Roundtable: Pandemic Lessons

When our collective pedagogical world was turned upside-down in March of 2020, many of us scrambled to adapt our in-person courses to online and hybrid environments. One solace during this extremely stressful time was that we were not alone. I was heartened to see music history instructors sharing instructional materials, pre-recorded lectures, and assessments. Many appeared as guest speakers in friends' and colleagues' classes via Zoom. And for those who had to take time off due to family care, illness, or bereavement, multiple others offered to step in and help.

Since then, we've discovered that some of the innovations that we implemented during a time of extreme stress were so valuable that we plan to continue to use them, even as we return to our face-to-face classrooms. This roundtable discusses such instances, focusing particularly on new approaches to course organization and content delivery, class discussion and student participation, assessment, a pedagogy of care, and tech tools. The contributors to this roundtable are innovative faculty from a variety of institutions and at the heart of this discussion is care for the student and an excellent, transformative student experience in the music history classroom.

—Sara Haefeli, Editor-in-Chief

Course Organization and Content Delivery

Even in my face-to-face classes, I typically rely on a learning management system for organization and assignments (we use Canvas). I break the course into content-based modules, each comprising one or two weeks. Each module consists of a "page" (a Canvas-specific method of organization) providing a brief introduction to the material and the primary learning objectives, my own lecture video (usually ten to twenty minutes in length), additional learning materials for the week, and a list of assignments. In shifting fully online, this method of structuring each course became even more important. One of the key

alterations I made at the start of the Fall 2020 semester was to expand my usual learning materials (previously, reading from the textbook and an in-person lecture) to include a variety of supplemental readings, videos, and podcasts. These provide a variety of methods for students to access the material, but also introduce more provocative issues such as racism, sexism, and classism within the standard Western canon.

To hold students accountable for these learning materials (but not unsustainably increase my grading workload), I "gated" the content on Canvas. When students first log into the course at the beginning of the semester, they see only a "Welcome" module, consisting of my video introduction to the course, the syllabus, and a discussion board with short, personal introductions. Once they view/complete these items, the subsequent modules become available. However, the content page at the start of each module is followed by a five-question, multiple-choice quiz related to the learning materials for the week. Students may take this quiz as many times as necessary, but must complete it with 100% accuracy before subsequent assignments for the week become available. The grading process is fully automated via the learning management system.

—Erin Bauer, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Copyright and the Sharing of Course Materials

The pandemic has heightened our awareness of inequitable access to educational resources. For example, the price of textbooks alone rose 88% between 2006 and 2016,[1] which has in turn prompted public interest groups to take action.[2] While tuition rates and student loan debt has been a continuous problem, students face even more financial challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Professors now have to balance a number of competing interests as they endeavor to provide students with the most valuable and accessible educational resources. Among these concerns is an effort to protect themselves and their universities from litigation.

1. Gaby Del Valle, "The High Cost of College Textbooks, Explained," *Vox*, March 6, 2019, https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/3/6/18252322/college-textbooks-cost-expensive-pearson-cengage-mcgraw-hill.

2. For cost statistics and past legislative measures, see Student PIRGs, "Make Textbooks Affordable," accessed November 25, 2020, https://studentpirgs.org/campaigns/make-textbooks-affordable/.

At the same time, instructors have increasingly experienced the value of sharing resources online, including scores, adaptive quizzes, outlines, and streaming playlists. How does the music history professor keep costs down for students and provide a comprehensive learning experience, all while modeling ethical practices with regard to copyright? Both fair use and the TEACH (Technology, Education, and Copyright Harmonization) Act of 2002 have been our legal guides pertaining to classroom materials. While the understanding of these statutes has always varied in practice, their interpretation during the pandemic has become even more nebulous.

The fair use doctrine states that "use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies…for purposes such as…teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright."[3] The work distributed must then meet a four-factor test with regard to the purpose and character of its use, the nature of the work, the amount and substantiality of the portion of the work, and the effect its use has upon its potential market value. The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) offers guidance on how the TEACH Act pertains to online learning, and The New Media Rights group offers an online tool to determine if a work intended for use in an online classroom meets the Fair Use or TEACH Act threshold.[4] Independent reports by various librarians and intellectual property attorneys offer additional guidance, but almost always with the caveat that their words are "educational" and "not legal advice."[5] These guidelines are vague and often a professor's demonstration of due diligence is enough to meet these requirements.

While Fair Use and The TEACH Act provide exceptions and workarounds to sharing copyrighted materials online, instructors nevertheless should always exercise care, as using such materials without permission still poses a risk. With this in mind, I make the following suggestions:

1. Follow one's own institution's guidelines and policies.
2. Consult with your librarian. University libraries often have accessible online guides with regard to what is permissible for

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3. "Subject Matter and Scope of Copyright," accessed November 24, 2020, https://www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html#106.

4. NAfME and NFHS, "Copyright Guidance for Distance Learning," (September 2020), https://nafme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TEACH-Act-Summary-and-FAQ-September-2020.pdf and New Media Rights, "Exemptions for Instructors in U.S. Copyright Law," accessed November 24, 2020, https://librarycopyright.net/resources/exemptions/index.php.

5. NAfME and NFHS. Also see Kyle Courtney's helpful website, "COVID-19, Copyright, & Library Superpowers (Part I), March 11, 2020, https://kylecourtney.com/2020/03/11/covid-19-copyright-library-superpowers-part-i.

streaming or sharing. Some libraries, for example, will offer digitized copies of texts when no electronic copy from the publisher is available. Librarians are largely familiar with institutional licensing and may assist in determining which and how much material can be distributed.

3. Use subscription music streaming and score databases available through your institutional library as well as free resources offered by other organizations. Naxos Music Library, Classical Scores Library, Opera in Video, are excellent examples of library subscription services. Eastman's Sibley Library and UCLA's Music Library have substantial open access online score repositories. The Choral Public Domain Library (CPDL) and the International Music Scores Library Project (IMSLP) contain a trove of public domain downloadable scores. Take under advisement that illegally uploaded scores are taken down periodically.

4. Integrate digital manuscripts and archival materials. WorldCat serves as a guide to library archival collections. Some of this material is digitized and freely downloadable, and thus has already been vetted by that library for copyright. The Internet Archive and HathiTrust serve as additional, often full-text, resources.

5. Remind the students to do their own due diligence copyright check. Explain to them the importance of copyright protection for artists, even if it comes at a cost and inconvenience.

6. Link out to resources instead of embedding content. Animated scores on YouTube and Spotify playlists are convenient, but audio recordings are rarely in the public domain.

7. Do not only model due diligence, but teach it. This is a chance for students to learn how to obtain public domain materials through the library or internet. One may find it helpful to create a specific assignment to help students find a score or recording and then determine its copyright status.

8. Ask oneself if certain material is really needed to make a pedagogical point. This is also an opportunity for professors to discover new music and broaden the pedagogical canon. Encourage students to email composers, who are often happy to share their scores, to request scores for personal study. This chance to interact directly with living composers allows one to model professionalism and teach students how to network.

—Alexandra Monchick, California State University, Northridge

Class Discussion and Student Participation

When we went on-line in March 2020, I was teaching three general education courses with 60-80 students in each. I cancelled all tests. Instead of continuing to "hold" class on Zoom, I wrote out modules with embedded music videos or short documentaries to view, with a few very simple quizzes that could be taken multiple times. The modules were designed so students could recognize the important points without worrying about getting the "right" answers, and thus could focus on what they were learning. I had them do weekly short reflections on the material, which were graded but very liberally, and with comments (with the help of my wonderful teaching assistants). I provided prompts for the students that asked them about how they perceived the music and how learning about music helped them learn about people, history, or political issues. I always talked about this in class presentations and attempted to get their thoughts and input class discussions, but in such large classes only a few of the same students contributed, week after week. Even with pedagogical tools to encourage engagement (such as "think-pair-share"), class discussion was always a struggle. But on-line I could read everyone's voice. I could see where they misunderstood, or where they experienced an "ah-ha" moment. I learned along with the students and each had a place where they could communicate with me (or the TAs) directly. The weekly responses were due each week, but I never counted anyone as late.

—Mary Natvig, Bowling Green State University

Assessment

Prior to the pandemic, assignments in my music history survey courses closely resembled those in my own undergraduate career, some twenty years ago. Students read from the textbook, listened to a lecture, and took examinations consisting of musical examples, important people, vocabulary, and preconceived essay questions. I worked to incorporate more interesting in-class activities, but grades still relied heavily on names and dates; fact-based information that is easily found via a quick Google search. In moving the courses online, I shifted assignments to focus on critical thinking. For each module, students now listen to musical examples and write a reflection on the discussion board, respond to a more provocative discussion prompt centered on issues like the inherent whiteness and maleness of the canon, the narrative of composer as genius, and

the importance of representation, to name a few, and complete an examination consisting of three or four short essay prompts.

Quantitatively, when gauging the effectiveness of assignments and other materials in their understanding of course content (on a scale of 1-5 with 1 indicating "Not helpful" and 5 indicating "Very helpful"), students indicated that the essay examinations were the most helpful (4.31), followed by the diversity of learning materials (4.28), musical reflections (4.10), discussion questions (4.03), and virtual class sessions (3.59). Qualitatively, many students indicated that the discussion questions have been the most valuable component of the course. For example:

> The discussion questions have honestly taught me the most about applying what we're learning to other topics that are important.

> Honestly, the ability to think about the discussion posts and apply what I've learned not only in this class, but my entire undergraduate career is the best thing I've learned.

With the range of challenges that students faced in the Fall 2020 semester, I decided to eliminate penalties for late assignments. Due dates are still listed online and I maintain the pre-established timing of content in weekly emails to the class and the virtual class sessions. However, students can now plan their time as they see fit, working ahead when feasible and devoting time to other responsibilities when necessary.

On a scale of 1-5 (1 indicating "No. They just help my procrastination." and 5 indicating "Yes!"), students responded to the question, "Do you appreciate the flexible due dates this semester?" at a 4.76.

—Erin Bauer, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Flexible Assignments

Deadlines are one of many things that used to feel important but now seem less relevant in the pandemic world. I have experimented with deadlines in two ways recently, both of which have worked well to alleviate the pressure that students often feel and resulted in fewer missing assignments and late penalties.

First, in the Spring of 2020, even before moving online, I designed my "History of Music II" class so that students could complete three out of five writing assignment opportunities. Their grade was an average of however many they had completed, with three as a minimum. When we shifted to virtual learning, I added a sixth option to provide them with additional flexibility. This model worked well, although each of the assignments still carried a firm deadline and many students waited to submit anything until the final three opportunities.

In the Fall of 2020, I made all deadlines "strongly recommended," but did not penalize students for submitting the assignment up to two weeks late. Students have been much more successful with this added flexibility. Many students do not work well without a deadline; the deadline now simply consists of a larger window of time. I have seen an enormous reduction in missing assignments, as students can complete assignments at their own pace. As an added benefit, I appreciate the slower pace of grading assignments as they come in, rather than grading all at once.

—Kristen Strandberg, University of Evansville

Flexible Exams

When my courses moved online for Fall 2020, I made all of my exams open-book. I even invited students to collaborate if they so desired, but asked them to disclose their collaboration and write in their own words. To clarify my expectations, I required that they complete a brief ethics tutorial. As in past semesters, I provided students with all of the questions in advance, although I also gave them enough time during the exam to consult sources. My questions are not simple and cannot be answered well without strong foundational knowledge. All exam items require open-ended responses.

Somewhat to my surprise, exam performance fell along almost exactly the same distribution as in past semesters, despite the invitation to use resources and to collaborate. The strongest students did excellent work; a quarter of the class earned grades in the in the D-to-F range, and half the class earned grades in the B-to-C range. I can only conclude that having an open-book exam does not in any way advantage students who have not put in the work to prepare throughout the semester. Despite my repeated warnings not to copy definitions out of the textbook glossary, a handful of the weakest students did exactly that. I had hoped to guide students in expressing their own understanding of

each term, but in these cases I failed, and I concluded that asking students to define terms in an open-book context is not worthwhile. On the final, I instead asked them to use specific terms in context while answering questions, and that worked much better.

I am very satisfied with the revisions that I made to assessment in the Fall 2020 semester. I hate giving up class time for quizzes and exams, so I am delighted to be finding my way toward asynchronous assessment solutions. When I returned to in-person teaching in Spring 2021, I added a weekly asynchronous quiz—one listening response and one short-answer question—in order to track understanding of the material. I have kept my exams online and open-book.

While teaching online, I left substantial feedback for students, but I had no way of knowing whether I had successfully filled gaps or corrected misconceptions. Now I give students the opportunity to revise every quiz and exam. If a student wants to resubmit any answer following feedback, they are welcome to do so. After all, what is the point of assessment if it does not further learning?

—Esther Morgan-Ellis, University of North Georgia

Pedagogy of Care

Before the pandemic I thought of myself as a kind and fair teacher. I had clear expectations, goals, detailed syllabi, and flexible office hours. I was always ready to help, always respected my students, and always tried to help them through tough times. But moving to remote instruction last March corresponded with my mother's move to hospice care—at my house (with aides coming in and out at all hours)—and then a month later to a nursing home where she died within a few weeks. All of this chaos altered my thoughts about privilege, what compassion really is, the ability to learn under stress, and how to express unconditional love to my students.

Sometimes I got emails from students: her stepdad had COVID and the fields needed plowing, so she had to work on the farm, sun up to sundown; a grandfather died and no one could visit him in the hospital or go to the funeral; she'd never had a computer and couldn't figure out how to submit the responses; he was so stressed he was going to quit school. And so on.

I learned that I cared much more about my students than about deadlines…
or spelling, or critical thinking…we were all just trying to muddle through. I
taught what I could, and they learned what they could.

This revelation is a little embarrassing because I always thought I cared
deeply about my students; I wanted them to learn, to be responsible, to get
good grades, and do a good job. Now I just want them to be okay. You can't
learn anything unless you're okay.

—Mary Natvig, Bowling Green State University

Tech Tools

In the spring of 2020, I started a crowd-sourced document called Teaching
Online Tools.[6] The goal of the spreadsheet was to provide people with a list
of online tools for teaching, what they do, what they cost, where they could
be found, and their special attributes (for example, potential for integration
into a course's Learning Management System [LMS] so that they are FERPA
compliant). The tools I use must be low cost or free, intuitive for the user, and
compatible with a variety of formats (smartphones, tablets, and computers),
as many of my students do not own a tablet, laptop, or desktop computer. The
sudden pivot to online instruction has proven that we can use those tools to
rethink what's possible in terms of student engagement and active learning in
both online and in-person classes. The following is an introduction to some of
the tools that I use to support active learning.

Tools such as *StoryMap* allow students to add written text, images, and video
links to an online map in order to illuminate a specific topic such as the musical
roles of women around the world. In courses such as my world music class, I
have students create a StoryMap for a specific topic. They can import a YouTube
video of a piece of music they're studying and link it to a specific coordinate
on the map. They also are able to add descriptions of the video and the genre,
depending on what the task is. This also works well as a team assignment and
presentation format.

Glogster is a similar tool that allows students to create multimedia posters
on any given topic using text, images, video, and audio, and can zoom in and out
on any image on the poster. Glogster even contains the capability to construct

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6. Reba Wissner, *Teaching Online Tools*, https://tinyurl.com/yr999d2y.

three-dimensional, multimedia posters. These tools allow students to exercise their creativity while demonstrating their command of information.

Annotation tools are also helpful in any learning environment. One, *Perusall*, is a PDF annotation tool that can be used both in and out of the classroom to comment on readings or to teach close reading and analysis skills. Similarly, *Hypothes.is* can be used to annotate any webpage. In a remote environment, students can work together to annotate a single document. This is especially useful when navigating things like digital primary sources.

Padlet is useful because it is a real-time crowdsourcing board with sticky notes that can be moved all over the board. Some universities that use Canvas have a Padlet plugin. In both remote and in-person environments, these boards can be used to generate student responses and organize them. Similarly, *Slack* and *Discord* allow students to communicate outside of the course LMS with messages, message boards, or audio responses. Students can use these tools as backchannels in order to discuss the course, ask others questions, and offer help.

Kialo is a platform that facilitates classroom debate through an online platform. Instructors can post a statement and students can respond to that statement and to each other to provide a debate-like forum in real time. Students are given "pros" and "cons" of a topic or situation and then they write their responses in the appropriate column. They can then respond to one another. In a face-to-face class, the platform could help students prepare for a real-time debate with other students with the pros and cons projected in the classroom.

For flipped classrooms and asynchronous classes, *Play Posit* and *EdPuzzle* are great for creating videos with embedded questions. These programs allow the instructor to embed questions into videos to assess students' learning (and be sure they are watching the videos). Students cannot view past specific points in the video without answering a set of questions. These tools integrate with the LMS so that faculty can see how each student answered. The ability to check students' responses allows the instructor to make modifications and clarifications quicker than the next class period.

Video Ant allows students to annotate videos with their own questions, comments, and observations. In a remote environment, it can be used to illustrate how students are interacting with a video. For music courses, students can markup specific elements of a piece or a performance. This can also be done as an individual homework assignment or in teams in an in-person environment.

—Reba Wissner, Columbus State University

Video Responses

I ask students to create (camera optional) video responses to reading and listening assignments using *Flipgrid*. Flipgrid is a free platform, independent from any LMS, which allows users to post short videos. The instructor can set a time limit for the videos for anywhere between fifteen seconds and ten minutes. They can also make the videos viewable by the entire class or only the individual student and instructor.

Video responses have worked especially well in my courses for non-majors for student responses to reading and listening assignments. I occasionally use Flipgrid in upper-level courses for majors as well. For example, rather than submitting written responses to short analytical assignments, students talked through their answers and thought processes, showing me how they arrived at their conclusions.

Most college-level courses place a heavy emphasis on writing skills and we often neglect other important modes of communication. Hearing a student's thought process verbally, I can more easily assess a student's understanding of the material. While in written work it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether an issue stems from poor writing skills or a lack of understanding, many students' verbal responses clarify how well they grasp the material. Further, even in an in-person course, the videos allow me to get to know each student a little better.

—Kristen Strandberg, University of Evansville