LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

POPULAR COMMERCIAL MUSIC ACROSS THE SPECTRUM: FROM
ELECTRONIC TO SYMPHONIC
A Freshman Survey of Music Composition

A master’s curriculum project presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in Music Education

by

David A. Pennise
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APPROVED BY:
ABSTRACT

There is a need in music composition for educators and administrators to implement concrete pedagogy to improve music composition as a profession that is recognized for its value and integrity. In this study, I addressed this need with a plan that focuses on curricular strategies to guide students in becoming successful artists and equip them to thrive in the increasingly popular commercial music industry. Students will maximize their academic development by applying compositional techniques from the common practice period and improve their chances of succeeding in modern music society by interacting with a harmonic grammar appropriate for commercial pop music.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Institutions of higher learning offer praxial approaches to guide students in developing musical skills. Praxialism is a musical philosophy that emphasizes participatory or action-based learning through various activities designed to promote comprehensive musicianship in the classroom. I created a curriculum that provides a survey of form, instrumentation, and popular commercial music genres. This course provides students with tools to study and emulate successful commercial music examples representing an inclusive range of styles. I reinforce and assess learning objectives through analytical writing and project-based assignments. Exposing freshmen students to the broader scope of popular music composition is the primary goal of my curriculum.

Statement of the Purpose

Through this project, I provide a comprehensive approach to implement popular commercial music composition pedagogy. This curriculum emphasizes popular commercial music theory and offers students opportunities to apply this theory to real-life situations that involve a full spectrum of ensembles. I will expose students to piano charts, electronic ensembles, singer-songwriter ensembles, choral ensembles, and full orchestra. Contemporary harmony and compositional techniques will be the primary focus of this curriculum. Students will also explore digital audio technology through various platforms, including GarageBand and Finale.

Most of the curriculum will entail creating piano charts in the style of popular commercial examples. Simultaneously, students will have opportunities to choose a capstone
project that involves a more significant task, such as a major ensemble. Rather than require students to write for every major ensemble, they will need only to create piano charts and choose one major undertaking for a final project, such as a full-length song, a choral ensemble, or an electronic composition. Students will be introduced to various platforms throughout the semester and receive guidance to select a project that best suits their interests and is most comfortable for them. While students will have opportunities to develop production skills to operate in a popular commercial style, they will also learn skills that address compositional aptitude, which will enable them to succeed in the popular music business.

Research suggests that a praxial approach to education renders the most success in developing well-rounded musicianship among students. David J. Elliot and Marissa Silverman substantiate this in their text, *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education*. They argue that praxialism is essential for public school education and criticize common perceptions of praxialism, which they feel are too narrow to be effective. Elliot and Silverman clarify that Aristotle views praxis as an intense discussion and thoughtful activity that improves overall well-being and circumstances.¹ In other words, praxialism has philosophical implications and does not merely mean “to do” or “to make.” The authors suggest that a praxial music education refers to educators’ need to impart and enable students to interact with all musical means of engagement that utilize creative and aural skills. They stress that the philosophy also includes a focus on (1) the why-what-how-where-when of effective, democratic, and civic education in, about, and through music performing, improvising, composing, arranging, and conducting/leading music musically; and (2) empowering people to make and listen to music for their own and others’ experiences of meaningfulness, happiness, self-worth, and musical satisfaction.²

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² Elliot and Silverman, “Philosophy and Music Education,” in *Music Matters*, 44.
With this project, I aim to improve music composition pedagogy by emphasizing praxis through active participation and project-based engagement rather than superficial knowledge acquisition. In this curriculum, a hands-on focus will encourage higher levels of thinking and reflecting. It will provide students with practical skills accessible in contemporary society and yield significant value in the potential for success and gratification.

Significance of the Study

Though not an absolute rule, there are generally distinctions between classical music and commercial music with popular emphasis. Dichotomies in instrumentation and ensemble categories are notable features that differentiate the two platforms. Popular commercial music includes contemporary instruments appropriate for a pop or rock band or a digital audio workstation. Concert music features more traditional instruments such as those used in chamber groups and symphony orchestras.

While there are noticeable distinctions between the world of concert, instrumental, chamber, and orchestral music and the world of commercial pop music, a notable feature that differentiates the two mediums is harmonic syntax. According to the *Oxford World Encyclopedia*, about the grammatic elements of music from the common practice period, such music is as follows: “Music composed between c. 1750 and 1820, whose style is characterized by emotional restraint, the dominance of homophonic melodies (melodies with accompaniment), and clear structures and forms underlying the music.”\(^3\) Functional harmony defines classical music, which, according to *Oxford*, is a theory of tonal harmony established by Hugo Riemann (1849-1919), who devised the term. The theory is that each chordal identity within a tonality can be reduced to one of

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three harmonic functions—those of tonic, dominant, and subdominant. Thus, for example, a supertonic chord has the function of a subdominant.⁴

There are published resources that professionals in the field use widely, which discuss classical music and popular commercial music grammars in more detail. Some of these resources include The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening by Steven G. Laitz, Music Theory for the Music Professional: A Comparison of Common-Practice and Popular Genres by Richard Sorce, and The Study of Orchestration by Samuel Adler (for more about essential resources, please see the literature review section).

Classical music features I and V chords as the tonic and dominant chords, respectively. IV chords in classical music are treated as pre-dominant chords that “set up” the dominant chords to proceed to tonic chords, particularly at cadences. Voice leading, counterpoint, preparation of dissonances, and independent ideas are essential characteristics of classical style.

With popular commercial music, the stringency of functional hierarchy is relaxed. For example, in classical music, it is understood that a IV chord must eventually progress to a V chord because it is subdominant. Subdominant harmonies always prepare or precede dominant chords in common practice contexts. It is considered poor practice to progress from a V chord to a IV chord or a ii chord because, as pre-dominant chords, their function is to lead to dominant harmonies, not vice versa. However, it is common for a V chord to proceed to a IV chord in popular music. I arranged an excerpt below from the hit song “Louie Louie” by the Kingsmen,⁵ which features a chord cycle where V progresses to IV, then moves to I.

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Figure 1. “Louie Louie,” excerpt.

Louie Louie
(Excerpt)

Words and music by Richard Berry
Arr. David Pennise

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In “Louie Louie,” the A major harmony assumes the role of tonic because it establishes the work’s tonal center and functions as the “home” point of reference. However, some of the other harmonies are unexpected; Em takes the place of the anticipated major V chord. While it may be tempting to ascribe the Em a substitute role in “filling in” for the expected major V, one could better understand the piece’s harmonic language from a modal perspective. The chords do fit the context of A Mixolydian, and A is the tonal center. The lack of leading tone in the E minor chord (no G#) desensitizes its gravitation to A, obfuscating the tonic-dominant pull. The placement of E minor where listeners would expect E major does not suggest substitution, but rather, a natural statement of the V (v) from the perspective of the Mixolydian mode.

In addition to harmonic behavior, other characteristics are unique to each style. For instance, in music from the common practice period, the harmony may change on almost every note. Texturally such a practice can be conceived as homophonic or chorale texture. Though that quality may not be necessary for music to be classical, it is a characteristic rarely found in popular commercial music.

Another important characteristic that differentiates the popular commercial style from the classical style is harmonic voicing. Classical style features a variety of root position and inverted harmonies for the sake of a melodic bass line, while popular commercial style uses root position harmony almost exclusively. If one listens closely to the song in its original form, one will hear frequent parallel perfect motion, with nearly all chords voiced in root position. While such a custom would be frowned upon in a common practice context, it is typical in commercial pop and rock music.

In an article from *Music Theory Spectrum*, a theory expert and commentator explores this concept in detail. Per Biamonte,
the pitch syntax of mainstream rock music comprises a variety of tonal, modal, blues-based and chromatic elements. Traditional constructs of scale-degree theory and harmonic functionality, while originally pertaining to art music, can be usefully modified to address elements of rock music that do not conform to tonal norms, particularly when these elements are considered in conjunction with other musical parameters such as rhythm, hypermeter, texture, consonance, and contour...[T]he context and function of some harmonic structures unique to rock music...cannot be interpreted in conventional tonal terms[, such as] double-plagal and Aeolian progressions, and triad-doubled scale systems.⁶

One example of pitch syntax in popular music diverging from common practice music is the tendency of basslines, which seldom yield inverted chords. An educational music theory resource clarifies this. Open Music Theory’s contributor states that

one key difference between rock and classical harmony is that chords in pop/rock music are almost always in root-position triads or seventh chords. This affects the “rules” of harmonic syntax, as 6/3 chords in classical progressions are replaced by 5/3 chords in pop/rock progressions. (For instance, the classical progression IV-IV⁶ becomes IV-VI. The same bass line does the same work, but by using a 5/3 chord instead of a 6/3 chord, the functional progression changes to something that would “break the rules” of classical syntax.)⁷

Indeed, it is feasible for chords in commercial pop and rock music to feature voicings with notes other than the root in the bass; however, it is much more common for most chords to feature the root as the bass note. Overall, the progression in “Louie Louie” is cyclical and contains modal elements such as a minor V (v). The work features perfect parallel motion and an obscured tonic-dominant axis, avoiding cadential tendencies. The absence of a leading tone (G♯) and substitution of a minor V (v) in place of a major V blurs the tonic-dominant axis, establishing a modal harmonic character.

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While such practices are acceptable in popular commercial styles, in the classical style, voice-leading standards are stricter. Laitz stresses that contrary and oblique motion are most desirable in contrapuntal practice in a standard theory manual. He also insists on avoiding parallel movement by perfect consonant intervals, including octaves, and fifths, between any pair of voices. Also forbidden are direct fifths and octaves, even though composers approach them in contrary motion. However, practices that would be considered flawed in classical music are generally welcome in commercial music.

Parallel perfect intervals have an open, hollow sound, are common in pop and rock music, and are a hallmark feature of many hits such as “Smoke on the Water” by Deep Purple. This song also uses chord cycles, as does much of the music in the popular commercial gamut. Many successful songs feature sequences like i-VI-III-VII in the Aeolian mode; in A Aeolian, that would translate to Am-F-C-G. This practice frequently occurs, not just in pop or rock music but in commercial music with similar grammatic considerations. For example, “Army Strong,” the theme for the U.S. Army, “Break Every Chain” by Tasha Cobbs, “Wake Me Up” by Avicii, and music from Pirates of the Caribbean, all feature chord progressions like i-VI-III-VII, which comprise a significant portion of popular commercial music. Some examples feature

substitutions such as a V in place of VII or a VII6 in place of VII, but i-VI-III-VII is the primary cycle of emphasis. Syncopation, parallelism, and unrestricted dissonances are other typical features in commercial pop and rock and are prevalent in the above examples.

This study will be significant because it will contribute a unique curriculum that may be more in line with current musical trends. In an article contributed to CNN, classical pianist and Gilmore award-winning musician Charlie Albright suggests that “classical music, in its now-traditional sense has seen better days. The Metropolitan Opera is only one of the many arts organizations that is having a harder and harder time filling its seats.”14 Statistics from the National Endowment for the Arts government database reported that in 2017 only 8.6% of U.S. adults (21 million people) had attended a classical music performance.15 Nearly the same percentage of people participated in a jazz concert, representing a minor change since 2012.

While the National Endowment for the Arts does not report statistics for popular music concert attendance, Statista reports that in 2013 59.44 million people attended a popular music concert.16 Although attendance of children is not reported, the disparity may be significant enough to suggest that trends in the current music market favor more commercialized music applications. My project can coincide with these trends by contributing a curriculum that contemporizes music composition across a spectrum of instrumental and electronic ensembles. It will provide a valuable survey of the broader scope of music composition by exposing freshmen

students to concert music, electronic music, orchestral music, and songs with a popular commercial focus.

My curriculum will build upon techniques that yield success in the context of music from the common practice period, such as development, form, and orchestration, by offering opportunities for students to apply what they have learned from classical music theory to contemporary contexts. That is useful as the stylistic features of classical and popular music, while unique to each genre, can be blended, which does occur in commercial contexts. Occasionally, commercial artists, like Hollywood film composers, will fuse neoclassicism with popular commercial syntax, as is the case in the iconic *Pirates of the Caribbean* theme, which combines classical voice-leading procedures with pop-rock chord progressions. Other times, they will use chord cycles almost exclusively, such as in the *Game of Thrones* theme or the *Schitt’s Creek* theme, which, while possibly less recognized than *Pirates of the Caribbean*, are nonetheless highly successful television shows.

IMDB.com reveals just how successful the *Game of Thrones* series has proven itself, citing a staggering 382 Primetime Emmy Awards with 626 nominations. Classic FM reports that “[the *Game of Thrones* theme] has won a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Music Composition, two ASCAP Awards[,] and was nominated for a Grammy.” Also highly

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commended is the series *Schitt’s Creek*, which received nineteen Nominations for Emmys and nine Awards, including Outstanding Comedy Series – 2020, and Outstanding Sound Mixing For A Comedy Or Drama Series (Half-Hour) And Animation – 2020. While the main title theme was not specifically mentioned, it is still popular, receiving the highest possible rating on iTunes, and a near-average of five stars on Amazon Music (with no negative reviews). Because themes are iconic features of the series, it is crucial to be mindful of what they are doing musically (regardless of their Academy Award status), especially when they coincide with highly successful media. Learning popular commercial music theory is essential because many successful television shows employ conventions characteristic of such syntax.

However, while popular music may be associated with success, it is sometimes criticized for being repetitive and lacking thematic development. This project can address both styles by priming students to imitate successful popular commercial music, whether merging neoclassical syntax with modern commercial grammar as in *Pirates of the Caribbean* or being primarily chord–cycle–oriented as in *Schitt’s Creek* or *Game of Thrones*. It will provide ample opportunities for students to employ compositional techniques creatively to develop their artistic voices.

**Research Questions**

Research for this project was a complicated endeavor that spanned many resources and drew from years of academic and professional experience. I carefully reviewed literature and scholarly sources that address commercial music to support research questions, which tackle the

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23. “Schitt’s Creek (Main and End Title Medley) [Main Theme],” Apple Music audio.
project’s overall scope. I addressed questions of inquiry in my research, in part by reviewing studies concluded by the National Endowment for the Arts and Statista statistics discussed earlier (for more information about results, please see Research Findings and Conclusion sections). The questions are as follows:

**Question 1:**

What, if any, are the advantages of having clear and comprehensive composition pedagogy? Furthermore, because most popular commercial music involves electronic and singer-songwriter mediums, for what reasons, if any, might extending popular commercial music pedagogy to include a more broad-based spectrum of genres be worthwhile? Will incorporating focuses like choral music and orchestral music, which traditionally emphasize grammar connected to music from the common practice period, be appropriate, and why or why not? What is the value of focusing specifically on popular commercial music theory as a framework for a freshman survey course? To what extent should I address each area to ensure a manageable cognitive load and successful learning?

**Question 2:**

What are some differences between popular commercial music and music from the common practice period? How, if at all, might musical features such as harmonic, pitch, timbral, and rhythmic behavior distinguish popular commercial music from common practice music? What, if anything, are some accepted definitions of “commercial music,” and from what sources can scholars access these definitions? What separates popular commercial music from other forms of commercial composition? In what ways, if any, will classically-trained music majors benefit from exposure to commercial music pedagogy, particularly with popular focuses?
How can popular commercial grammar be applied to contexts that extend beyond “popular” songs? To clarify, *Schitt’s Creek, Pirates of the Caribbean*, the theme for the U.S. Army, “Wake Me Up,” and “Break Every Chain,” are not all “pop” tunes. While some of these examples are, others represent television shows, soundtracks, advertisements, and praise and worship pieces. Each of the examples features a standard chord progression: i-VI-III-VII, which is characteristic of pop and rock music. That said, is this survey course a salient introduction to the contemporary world of successful commercial music, which is arguably becoming more influenced by popular syntax? Or are there some gaps in this study, and if so, how can scholars address limitations in future studies?

**Question 3:**

What, if any, are the confines of concrete composition pedagogy? To what extent can a curriculum adequately govern approaches to composition, which is generally recognized and taught as a creative and subjective art form? Are there benefits to focusing on popular commercial music instead of other means of commercial expression? If so, how will music students benefit from exposure to this curriculum? Is commercial pop music more accessible to mainstream audiences than other forms of commercial expression, and if so, why is this the case?

**Hypothesis**

In this project, I addressed limitations that stem from an absence of concrete pedagogy relating to music composition curriculums. I designed a unique commercial composition curriculum to suit students’ needs in various institutions. I hypothesized that there is a desire to expand popular commercial music composition pedagogy and theory in current curricular contexts and provided studies (please see chapter one, page nine) to potentially confirm this hypothesis. Upon executing research and educational methods, I constructed a curriculum that
will be valuable for educators and administrators who strive to provide specified direction in their composition classes.

Students will appreciate this course because it aims to improve composition in the classroom by solidifying pedagogical standards. I project that learning popular commercial theory and having opportunities to apply such a concept to the broader scope of ensembles that a traditional composition major or commercial composer would address will be intriguing to students. I intend for this curriculum to be attractive to department chairs and deans as a comprehensive, proactive, introductory course that extends popular commercial music in various forms to the broader scope of music composition in a survey that incoming students can take.

Significance of Terms

I articulate various concepts throughout this study and highlight essential terms. For instance, “praxialism” is an important term, which, according to David J. Elliot, is a philosophy that “begins with an explanation of the nature and significance of music.” Elliot aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of musicality while employing a diversified approach to accomplish this goal. He favors the development of well-rounded musical competence and aural skills in students who interact with music. Elliot feels these should be the primary focuses of contemporary music education. In the context of my curriculum, a praxial approach to music composition will involve a didactic and kinesthetic interaction with music. Creativity and efficacy will be primary goals for students to develop in their practices.

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26. Ibid.
Another important term is “commercial music.” Webster’s refers to commercial phenomena as being “designed for a large market,” and “viewed with regard to profit.” The *Grove Dictionary of American Music* defines “commercial” as “an advertisement created for broadcast via radio or television, sometimes transmitted on videotapes, in cinemas, and on Internet sites.” Imro, an international platform that handles distribution and royalties relating to music, presents a similar definition. Per the website, commercial music is “any music produced that is being marketed directly to the general public by any medium.” In developing this curriculum, I emphasized compositional techniques to prime students to work with commercial chord cycles. These are ubiquitous features in popular commercial and rock styles, though they are not exclusive. An analysis of music history can provide insight into how today’s popular music came to fruition.

In summarizing the development of popular music since its inception from the start of the 20th century, the University of Minnesota provides insight. Their website suggests that popular music emerged from the Tin Pan Alley tradition from the early 1900s when musicians in various disciplines collaborated to generate successful songs. According to the source, the primary difference between popular music and classical music is that, whereas classical artists were exalted for their individuality and expected to differ stylistically from other classical composers, popular artists were praised for conforming to the tastes of their intended audience.

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32. Ibid.
Nonetheless, popular music broke barriers that classical music upheld without completely neglecting tonal sensations. For instance, some practices, which are frowned upon in classical music, are prominent in much of today’s popular commercial music. These practices include parallel fifths, unprepared dissonances, and loose hierarchical functions of chords. Such characteristics are prevalent in the examples I mention above.

With this curriculum, I strove to equip students to create music that is arguably high in quality and allows students to produce commercial pop examples accessible to broad audiences. I aimed to use this course to enable students to write in a style that imitates successful commercial music while providing the foundational techniques that mark successful classical music, such as development, form, and orchestration. Students will have the opportunity to apply such practices to commercial contexts across a full spectrum of genres, such as choral, singer-songwriter, electronic, and orchestral ensembles. The goal will be to provide students with tools to compose commercial music effectively by learning to incorporate proven techniques that will allow them to be original and inventive where appropriate.
CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

A careful examination of relevant literature is necessary to ascertain the standards that govern music composition pedagogy in contemporary education. A literature review will also reveal discrepancies and suggest needs for further exploration. Below I organized my literature into four distinct sections; for each text, I summarized what the text conveys and pointed out weaknesses (where applicable) while offering solutions to gaps in studies.

Music Theory/Composition Resources


I value this text and used it frequently as a Liberty University Online student in my graduate music theory courses. I admire the author’s exact comparison of popular and traditional harmonic grammars, which he meticulously clarifies with illustrations and examples. _Music Theory for the Music Professional_ is easily navigable and offers a comprehensive account of musical syntaxes that range from Baroque and classical to popular, jazz, and commercial genres. The text features limited pedagogy but is well-suited for classrooms, as it includes exercises that are useful for assigning to students. I would recommend _Music Theory for the Music Professional_ to students interested in learning music theory that extends beyond traditional grammars.

_The Study of Orchestration (4th edition)_

_The Study of Orchestration_ is an excellent music theory source that guides musicians to apply orchestration concepts across various instrumental genres. Though it focuses on traditional music, educators can adapt the text’s methodology to suit popular commercial music contexts.
While I aim to use this resource to guide orchestrating popular music, Adler intends for students and educators to apply his methods to classical contexts. *The Study of Orchestration* will be a valuable resource for students creating capstone compositions for orchestras.

*Successful Lyric Writing: A Step-by-Step Course & Workbook*

*Successful Lyric Writing* is an excellent source for students wanting to learn successful songwriting. It is a carefully organized workbook that offers assignments, which model practical song construction. *Successful Lyric Writing* features examples that clarify and illustrate concepts, and I would recommend *Successful Lyric Writing* to people with music backgrounds interested in learning songwriting in a popular style. I appreciate how the author breaks down successful songs and explains why some are more effective than others. *Successful Lyric Writing* has convincing scholastic potential.
Pedagogical Resources

*Teaching Music Through Composition: A Curriculum Using Technology*

I consider this a tremendous resource for educators and students. Experts in music education endorse *Teaching Music Through Composition* and recognize the text as a source of real-world value. The synopsis on the cover states that the reference “offers a practical, fully multimedia curriculum designed to teach basic musical concepts through the creative process of music composition.” In one endorsement of *Teaching Music Through Composition*, Rick Dammers argues that Freedman “draw[s] from her experience teaching one of the leading high school music technology programs in the United States.” He commends her for offering practical approaches that have proven effective. Freedman’s methods are excellent, and examples are valuable, which is why I will use this source to guide my lessons. However, I will offer one comment on the material. In Figure 2, which I extracted from Freedman’s text, I would prefer something more in line with popular commercial music grammar than the models Freedman uses in her workbook. To illustrate my point, I took the following example from an assignment that illustrates motivic sequences.

Figure 2. Example of motivic sequences, Barbara Freedman.

This composition is successful in its structural evolution of motivic ideas and its progression in a coherent fashion. The first measure is concept “A,” and the second measure is a

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sequence of the original “A” idea. Measure three is a contrasting motivic segment that one can conceive of as “B.” Measure four is rhythmically equivalent to the first two measures, except it is an oblique manifestation of that rhythm in the sense that it remains stagnant (pitch-wise) on a G4. There is a half cadence in bar four of the first phrase, which poses a “question.” Bars five and six are exact restatements of measures one and two, respectively, and bar seven is a variation of bar three in the initial phrase, while the ultimate bar closes on a tonic “C” whole note. It is structurally and melodically almost identical to a popular nursery rhyme, “Soft Kitty,” made famous by *The Big Bang Theory*, which arguably could be a selling point even though it is simplistic. I illustrate this excerpt below:

Figure 3. “Soft Kitty” (Traditional), arr. by David Pennise.

Aside from being in different keys, each excerpt has almost identical rhythmic ideas. Besides, they are structurally similar; both passages pose antecedent “questions” on the fourth bar, which are “answered” by the consequent phrase that concludes on a whole tonic note by the final measure of each excerpt. I may take a unit like this and adapt it to feature a more commercialized grammar incorporating top-40 chord cycles (my curriculum’s primary goal). Freedman’s text will be a salient resource for students and educators to consult. Ideally, this book would feature popular examples like the ones I will have my students create. Since the text does not include such models, I will substitute the content in the textbook.
All You Need to Know About the Music Business

All You Need to Know About the Music Business is a superb source for students, providing essential training to thrive in the music business. The text discusses business strategies while providing helpful advice, and LA Times refers to it as “The Industry bible.” Donald S. Passman covers essential topics, some of which experts tend to neglect. Such examples include “how streaming has radically restructured the music business,” “updates on high-profile copyright infringement cases,” “the music modernization act and what it means to the industry,” and more. I admire All You Need to Know About the Music Business because it is research-based and credible in its sourcing. Most importantly, professional experience has shaped the workings of the text. I would recommend All You Need to Know About the Music Business to students serious about applying the theory and musicianship skills they will learn in my course with an effective business model for success.

Hooktheory I: Music Theory

I consider Hooktheory a great resource. It offers a contemporary conceptualization of music theory, focusing on the fundamental elements of music, with exercises to develop skills and comprehend music. It draws from famous examples, including those on the radio, and aims primarily at people interested in mastering music theory and creating songs. I consider Hooktheory I an excellent source because professional experience and endorsement solidify its credibility. I would recommend Hooktheory I to students as supplementary material to build


36. Cover copy, All You Need to Know About the Music Business, 2019.
upon the concepts I present in class. I appreciate the care and dedication the author devotes to crafting this text.

Harmonic Experience

Harmonic Experience, by W.A. Mathieu, offers a comprehensive exploration of harmony, ranging from the basics to contemporary chord sequences. The text features chapters that contain helpful information relating to intervallic relationships, octaves, thirds, harmonic associations, chromatic pairs, modal mixture, diesis, cadences, triadic construction, and other factors. Mathieu considers the balance between the ancient harmonic just intonation system and twelve-tone tonality. I applaud the text for its comprehensive music coverage and exploration of practices characteristic of compelling music.

Tonal Harmony

Tonal Harmony is a salient text published in 1984 by theorist and musical aficionado Kostka, recognized for offering a practical and easy-to-follow guide that is attractive for musicians and professors. Classrooms throughout the world use this text. Multiple chapters offer perspectives that address pitch, rhythm, triads, voice leading, diatonic chords, inversions, cadential gestures, and other concepts. I applaud this resource and appreciate its wide-ranging endorsements as well as the author’s experience. For these reasons, Tonal Harmony is a credible resource.

The Guide to MIDI Orchestration

The Guide to MIDI Orchestration 4e by Paul Gilreath provides techniques appropriate for instrumentation and orchestration in the traditional sense while progressing to sequencing and delving into effects, plugins, mixing, and virtual instruments. It supplies helpful visual charts that guide voicing structures related to orchestral families. I would recommend this book as a
supplementary source for students and others as I value its credibility and dedication to research. The language in the text is accessible, which makes the content digestible to wide audiences.

*Acoustic and MIDI Orchestration for the Contemporary Composer: A Practical Guide to Writing and Sequencing for the Studio Orchestra*

*Acoustic and MIDI Orchestration for the Contemporary Composer* is a quality resource by Pejrolo, a music technology professor at the Berklee College of Music. It focuses on traditional orchestration practices and includes techniques appropriate for modern production. Topics covered relate to MIDI messages, mixing, and sequencing. They also include using the orchestra, portamentos, pizzicatos, mutes, and harmonics. I applaud the text for its comprehensiveness, effectiveness of methods, accessibility of reading, and its focus on practical and monetary success. I would recommend *Acoustic and MIDI Orchestration for the Contemporary Composer* to others, especially students interested in furthering their exploration of concepts that I will introduce in class.

*Essential Grooves*

This source is relevant to commercial pop and rock music though it may be lesser-known. It is a successful primer on arranging for rhythm section in various popular styles, including soul, Motown, funk, hip-hop, rock, Jazz, Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, and Afro-Caribbean. It is a brilliant source that applies to a wealth of contexts, including popular music. I would recommend that students consider adding *Essential Grooves* to their libraries.

*Rock and Jazz Harmony*

*Rock and Jazz Harmony* offers a complete, comprehensive account of examples to study related to rock and jazz’s harmonic language. *Rock and Jazz Harmony* goes into extensive detail, is fun to read, focuses on successful techniques, and applies to many situations. I would
recommend this text to all musicians and people in the business. I applaud *Rock and Jazz Harmony* as a text that experts put together that applies practical concepts to many situations. I would enthusiastically encourage students to invest in *Rock and Jazz Harmony*.

*Teaching At Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors* (4th edition)

*Teaching At Its Best* is an exceptional text that offers tried-and-tested strategies for educating students. While not explicitly written for music education, music professionals and experts endorse this text. For instance, Liberty University requires music education students to consult *Teaching At Its Best* as part of their studies. One scholar writes, “all faculty members from new adjuncts to experienced professors will improve their teaching if they read the latest version of Linda Nilson’s essential and very practical handbook on teaching.”37 This resource offers comprehensive approaches to pedagogic implementation that have been proven effective in contemporary classroom situations. It was vital for informing my decisions and shaping my educational practices in the classroom. I would not recommend this for students but would recommend the text for instructors.

Music/Education Resources

*Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues*

*Praxial Music Education* features a compilation of papers by internationally acclaimed music education scholars. These papers provide analytical reflections on the merit and value of praxialism in the context of contemporary education involving musicianship.38 It is accepted as a leading resource for music educators in modern America and beyond. One scholar, Joelle I. Lien,


a recognized contributor to *Music Educators Journal*, states, “the real beauty of this collection of writings can be found in the diversity of perspectives and opinions presented.” Lien applauds David J. Elliot, the editor of the text and a prolific contributor to praxialism in the field of music education. Joelle commends Elliot for respecting and including the positions of scholars who disagree with his views, which align with Elliot’s deeply held opinion that scholarly deliberation, and even disagreements among professionals, are essential for the vitality of music education.

I admire this resource for its contribution and because it does not assert its contentions as exclusive. Given that I gear my project toward college students, I have decided to list it as a relevant example of existing literature applicable to collegiate music pedagogy, even though Elliot’s text focuses primarily (but not exclusively) on public school education. For the context of the curriculum project, *Praxial Music Education* informs my approach to providing students with hands-on experience and a curriculum that focuses predominately on one of the facets of praxialism, namely composition. This resource lacks pedagogic stratagems, but it does well to inform educators of the need to implement a broad-based approach to their disciplines. It also functions as a relevant advocacy tool. I would not expect students enrolled in my course to consult *Praxial Music Education*, but it is an essential text for educators to include in their libraries.

*Seeking the Significance of Music Education: Essays and Reflections*

*Seeking the Significance of Music Education* is a reputable resource for educators, and it does well to update the context of aestheticism in contemporary America. Bennett Reimer skillfully articulates various approaches to music education, and he provides insight that helps

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40. Ibid.
readers develop their philosophical positions that will inform their practices. It is also a source of relevant anecdotes, which Reimer incorporates to illustrate points. For example, in chapter five of his text, Reimer points out how “[he] was confronted with a delineation belief system in a dramatic and amusing way during [his] three-month study in China of the Chinese system of music education.”

Reimer explains that he was fortunate enough to have musicians perform a private recital for him at the Chengdu Conservatory of Music.

A conductor caught him off-guard when he asked Reimer for an interpretation of a piece. Reimer responded, “‘It seemed to me to be about very active musical events with a great deal of inner energy and melodic and rhythmic complexity, coming to a climax shortly before the piece ended.’” The intent was to portray a battle in the swamp through music rather than suggest musical behavior. Reimer attempted to superimpose a Western consideration of the piece, emphasizing theory rather than conceptual portrayal. He was no more successful in his second attempt to contextualize the composition when he proposed “an exciting situation” in the music.

This scenario is relevant to my philosophical positions as they pertain to music education. It illustrates a need to be sensitive to culturalisms that vary among societies to avoid unintentional disrespect. When presenting this kind of music to students, I might focus on guiding their understanding of what phenomenon the piece is portraying (i.e., a battle taking place in a swamp) rather than merely analyzing the musical events from a theoretical perspective. If I were to present music evocative of Western culture, I might focus more on the theory and how that might give meaning to what is happening musically. The source is limited in

42. Ibid.
what it can offer pedagogically, but it is valuable for helping people form ideas about musical viewpoints. The text may be slightly biased, with overtones that suggest favoritism toward aestheticism, a philosophical movement that scholars credit Reimer for starting. Though it is not a resource from which students in a music composition course might directly benefit, it is valuable for educators to include in their libraries.

Historical/Research Resources

_A History of American Music Education (3rd edition)_

_A History of American Music Education_ is an important source that I used as a Liberty University student. The text is peer-reviewed, and eminent scholars in the field endorse the resource. According to one expert, “honoring the legacy of generations of music educators and mapping pathways that guided and advanced the profession, the authors [of _A History of American Music Education_] have illuminated how history can inform contemporary practice.” This text is a convincing source for educators to keep in their libraries. It provides a comprehensive account of music history and contextualizes limitations in the existing bodies of literature.

_Music in Words: A Guide to Researching & Writing About Music_

_Music in Words_ is an excellent source for educators and students alike. Top-tier professionals support this resource. For example, a review from _Australian Music Teacher Magazine_ reads, “not only a valuable quick-reference compendium of information but also a lively and enjoyable book that triggers as well as offers ideas.” I find this text a robust

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supplemental source for students looking to become better writers about music. Still, it is of little value for implementing music pedagogy. *Music in Words* has helped me to articulate myself more effectively when conducting research and expressing ideas. The guide is a resource that both educators and music students should keep in their libraries. I would not require this text in my classroom.

**Summary**

These literary sources represent the scope of extensive research, consultation of experts in various music fields, and college and professional careers, encompassing music from the common practice period and commercialized contexts with popular focus. The majority of resources highlight traditional music theory, educational practices, and research stratagems and are limited in their relevance to applied composition. Many offer guidance in using a business strategy to achieve success, while only a few offer guidance for achieving effective practice or discuss popular commercial music theory. Further study may be worthwhile to expose a need to improve composition pedagogy in the classroom and the scope of literature I reviewed. It might also reveal limitations in existing sources and a need to contribute to the literature. Most textbooks discuss traditional music theory and lack pedagogy because they do not teach students precisely how to compose in a particular style. Even textbooks that discuss production methods, and pop or rock music, provide scarce information about chord cycles, even though they constitute a wide variety of successful tunes in many styles.

While many sources cover a wide range of musical periods, such as plainchant, Baroque, Classical, and Twentieth-Century, they lack practical application, primarily concerning commercial contexts. For those relevant, they often provide business strategies or discuss theory at a superficial level, failing to account for pertinent patterns and components such as formal
structures and chord progressions that constitute some of the biggest hits in the market. I suggest further study to exhaust the review of pertinent literature fully and, if necessary, call for experts to examine and document the mechanics of successful commercial pop and rock music more comprehensively. An essential part of achieving success in practice stems from learning what is happening at a given moment. If more resources were available for aspiring artists to consult, the methods of some of the most successful musicians would be readily accessible, and it would be easier for newcomers to achieve success.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

I used historical methods to guide research for this project. A systematic examination of past events provides an account of the evolution of music education and academic development. The resources reviewed illustrate a growing need to improve college music programs, given current trends in the contemporary music industry. I consulted a wide range of academic texts that represent the scope of my college education, carefully investigated other sources, and found few literary resources that offer guidance for implementing composition pedagogy.

My process for developing this curriculum entailed studying existing Liberty University courses and modeling my class after them. I organized the semester into sixteen weeks and created a syllabus that outlines each week’s expectations, using various Liberty syllabi as templates. I added relevant readings and assignments to supplement coursework. I included multiple charts, such as an analysis chart that provides information about the curriculum, outlines the problem, describes learners and their characteristics, and discusses delivery methods. According to suggestions from professionals and professors, I adjusted coursework to a manageable workload and compelling curriculum. I also articulated learning outcomes supporting Bloom’s Taxonomy to ensure substantial learning occurs when educators enact this course.

I constructed a design chart with a concept statement, learning outcomes, content, training activities, and assessment tools over a sixteen-week timeframe corresponding to Bloom’s Taxonomy to facilitate adequate learning. I articulated a chronology of learning outcomes and rationalized the sequence of various objectives. I implemented a development chart with an expository lesson demonstration that includes a narrative, graphical organizers, and
I outlined a series of instructive events and described how I would address each instructional unit. I added an implementation chart that discusses physical items and rationalizes the use of each article. For the second part of this chart, I articulated possible weaknesses and rationales for changing plans, demonstrating preparedness to be flexible and mitigate unexpected concerns. I included an evaluation chart, learning outcomes, and a rationale for each. Upon evaluating and reflecting, I described possible issues, strategies for addressing problems, and grounds for revising my curriculum. I included an appendix that corresponds to external, supplementary media. I shaped my curriculum after a beginning composition course I took as a freshman that entailed writing lead sheets with popular commercial chord progressions. Using Liberty undergraduate courses as models and templates, I drew from my personal, professional, and educational experience to expand upon this introductory course. After consulting with experienced educators and relevant field experience, I adapted the workload to make it manageable and appropriate as a freshman survey course.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Discoveries

Upon researching this curriculum, I discovered some pedagogical resources about commercial pop and rock music, with occasional resources focusing on commercial music in the generic sense. There are some sources specific to popular commercial music’s theoretical considerations, and more that are akin to commercial music outside of pop and rock, such as jazz theory resources. While some educators teach popular commercial music, in many commercial music programs, commercial music encompasses a broad scope of syntaxes involving Broadway musicals, videogames, cinema, and other genres with an absence of a popular commercial framework (although this is not always the case). For example, many undergraduate programs have degree paths entitled “Jazz and Commercial Music,” which favors jazz over pop or rock applications.

I have observed that popular commercial grammar is desirable in the commercial music market even though its presence in academia is lessened (though not absent altogether). I discovered various musical examples encompassing an overarching variety of genres that feature contemporary cycles like i-VI-III-VII, which I mentioned previously. However, the presence of literature and educators that discuss them in detail is scarce. As the musical sources illustrate, commercial pop and rock music is not exclusively fitting for pop or rock stages but has demonstrated success in various commercial contexts, as have other harmonic grammars.

I developed this curriculum with an emphasis on commercial pop music rather than commercial music as a whole. I also extended the course duration from eight weeks to sixteen weeks to provide students with ample time to achieve objectives and correspond to Liberty
University courses. I foresee the curriculum being beneficial because it will allow students to learn and apply popular commercial music theory to multiple situations that will yield success in various contexts. I anticipate that the curriculum will change over time to suit current trends or needs in different settings; for example, educators may develop a remote version of this course due to COVID and virtualization within the music industry. After I successfully test my curriculum, I will adapt the system after assessing what is useful and what needs improvement.

Description of the Curriculum

My research revealed that there are numerous resources devoted to common practice harmonic grammar. However, there is an absence of pedagogical sources that focus on the implementation of courses. Generally, administrators gear university settings toward preparing students to conduct, learn music theory, orchestrate, and train their ears. While these are necessary skills to foster competent musicianship, they are insufficient to prepare students to create original compositions. While some colleges have classes explicitly devoted to compositional design, many lack educational applications relevant to the modern music industry.

In my curriculum, I sought to address limitations by providing students with opportunities to interact with music in ways that will leave room for creative individuality and be marketable in the commercial music industry. This project will task students with composing melodies in various forms, using popular commercial chord progressions. For example, a student will compose a four-bar phrase using the i-VI-III-VII chord progression and write it a second time to become an eight-bar “A” section. They will create a contrasting four-bar representation to restate and become an eight-bar “B” statement. Rewriting their “A” phrase to become a recapitulation, they will finally compose a brief coda to conclude their pieces. This activity will
represent ternary form. Students will expand their lead sheets to become a piano accompaniment chart.

While the curriculum starts students with “exercise-based” activities as described above, it progresses to units that call for students to study the language of modern tunes. These include selections such as “Despacito,” a widely successful pop hit streamed billions of times (which incidentally uses the chord progression i-VI-III-VII)\(^4\) including on YouTube, where as of July 4, 2021, at 2:04 pm, it received 7,427,983,310 views.\(^5\) Students will spend considerable time composing lead sheets and creating piano accompaniment charts using the same structural and harmonic language as highly successful artists. I chose assignments of such magnitude because they provide the optimal rigor to allow students to focus on mastering the form and harmonic language of thriving pop music. Doing so is essential to grasp before taking on more substantial projects like the final project, which will provide students with options to undertake a rigorous activity such as arranging for a fuller ensemble or producing a track.

Even before students take on significant charting assignments, it will be vital for them to understand smaller-scale forms such as ternary and binary forms, which are often presented initially in rudimentary music classes. They will learn popular chord progressions and accompaniments along the way and will eventually create lead sheets in ternary-within-ternary form. Although the popular examples they will emulate do not necessarily abide by this structure, I wanted to start with something generic that could be used in broad contexts and introduce students to large-scale structure, so they become comfortable enough to take on


emulating practical music, which does not always have a form that is as straightforward or easy-to-follow.

I also am doing this because I wanted to build on the course design from a former beginning composition professor, a Juilliard Doctoral graduate who studied with John Williams. This professor, Dr. Ken Lampl, taught a class where students created multiple versions of charts, such as what you will see on the following page for final projects. Lampl has a long track record of commercial success, including scoring two Pokémon movies and other significant blockbusters and television shows. Although he did emphasize popular chord progressions and polymodal/pop music theory in practice, I have discovered that his teaching stratagems were unique and presented as an “insider secret” rather than universally followed or accepted conventions or methods.

My goal with this curriculum is to extend Lampl’s idea of teaching popular commercial grammar in a fundamentals class. I incorporated examples of highly successful commercial music for students to emulate, in addition to providing opportunities for them to compose for generic structures as Ken Lampl had students do in his course. On page thirty-seven, Figure 4 features an example of a compositional lead sheet that a student might create before emulating a piece of music with a less straightforward structure. I ask students to develop their lead sheets into piano charts, using more straightforward “classical” accompaniments like Alberti bass because they are easy to digest and realize. Later, when practical music is studied, students will be creative with accompaniments and may choose to apply the patterns used by successful artists. I start with preexisting models to yield a smooth transition between modalities of thinking and ensure a manageable cognitive load.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION/CONTEXT

To provide context, I illustrate what an example of a composition in ternary-within-ternary form might look like in Figure 4. The work features three primary thirty-two bar structural areas that function as mini “ternary sections.” For example, the first thirty-two bars consist of one melodic phrase, followed by a contrasting melodic phrase, concluding with a return to the initial melodic phrase. For optimal viewing, I have left the remainder of this page blank so an entire page can be devoted to viewing the chart.
Figure 4. Example of composition for lead sheet in ternary-within-ternary form:

\{ABA\} \{CDC\} \{ABA\}.
The composition begins with an eight-bar A phrase, which comprises two repeated four-bar sub-phrases and features the chord progression “Am-F-C-G,” or i-VI-III-VII in A Aeolian. A contrasting eight-bar B phrase follows, again with repeated sub-phrases, using the chord progression “C-G-Am-F.” These are the same chords but in a varied order. After this is a recapitulation of the A section. The didactic purpose of this unit will be to guide students in understanding polymodality, which occurs in commercial pop and rock music (I provide examples in the curriculum), as does commercial music with one primary modal center. I can substantiate the credibility of the pedagogy from its derivation from the methods that Ken Lampl, a word-class Hollywood Film Composer, incorporated in his original beginning composition course, which I am extending conceptually in this curriculum.

One can understand the form as A [4+4] \( \rightarrow \) B [4+4] \( \rightarrow \) A [4+4]. These thirty-two bars or A+B+A combined constitute a large-scale A section. A large-scale B section follows, beginning with a C eight-bar contrasting section, consisting of one repeating sub-phrase, using the chord progression “Dm-C-G-Am.” This large-scale section features a microscopic “D” section that follows the C section, using the chord progression “F-G-Am-C,” or I-II-iii-V in F Lydian. A recapitulation of the large-scale “B” section follows the initial overarching A section, with a brief coda appended. Diagrammed, one can express the composition as follows:

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“A”                             “B”
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“A”
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Finally, the following piano chart is one possible realization, using several different contemporary piano accompaniment techniques.
Figure 5: Example of composition for piano in ternary-within-ternary form:

\{ABA\} \{CDC\} \{ABA\}.

Composition Demo
(For Piano)

David Pennise
Composition Demo

46

(C) (G) (Am) A (Am) (F)

Pho.

51

(C) (G) (Am) (F) (C)

Pho.

56

(G) B (C) (G) (Am) (F)

Pho.

61

(C) (G) (Am) (F) (Am) (F)

Pho.

67

(C) (G) (Am) (F) (C) (G) (F) (Em)(Dm)(C)

Pho.

Coda
The only compositional difference between the two examples is that the second example substitutes a more effective coda idiomatic of the piano (it might not be appropriate for a lead sheet, which is often realized by a guitar). I will introduce imitation devices in a different unit that will allow students to be innovative and creative. I will encourage composers to imitate successful practices while being original to develop their techniques. I will stress to my students that this course’s purpose is not to assert that my curriculum is superior nor that it represents the only way to compose effectively. I will encourage students to learn from this class to create successful commercial music that imitates practices professionals use in various disciplines. I will also urge students to expand upon what they know and be creative in their approaches. Figure 6 is an excerpt from a composition loadbang performed. This established new music ensemble demonstrates developmental techniques in a contemporary context.
Figure 6. “Mamba,” for loadbang illustrating developmental techniques (m.95-156).
Mamba

C Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Cl.

Bar. (Hand Claps)

Retrograde Inversion of C

Diatonic Mirror Inversion of C
(C Prime: m. 109-110)

Sing: Ah
Mamba

Retrograde
Inversion of F Prime with
Added Sixteenth
Notes on Beat 4
(Oblique Motion)
(F Double Prime: m. 123)
(F Triple Prime: m. 124)

C Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Cl.

Bar.

Doo dah dee duh
Dah Dah
Dee duh Tah
Doo
Mamba

Truncation of G
(G Triple Prime: m. 139)

Truncation of G Prime;
Beats 3 and 4
Omitted (G Quadruple
Prime: m. 149)

Extension of G Double Prime;
Beat 5 Added (G Quintuple Prime:
m. 150)
My rationale for including “Mamba” in the curriculum is to illustrate the potential of complex developmental techniques in contemporary contexts. Few pop or rock examples incorporate techniques such as diatonic mirror inversion and transformation of the diatonic mirror inversion, which are the kinds of techniques I employ. The course’s primary focus will be on established and current popular examples that favor direct repetition over development. However, I want to illustrate that in the art of composition, especially in contexts outside the scope of “rock-‘n’-roll” or “pop” music, there is room to be creative, and drawing influences from other styles is often encouraged.

Harmonically, “Mamba” is akin to popular music in its emphasis on modal chord progressions, including I-V-vi-IV, or C-G-Am-F in C Ionian, and I-II-iii-V or F-G-Am-C in F Lydian. These are the kinds of cycles featured in established pop and rock tunes, which I illustrate in the Developmental Chart of my curriculum. Developmentally “Mamba” is analogous to neoclassical music as it incorporates techniques like permutation, truncation, and retrograde inversion, characteristic of common practice grammar.

The point of the course is to provide students with the tools and techniques used by established artists in the field while illustrating that there is room to apply them to many contexts, including new music and art music ensembles. Works that draw from current musical trends such as radio broadcasts, music made over 100 years ago, or other possibilities can prove attractive because of their familiarity and uniqueness. I will use “Mamba” as one way to encourage students to “think outside the box” beyond this course, as doing so can also yield success (as it did for me), besides being a “pop star” or a “rock star.” If a student prefers to model their career after the top-40 artists that I will introduce them to in my course, they will
have ample opportunities to learn the syntax and structure that many of them use, and to prime themselves to think in a similar fashion harmonically.

The course’s composing approach will maximize objectivity in grading and provide a good primer for creating successful commercial music in the popular style. I will prompt students to write in styles similar to successful commercial artists, such as Ramin Djawadi, composer of *Game of Thrones*, James Horner, composer of *Braveheart*, and Hans Zimmer, composer of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, as well as composers of other successful productions. Students will have opportunities to use concepts such as means of variation and imitation devices, which I will incorporate into specific assignments. Innovation and correspondence to successful commercialism are essential skills to thrive in the music industry.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Summary of Study

The scope of the study stemmed from providing statistical data to suggest a confirmation of my hypothesis that societal attitudes toward common practice music and jazz are growing weary and illustrating that commercial pop and rock music is thriving. Research and analysis of varying musical contexts suggest that popular commercial music harmonic grammar is favorable. I was inspired to create a freshman survey curriculum to mediate a potential gap between common music theory and compositional pedagogy in the traditional collegiate music classroom and practices that are taking place in television shows, cinema, commercials, songs, and other settings.

That is, as I illustrated earlier, chord progressions like i-VI-III-VII are ubiquitous in popular music because of their inherently modal character, lack of traditional functional hierarchy, and their commonality in contemporary situations. From its prevalence in praise and worship tunes like “Break Every Chain” and in reggaetón hits such as “Despacito,” plus promotional videos like the theme for the U.S. Army, the progression is versatile. It is often desirable in the commercial music market and not restricted to a particular genre in which it can function.

Charlie Albright noted that classical music favorability is waning. Sources like The National Endowment for the Arts and Statista substantiated that implication, citing statistics that illustrate declining attendance in classical music and jazz concerts. Notably, this does not entail a reduction of musical participation or interest. My research validated a significant increase in attendance in live musical events where pop and/or rock music played a significant component (see chapter one, page nine). The significance of the curriculum’s title “Popular Commercial
Music Across the Spectrum: From Electronic to Symphonic” stems from a desire to present popular commercial music composition pedagogy and introduce the idea of applying related harmonic syntax to multiple contexts, beyond the expected “pop” or “rock” performance venues. I present examples of relevant models that are successful in verifying the effectiveness of doing so (please see design chart, pages 78-110).

The premise of the curriculum does not dismiss classical music as an old art form. It even recognizes that successful examples of commercial music often draw influence from common practice harmonic syntax, in addition to more contemporary harmonic characteristics (see chapter one, page ten). The central argument for justifying the publication of this curriculum is not an intention to replace common practice art forms but to inspire the supplementation of traditional music theory pedagogy with more contemporary or commercial applications, and more specifically, those with a popular orientation.

As I illustrated with the inclusion of an original piece of music (see chapter five, pages 44-50), it is appropriate in artistic music and even commercial applications to draw influence from multiple practice periods. Including neoclassical and modern contexts is feasible, and there are a variety of ways to do so. My work, “Mamba,” incorporates developmental techniques characteristic of melodic and motivic behavior in classical music. Other works, such as the theme for Pirates of the Caribbean, fuse voice leading, and harmonic practices characteristic of the common practice period in addition to “popular” commercial grammar. The point of this project is to facilitate creativity, not necessarily direct students to compose in a “proper” fashion. The musical examples I studied illustrate that composers will sometimes draw influences from other styles and practices in modern practice. However, no two works are precisely alike in the techniques and methodologies they employ.
Limitations

The nature of limitations facing my study involves an absence of practical implementation; I designed much of the course due to professional and academic experience and observations of current pedagogical and educational resources, which I sought to mitigate with this curriculum. Because I designed this project for use at universities, revisions may become necessary after being tried and tested by multiple educators. I can justify the first limitation because the curriculum is backed by robust research and consultation of experts, featuring music examples from highly successful artists. It also extends concepts introduced by Ken Lampl, who is a thriving film composer.

My course will incorporate the same skills that Dr. Lampl emphasized in his class and extend them to situations that teach practical composition, such as whole, electronic, and popular ensembles. I will present this course as a survey of music composition to first-year students to develop a sense of what undergraduate students will encounter in more depth later in their studies: compositional development, form, harmony, theory, counterpoint, and orchestration. I am supplementing with original examples to illustrate the concepts more directly I employ throughout the course. However, I feature famous examples and guide students to model their practices as well. Limitations will be easier to address once educators have tested this course in real-time.

Next Steps

The following steps in the research process will be to conduct trials of this curriculum by proposing the course to multiple university settings and assessing its overall effectiveness. Once implemented, I can present surveys to students asking them to evaluate their experience. I will also consult with administrators and educators who might employ the pedagogy in this
curriculum and solicit their feedback. After giving this curriculum a sincere trial, I will implement revisions based on factors that warrant improvement and overall responses received. Adaptations to suit varying contexts and skill levels among different university and college contexts may also be necessary.

Suggestions for Further Study

Further studies may be necessary to provide exhaustive retrospection of the existing literature relevant to music composition or particular to pedagogy. Studies that test the effectiveness of popular commercial composition pedagogy on success and welfare in life may be necessary. I propose studying the implications of fusing common-practice grammar with contemporary commercial pop grammar. For example, studies could consider popular songs that use developmental techniques on the radio. If studies reveal that such themes are more successful in the commercial market, this may suggest a need to stress development in contemporary music composition pedagogy. Studies that explore educators’ and students’ perspectives and students’ enthusiasm for learning to write commercially across a spectrum of genres will be worthwhile. I trust that this course will feature a meaningful contribution to the literature, and I hope it will prime students and educators to achieve success.
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CURRICULUM: “POPULAR COMMERCIAL MUSIC ACROSS THE SPECTRUM: FROM ELECTRONIC TO SYMPHONIC”
David Pennise

MUSC 689: Thesis Proposal and Research
Dr. Joshua Carver

August 17, 2021
COURSE SYLLABUS


COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will help students apply compositional concepts to various mediums and contexts and have a popular commercial focus. Students will become familiar with basic formal design (ABA form, AABA form, etc.). The curriculum will emphasize instilling variety and preparing students to become successful practitioners in the commercial field. Educators will equip students with the skills necessary to compose popular music for chamber ensembles, SATB choir, orchestral ensembles, singer-songwriter ensembles, and media.

RATIONALE: The necessity for aspiring composers to be comfortable writing for multiple mediums is paramount, especially for commercial composers who thrive in a dynamic society where musicians are likely to be called upon to use multi-faceted skills. This course will enable students to become comfortable working with structures that have been proven successful and translate them to compositions that range in instrumentation, focus, and style and have commercial application. The course will equip musicians to better contribute to their chosen field. Popular Commercial Music Across the Spectrum: From Electronic to Symphonic uses a praxial approach.

I. PREREQUISITES
   A fundamental understanding of music theory, chords, keyboard skills, harmony.

II. REQUIRED RESOURCE PURCHASES


III. **ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR LEARNING**

1. Computer with basic audio/video equipment (Mac with latest OS is recommended; students with PCs will be required to use on-campus computer labs for all assignments requiring work with GarageBand.).
2. Internet access (broadband recommended).
3. Microsoft Office.
4. Finale (latest version recommended; older versions are acceptable).
5. GarageBand.

IV. **MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

A. Discuss various components of basic formal structures that have been tried and tested successfully in guiding music composition (i.e., recall that ternary form is broken down into an eight bar “A” section, followed by an eight bar “B” section, concluding with an eight bar “A” section.).

B. Apply examples of formal structures to create short compositional sketches (i.e., compose a lead sheet of a piece in ternary form with a beginning eight bar “A” section, followed by a contrasting eight bar “B” section, concluding with an eight bar “A” section).

C. Arrange and develop compositional sketches into piano reductions (i.e., take a piece written for melody + chords lead sheet in ternary form, and arrange it for piano, featuring accompanying patterns).

D. Create more substantially-scored pieces from piano charts (i.e., arrange a piano chart of a work in ternary form for chorus).

E. Revise compositions after eliciting feedback from colleagues and instructor (Revisions will be optional, but students will have the option to revise assignments for improved grades. Revisions will be due no later than a week after the week when I assign original projects. Students will be unable to modify final projects).

V. **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

A. **Discussion Board Forums (4):** Discussion boards provide learning practices that engage students through partnership. Students must contribute threads that respond to prompts for each forum (at least one thread per module is required). Each thread must be no less than two hundred fifty words, demonstrate knowledge about the course, and reference at least one source. In addition to the post, I require students to reply to at least two classmates’ threads, and these responses must be no less than one hundred words in length.

B. **Hans Zimmer Analysis:** After studying and listening to “160 BPM,” “All of Them,” and “Ah, Putrefaction,” students will write a paper in current Turabian format, selecting one of these pieces and analyzing the structure and essential features within the work. Students can find examples of analyses on Blackboard under the “Additional Resources” tab. The study must contain four to five pages of content, a title, and a bibliography page,
and feature at least three scholarly sources. Students may wish to discuss how they can apply what they learn to original compositions and pay attention to features such as accompanying patterns, textural elements, instrumentation, intensity of scoring, etc.

C. Exams: There will be no exams; in place of such tests, there will be a capstone project.
VI. Course Grading and Policies

Week 1:
- Course Requirements Checklist. (10 points)
- Review Syllabus.
- Class Introductions.
- HW Monday: Complete questionnaires and Course Requirements Checklist.
- HW Friday: Discussion Board Forum One. (20 points)

Week 2:
- Introduce developmental techniques.
- HW Friday: Read developmental techniques ditto and complete worksheet.

Week 3:
- Topics:
  1. Present activities to help students recognize and interpret developmental techniques in music.
  2. Introduce students to common formal structures in music.
- H.W. Friday: Take four original ideas from class and combine them to create compositions using the following structures: ternary form, rondo form, thirty-two bar form, through-composed form, and binary form. Apply one developmental technique for every recurring section, which students must treat as prime sections (i.e., ABA -> ABA').

Week 4:
- Topics:
  1. Introduce popular commercial chord progressions that emphasize different modes.
  2. Students will compose for lead sheets using chord progressions that are characteristic of popular commercial music in ternary form, rondo form, thirty-two bar form, through-composed form, and binary form.
- H.W. Monday: Practice performing assigned chord progressions (i-VI-III-VII or Am-F-C-G in A Aeolian, I-V-iii-II or F-C-Am-G in F Lydian, I-V-vi-IV or C-G-Am-F in C Ionian, i-III-v-IV, or Dm-F-Am-G in D Dorian) and get comfortable with the progressions.
- H.W. Friday: Practice composing melodies using popular commercial chord sequences assigned. Use preexisting material to create a lead sheet in ABA, AABA, ABACA, ABCD, and AB forms. For each letter, pick one chord progression that emphasizes a particular mode. For example, an “A” section can incorporate the Am-F-C-G chord progression, which highlights the Aeolian mode. A “B” section might use an F-C-Am-G progression that centers around the Lydian mode. Finish class activities.
Week 5:
- **Topics:**
  1. Learn accompanying patterns and apply them to lead sheets.
  2. Discuss harmonic language and structure of “All of Me” by John Legend.
- **H.W. Monday:** Finish classwork activities pertaining to accompanying patterns.
- **H.W. Friday:** Students will be asked to continue familiarizing themselves with the breakdown of “All of Me.”

**READING:**
- “All of Me” lead sheet.
- “All of Me” piano only chart.

**LISTENING:**
- Listen to “All of Me.” (Recordings will be provided for all assigned musical examples.)

Week 6:
- **Topics:**
  1. Review the structure of Legend’s composition and discuss ways to emulate his work to create original music.
  2. Introduce students to “Alone” by Marshmello and guide students to create charts that model the harmonic language and structure of the work.
- **H.W. Monday:** Finish charts from class that model “All of Me,” by John Legend. (30 points)
- **H.W. Friday:** Students will finish charts from class that model “Alone,” by Marshmello. (30 points)

**READING:**
- Look at “All of Me” lead sheet by John Legend.
- Look at “All of Me” piano only chart.
- Look at “Alone” by Marshmello lead sheet.
- Look at “Alone” by Marshmello piano only chart.

**LISTENING:**
- Listen to “All of Me.”
- Listen to “Alone.”

Week 7:
- **Topics:**
  1. I will introduce students to the concept of arranging piano charts for SATB + piano choir.
  2. Learn the structure of “Break Every Chain” by Tasha Cobbs, use as a model to create an original piano chart in a similar style.
- **H.W. Monday** – Complete chorale arrangement activity worksheet.
- **H.W. Friday** – Finish piano chart in the style of “Break Every Chain.” (30 points)

**READING:**
- Look at “Break Every Chain” lead sheet by Tasha Cobbs.
- Look at “Break Every Chain” piano only chart.
LISTENING:
• Listen to “Break Every Chain.”

Week 8:
• Topics:
  1. Introduce arranging for Pop-Rock ensemble that features the following instruments: Vox, Keyboard, Electric Guitar, Electric Bass, Drum Set in Finale.
  2. Introduce “Despacito” by Daddy Yankee and Luis Fonsi and equip students to create a piano chart in the style of the song.
• H.W. Monday – Pop-Rock Ensemble arrangement activity worksheet.
• H.W. Friday – Finish piano chart in the style of “Despacito.” (30 points)

READING:
• Look at “Despacito” lead sheet by Daddy Yankee and Luis Fonsi.
• Look at “Despacito” piano only chart.
• Adler: 741-799.

LISTENING:
• Listen to “Despacito.”

Week 9:
• Topics:
  1. Expose students to arranging piano charts for Full Orchestra using Finale.
  2. Introduce students to “Skyfall” by Adele.
• H.W. Monday – Full Orchestra arrangement activity worksheet.
• H.W. Friday – Finish piano chart in the style of “Skyfall.” (30 points)

READING
• Look at “Skyfall” lead sheet by Adele.
• Look at “Skyfall” piano only chart.
• Freedman: 11-27, 140-143.

LISTENING:
• Listen to “Skyfall.”

Week 10:
• Topics:
  1. Expose students to arranging piano charts for EDM Ensemble.
  2. Introduce students to “This is What You Came For” by Calvin Harris.
• H.W. Monday – EDM Ensemble arrangement activity worksheet.
• H.W. Friday – Finish piano chart in the style of “This is What You Came For.” (30 points)

READING
• Look at “This is What You Came For” lead sheet by Calvin Harris.
• Look at “This is What You Came For” piano only chart.
• Freedman: 11-27, 140-143

LISTENING:
• Listen to “This is What You Came For.”
Week 11:
- Topics:
  1. Introduce the concept of arranging piano charts for thirty-second media ensemble.
  2. Review prior concepts up until this coming point as well as Discussion Board.
- Friday H.W. – Discussion Board Forum Two. (20 points)

Week 12:
- Topics:
  1. Review GarageBand Basics. Students will have studio time that will function as a “guided tutorial” to follow along. I will provide dittos that explain everything explicitly.
  2. I will go over songwriting as well as large scale forms (sonata, ternary-within-ternary and top-40) with students.

Week 13:
- Topics:
  1. Expose students to the music of Hans Zimmer. I will play examples of his music and discuss them as a class.
  2. Review scholarly writing and practice brainstorming ideas, constructing theses, and making scholarly arguments.
- H.W. Monday – Review audio clips of Zimmer soundtracks and decide which piece you would like to analyze for analysis paper (to be introduced Friday).
- H.W. Friday – Begin working on analysis and final project (both will be covered in detail during class).

READING:

LISTENING:
- “160 BPM.”
- “All of Them.”
- “Ah, Putrefaction.”

Week 14:
- I will spend class time refreshing students on everything we have covered so far. This will take place over Monday and Friday. I will introduce Discussion Board Forum Three. Time will be devoted for students to work in the studio as needed.
- H.W. Monday – Discussion Board Forum Three. (20 points)

Week 15:
- Students will have studio time to devote entirely to working on their final projects. I will be around to guide students as needed. Final projects will be due by Monday Week 16.
- H.W. Friday – Discussion Board Forum Four. (20 points)

Week 16:
- Students will present their projects.
FINAL PROJECT OPTIONS:

- Final project options will be as follows:
  1. Using rondo form, ternary form, binary form, or thirty-two bar form submit one of the following final projects (sixteen bar minimum):
     a) A composition in lead sheet, piano, and full score for orchestra formats
     b) A composition in lead sheet, piano, and thirty-second commercial formats (I will assign instruments)
     c) A composition in lead sheet, piano, and SATB choir and piano formats
     d) A composition in lead sheet, piano accompaniment, and pop-rock band formats (I will assign instruments)
     e) A composition in lead sheet, piano, and electronic ensemble formats (I will assign instruments)

- OR

  2. Using a large-scale form (sonata, ternary-within ternary, or top-40 form) submit one of the following (thirty-two bar minimum):
     a) A lyrics-plus-chords lead sheet of an original song with lyrics (accompaniment chart not required)
     b) A lyrics-plus-chords lead sheet and a piano accompaniment chart

OTHER GRADING COMPONENTS: Participation (200 points)
  - Engagement in Peer Presentations (150 points)
  - Analysis Paper (195 points)
  - Final Project (225 points)

D- = 680–699  F = 0–679

3. Late Assignment Policy

Students must complete assignments on time. Students who submit without approval within a week after the assigned due date will receive a 20% deduction on their work. Each week following, the percentage will increase by 10% until after five weeks, at which point students will not receive credit.
CURRICULUM PROJECT – DESIGN CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor: David Pennise</th>
<th>Course: Popular Commercial Music Across the Spectrum: From Electronic to Symphonic</th>
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</table>

**Concept Statement:** This course is designed for prospective composers who would like to become fluent in composing for commercial settings. I designed this course for music theory and composition majors at the undergraduate level, starting their first year (surveying their program).

Discussion board forums will be required and will contribute to students’ overall grades. The ability to interact with such platforms is necessary for ensuring successful communication, engagement; and for developing critical thinking skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Learning/Training Activity</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recall examples of form that composers commonly use in music.</td>
<td>Week 1 <em>(MONDAY)</em> -Class introductions. -Complete Course Requirements Checklist. -Student questionnaires. <em>(FRIDAY)</em> -Review syllabus. -Class discussion for Discussion Board.</td>
<td>Week 1 <em>(MONDAY)</em> -Ask students to sit next to someone they do not know and get to know them better; have students switch one to two times. -Go over the Course Requirements Checklist. -Ask students to fill out questionnaires. <em>(FRIDAY)</em> -Go over syllabus. -Class discussion for Discussion Board:</td>
<td>Week 1 <em>(MONDAY)</em> -Students will fill out questionnaires, which will ask students to provide information about themselves and fun facts they learned about the people with whom they interacted. -Students will complete the Course Requirements Checklist. <em>(FRIDAY)</em> -Students will acknowledge on Blackboard that they have read the</td>
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<td>Week 2 (MONDAY)</td>
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<td>- Introduce developmental techniques.</td>
<td>- We will discuss development in music.</td>
<td>- Students will continue to practice skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- We will cover techniques such as retrograde inversion, permutation, diminution,</td>
<td>- I will distribute dittos and resources.</td>
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Discuss musical perspectives. Arrange students into groups to discuss their thoughts on music, perspectives presented and their own points of view. Have representatives from each group report back overall thoughts to the class.

syllabus and will be able to submit comments/questions/expectations or concerns.

- Discussion Board – Topic: What do you feel the role of music should be - to entertain, to make money, to appeal to the masses, or perhaps to exist for its own sake? Discuss your perspectives about music, what genres you like, and why you feel the way you do.
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<tr>
<td>- Review developmental techniques + examples, practice skills.</td>
<td>augmentation, same-rhythm-different-pitches, etc.</td>
<td>- I will encourage students to practice developmental techniques and apply them to original ideas.</td>
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</table>
| - I will review development with students; we will look at brief examples from famous music in different genres that use development. 
- I will supply students with worksheets to practice development. | - I will present “Mamba,” an original composition loadbang performed, and I will provide copies of the score for students. 
- I will break students into groups and ask them to analyze and take note of techniques applied to different sections of the composition. A representative from the group will circle important features and annotate them on the score. 
- We will reconvene as a class, and the | - I will assign a worksheet to guide students to become comfortable employing developmental techniques to established and unique ideas. |

2. **Apply examples of form to create commercialized compositional sketches.**

**Week 3 (MONDAY)**
- Students will learn to recognize developmental techniques in music.
- I will present “Mamba,” an original composition loadbang performed, and I will provide copies of the score for students.
- I will break students into groups and ask them to analyze and take note of techniques applied to different sections of the composition. A representative from the group will circle important features and annotate them on the score.
- We will reconvene as a class, and the
**FRIDAY**
- Introduce students to common formal structures in music.

representatives will report features. I will take note of them and ask the remaining students to note them.
- We will also look at Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, one of the examples we will have looked at briefly last Friday and analyze it in more detail as a class. The point will be that development can be effective in more than one context.

**FRIDAY**
- We will discuss form in music. I will introduce students to binary (AB) form, ternary (ABA) form, rondo (ABACA) form, thirty-two bar (AABA) form, and through-composed (ABCD) form. I will present examples of melodies that demonstrate each structure.

- I will break down melodic construction with students and ask students to compose four eight-bar melodies, each consisting of two-repeated four-bar sub phrases. I will be around to guide students needing assistance.

- I will review formal breakdown with

**FRIDAY**
- For homework, I will assign students to combine their ideas to create compositions using the following structures: ternary form, rondo form, thirty-two bar form, and binary form. I will instruct students to apply one developmental technique for every recurring section, which they should treat as prime sections (i.e., ABA becomes ABA.’).
students and developmental techniques with unique ideas. I will then introduce new formal structures: ABA' + ABA'A" + ABA'CA." For prime sections, I will demonstrate examples of applying developmental devices instead of direct repetitions and provide handouts to illustrate concepts.

| 3. Arrange compositional sketches for piano charts. | Week 4 (MONDAY) -I will introduce popular commercial chord progressions that emphasize different modes. | Week 4 (MONDAY) -I will briefly review the concept of “modes” with students, as well as chord construction and chord sequences. -I will explain to students that in commercial pop and rock music, progressions tend to emphasize four modes: Ionian, Dorian, Lydian, and Aeolian. I will introduce and demonstrate four common chord sequences. C-G-Am-F emphasizing the Ionian mode will be the first sequence I teach. I will introduce Dm-F-Am-G emphasizing the Dorian mode, and F-C-Am-G highlighting the Lydian mode. I will include Am-F-C-G, which | Week 4 (MONDAY) -For homework, I will ask students to practice performing the progressions and get comfortable with them. |
emphasizes the Aeolian mode. I will provide visual examples and dittos for students to reference. I will play samples of popular music that use these progressions as well as other modal progressions such as John Mayer’s “Vultures” in Dorian.
- I will demonstrate and provide sheet music that shows students how to play each progression on the keyboard. I will come around to help students perform each passage.

(Friday)
- Students will learn to compose for lead sheets using the formal structures they learned from Week 3.

(Friday)
- I will reintroduce students to melodic composition using motivic cells corresponding to chord sequences. I will demonstrate effective compositional technique, motivic construction, and transformation. As a means of demonstration, I will teach students how to create modality without using predetermined chord cycles.
- Next, students will use predetermined chord cycles: Students will compose a four-bar passage for four distinct chord progressions: C-G-Am-
<table>
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<tr>
<th>4. Create full-ensemble compositions from piano charts.</th>
<th>F, Am-F-C-G, Dm-F-Am-G, F-C-Am-G. Students must then repeat their four-bar sub phrases to become eight-bar phrases. Students will set each one of their eight-bar melodies corresponding to a particular progression, A, B, C, or D. -Students will compose one piece for melody + chords lead sheet for each of the following structures, using their A, B, C, and D ideas: ABA, AABA, ABACA, ABCD, and AB.</th>
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<tr>
<td>5. Revise compositions after eliciting feedback from peers.</td>
<td>Week 5 (MONDAY) -Students will learn to apply accompanying patterns to their lead sheets.</td>
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<td>Week 5 (MONDAY) -I will introduce students to the following accompanying patterns: whole-note blocked chords, eighth note Alberti bass, quarter note blocked chords, and unisons. I will demonstrate the accompaniments, provide visual guides, and show an application to popular commercial lead sheets. -I will instruct students to set up a grand staff session in Finale, copy-and-paste their lead sheet staves with melodies and chords, and apply one pattern</td>
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<td>Week 5 (MONDAY) -I will instruct students to finish the projects from class and review any troubling concepts.</td>
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### (FRIDAY)
We will discuss the harmonic language and structure of famous commercial artists, focusing mainly on emulating a piece by John Legend.

- We will analyze “All of Me” by John Legend. I will provide lead sheets and piano charts and perform the composition in class.
- I will break students into groups to discuss

| to A sections, B sections, C, and D sections. Students will append a brief coda to conclude their compositions, using ii-V-I or IV-V-I chords with all whole notes and a fermata added to the final statement.
- I will go around to check on each student. Once students do that successfully, I will ask them to convert all recurring sections to prime sections. I will have them apply one developmental technique to all prime sections (inversion, retrograde, same-rhythm-different-pitches, etc.) and be available to guide them. They will have dittos from past lessons to refer to as a guide in applying development. Students may apply techniques to one bar at a time or an entire phrase, so long as the method is appropriate for preserving musical integrity.
- Students will be asked to get comfortable familiarizing themselves with the breakdown of Legend’s composition. |
the overall thoughts – what they liked, what they didn’t like, what worked, what didn’t work. We will reconvene as a class. Representatives from each group will report overall thoughts.
-We will discuss the structure, texture, accompaniments, and features. I will annotate the score as I go with the class and make it available to students on Blackboard.
Week 6 (MONDAY)
- We will review the structure of Legend’s composition and discuss approaches to emulating his work to create original pieces.

Week 6 (MONDAY)
- I will guide students to understand the structure of Legend’s work is as follows: Verse, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Post-Chorus, Verse, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Post-Chorus, Bridge, Chorus, Post-Chorus, Outro.
- I will explain that students can translate this to ABCDA’BCD ECD(Coda).
- I will discuss practical approaches to model the composition. I will ask students to reach out to me if they have any questions. Students will be required to do one of the following:

  a) Write for piano accompaniment chart, using the i-VI-III-VII chord progression or Am-F-C-G in A natural minor (or the native key of Legend’s piece), and emulate Legend’s motivic structure and accompanying gestures. To clarify, write an “A” section that is the same length as Legend’s first Verse, a “B” section that is the same length as Legend’s Pre-Chorus, a “C” section that is the same length as Legend’s Chorus, and a

Week 6 (MONDAY)
- For homework, I will instruct students to finish their lead sheets.
“D” section that is the same length as Legend’s Post-Chorus (and so on). Use a developmental technique for any prime section (the equivalent of changing lyrics for a recurring “verse”).

b) Follow the directions above, except using any singular progression throughout, as we talked about in class.

c) Follow the directions in option a, except making each section eight measures long consisting of repeating four-bar subsections. Use a different chord progression for each section. For prime units, use the same chord progression as the non-prime original, except applying a device of imitation. Students can use the motivic phrases and/or accompaniments that they created previously in class for each prompt. They can also develop new material/accompaniments or model accompaniments after what Legend uses in his piece.
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<td>-I will introduce another composition by a celebrity artist for students to emulate. This piece will teach students about polymodality as the work emphasizes both Ionian and Lydian modes, rather than exclusively a singular modal progression throughout.</td>
<td>-I provide time for students to complete this project. <strong>FRIDAY</strong> -I will play “Alone” by Marshmello for students. I will provide lead sheets and piano charts. -We will dissect the piece’s structure, which is as follows: Verse, Pre-Chorus, Instrumental Break, Verse, Pre-Chorus, Instrumental Break, or ABCABC form. - I will instruct students to select one of the following options: a) Write for piano accompaniment chart, using progressions that Marshmello uses (in the same corresponding sections of the piece). To clarify, write an “A” section that is the same length as Marshmello’s first Verse. Follow that with a “B” section that is the same length as Marshmello’s corresponding first Pre-Chorus. From there, add a “C” passage that is the same length as the related first Instrumental Break in “Alone.” Restate the original A, B, and C sections respectively, and apply at least one</td>
<td>-I will instruct students to familiarize themselves with “Alone” and supplementary materials. I will require students to finish their assignments.</td>
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developmental technique to each restated section (Treat as prime sections).
b) Follow the directions above, except using any two chord progressions we talked about in class.

c) Follow the directions in option a, except making each section eight measures long consisting of repeating four-bar subsections. Use a different chord progression for each letter (section).

For each prompt, students can use the motivic phrases and/or accompaniments that they created previously in class or come up with new material/accompaniments. They may also model accompaniments after what Marshmello uses in “Alone.”

-I will devote the rest of the class to providing studio time for students to complete this project.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Week 7 (MONDAY)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- I will introduce students to the concept of arranging piano charts for SATB + piano choir.</td>
<td>- I will present “Break Every Chain” by Tasha Cobbs. I will perform the piece from YouTube and distribute lead sheets and piano charts. Analyzing and annotating the charts together as a class will constitute a culminating activity. - I will demonstrate taking my piano chart composition (modeled after Cobbs’ piece) and arranging it for an SATB choir. - I will present visual charts that demonstrate possibilities, as well as a PowerPoint presentation. - I will encourage students to start thinking about their final capstone project and clarify that this is one option but not a requirement.</td>
<td>- I will supply worksheets to guide students in developing an understanding of arranging for the chorale. I will equip students to start preparing for this as a final project, but I will not require them to do so this week. I will encourage students to review any unfamiliar concepts.</td>
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<td>- We will review Cobbs’ composition and prepare students to create a piano chart in a similar style.</td>
<td>- We will dissect the structure of the piece, which will be as follows: Chorus, Bridge 1, Chorus, Bridge 1, Interlude, Bridge 2, Interlude, Outro - I will instruct students to select one of the following options: a) Write for piano accompaniment chart,</td>
<td>For homework, students will finish their arrangements.</td>
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using the progression that “Break Every Chain” uses. To clarify, write an “A” section that is the same length as the first Chorus in “Break Every Chain.” From there, add a B section that is the same as the first statement of Bridge 1. Follow this with a restatement of the A section that is the same length as the original Chorus. Restate your B section that is the same as Bridge 1, then follow it with a D section that is equivalent to the interlude in “Break Every Chain.” Follow this with a C prime section that corresponds to Bridge 2 in “Break Every Chain.” Proceed with a direct restatement of your D section that correlates to the final interlude. Including a corresponding “outro” section is optional.

b) Follow the directions above, except using any one chord progression that we talked about in class.

c) Follow the directions in option a), except making each section eight measures long consisting of repeating
four-bar subsections. Use a different chord progression for each section. Apply one developmental device to any one recurring section, which you can treat as a prime area (just as Tasha Cobbs changes lyrics among recurring verses, composers should alter one element.). For each prompt, students can use the motivic phrases and/or accompaniments that they created previously in class or create new material/accompaniments or model accompaniments after what Cobbs uses in her piece. I will devote the rest of the class to providing studio time for students to complete this project.
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<tr>
<th>Week 8 <em>(MONDAY)</em></th>
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<tr>
<td>-I will introduce students to the concept of arranging piano charts for Pop-Rock Ensemble consisting of Vox, Keyboard, Electric Guitar, Electric Bass, and Drum Set in Finale.</td>
<td>-I will demonstrate taking my piano chart composition (modeled after “Despacito”) and arranging it for Pop-Rock Ensemble. -I will present visual charts that demonstrate possibilities, as well as a PowerPoint. -I will encourage students to start thinking about their final capstone project and clarify that this is one option for a final project but not a requirement for this week.</td>
<td>-I will provide students worksheets to guide them in developing an understanding of arranging for Pop-Rock Ensemble. I will equip students to start preparing for this as a final project option, but I will not require them to do it this week. I will encourage students to review any unfamiliar concepts.</td>
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<td><em>(FRIDAY)</em></td>
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<td>-We will review “Despacito” by Daddy Yankee and prepare students to create a piano chart in a similar style.</td>
<td>-I will play “Despacito” by Daddy Yankee for students. I will provide lead sheets and piano charts. -We will dissect the piece’s structure, which is as follows: Intro, Verse, Chorus, Post-Chorus, Verse, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Post-Chorus, Bridge, Outro. -I will instruct students to select one of the following options: a)Write for piano accompaniment chart, using progressions that Daddy Yankee and Luis Fonsi use (in the</td>
<td>-Students will finish their projects for HW.</td>
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same corresponding sections of the piece). To clarify, write an “A” section that is the same length as “Despacito’s” first Verse. Follow this with a “B” section that is the same length as “Despacito’s” corresponding Chorus and include a “C” section that is the same length as “Despacito’s” corresponding Post-Chorus. After that, add an A prime section equivalent to “Despacito’s” second Verse. Follow this with a D section that is equivalent to “Despacito’s” Pre-Chorus that proceeds. Add a B section to correspond to “Despacito’s” second statement of the Chorus. From there, add another C section equal to the second Post-Chorus that follows. Add a section to correspond with the Bridge and include an Outro.

b) Follow the directions above, except using any singular chord progression throughout, which we talked about in class.
c) Follow the directions in option a), except making each section eight measures long consisting of repeating four-bar subsections. Use a different chord progression for each section. Apply one developmental device to prime areas (just as Daddy Yankee and Luis Fonsi change lyrics among recurring Verses, composers should alter one element.). For each prompt, students can use the motivic phrases and/accompaniments that they created previously in class or come up with new material/accompaniments or model accompaniments after what Daddy Yankee and Luis Fonsi use in their piece. I will devote the rest of the class to providing studio time for students to complete this project.
Week 9 (MONDAY)
-I will introduce students to the concept of arranging piano charts for Full Orchestra in Finale.

(FRIDAY)
-We will review “Skyfall” by Adele and prepare students to create a piano chart in a similar style.

Week 9 (MONDAY)
-I will demonstrate taking my piano chart composition (modeled after “Skyfall” by Adele) and arranging it for full orchestra.
-I will present visual charts that demonstrate possibilities, as well as a PowerPoint presentation.
-I will encourage students to start thinking about their final capstone project and clarify that this is one option but not a requirement for this week.

(FRIDAY)
-I will play “Skyfall” by Adele and prepare students to create a piano chart in a similar style. I will perform the piece from YouTube and distribute lead sheets and piano charts. We will analyze and annotate the charts together as a class.
- I will instruct students to select one of the following options:
  a) Write for piano accompaniment chart, using progressions that “Skyfall” uses (in the

Week 9 (MONDAY)
-I will supply worksheets to guide students in developing an understanding of arranging for a Full Orchestra. I will equip pupils to start preparing for this as a potential final project option, but I will not require them to do it this week. I will encourage students to review any unfamiliar concepts.

(FRIDAY)
-Homework will involve finishing compositions for the week.
same corresponding sections of the piece). To clarify, write an “A” section that is the same length as “Skyfall’s” Verse 1. Add a “B” section that is equivalent to “Skyfall’s” corresponding first statement of the Chorus, plus an “A” section that is equal to “Skyfall’s” corresponding Verse 2. Follow the Verse 2 with a B section that is as long as “Skyfall’s” second statement of the Chorus. Then, include a C section that is equal to “Skyfall’s” Bridge. Finally conclude with a B section that is equal to “Skyfall’s” Chorus.

b) Follow the directions above, except using any two chord progressions throughout, which we discussed in class.

c) Follow the directions in option a), except making each section eight measures long consisting of repeating four-bar subsections. Use a different chord progression for each section.
For each prompt, students have the option of using the motivic phrases and/or accompaniments that they created previously in class, or coming up with new material/accompaniments, or modeling accompaniments after what “Skyfall” uses. Students may employ direct repetition for each “A” section or alter one element/apply a developmental device for each recurring verse, just as Adele changes the lyrics for each verse (while preserving the same basic melody and harmonic structure).

-I will devote the rest of the class to providing studio time for students to complete this project.
Week 10 (MONDAY)
-I will introduce students to the concept of arranging piano charts for Electronic Composition.

(FRIDAY)
-We will review “This Is What You Came For” by Calvin Harris featuring Rihanna and prepare students to create a piano chart in a similar style.

Week 10 (MONDAY)
-I will demonstrate taking my piano chart composition (modeled after “This is What You Came For” and arranging it for Electronic Composition.
-I will present visual charts that demonstrate possibilities, as well as a PowerPoint presentation.
-I will encourage students to start thinking about their final capstone project and clarify that this is one option but not a requirement.

(FRIDAY)
-I will present “This Is What You Came For” by Calvin Harris featuring Rihanna. I will perform the piece from YouTube and distribute lead sheets and piano charts. We will analyze and annotate the charts together as a class.
-I will instruct students to select one of the following options:

a) Write for piano accompaniment chart, using progressions that

Week 10 (MONDAY)
-I will give students worksheets to guide them in developing an understanding of arranging for Electronic Composition. I will equip students to start preparing for this as a final project, but I will not require them to do so for this week's task. I will encourage students to review any unfamiliar concepts.

(FRIDAY)
-Homework will involve finishing compositions for the week.
“This Is What You Came For” uses (in the same corresponding sections of the piece). To clarify, write an “A” section that is the same length as “Came For’s” Chorus. Add a “B” section that is equivalent to “Came For’s” corresponding first Verse, plus an “A” section that is equal to “Came For’s” corresponding Chorus. Follow the Chorus with a C section that is as long as “Came For’s” Bridge. Then, include a B section that is equal to “Came For’s” Chorus.

b) Follow the directions above, except using any two chord progressions throughout, which we discussed in class.

c) Follow the directions in option a), except making each section eight measures long consisting of repeating four-bar subsections. Use a different chord progression for each section.

For each prompt, students have the option of using the motivic phrases and/or accompaniments that
they created previously in class, or coming up with new material/accompaniments, or modeling accompaniments after what “Came For” uses. I will devote the rest of class to providing studio time for students to complete this project.
Week 11
(MONDAY)
-We will spend class reviewing prior concepts up until this point.

(FRIDAY)
-I will start a new topic for discussion.

Week 11
(MONDAY)
-I will review each unit covered until this point, provide dittos, tutorials, handouts, and easy-to-follow resources.

(FRIDAY)
-We will discuss the following topic, which will eventually culminate into Discussion Board Forum Two: Is there value in contemporizing traditional ensembles by emphasizing pop-rock commercial grammar as a model? Is doing so detrimental to the integrity of art in contemporary music or likely to be profitable? Does art precede commerce (or vice versa)? I will form discussion groups with the class. Representatives from each group will report overall thoughts from each group.

Week 11
(MONDAY)
-I will encourage students to review any unfamiliar concepts.

(FRIDAY)
-I will ask students to review any concepts they felt were challenging and respond to Discussion Board Two. The topic will be the same as what we used for class discussion, except students will be asked to provide their thoughts and respond to two other students’ prompts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>(MONDAY)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-I will teach GarageBand Basics.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>(FRIDAY)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-I will introduce songwriting and discuss large-scale structures.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>(MONDAY)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Students will have studio time that will function as a “guided tutorial” to follow along. I will provide dittos that will explain everything explicitly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>(FRIDAY)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Students will work on their final projects and I will be available to assist students as needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>(FRIDAY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-I will go over songwriting as well as large scale forms (sonata, ternary-within-ternary and top-40) with students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Week 13  
(MONDAY)  
-I will introduce the music of Hans Zimmer.

(FRIDAY)  
-We will introduce the Hans Zimmer analysis plus the final project.

Week 13  
(MONDAY)  
-I will play examples of his music and we will discuss them as a class.  
-Examples will include, “160 BPM,” “All of Them,” and “Ah, Putrefaction.”  
-I will arrange students into groups to discuss their thoughts on the music.  
-I will have representatives from each group report back the overall thoughts to the class.  

(FRIDAY)  
-We will discuss scholarly writing and practice brainstorming ideas, constructing theses, and making scholarly arguments for the Hans Zimmer analysis.  
- I will introduce the final project requirements, which will be covered in detail.  
-Students will have the following options, each of which will constitute a valid project:  
-Using rondo form, ternary form, binary form, or thirty-two bar form, submit one of the following:  

A) A composition in lead sheet, piano, and full score for orchestra formats

Week 13  
(MONDAY)  
-Students will review the audio clips (they will be provided on Blackboard) of each Zimmer piece and decide which one they would like to analyze for the upcoming paper (to be discussed Friday of this week).

(FRIDAY)  
-Students will begin working on their analyses and projects.  
Papers will be due by Monday Week 15 and projects will be due by Monday of Week 16.
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
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</table>
| (sixteen bar minimum). B) A composition in lead sheet and piano formats, arranged for a 30 second commercial (I will assign instruments). C) A composition in lead sheet and piano formats, arranged for an electronic ensemble (I will assign instruments). OR  
Using a structure that is at least 32 bars in length or a large-scale form (sonata, ternary-within-ternary, or Top-40 form) submit one of the following:  
A) A melody-plus chords lead sheet of an original song with lyrics (accompaniment chart not required). B) A melody-plus chords lead sheet (without lyrics) and a piano accompaniment chart. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14 (MONDAY)</th>
<th>Week 14 (MONDAY)</th>
<th>Week 14 (MONDAY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-I will refresh students on everything we have covered so far. I will introduce Discussion Board Three and provide studio time for students to work on their projects and seek my assistance as needed.</td>
<td>-All concepts will be reviewed, and students will be able to ask questions. We will discuss the topic for the third Discussion Board Prompt, which will culminate into an assignment on BlackBoard. The prompt will be as follows: A) As what type of composer would you best categorize yourself? Are you predominately classical, jazz-oriented, pop-rock oriented, and what are some of your influences? Do you feel this class has expanded your musical perspectives? Why or why not?</td>
<td>-Students will continue to work on their analyses and final projects. They will also respond to the Discussion Board prompt and include replies to at least two peers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(FRIDAY) - I will spend part of the class leading an "open question" forum. Students will have opportunities to raise their hands to ask questions and I will review anything about which they may need clarification. The remainder of the class will be devoted to studio time where students will continue to work on their projects, and I will be available to assist as needed.

(FRIDAY) - I will lead a “Q&A” review session. I will also devote studio time for projects where I will come around to help.

(FRIDAY) - I will instruct students to continue working on their projects and analyses.
Week 15 (MONDAY-FRIDAY)
-I will instruct students to continue working on their projects and complete the Discussion Board.

Week 15 (MONDAY-FRIDAY)
-We will have a class discussion about the meaning of music, its importance, and how we benefit as a culture, society, and economy from music. We will have group discussions, and this will eventually culminate into a Discussion Board forum: What role does music play in your life? Are you planning on pursuing a career in music? To what extent? Do you feel like music has enough of a presence in the public sphere? Why or why not?

-Presentation times will be allotted to students who are prepared to present.

Week 15 (MONDAY-FRIDAY)
-I will introduce students to the final discussion board topic. I will put students in groups to discuss their thoughts.

Week 15 (MONDAY-FRIDAY)
-We will have a class discussion about the meaning of music, its importance, and how we benefit as a culture, society, and economy from music. We will have group discussions, and this will eventually culminate into a Discussion Board forum: What role does music play in your life? Are you planning on pursuing a career in music? To what extent? Do you feel like music has enough of a presence in the public sphere? Why or why not?

-Presentation times will be allotted to students who are prepared to present.
| Week 16 (MONDAY-FRIDAY) | Presentations of Final Projects will take place. | Week 16 (MONDAY-FRIDAY) | Students will present their projects and engage with peers during their presentations. | Week 16 (MONDAY-FRIDAY) | Students will present and fill out course evaluations. |
### I. Learning Outcomes and Descriptions Corresponding to Bloom’s Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rationale for Sequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recall examples of form that artists commonly use in music.</td>
<td>I feel that beginning with this objective is advantageous because it primes students to initiate the course by thinking about structure, why it is essential, and how musicians commonly use it. Per Linda B. Nilson in <em>Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors</em>, “[inquiry-guided learning] typically involves acquisition and comprehension of knowledge,” and a variety of means that support cognitive engagement, which ascend in the hierarchy. I try to co-align my teaching stratagems to respect the recommendations provided by scholars such as Nilson. I always begin with lower levels of thinking, as it is essential to instill foundational knowledge before calling for complex cognition levels. Because form is an important, fundamental concept that recurs throughout the course, I sought to introduce the class by asking students to recall what they know about structure and guide them until they have a reliable enough grasp to introduce more rigorous material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Apply various examples of form to create commercialized, compositional sketches.</td>
<td>The objective will be reasonable to introduce after the former, as it presents a more rigorous manifestation of cognitive thinking and transcends from knowledge-based engagement to comprehension-based engagement. The second objective adheres to guidelines provided by known experts in education. Per Harro Van Brummelen, “an integral unit is a portion of a course or program that has a clear thematic focus and that: [1]) has internal unity [, 2]) has external consistency [and] 3) includes pertinent and meaningful aspects of reality that are related to, and may even go beyond, the main discipline focus of the unit.” I believe that including this objective in my course (directly following the first objective) is worthwhile because it builds upon fundamental knowledge and calls for composers to apply what they already know about composition to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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concept of creating lead sheets in a variety of structures. This skill is useful throughout the course and will become necessary for students in their field as they look to market themselves as meaningful composers in the commercial music business.

3. Arrange compositional sketches into piano reductions

The third objective will be ideal to follow the former. Per expert Regelski, “teaching all students the same instrument is simpler in terms of pedagogy and resources but carry over to playing outside of school is greater when students choose instruments that interest them (for whatever reason).”

Though Regelski may be referring to pedagogy that pertains to the performance of instruments in primary school settings, the point he is illustrating is nonetheless relevant for the course I am designing. The idea of diversifying learning applications (as demonstrated by allowing students to apply concepts by performing more than one instrument) is similar in creating a collegiate composition course. The reason is that it is crucial for students not merely to learn to compose for piano but a variety of ensembles and settings, as will be necessary for successful application to career prospects that transcend classroom limitations. Though this unit involves a single, simple instrument, it is a good primer for solidifying students’ concepts until a later point.

4. Create large scale compositions from melody-plus-accompaniment charts.

The objective builds upon knowledge and conceptual comprehension that students will acquire up until now. Students will apply the concepts they will have learned to a more realistic and complex application that is likely to mirror real-life circumstances (composing for a large-scale ensemble). Students will need not “start from scratch;” they can take what they have accomplished (their melody-plus-accompaniment charts) and expand upon them to become large-scale arrangements for a large performing ensemble.

5. Revise compositions after eliciting feedback from peers.

Though I do not directly refer to revisions in the chart above, I will encourage them. Students will have the opportunity to present their work to the class (after it has been due) and receive feedback from the instructor and colleagues. They will be allowed to revise their compositions and turn them in up to a week after being graded for extra credit. Final projects will not be revisable. Revision is an excellent

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concept to include because it stems from the highest level of thinking in Bloom’s Taxonomy chart. Revision corresponds to evaluation and is an important life skill for the real world, where composers will likely be called upon to “improve” or adjust their work. It is important to note that students will only undertake one major ensemble project as a capstone final assessment. They will be exposed to all ensembles and guided to choose a focus that interests them. Originally, students would have been asked to arrange for multiple ensembles, but the requirement was revised to better respect cognitive load theory.

CURRICULUM PROJECT: DEVELOPMENT CHART


EXPOSITORY (Demonstration of Lesson)

I will begin class by verbalizing something along the following lines: “Hello class! Today we are moving forward to a new unit that focuses on composing melodies using popular, commercial chord progressions. You may have noticed as you were entering the classroom that I had music playing. Would anybody like to guess the names of the pieces I played and what artists you may have heard? You may recognize that all the excerpts I played have something in common. Each of the passages uses the same chord progression: i-VI-III-VII! In A natural minor, that translates to Am-F-C-G. This chord progression is one of the most well-recognized, versatile, and commercially-used progressions out there!”

I will continue; “some of the most successful pieces of all time make use of the i-VI-III-VII progression! And the progression is not limited to Top-40 music. You can hear it in film scores, gospel music, television ads, and even promotional videos for the US Army. Used by many artists, from Chris Tomlin to Hans Zimmer, to Tasha Cobbs, to Avril Lavigne, to Pitbull, this chord progression can be the key to composing award-winning, catchy music!” After presenting excerpts from different songs, I will ask students to play the chord progression on their keyboards, assuming they will be in a piano studio at the time. I will have students discuss commonalities involving motivic ideas among each of the examples I present. Students will consider the cultural implications of music that features this chord progression, which sensationalized the industry in the mid-1990s to early 2000s. Modern artists spanning a wide variety of genres use this cycle today. Next, I will be sure that students are ready to grasp various commercial chord cycles in different modes and how
artists can use the progressions to create contrasting phrases that evolve into large scale compositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will begin the new lesson by playing excerpts from “Grenade,” by Bruno Mars, “Wake Me Up,” by Avicii, and “Despacito,” by Daddy Yankee and Luis Fonsi. After I finish playing the excerpts, I will ask open-ended questions that promote metacognitive engagement. I may ask questions such as, “Do you recognize any of the songs I played and who the artists of these songs are? What are some of the genres you heard? Do you hear common instruments in any of these examples? Is there a commonality among each of them? What chord progression did you hear? Why do you think so many hit songs use this chord progression? What commercial mode does the i-VI-III-VII progression use? Can you identify other modes commonly used in commercial pop-rock? What are some examples of other successful chord progressions?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, I will show the class pictures of Bruno Mars, Avicii, and Daddy Yankee and provide a brief overview of each artist to demonstrate how diverse they are. The point will be despite their different career paths, they tend to use similar modes and progressions such as i-VI-III-VII, which have been proven successful in a variety of genres that represent many artists. I will call on students individually to name four commonly used commercial modes. As I am calling on students (and students provide correct answers), I will write the names of each of the four most commonly-used commercial modes on the board: Ionian, Aeolian, Lydian, and Dorian.

I will ask students to express examples of chord progressions used for each mode. I will write I-V-vi-IV next to Ionian (C-G-Am-F in C Ionian), as this is the most commonly used chord cycle in the Ionian mode; i-VI-III-VII next to Aeolian (Am-F-C-G in A Aeolian); I-V-iii-II next to Lydian (F-C-Am-G in F Lydian); and i-III-v-IV next to Dorian (Dm-F-Am-G in D Dorian). I will play excerpts from different songs that use these progressions so students can contextualize them.

I will explain to students that while there are pieces that use a single chord progression, many pieces feature multiple progressions from different modes to represent contrasting music sections. When I feel that students have a solid enough understanding of commercial chord sequences, I will transition to an activity that will involve assessment. I will assess students’ knowledge of chord progressions and modes by having students work with keyboards in practice studios. I will ask the students to compose two four-bar phrases for the following chord progressions: Am-F-C-G (or i-VI-III-VII in the Aeolian mode), C-G-Am-F (I-Vi-IV in the Ionian mode), F-C-Am-G (IV-I-vi-V in the Lydian mode), and Dm-F-Am-G (ii-I-vi-V in the Dorian mode), using no more than two or three motivic ideas per phrase.
Students will then present their manuscripts to me, and I will perform each of the students’ two musical examples for each chord progression. I will call on the class to vote on their favorite one of each set of two melodies and justify their choices. After having circled melodies, I will return students’ manuscripts that the class deemed to be favorites and ask students to hold on to their documents for future use. For HW, I will assign listening examples that make use of the progressions heard in class and ask students to assign their circled melodies representing each modal progression, letters A, B, C, and D (respectively), which will become necessary for the future. With this knowledge, students will be prepared to shift to the next module, which will involve combining melodic ideas to create larger-scale compositions and selecting appropriate accompaniments to support each section.

**Graphical Organizers**

The “Popular Music Excerpts” chart illustrates various examples of contemporary and successful music, the timeframe (clip) of each model, which chord progression is featured, and which mode is used. The point of this chart will be to demonstrate the commonality among many very different examples of commercial-quality music, which make use of the same chord progression. The map will illustrate that i-VI-III-VII (or Am-F-C-G in A Aeolian) is one of the many commercial music progressions to engage mass audiences. The “Commercial Chord Progression and Modes in Context” chart demonstrates complete, repeating four-bar phrases that students can create using motivic patterns to represent various chord progressions featuring different modes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Clip</th>
<th>Chord Progression</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Wake Me Up,” by Avici</td>
<td>0:00-1:00</td>
<td>i-VI-III-VII</td>
<td>Aeolian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grenade” by Bruno Mars</td>
<td>0:36-0:56</td>
<td>i-VI-III-VII</td>
<td>Aeolian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Despacito” by Daddy Yankee</td>
<td>0:00-1:00</td>
<td>i-VI-III-VII</td>
<td>Aeolian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Give Me Everything” by Pitbull</td>
<td>0:44-1:14</td>
<td>i-VI-III-VII</td>
<td>Aeolian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Our God” by Chris Tomlin</td>
<td>1:32-1:50</td>
<td>i-VI-III-VII</td>
<td>Aeolian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Commercial Chord Progressions in Different Modes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord Progression</th>
<th>Roman Numerals</th>
<th>Example of Melodic Idea</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-G-Am-F</td>
<td>I-V-vi-IV</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Example of Melodic Idea" /></td>
<td>Ionian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am-F-C-G</td>
<td>i-VI-III-VII</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Example of Melodic Idea" /></td>
<td>Aeolian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-C-Am-G</td>
<td>I-V-iii-II</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Example of Melodic Idea" /></td>
<td>Lydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dm-F-Am-G</td>
<td>i-III-v-IV</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Example of Melodic Idea" /></td>
<td>Dorian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7. Example of through–composed composition using motifs from above chart.

Score

(A SECTION)

Piano

(B SECTION)

Pno.

(C SECTION)

Pno.
Figure 8. Example of composition in ternary form using motifs from same chart.
Figure 9. Example of composition in 32-bar form using motifs from chart.
Figure 10. Example of composition in rondo form using motifs from chart.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruction Event</th>
<th>Description of How Each Instructional Event will be Addressed in Instructional Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gain Attention</td>
<td>I will start the class with musical examples from various songs featuring different artists who use the i-VI-III-VII chord progression. The activity will engage students aurally and cognitively. In Linda B. Nilson’s <em>Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors</em>, the author advises educators to “explain [their] reasons for being so interested in the material [that they are presenting], and make it relevant to [their] students’ concerns.” This quote is relevant to my plan because it illustrates how crucial it is to present material enthusiastically (which I plan to do) and validates the importance of presenting material in a fashion that promotes student engagement. By going beyond merely lecturing students about chord progressions, I will seek to “capture their attention” by playing some hit examples of songs that segue into the unit for the day, which will involve chord progressions in various modes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inform Learners of Objectives</td>
<td>I will introduce the new module by performing examples of chord cycles that are like the progressions used by established pop-rock commercial artists spanning multiple genres. Students will begin to understand the importance of modal chord progressions such as i-VI-III-VII that represents the Aeolian mode. The topic will extend beyond the primary focus by including background discussions related to past concepts and artists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Guide Learning</td>
<td>I will return students’ manuscripts with examples that were deemed class favorites, circled. I will ask students to assign each of their “favorite” motifs one of the following letters (so that students use each letter once and there are no left-over letters): A, B, C, D. I will then assign students letters A, B, C, or D and put them in one of the following groups: an Ionian group, an Aeolian group, a Dorian group, or a Lydian group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Elicit Performance (Practice)</td>
<td>I will return students’ manuscripts with examples that were deemed class favorites, circled. I will ask students to assign each of their “favorite” motifs one of four letters. Students will use each letter once, and there will be no left-over letters. The letters will be as follows: A, B, C, and D. I will then put them in one of the following groups: an Ionian group, an Aeolian group, a Dorian group, or a Lydian group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, students 1, 2, 3, and 4 would be assigned letters A, B, C, and D, respectively, and would constitute a Dorian group. Students 5, 6, 7, 8 would be assigned the same respective letters and form a Lydian group. There would also be an impartial “judge” assigned to each group, which I will ask to vote on each students’ melodies corresponding to their group. For instance, each Lydian group will present their Lydian pieces from the previous day, and the judge will select a favorite.

After the class votes for favorites, the scribe will write down their preferences and switch between groups to transcribe different melodies and create more complete compositions. For instance, if a composer had a melody they chose from the Dorian group for one phrase, he or she would migrate to the Lydian group and transcribe the favorite of that group. They would then combine them to come up with fuller-scale pieces.

In Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors, Linda B. Nilson contends, “first and foremost, you are the discussion facilitator, which means to make it easy for students to participate. The process can begin before class. By arriving a little early and casually chatting with students as they arrive, you can loosen them up for dialogue.” This quote is relevant when considering my plan. It calls for me to coordinate group-based activities, which will evolve into discussions influenced by students’ experiences in different groups. I will do my best to make it easy for students to share their thoughts and articulate how they feel about each other’s work. I will try to interject and offer insight where appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Provide Feedback</th>
<th>I will ask students to reflect on their experiences for the day, what they learned, and what they feel could have gone smoother. I will ask students to offer responses in the form of paragraphs and answers to surveys they will place in an area that I will provide for them. The feedback prompt will ensure students understand that their experience and feelings are essential.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Assess Performance</td>
<td>I will ask students to evaluate their examples as well as the examples of their colleagues. They will identify strengths and weaknesses in their works and consider ways to improve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
their future accomplishments. This strategy supports advice as articulated by Nilson when she advises educators to incorporate “questions requesting more evidence,” as okay as and “cause-and-effect questions.” I will ask students to justify their experience with evidence of what they felt worked and did not work so well; I will also ask them to clarify what they mean and why they think the way they do.

7. Enhance Attention and Transfer

Following the lesson, students will be asked to create new melodies and revise their current work based on classroom feedback and personal assessment. I will ask students to think about how they can use their existing creations to work in tandem with accompanying patterns, which I will direct them to take a look at to prepare for the lesson to follow.

I will invite students to provide feedback that will give me an idea of what they learned, what they appreciated, and what they did not favor about their experience to improve my presentation and facilitate engagement and success more effectively.

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**CURRICULUM PROJECT – IMPLEMENTATION CHART**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor: Pennise, David</th>
<th>Course: MUSC 139, Popular Commercial Music Across the Spectrum: From Electronic to Symphonic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Item</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rationale for Use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
<td>A PowerPoint presentation will become a necessity to illustrate essential concepts and accompany guided lectures. I will use a PowerPoint presentation and a computer to connect to a projector to play examples of music that use chord progressions and present slides representing motifs and other vital sketches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead/Document Projector</td>
<td>I will use an overhead projector connected to a computer to display whatever is on my laptop so that the class can see and hear my presentation elements (such as conceptual or musical examples). I should have access to a “Smartboard” or an equivalent device that will enable me to accomplish this. I plan on using a projector to project colorful elements that I will create for my PowerPoint presentation that will help students make sense of what I am teaching.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

52. Ibid.
### Keyboard/Studio Equipment
I will ensure that students have access to equipment, such as computers with notation software (Finale), which students will use to notate music. Also, I will make sure students can work in studios with functioning keyboards to quickly audition material they may come up with and transfer it to their manuscripts.

### Handouts
Handouts will become a crucial resource for my classroom environment and will include charts that demonstrate concepts. I will strive to make dittos available on Blackboard and provide copies for students in the class. On the first day of school, I will pass out index cards for students to write facts about themselves, share their ideas, and collaborate. Students should ultimately feel as though they matter. I will have students work together by exchanging index cards and partnering up. This will be so they can truly get to know one another and feel like individuals with purpose, rather than just students taking another course to satisfy a degree requirement.

### Pencils, Dry Erase Markers, Erasers, etc.
Educators must prep their lessons by ensuring they have all the resources they need to teach their class successfully. They may struggle to write down or present important concepts to their students if they are unprepared to do so. Without proper materials, such as paper, pencils, pens, markers and erasers, educators will likely be unproductive.

## Part II: Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Rationale for Task</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Research, Compose Music Examples, Put Together a Presentation for Classroom Unit.</td>
<td>A PowerPoint is a fantastic resource that can help translate the material to students of multiple intelligences. I could simply lecture my students about chord progressions or read about chord progressions, or demonstrate chord progressions. By presenting content that is likely to capture their interest and charts that illustrate what music examples may be doing, students will be more likely to understand and appreciate what will be happening. It is necessary to present materials that contribute to students’ educational experiences, which is why I will incorporate differentiated learning modalities (i.e., PowerPoint presentations) into my lessons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I will need to perform equipment checks to ensure all materials I will need are in working order. Doing so includes making sure the projector is functioning properly. I will need to make photocopies of material I will project and distribute to the class.

I must be sure that I have working materials for my classroom and an overhead projector to project my computer screen onto a Smartboard (or equivalent technological device). Preparedness enables classroom activities to go smoothly and naturalizes enthusiastic delivery. When a teacher has their materials working correctly, they can focus their energy on reaching their students rather than troubleshooting technology.

I will want to be sure that I have access to the equipment I will need to have available for students. It will be important for me to consult with AV or technology support services to be sure everything is in working order and ensure there is a way to get a hold of the necessary people and resources I may need, depending on whether issues arise.

It is critical to resolve any concerns as quickly and effectively as possible to avoid wasting time. Spending too much time troubleshooting may inhibit effective learning and prevent classroom coordination from operating in an efficient manner.

I will want to make a list of logistical considerations and plan time for setting up materials and arranging seats to maximize efficiency.

There is a need to consider logistics. The classroom setup enables students to flourish, especially when it allows for a personal exchange of ideas. Students should not have barriers to prevent them from communicating, especially during discussions. This setup will also enable students to get to know each other by facilitating direct interaction. It is only “fair” for educators to encourage participation and communication because doing so helps students master concepts and feed off each other. It will equip them to take exams that demonstrate what they have learned. Educators must tailor their exams so students can reflect on what they have acquired through learning and be successful.
Part III: Formative Assessment Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formative Assessment Type</th>
<th>Assessment Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chord Progression Exam (performance, identification); Composition Activities</td>
<td>I will assess students’ understanding of chord progressions used in commercialized contexts by having them identify chord progressions discussed in class (one for each mode). I will also ask students to perform the progressions on keyboards to demonstrate applied comprehension. Students will be able to “put their skills to the test” by composing motivic ideas using various progressions. This assessment strategy will motivate students to master concepts. I believe tests that demonstrate material comprehension (even at a recall stage) are essential to ensure students take the initiative to achieve mastery in their learning.</td>
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**CURRICULUM PROJECT – EVALUATION CHART**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor: Pennise, David</th>
<th>Course: MUSC 130 (Popular Commercial Music Across the Spectrum: From Electronic to Symphonic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Your Formative Assessment Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify structural applications pertaining to music (recall various examples of form).</td>
<td>I will assess students’ understanding of form by putting students into groups where students will be assigned letters to represent components of various formal structures. This activity will engage students by fostering interpersonal skills, collaboration skills, and higher thinking levels. I will have students raise their hands before the group activity begins and call on students to answer questions that</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rationale for Formative Assessment Type</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In “Leading Effective Discussions,” a chapter from <em>Teaching at Its Best</em>, Nilson advocates for removing barriers that inhibit social interaction to promote engagement and maintain students’ interests. One of the pieces of advice that she offers is to “frequently break [the] class into small groups to solve problems and answer complex questions.”53</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Another piece of advice offered is to “direct some</td>
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| 2. Apply formal examples to compose sketches of brief compositions that are idiomatically commercial. | After I coordinate a presentation on commercial chord progressions that feature various modes, I will assess students’ understanding by calling on students individually to recall chord progressions commonly used in commercial contexts. When I feel that students have a good handling of this topic, I will prompt them to actualize their understanding in an activity that will involve working with keyboards and composing distinct four-bar phrases for multiple chord progressions representing different modes. I will be sure to demonstrate examples of motivic composition in correspondence to commercial modes. | This assessment is excellent for engaging students to demonstrate an intuitive, intimate level of understanding beyond superficial comprehension of concepts by requiring them to participate and be creative. This strategy aligns with the advice of Linda B. Nilson because it works in favor of student-centered interaction, participation, and collaboration. Nilson advises educators to “get to know [their] students” by “asking them about their majors, interests, and backgrounds.” Students will have the opportunities to get to know one another by working in groups to combine their motivic ideas (a later part of the activity) after they have voted as a class for each other’s best work. |
| 3. Arrange compositional sketches for piano charts. | After students compose motivic phrases and are assigned various letters (A, B, C, D) in my scenario, I will have students work together in groups and combine musical ideas to create distinct four-bar phrases for multiple chord progressions representing different modes. | In my scenario, I will have students work together in groups and combine musical ideas to create distinct four-bar phrases for multiple chord progressions representing different modes. |

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| C, D), I will place them into groups containing a scribe. I will provide names for each group (“ternary group,” “through-composed group,” etc.). The scribe will notate and arrange various individuals’ melodies so that, for instance, the person assigned A in the ternary group will supply a tune to use in tandem with the person assigned B in the same group. The scribe will write a short composition in ternary form, using person A’s melody for the “A” section, person B’s theme for the B section, and person A’s tune for the return of the “A” section. Following this activity, I will assess students’ comprehension of accompanying patterns and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge-in-action by incorporating various accompaniments into original compositions. Students will be assigned examples of works for each of their motivic phrases used to support compositional structures. I will present examples of pieces that illustrate what I will be asking students to accomplish.

4. Create compositions for larger-scale ensembles based on piano chart sketches.

There will be various presentations on orchestrating for different ensembles based on piano sketches. I will present examples and ask

Nilson advises educators to “assign tasks that build in the challenge and some desirable difficulty—not too easy but not overwhelming.”

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students to put their understandings into practice by applying concepts learned to develop their orchestrations. This outcome will encompass multiple weeks of learning and will be adapted to suit various ensembles.

| 5. Revise compositions after eliciting feedback from peers. | Students will have an opportunity to hear from their peers and me and apply feedback to improve their work for extra credit. I do not want to require students to revise their work because that might not be fair to everyone, especially those who would have done well to begin with. Students should be motivated to change for their learning benefit, as doing so will help real-life circumstances. I have decided that extra credit can sometimes serve as a better motivator than coercion and even yield stronger results. | feel that this plan respects her wisdom. I will seek to avoid “throwing students into the sharks” by introducing material in gradual steps (that will involve checkpoints and activities that reinforce knowledge) so students can learn comfortably and do not feel overwhelmed. | In Nilson’s text, she advises educators “to give extra credit or bonus points only to students who have completed their regular assigned work.”\textsuperscript{59} I agree with her advice to support extra credit as a motivator for further participation and success. However, I would not necessarily be on board with only allowing individual students to benefit from extra credit. I would instead focus on motivating students to complete assignments by providing value they can experience in action. |

\textsuperscript{59} Nilson, “Enhancing Student Motivation,” 102.
## Evaluation and Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/Strategy</th>
<th>Rationale for Changing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One of the issues that could come to fruition may be that the course could feature a limited conceptualization of what constitutes commercial music. For example, the course’s focus is on chord cycles that feature various modes (i.e., i-VI-III-VII or Am-F-C-G (A Aeolian)).</td>
<td>I could strategically address this issue by expanding the harmonic and grammatical languages in the course. For example, I could incorporate more common practice idioms, mainly from classical music, which composers also use in commercial contexts. However, by focusing on chord cycles that have been tried and tested successfully, students can easily apply concepts that will involve working with large-scale ensembles. If I overwhelm students with extensive harmonic vocabularies, the outcome may be more obfuscating than helpful and may hinder learning development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial music that is particularly in the pop-rock style generally implies digital/electronic platforms. It may therefore be challenging to uphold commercialism in the context of mediums involving choirs, symphonic or chamber ensembles (as such avenues tend to have more traditionally classical focuses).</td>
<td>It might be ideal to narrow the focus rather than maintain its broadness so that it is more relevant with commercialized practices as they tend to occur (for example, this could entail focusing more on media/songwriting/electronic production rather than orchestral/symphonic/choral idioms); however, this adjustment may not be necessary as true commercialization can involve many ensembles and not simply constitute electronic music or music for media (i.e., Broadway shows).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course seems to neglect harmonic vocabularies beyond traditional “pop or rock” scopes, such as jazz.</td>
<td>I could provide students with resources and give them the option to expand upon the primary focus, which I plan to have feature primarily chord cycles. I will rationalize my decision to focus on chord cycles as they are easy to digest, tend to have broad commercial appeal, are convenient, and can be effective in many situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This course may lack correspondence to a university mission.</td>
<td>I may adapt the focus of the course to align with different philosophical focuses of universities. For secular universities, there may be less emphasis on religious music; for religious universities, more emphasis can be devoted to religious music.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX

Link to folder with supplementary audio examples (Figures 4-10):

https://bit.ly/3iNJRgT