

A Cross-Disciplinary Approach to Teaching Music History

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Poster Abstract

In teaching surveys of Western art music to both undergraduate majors and non-majors, my primary objective is to foster a deeper understanding of the socio-historical milieu in which representative compositions were written. To this end, I believe the most effective learning environment is one that combines aural, visual, and interactive elements, which stimulates student-led discussions while limiting the time one spends lecturing. While audio and video clips are universal in the music history classroom, one can create a multi-sensory experience for students by integrating relevant examples from the visual arts and also excerpts from poetic and theatrical works. I find this approach to be especially useful when introducing musical eras and the many “-isms” of the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, in framing our discussion of the Renaissance, we might explore Raphael’s *Madonna del Prato* and Palladio’s Venetian villas in addition to studying the works of Josquin and Palestrina.

This poster presentation aims to demonstrate some of the ways that history can be made more accessible and engaging to students using standard classroom technology. Sample lecture slides highlight the potential advantages of incorporating cross-disciplinary elements, which may broaden students’ perspectives on style while encouraging active participation in the classroom. Positive student learning outcomes include: (1) acquiring vocabulary that moves beyond the textbook, (2) developing a broader conception of musical style, and (3) improving the ability to think critically about history through a combination of listening, score analysis, discussion of contemporary artworks, and evaluation of performance.