

Model Teaching #2: Harmony and Voice Leading November 10-21

Overview

You will teach a portion of a first-year written theory class, presenting a fairly limited harmony and voice-leading topic. You will also create a corresponding homework assignment. You may choose to reinforce your lecture with aural examples, but your primary emphasis should be on written skills. At the end of your class, you will be asked questions about your topic.

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 twenty-minute segment of a written theory class for college-level music majors, focusing on your assigned topic (and being careful not to drift into someone else's topic). Obviously, twenty minutes may not be sufficient for a thorough lecture — let alone adequate practice for your students — so your focus should be on articulating and illustrating the most important facts while keeping the class actively engaged. As in your first model teaching, it is completely acceptable to focus specifically on a small but meaningful portion of your assigned topic (for instance, only ii^6 , or only chords with $\sharp 4$ in the bass). As you make your lesson plans, keep in mind that clarity and efficiency will not only help you accomplish more in twenty minutes but will also usually make your students more attentive.

You will also provide us with a written assignment that your students would be expected to complete before the next class; this assignment should include both partwriting and analysis (and ideally you should provide a recording of the analytical excerpt). You are welcome to distribute it before, during, or immediately after you teach — whatever you would do with a real class. I will complete this assignment and send it to you, and you will correct (but not necessarily grade) my work and return it to me.

The rest of us will try to behave like conscientious but ignorant students: we will volunteer if we believe this is realistic, we will answer questions *exactly* as they are asked, and we will learn material *exactly* as it is taught. We will not bother you with tricky questions during your presentation (but you should expect some difficult question *after* your presentation). In order to react appropriately, we need you to tell us which textbook we are using and what material we have already learned (which should be appropriate to the textbook). Please be prepared to summarize this information as succinctly as possible (in a minute or less) before you teach. Example:

This class is using Aldwell/Schachter/Cadwallader. Students have already mastered I and I^6 , V^7 in all inversions, $vii^{\circ 6}$, IV, ii, and ii^6 . They recently learned about the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$, but they don't know any other $\frac{6}{4}$ chords. We always sing with scale-degree numbers.

Please be aware that if your teaching is inconsistent with your chosen textbook and you don't let us know in advance what you are changing, I will consider this a significant error.

You are welcome to use any desired materials/techniques to enhance your teaching: make a handout, refer to a textbook (just be sure we can see the relevant pages), play a recording, play the piano, have students sing, use the chalkboard, project from the document camera or a computer, etc. I urge you to test any classroom technology 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 other things you can do to help you prepare.

- Visit a variety of core undergraduate theory classes (especially Theory I and Theory III). 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 it.
- 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

As in the previous round of model teaching, 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 on Canvas; you will not be able to see peer 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 behave like a conscientious but ignorant student: you should volunteer if this seems realistic, answer questions *exactly* as they are asked, and learn material *exactly* as it is taught. Please ask only realistic questions during the presentation; however, you are encouraged to ask difficult questions afterwards.

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 the homework assignment is optional, but you should address it in your comments.