

**Model Teaching #1: Fundamentals**  
**October 1-8**

**Overview**

Each of you will teach a small portion of a fundamentals class, addressing both conceptual knowledge and practical skills. You will also create a corresponding homework assignment.

When you are not teaching, you will perform two important functions: you will serve as a student during the class, and you will provide prompt feedback after the class through Canvas. Remember that the quality of your teaching and the quality of your comments to one another will factor into your overall course grade.

**The Details**

You will teach a fifteen-minute segment of a fundamentals class for college-level music majors, focusing on your assigned topic (and being careful not to drift into someone else's topic). Your goal is to present this extremely limited written or conceptual topic and practice corresponding practical skills (written, aural, or both). There is no prescribed ratio of time spent on conceptual and practical material, but you are required to address both meaningfully. Ideally, you should try to connect the two domains in a natural way.

You will also provide us with a written assignment that your students would be expected to complete before the next class. Naturally, it should focus on the information you are presenting to us. You are welcome to distribute it before, during, or immediately after you teach — whatever you would do with a real class, as long as it is provided (online or on paper) before our class ends at 2:15. I will complete this assignment and send it to you, and you will grade (not just correct) my work and return it to me.

Your focus should be on articulating and illustrating the most important facts while keeping the students actively engaged. If your assigned topic cannot be explained exhaustively in fifteen minutes, it is completely appropriate to teach only a subset (e.g.,  $\frac{6}{8}$  meter rather than *all* compound meters). If you would like to address a specific topic only tangentially related to your assignment, please speak to me about it first in case you will inadvertently overlap with someone else's topic. As you make your lesson plans, keep in mind that clarity and efficiency will not only help you accomplish more in fifteen minutes but will also usually make your students more attentive.

The rest of us will do our best to serve as your students. In order to react appropriately, it is imperative that we know what has been taught in earlier classes. Please be prepared to summarize this information as clearly and succinctly as possible (in less than 30 seconds) before you teach. Example:

This class has already mastered major scales and major key signatures. Last time, we introduced the natural minor scale as well as the concept of relative major and minor keys. The only intervals we have mentioned so far are the whole step and the half step. We always sing with scale-degree numbers.

If you plan to use any form of classroom technology, I urge you to test everything well in advance in order to avoid unpleasant surprises. Please let me know if I can help.

## **Preparing to Teach**

The best way to practice teaching a class is by actually teaching a class. Fortunately, there are certainly other things you can do to help you prepare.

- Visit a variety of first-year theory classes (especially fundamentals, first-semester theory, and first-semester aural skills). You will learn a lot both from observing the instructors and from observing the students. You can look up the schedule online and ask whether the instructor is willing to let you sit in.
- Read my “General Teaching Suggestions” online handout. It summarizes many of the points I have most often needed to address after observing pedagogy students, teaching assistants, and job applicants over the years.
- Don’t hesitate to discuss your ideas, musical examples, handouts, etc. with me or with others. I am happy to meet with you in advance.

## **Receiving Feedback**

You will receive feedback in several distinct forms. Before our class next meets, your colleagues will post comments (both praise and constructive criticism) on Canvas. I will provide detailed written feedback, and you are always welcome to meet with me. You should post a very short self-critique; you will not be able to see anyone else’s comments until you post something yourself. Last but not least, you should watch the video recording of your teaching; you may very well discover some habits you didn’t know you had.

Although I believe you will find the peer feedback valuable, and there is inherent benefit in gathering opinions from multiple people, please be aware that I alone will determine your grade.

## **When You are Not Teaching**

In class, you will do your best to approximate the behavior of a fundamentals student. Please bear in mind that your goal is to be helpful by making the class as realistic as possible. (Disclaimer: no matter what we do, the experience isn’t going to be realistic, but we’re going to try.) If you answer every question correctly and pay attention 100% of the time, that is not realistic behavior. On the other hand, knowing absolutely nothing and having no musical instincts whatsoever is also not realistic behavior. Please give the teacher something to work with.

As promptly as possible after class (before your memory fades), you will provide feedback to that day’s teachers by posting comments on Canvas. In order to receive credit, your comments must be received before noon on the next class day — i.e., comments for Monday’s teaching will be due by noon on Wednesday. Remember that the quality and quantity of your feedback will factor into your grade for this course. Minimal responses like “Great job!” aren’t really helping anyone. Instead, try to be as specific as possible in identifying strengths and weaknesses, suggesting small adjustments that might make a big difference, and offering any other practical advice. Again, I want to stress that you are not grading one another, either directly or indirectly: offering criticism will not lower anyone’s grade, and providing praise exclusively will not raise anyone’s grade. Completing and returning a colleague’s homework assignment is optional, but you should address it in your comments.