

Teaching Statement

I am entering my twenty-eighth year of teaching music theory and composition at the college and university level. Tenure and promotion at TTU were applied for in 2007 and granted in the spring of 2008. My position was originally a split-position with the teaching load divided somewhat equally between theory and composition. After Dr. van Appledorn retired in 2008, I took on more responsibilities in composition, though with consistent teaching in the theory area.

My philosophy of teaching is always multifaceted and includes the following principles:

- to provide the best learning experience for the most students
- to make the student experience an adventure of discovery and learning
- to create lifelong learners, lifelong creators
- to understand the *craft* of composition, the ability to create apart from inspiration
- to understand structure, especially complex structures, even if that means the absence of such
- to try my best to create an atmosphere of excitement for the subject at hand
- to approach every student with care, understanding, and inspiration
- a holistic approach that weaves teaching and learning

The individual lessons in composition are always geared to help composers gain the knowledge, experience, discipline, and craftsmanship to succeed in the field. Composers should be able to create in a variety of styles, and so they are required to explore numerous musical languages, as well as numerous formal schemes—often outside the kinds of music with which they are comfortable. Undergraduate and graduate instruction always involves mentoring with the idea that they will in turn become mentors to the people in their own sphere of influence or teaching. A major goal is to develop a discipline for composing even when the creative “muses” are absent—a process that involves the ability to craft music at the highest level apart from the epiphanies of intuitive creation. The life of a composer, whether teaching, freelance, film scoring, or any of the myriad niches we find, means a necessary ability to “make” music at virtually any time. This is a skill I have learned and nurtured over many years and teach to all my students.

Classroom teaching is approached as not just a learning experience for my students, or a lecture, or an innovative technological session, though these may indeed be very important and even essential, but that my students learn *how* to learn. One of the primary goals is to show them the beginnings of numerous paths, that they may continue the journey without me.

Teaching is also a growing and learning experiences for myself. If any students don’t understand a concept, then my first inclination is to assume that I did not teach it clearly or in the right way or with enough time; and so, I am always striving to comprehend how *I* understand principles of my subject matter and how they can be approached in different ways. It is important also, to know how to place limits on the concept of multifaceted explanations—one must be careful not to overwhelm students with so many ways of thinking on a subject that they cannot easily sort out the means of successfully mastering the subject—particularly at the undergraduate level.

Some discussion on curriculum and courses in composition: in 2010, new courses were developed in collaboration with my colleague—Computer Music I and II, and a course on contemporary composition—Music After 1945. In just the last year as the composition program became its own “area,” my colleagues and I revamped the undergraduate curriculum to allow access to so many of the new kinds of music composition—they now have choices in 21 of their composition course hours to take things like recording, informatics, or more advanced computer music. Master’s and doctoral programs are undergoing a similar change. Additionally, I designed and taught a course in sound design using frequency-modulation synthesis (FM). The course involved building and shaping software “instruments” from fundamental wave forms interacting with each other in planned and unplanned ways and then used to compose computer music pieces.

Overall evaluations for every year are ranked near the top of the School of Music. I take great pride in the energy and enthusiasm brought to every class. There is a great responsibility to show students the possibilities that knowledge can bring, and to do this in ways that help them discover some of this knowledge through themselves and through their own discipline and responsibility. I try to push the average student to higher levels, while providing opportunities within the regular class structure for gifted students to excel.