

Teaching Philosophy and Methods

Mark Petering, Ph.D.

Teaching is my way of sharing knowledge, enthusiasm, and appreciation for the musical arts. I feel fulfilled in creating the same enthusiasm and understanding in my students. My goal is to guide students to become independent thinkers, assisting them in making their own original contribution.

I am particularly mindful of nurturing students who are first generation college students (like my mother), minority students (like my wife), students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students who face daily challenges living in a society that far too often does not fully recognize their value. My hope is that my proactive efforts in and out of the classroom ensure that *everyone* feels valued and succeeds. (*emphasis added*).

Since I began teaching in a higher education setting in 2002, I have proudly treated all students from various walks of life with dignity, respect and equality. Over the course of my years as a professor, I have worked with LGBTQIA+ students, students with disabilities (students who are blind), minority students, and students who experienced mental and emotional distress (including attempted or contemplated suicide).

Specifically, during classroom discussions and independent or group work, I am particularly mindful of the students described above and proactively check in with them throughout class time in ways that are not obvious. I check in with all of my students during board work, but am mindful to check in (either in person or via email) with the students, who need extra support, by encouraging them to visit with me for additional assistance.

Also, I use inclusive language at meetings (“Hi Everyone”, not “Ladies and Gentlemen”, “first year students”, not “freshmen”); I use proper pronouns (he, she, they) when referencing students, staff, and/ or colleagues.

In my professional career, both as an educator and as a composer, I have highlighted the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, regardless of gender, race or sexuality. I have encouraged racial sensitivity training through the academic senate and have participated in on-campus training, regarding Title IX.

As lyricist to many of my choral works, I emphatically draw attention to equality and inclusion by incorporating words such as “equality” or comparing the color purple to the color of pain in my collaboration with African-American Lutheran Pastor Harvard Stephens on our *Purple Liturgy*. (My choral works, *Reformation Festival* and *The Purple Liturgy*, are available at www.markpetering.org/music - click score button at top).

Additionally, I use the theory text *Harmony in Context* by Miguel Roig-Francolí because of its diverse sampling of women and minority composers as well as popular music and music theater in addition to those the traditional classical canon.

Overall, my goal is to promote a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere where all students feel comfortable to engage with each other and me whereby the students have a safe space to focus on learning. Strong student-faculty interaction is key to a positive educational experience. I find that offering students a friendly hello in the hallway and being willing to informally chat with them makes for a more cohesive, welcoming classroom environment.

As a classroom leader, I have found that a holistic methodology, thorough preparation, and a confident, friendly approach make for an enjoyable, productive environment for students. Because students learn in different ways, I incorporate listening, performing, and writing activities in my lessons, often relying on supporting technology. Using different methods allows the information to be experienced in numerous ways and reinforces content. This leads students to make personal connections with musical concepts. Students often comment on my great enthusiasm in class.

In general, I believe that strong preparation ensures a fully developed course that meets its goals throughout the semester. I take pride in providing students with a logical, thoughtful, and stimulating classroom experience. My daily routine consists of a complete outline of the day's activities, careful attention to the handouts, recordings, and computer support, and review and practice of the lesson.

I have found that students are more excited to learn when they take part in the instructional process. For example, an undergraduate theory lecture would begin with students listening to recordings or performing musical examples on their own instruments that highlight the day's topic. A note-taking template that I created outlining the entire theory textbook would be completed by the students prior to the lecture to assure some basic understanding, and the lecture could then be followed by students singing corresponding four-part harmony reductions or working at the dry-erase boards to demonstrate understanding. Finally, use of online instructional theory software would complete the students' introduction to a subject.

The more ways that I can offer students effective opportunities for learning, the more they feel empowered to take ownership of knowledge. The more confident they feel taking charge of their education, the better they will perform.

Please visit my "books" section of my imslp.org site to view materials that I have developed for my various classes now available online for all.