement changes, but also -- the question of expertise? Can we teach things... if we're expanding what we teach, that is beyond what we're already very comfortable teaching, what we already know... one way that we've talked about this already is sharing resources. But beyond that, do any of you have thoughts about this question? Andrew,

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 1:09:10
So again, starting by saying that I have the privilege of experience, of having done this for a while, and also the privilege of tenure and all the privileges -- Male, white... I actually am very keen to show the students that I'm learning with them. I foreground that a lot. So for example, recently, I've been really trying to talk a lot -- as much as I can, in this early music part of the sequence, about non European traditions. And there's not a lot out there in English that I know about. And I'm casting about and I'm offering students... and I'm telling them, two weeks ago, I knew nothing about this. Now I know this much about it. I know what you guys know, because

here are the things that we're all thinking about. And yet it's essential that we think about this, it's essential that learning happen. So I guess, if you're in a position where you feel comfortable to model incompetence, right, but maybe that's not the right word. You know -- curiosity, right? I mean, back to curiosity right there. Here's our, here's our ritornello. Right curiosity as something that that we do because we care. And then, of course, we don't know, until we know. And that's okay. So if the grades aren't a problem, if you're not going to be tested on it, you know, then that it does potentially open that up. But it is true that again, I feel comfortable doing that, partly because I am in a position of privilege, I don't have a lot to lose. And I can see how some individuals might feel less comfortable also, because we could circle back to questions like course evaluation surveys, right. I mean, I you know, of course, that's, that's a big thing. I know that in working with colleagues who are not male and white, they have been perceived as more problematic than I have, because, because they're not because they're not clear enough, even though I am providing the same information in team teaching, for example. And so this is, this is not --- this is a problem, it's not going to go away like this [snap]...

Sara Haefeli 1:11:17
I would like to say though, Andrew, that you can use your privilege by doing that in your classrooms, because then it will set the standard for the adjunct and contingent faculty or younger faculty, or faculty that are that are somehow marginalized. I would love to write an article called foolish pedagogy about how the kind of Buddhist notion of the fool, right that you have to be, you have to be open to learn something, or kind of like we call what we do a discipline, right? Well, what does it mean to be a disciple? it means to be a student and a learner? Right? Um, so. So I, I never know, like, I know what case study I'm presenting to the students, but then I have my students ask a research question that extends that case in some way. And sometimes they ask questions that I know nothing about. And I find those the most exciting because what I am an expert in is finding stuff out, you know, so and evaluating information, right. So that's what I can model to the students. And I love this idea of making it safe for other faculty to be doing the same thing.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:12:29
I agree with that -- modeling humility, also, you know, one cannot know everything about everything. And the expertise that we do have, because of our experience as scholars and as teachers is, we know how to find stuff, we know how to read stuff, we know how to evaluate sources. And that makes it possible for us to rely on the expertise of scholars who have written on the things that we're teaching. So I will very often go into my classes and say, I know very little outside of what this article says, and what you know, my colleague, Sonja Downing, who is an expert on, you know, Balinese Performing Arts has told me, and a couple of other things

that I've read. And I may not be able to answer all of your questions, but I know how to find the answers. And I think that's really important also, because one of the problems of a survey course that I think we all agree about is, you know, that coverage is impossible, and dispelling the illusion of coverage. That's something that we do when we say, I don't know, and, you know, I don't have all the answers, I can look this up, but I don't actually have expertise about all the music topics in the whole world. Melanie, were you gonna...

Melanie Lowe 1:13:47

Yes, I was going to say something really short, which is that also acknowledging and valuing, validating that our students have expertise in areas that we don't. I see a really great way of kind of leveling a little bit the obvious power differential that is still in place, despite whatever we try to do to maybe make it a safe trusting space, there is always going to be that power differential. And when we acknowledge that our students have expertise in areas that we don't, I just find that I can learn from them. And it makes it easier for them to learn from me. And it becomes more of a conversation and a collaborative process than the more sort of top down, you know, giving of information that I'm the expert in.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:14:29

I agree 100%. And also in the culture of a conservatory, there's so much of that. There's students who are interacting with teachers who are really positioned as authorities over their, you know, interpretation of the pieces that they're working on. And so, that dynamic is, is there to such an extent that students often bring it into the classroom and it's really nice to dismantle that in any way that we can. In a spirit of respect, also. Anything else happening in the chat?

Sara Haefeli 1:15:02

Um, can we go back to that ungrading? Because I just have some really, really practical hints for this. So I have my students work in groups. So their grades are 50% group evaluation, peer evaluation and 50% self reflection. And you could adapt that for any kind of, you know, thing that you wanted to do. The entire grade could be self reflection. And people often say, Well, what if the group just decides they're going to give each other perfect grades no matter what happens? And I say, more power to them. I do not care about that grade, right? If the student who did terrible work writes in reflection, that they were, they were awesome... You know, it's, they are adults, they're, you know, they're not engaging in the process, I can't make them engage by, you know, placing some sort of grade schema upon them. And so I'm sad for that person, but I just have to give up caring about it. And it has been so liberating. And honestly, I've found that the students are very, very honest, if not a little bit too hard on themselves, they're often harder on themselves than I would be on their projects. And I've also -- there was

another question, I think, Douglass might have asked about well, what about critique, we're supposed to critique their writing. When I sit down with them with their research papers, they know all the mistakes in their research paper already, I don't have to mark them, they already know where their deficits are. Focusing on the deficits does not promote good learning. So focusing on their strengths and helping them build on the thinking and the thought process that goes in that. I've found that ungrading supports all of that really good transformational work.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:17:00
Ungrading also doesn't have to mean not giving feedback, it's just not giving numerical grades. That's how I've been doing it this year. And it's had a very positive impact on honestly, the work and the engagement that students are doing. Andrew,

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 1:17:21
Really briefly, also on ungrading -- and again, I think, if folks are interested in talking more about this, each of us has a different way we've been trying to implement a different experience with it. I've also been doing a fair amount of ungrading in my class this semester. And there still is a paper trail of the work that students do if you want to follow it. In fact, I have taken to double checking. And exactly as Sara said, several times students will give themselves less credit than they deserve. And sometimes a student will have verifiably done no work, or very little work and have given themselves full points. And so I say, Tell me why, convince me that the fact that you did two thirds or half is actually as much as you could do, because in some cases, it's all they could do. And then I'm willing to listen, because it's their circumstance. So I mean, there are ways to create accountability. And I think Erica, your point is -- everybody I've read and have tried to learn from about ungrading says, that is exactly what you do, instead of giving grades you give feedback. Because feedback is crucial, right? We learn from feedback. But as Sara says, feedback that points out what you did wrong, is not going to help you get better. I mean, some of us who are professionals, PhDs, we've gotten masochistic, and reader number two, and we've learned to deal with getting what we can out of feedback about what we did wrong. But that is ultimately, verifiably bad. You know, those of us who have been in administration and have read stuff about supervising have learned that telling your supervisee what they've done wrong is exactly the wrong way to help them get better, exactly the wrong way. You know, Harvard Business, school, all that stuff. So why should it be different with students? Sorry, I'll get off my platform now.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:19:04

Well, we only have a few minutes left. I actually want to ask my panelists here isf there are any things that you wanted to bring up or you wanted to say that we haven't already talked about?

Sara Haefeli 1:19:17
I think there's a question about the sense of community that I think is really interesting. So I think in my classes, the thing that has replaced ... well, let's ask what gave them a sense of community in the first place? Was it the textbook, was it having to do those tests? Was it the, you know, the all nighters before they turn in the research paper? That's replaced by this transformational work in small groups; and I have to say that when we went online in March and the pandemic, the one thing that really saved my class was that small group work, so those groups have become ... groups of four or five students have ... they have become incredibly close. So that's not a whole cohort, like a sophomore class. But the fact that they're all working in small groups, and they all have that small group experience has kind of replaced the idea of the, you know, what really was almost like hazing with the survey course.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:20:22
There's also, I think, implicit in the question, a sense of how students feel a part of this broader musical community that has a shared body of knowledge. And I mean, that brings us back, I think, to a question about gatekeeping; in terms of are you ... do you feel like you are part of the group, or not part of the group, if you don't have that shared knowledge, and I kind of feel like dismantling some of that is powerful work that we can do in our core courses. You know, that might work very positively towards breaking free of this idea that if you can't, you know, talk Opus numbers, you're not a real musician, or, you know, some of these hangups that students have, or ways that they sort of position themselves. When you ask them the question. You know, are you a musician... oh, I'm not a real musician, you know, that sometimes is a divide that we even see in classes, with performance majors and other music students. So giving them these kind of broader ideas about what music is, musicking, you know, super broad definitions, and also a sense of the way that music means all these different things at different times in places and cultures. If that can replace a notion that you're part of the classical music community if you know all the repertoire, and you can, you know, talk about it in a knowing way, when you're making small talk after a concert. And that's a different sense of community, I think, that we could help foster. Any last words?

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 1:22:10
I wish we could have captured all this chat. I'm sorry.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:22:13

I do, I feel the same way.

Melanie Lowe 1:22:16
There was a question. I don't know if this is kind of going back too far. But there was a question I just saw about ... oh, yeah. Like, basically, how do you handle students that are really anxious or kind of don't do well, or really dislike this small group work? Because I think that's probably more than we think. And I would like to know the answer to that question. So I'll punt out there to someone who has, who is better at getting those students who really resist or really are anxious in those kinds of small group work settings.

Sara Haefeli 1:22:48
Erica, do you do that?

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:22:50
Um, not so much. But, you know, one thing I've noticed is that in the online learning situation that many of us find ourselves, group work is a way of actually connecting students, and it has felt like a more positive experience than it does in sort of normal face to face times.

Sara Haefeli 1:23:14
So 100% of what I've been doing is group work for some of my classes, except for the writing intensive class where they do write individual research papers. But one of the things that I have the groups do is I have them make it really clear what their expectations of each other are, how they're going to communicate, when they plan on meeting, and you may get somebody in a group that's just like, you know, what, I don't like music history, it's not the most important thing in my life. And I think that's fine. You know, so for that to be out on the surface actually helps the group kind of navigate those issues. So, making the group... the expectations that the group themselves define for themselves, you know, what kind of quality work do we expect of each other? When is it going to be turned in, you know, those kinds of expectations, I think, has really, really helped. Taking away the grading really, really helps. Because usually people are resistant to group work because they don't want to be graded by what their slacker colleagues are doing. Right? Also, all my students are music majors, they have to work in small groups anyway, right? They play in small ensembles. And so I might think differently about this if it were non majors, but I ask them to think about their small group as like a chamber ensemble, they all have their role. They're all playing from a position of strength, you know, so if someone's really great at graphic design, if someone's got some recording technology skills, you know, all of their projects are going to work with those areas of strength and not out of areas of deficits. And I have had to do a little bit of counseling or

hold some interventions for groups that haven't been working well. But out of … I have about 90 students every semester, and I've only had two groups that were not functioning well. And after some frank conversations, they've healed. So they have the same group the whole semester, and they learn how to work through those issues. And it's really, it's really powerful.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:25:20
The chamber music comparison, I think, is so important in music conservatory, it's different than if it's a class and students don't know each other already don't interact, they haven't all been in theory sequence together, etc, etc. Andrew?

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 1:25:32
Really briefly, latching on to the chamber music… I don't require group work, and that's partly because I haven't yet figured out how to be quite as elegant with it as Sara has. But I do give the option for students to do a group project at the end as part of the capstone project. And those essentially become little chamber ensembles. And they're … so, self selected. And some students prefer to do it on their own, and that's fine. So again, back to this idea of choice, right? I mean, not to say that it's not valuable to build the skill of working in groups, because it is, and I think, in the end, this is a valuable skill that students should be given the opportunity to learn to do better, even if it's hard. So I honor Sara's idea that it needs to be done, right. I mean, clearly, if you decided this is a skill, then you build it into the curriculum, I haven't built it in as a necessary skill, but I've built it in as a possible skill. And then when students elect into it, then I try to coach it the way that Sara is talking about. So maybe, depending on how comfortable you are in making that a necessary skill and how viable it is, given the size of the group, maybe that's one way to go about it.

Sara Haefeli 1:26:36
And you know, if someone's got social anxiety, so they have trouble being face to face in a group that maybe they can collaborate with the group via Google Doc, or Teams, or something like that. Right? So taking a look at the universal design of the whole class, and then applying that to their groups as well. How can we include this person and use their strengths in our group from their own kind of perspective.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:27:00
I was gonna say, Google Docs, also -- Google Docs, Google Slides, gosh, it makes it so easy to collaborate, relatively, Zoom also … but it's true. If you're collaborating on a Google Doc, you don't even have to talk to each other, right? So for some students, that's really important, because that's not something they're comfortable with. All right, we are at the end of our

allotted time, I want to thank the three of you, Sara, Melanie, and Andrew, so much for agreeing to participate and for contributing all of your thoughts, and all the information about your courses so generously. And I want to thank everybody who participated in the chat. I saw a few people comment that in fact, the chat will be saved. So that feels like good news. And so thanks again to everyone, have a terrific rest of the conference. All right.

Sara Haefeli 1:27:55
And thank you, Erica, for putting this together, bringing us all together, and just doing such a great job with the organization.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:28:02
Thank you. I'm so glad this worked out.

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 1:28:04
Yes, it really is Erica's accomplishment here. So thank you for bringing us together.

Sara Haefeli 1:28:08
It really is.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:28:09
I think I say leave meeting and then it's over.

Andrew F Dell'Antonio 1:28:14
I guess so.

Erica J. Scheinberg 1:28:17
All right. Bye. Bye.