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*James Madison University*

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Reevaluating Student Engagement: Exploring and Applying Alternative Assignments in  
Higher Education Undergraduate Applied Saxophone

Anthony S. Cincotta II

A Doctor of Musical Arts Document to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

School of Music

May 2023

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## **Dedication**

This document is dedicated to my most devoted support system – my family!

Mom and Dad – Without you, none of this would be possible. Your constant love and support are the reason that I made it, and I cannot thank you enough. I appreciate everything you've done to help my dreams become a reality.

My sister, Alex Cincotta-Guest, brother-in-law, Kevin Cincotta-Guest, and my nephew, Mateo Anthony Cincotta-Guest. I love all three of you.

My beautiful fiancé, Anna – You are my best friend, my one true love, and the person I want to share the rest of my life with. This document is for you and our future family. I love you.

This document is also dedicated to Louis Joseph Delfino Jr. (grandpa) who saw the beginning but not the end.

You may be gone, but you're always with me.

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All my professors at JMU

My friends, colleagues, and students at Bridgewater College and Eastern Mennonite University

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## **Abstract**

Undergraduate applied saxophone study revolves around the conservatory model. This inflexible model, often referred to as a master-apprentice relationship, can create an instructor-centric power dynamic which does not address the needs of the modern student. A classroom where the power lies so heavily with the instructor can stifle student engagement and can create a sense of disenfranchisement. In this setting, students have limited input on their assignment selections. While curricula have evolved with regards to being more culturally diverse, relevant, and inclusive, the approach that educators use to deliver the material has remained largely unchanged. There is limited research on alternative syllabus systems and their use in applied collegiate saxophone. Professor John Boyer's "World Regions" syllabus can be used as scaffolding to explore a new methodology utilizing diverse assignments in order to present a more nuanced account of student comprehension. Creating a mastery-oriented syllabus for applied undergraduate saxophone lessons can better serve the needs of a greater population of students.



## I. Fundamentals of Learning & Teaching

Developing a new approach to applied saxophone study that will be effective requires several steps. The first step is developing a basic understanding of when students learn. As Susan Hallam discusses, one major aspect to learning is that it can only happen if the learner wants to learn.<sup>1</sup> Teachers can provide information in a multitude of ways, but until the student is ready to receive, process, and understand it, no learning will be accomplished. In order to promote the process of learning, teachers need to understand that their students are individuals, both in how they learn, but also in their interests. No matter who a teacher is working with, the following aspects should be applied accordingly – clear explanations, the breaking up of tasks into smaller parts, providing a template of comparison (i.e. listening to a piece either through a recording or modeled by the teacher), feedback, repetition, and helping the student develop a broader sense of understanding (relating new material to something the student already knows).<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, teachers can begin to develop a productive approach to how they will instruct their individual students.

Developing a new syllabus that accomplishes that goal, also requires a deeper understanding of how students learn. This next step in the process provides further insight of what an effective mode of teaching can look like, particularly in an applied saxophone classroom. In an essay by Judith Brown, she speaks to the development of music majors

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Hallam, “The Role of the Teacher in Facilitating Learning”, in *Instrumental Teaching: A Practical Guide to Better Teaching and Learning*. (Oxford, NH: Heinemann Educational, 1998) 125-134.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam, “Facilitating Learning,” 125-126.

who wish to become professional performers.<sup>3</sup> Brown's first comment is that in order for students to have a potentially long performance career, they need to develop a balance between the obvious technical training and the expansion of their cognitive skills.<sup>4</sup> This goes beyond acquiring knowledge. Students need to learn and understand the actual process of learning. The responsibility for the development of these skills rests primarily with the teacher. To effectively teach these skills, the teacher should be well versed in the different dimensions of how the human brain learns.

According to Brown, there are five dimensions to learning. Her first dimension focuses on a student's attitudes and perceptions.<sup>5</sup> Before any formal learning begins, the student enters the classroom with preconceived ideas and attitudes towards the tasks that will be asked of them. This first dimension acts as the foundation for learning. At the collegiate level of music learning, the student enters into instruction willingly and hopefully with a positive attitude. This positivity is crucial because, as mentioned earlier, learning can only happen willingly. The teacher plays a significant role in maintaining this positivity. By overexerting their student with repertoire and exercises that are beyond the student's skills, this attitude can quickly deteriorate, and this foundation of learning will crack.

The second dimension is where the acquisition and integration of knowledge begins.<sup>6</sup> At this level, the student is taught how to apply information and skills they have learned. In an applied saxophone lesson this will primarily pertain to applying this

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms: Using the Dimensions of Learning to Enhance the Training of Professional Musicians within Tertiary Music Institutions," in *Inside, outside, downside up: Conservatoire training and musicians' work* (Perth, WA: Black Swan Press, 2008), 122-136.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms," 122.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms," 125.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms," 127.

information to the repertoire they are learning. Through this process students are demonstrating the use of the information after it has been taught by applying information transfer, critical thinking skills, and applying their technical training.

The third dimension extends the knowledge acquired from the second dimension, and begins to refine it through the processes of comparison, classification, abstraction, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, and analysis of errors and perspectives.<sup>7</sup> Brown explains that students use these skills in their everyday lives, but need to be taught how to use them in the context of their musical training. This refinement process acts as the basis for the fourth dimension.

The fourth dimension of learning focuses on the use of knowledge in a meaningful way.<sup>8</sup> The learning that takes place in the classroom is most useful when it can be applied to aspects of a student's life outside the classroom as well. This can be a difficult dimension for a teacher to help a student reach, thus commonly disregarded.<sup>9</sup> Typically, there is a lot of material to cover, and unlike most of students' other classes, applied lessons only meet once a week. Due to the lack of time, this dimension can be disregarded. Rather than ensure the student can apply what has already been taught in a meaningful way, the teacher continues with the curriculum in order to cover all of the material throughout the semester. However, if this dimension can be achieved, the student will acquire skills that can improve the student's life.

The fifth dimension focuses on the development of "habits of mind."<sup>10</sup> All previous dimensions of learning include the subconscious production of habits, but in this

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<sup>7</sup> Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms," 128.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms," 130.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms," 131.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, "Challenging the Old Paradigms," 132.

dimension the habits subsume all previous dimensions through the development of constant critical, creative, and self-regulating thinking from the learner.<sup>11</sup> The ultimate goal of these habits is to lead to a student planning their own work through the consideration of all possible resources beyond what their teacher provides. The time a teacher spends with a student will end. It is essential that by the culmination of their collaborative work, that the student has learned to be a self-sufficient professional.

Understanding the learning process is important, but the next step is deciphering if students retained the material that was taught. This process comes in the form of assessment. It is important to differentiate between the terms “assessment” and “evaluation.” Often these terms are used interchangeably, and there is a distinct difference between the two. Robert A. Duke offers a concise differentiation between these two terms.<sup>12</sup> He also addresses how teachers need to rethink their approach for how they assess their students. So much emphasis is placed on the assessment, that the focus of the student is dominated on the evaluation of their performance in the class, rather than on the understanding and application of the material.

Assessment is the process of collecting the information about a student’s performance, while evaluation is communicating the results in relation to other learners or according to a standard.<sup>13</sup> Duke used a basketball analogy to explain. “You made 4 out of 28 free-throws (assessment), which stinks (evaluation).”<sup>14</sup> This difference is one that many teachers, particularly in instrumental studios, can overlook and manage to lump

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<sup>11</sup> Brown, “Challenging the Old Paradigms,” 132.

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Duke, “Assessment,” in *Intelligent Music Teaching: Essays on the Core Principles of Effective Instruction* (Austin, TX: Learning and Behavior Resources, 2005), 49-87.

<sup>13</sup> Duke, “Assessment,” 51.

<sup>14</sup> Duke, “Assessment,” 51.

together. One thing that can help separate the two is stopping after playing and asking the student for their assessment first. This accomplishes two things. First, it defers some of the control away from the teacher, and places it with the student.<sup>15</sup> Second, it allows the student to think critically about their playing rather than solely be provided the answers, promoting their dependence of their teacher.

This relates to another component of Duke's arguments. He argues that students need to be given numerous opportunities to demonstrate what they know.<sup>16</sup> When it is time to demonstrate what they understand, students can struggle during their first attempt because they are no longer following their teacher's ideas for structure.<sup>17</sup> This removal of structure forces the student to synthesize their own thoughts and accurately articulate their understanding of course material. This process can be improved if the student is given multiple opportunities to demonstrate their understanding before the final assessment. By providing the student these opportunities, the teacher can then work with the student to fill in gaps in their student's understanding throughout the semester.

In addition to understanding the difference between assessment and evaluation, teachers need to be aware of the different types of assessment. Susan Hallam discusses the difference between formative and summative assessment, and how both should be used harmoniously in an applied lessons setting.<sup>18</sup> Formative assessment is information provided to both the student and teacher about the teaching of course material.<sup>19</sup> For example, something as simple as a teacher asking a student periodically if they

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<sup>15</sup> A deeper explanation and conceptual analysis on the classroom power dynamics will be explored in Chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> Duke, "Assessment," 58.

<sup>17</sup> Duke, "Assessment," 58.

<sup>18</sup> Hallam, "Issues of Testing in Music Education," in *Instrumental Teaching: A Practical Guide to Better Teaching and Learning* (Oxford, NH: Heinemann Educational, 1998), 43-50.

<sup>19</sup> Hallam, "Issues of Testing," 44.

understand a concept, or if they have any questions before continuing with the lesson, are forms of formative assessment. The teacher is able to gauge if the student is understanding the material, which also allows them to examine the effectiveness of teaching of the material. For this to be most beneficial, formative assessment should be used during the process of teaching, rather than afterward.

Summative assessment is used after the teaching is complete and determines how well the material was learned by the student.<sup>20</sup> The teacher sets a prescribed assessment to gauge a student's understanding of material, after the teaching has culminated. This type of assessment is most seen in the form of quizzes and exams. These two forms of assessment may seem like common knowledge, but it is important to be able to address both the results of a student's learning, and to continually assess the clarity of the teacher's instruction. While a teacher may think they taught something clearly, a student may not have understood. Due to this, formative assessment becomes subjective to every student. Teachers cannot teach everything the same way to every student and expect all of them to be successful, because all students learn and understand things differently. If a student did not learn something because of the way the teacher explained it, the teacher should adapt and find an alternative method of instruction.

With an understanding of the types of assessment, the topic of dimensions of assessment can be discussed. Much like Brown's dimensions of learning, Don Lebler believes there are dimensions of assessment.<sup>21</sup> According to Lebler, Assessment should be approached in relation to its potential to help a student learn. When approaching

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<sup>20</sup> Hallam, "Issues of Testing," 44.

<sup>21</sup> Don Lebler, "Perspectives on Assessment in the Learning of Music," in *Inside, Outside, Downside Up: Conservatoire Training and Musicians' Work* (Perth, WA: Black Swan Press), 181-193.

assessment with this mindset, there are three dimensions that Lebler outlines – assessment by staff, self-assessment, and peer assessment.<sup>22</sup>

According to Lebler, assessment by staff is the most common type of assessment. He argues that this dimension is defined by a teacher making a judgement connected to a learner's progression with the material against the standards.<sup>23</sup> Lebler's second dimension, self-assessment, is typically utilized while the work is in progress. This type of assessment is necessary for a student to learn how to use their time efficiently and productively. In the self-assessment process, equal attention should be paid to the product and the process.<sup>24</sup> He also explains that self-assessment is a skill that needs to be taught. One way this skill can be nurtured is through the third dimension, peer assessment. Most commonly, this form of assessment is used in a group setting where the members work on a common project, and each contribute their respective portions to create the whole.<sup>25</sup> This dimension can also be applied to individual submissions from a student. Students open themselves to comments from their peers, which usually come from the teacher. The students practice their assessment skills and deliver clear feedback to their peers. These skills then transfer back to their own self-assessment.<sup>26</sup>

Ideally, students will have a much richer learning experience if they are able to engage in all three dimensions of assessment. Within an applied saxophone studio, all three should be relatively easy to accomplish. The most common dimension will be the staff assessment. This dimension will be key to procuring the other two. During a lesson,

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<sup>22</sup> Lebler, "Perspectives on Assessment," 181-182.

<sup>23</sup> Lebler, "Perspectives on Assessment," 182.

<sup>24</sup> Lebler, "Perspectives on Assessment," 183.

<sup>25</sup> Lebler, "Perspectives on Assessment," 183-184.

<sup>26</sup> This concept of self- and peer-assessment are vital to the author's creation of some of the assignments employed in the case study outlined in chapter 3. Lebler's work will be directly referenced during the explanation.

the teacher needs to be able to go beyond the basic criticisms of the student's playing and engage the student to think and listen more deeply than they are used to. Without this, the student will not be able to achieve the second and third dimensions. They will only be able to improve if the teacher tells them what to do.

The second and third dimensions, self- and peer-assessment respectively, are closely related. As mentioned above, students need to be provided opportunities to assess their own work in order to develop their critical thinking skills. As applied saxophone students, the majority of their time will be spent alone in a practice room. Time spent with their teacher will typically be limited to one-hour weekly lessons. Therefore, during their time practicing it is essential for each student's progression that they understand how to assess their own playing without any outside guidance. As they build this skill, it can be applied and strengthened by the third dimension, peer-assessment. A student's ability to listen critically is not limited to the assessment of their own playing. They can also apply this skill to when they are listening to others. These two dimensions complement one another. Finding ways to achieve all three dimensions can help them progress more efficiently.

A term that has yet to be discussed, but deserves equal emphasis when encouraging students, is "feedback." Feedback comes in many different forms, and does not always come when a teacher means to give it. In another essay by Duke, he explains that feedback comes in many forms, and that in the classroom the teacher is not the only source.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Robert A Duke, "Feedback," in *Intelligent Music Teaching: Essays on the Core Principles of Effective Instruction* (Austin, TX: Learning and Behavior Resources, 2005), 121-137.



Not all feedback is intentional. Despite this, it can affect a person's behavior all the same. A great example used by Duke was that of a young child accidentally placing their hand on a hot stove and burning themselves.<sup>28</sup> This is an unintentional form of feedback, but the child's future behavior will be affected because of it (hopefully). They will remember the consequences of placing their hand on the stove, and not place their hand there in the future. In a classroom setting, students and teachers receive feedback even when they are unaware that it is being provided. Something as simple as a student raising their hand in class creates multiple levels of unintentional feedback.<sup>29</sup> The student who raised their hand, as well as all the other students in the class, receive feedback from the teacher when they call on the student. They are provided the feedback that when students raise their hand to speak, they are granted permission by the teacher to do so. In addition, the teacher received feedback from the student that they understand because their actions adhered to this rule. Students also receive unintentional feedback from other students. For example, when a student acts out in class. If the student makes funny faces or tells jokes, they receive feedback from the other students when they laugh, which potentially encourages the behavior. They also receive feedback from the teacher when they get the teacher's undivided attention when being scolded.

Unintentional feedback is powerful and can play a large role in an applied saxophone lesson. While the intentional feedback the teacher provides can be positive and encouraging, their unintentional feedback can be saying the opposite. The example Duke provides is that of a student in their lesson. Every time they make a mistake, their

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<sup>28</sup> Duke, "Feedback," 124.

<sup>29</sup> Duke, "Feedback," 123-124.

teacher stops them to address the issue.<sup>30</sup> The intentional feedback says, “You missed ‘x’ in the music. Let’s address that.” Addressing the issue is important. However, consistently stopping after the student makes a mistake will become a pattern of unintentional feedback, and after a while the student will begin to stop on their own because they were trained by the unintentional feedback of the pattern to do so. The teacher could tell the student to play through the mistakes, but if the pattern has been established, the habit will be difficult to break. Teachers need to be conscious about what their intentional and unintentional feedback are telling the student.

The teacher and student play important roles in an applied saxophone classroom. To improve the experience had by both parties, there should be a clear understanding of Brown’s dimensions of learning, Duke’s differentiation between assessment and evaluation, his dimensions of assessment, and Hallam’s explanation of the differences between formative and summative assessment. Their research acts as the base for how the author developed their alternative applied saxophone syllabus.

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<sup>30</sup> Duke, “Feedback,” 126.

## II. Developing a New Approach

The research provided by Duke, Hallam, Lebler, and Brown acts as the foundation for deciding how to effectively use assessment and feedback during the teaching of applied saxophone lessons. Within the classroom, teachers need to be aware of how their actions, both intentional and unintentional, can affect the learning environment. A research study and its results published in the *British Journal of Music Education*, conducted and written by Gemma Carey and Catherine Grant, sheds light on what both students and professors think about their individual applied music lessons.<sup>31</sup> While this is an international study, the responses relate to the pedagogical methods employed in higher education in the United States. Below are the four most common answers from students and professors.

1. Teachers need to customize their teaching to each learner.
2. A strong teacher-student relationship is needed for success.
3. Students need to learn how to apply concepts learned in their lessons across other aspects of their education.
4. Students need to learn how to navigate between dependency on their teacher's comments and self-sufficiency.<sup>32</sup>

Number one on the list relates back to Hallam's explanation of formative assessment, where the teacher learns from their teaching and adjusts based on each student's respective needs. If possible, a teacher can accomplish this during the first lesson. Teachers should take the time to find meaningful ways of engaging students in ways that relate to their students' respective interests. Number two on the lists extends

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<sup>31</sup> Gemma Carey & Catherine Grant, "Teacher and Student Perspectives on One-to-One Pedagogy: Practices and Possibilities," *British Journal of Music Education* 32, no.1 (April 2014): 5-22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051714000084>.

<sup>32</sup> Carey and Grant, "Teacher and Student Perspectives," Abstract.

beyond the professional aspect of number one. A teacher should take the time to get to know their students. Showing an interest in their lives displays a level of compassion for the student that enhances the student's experience in their lesson.<sup>33</sup> This relates back to Duke's feedback. A teacher greeting a student at the beginning of a lesson and asking, "How are you," provides the feedback to the student that their teacher cares about them. Taking the time to check in with the student can have a positive impact on the lesson.

Number three on the list relates to Brown's fourth dimension of learning, "Use of Knowledge in a Meaningful Way." The concepts taught in class become more meaningful when they can be applied outside class. For example, when a teacher tells the student to practice their scales every day so that they develop better overall technique, the teacher is also helping them learn about diligence, work ethic, and trusting a process. These are all concepts that can be applied to other aspects of their lives.

Last, number four on Carey and Grant's lists is a delicate process. Younger students may need more guidance than more advanced students. Many younger students will not have the knowledge and experience that a more advanced student has acquired. Therefore, a younger student may heavily depend on the comments of their teacher. As the student progresses, the student should begin to be pushed by the teacher to develop their own ideas. These ideas may need further refining by the teacher. However, with the proper guidance, the student's thoughts should develop into more mature ideas that over time will need less supervision.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> This should come in both intentional and unintentional forms of feedback. Telling a student that you care (intentional), in addition to finding ways to *show* that student that you care (unintentional). Primarily, this unintentional feedback will come from tone of voice and body language.

<sup>34</sup> Number four can also be viewed as an exercise in the idea of providing student control in the classroom and promoting self-sufficiency.

The conservatory-style approach to applied one-to-one pedagogy has been used for decades in many countries. It is one that many, if not all, musicians who have taken lessons are familiar with. Students learn on figurative bended knee to learn from their teacher's wisdom. Randall Allsup examines the importance of pedagogical change through the diversion of control within the classroom.<sup>35</sup> He introduces readers to the Japanese philosophy of *shokunin*, a concept that requires the participant of any craft to pursue complete mastery of it.<sup>36</sup> Allsup uses the example of master sushi chef, Jiro Ono, to further explain the dedication and pursuit of perfection associated with *shokunin*.<sup>37</sup> *Shokunin* is analogously related to the life of being a student-musician in the conservatory-style applied undergraduate saxophone classroom. One of the problems associated *shokunin* and the conservatory-style classroom is that it can reduce a student's focus to the applied lessons aspect of their life. Unlike making sushi, extra-musical life experiences have a direct influence on the music people make, and how they make it. "If [a] student-musician is more than a producer of context-specific sound, more than the mere executant of a composer's intentions... care for the quality of one's human and sonic relationships become newly important."<sup>38</sup> Navigating away from this way of teaching can be a challenging prospect.

Disrupting the status quo in order to improve the student experience in applied music can be difficult. Randall Allsup and Cathy Benedict address this issue through the lens of high school band. In their article, they argue the conservatory-style approach to

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<sup>35</sup> Randall Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom: Toward an Open Philosophy of Music Education* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom*, 17.

<sup>37</sup> Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom*, 23.

teaching is easier to continue rather than challenge, because it is what is comfortable.<sup>39</sup> Challenging the status quo can bring forth fear and doubt in one's teaching. There are people who think it is easier to remain on the current path, than to try to out carve a new one. However, if teachers can challenge the current approach, they can begin the process of developing a new standard, and hopefully cultivate an environment where both teachers and learners are "jointly responsible for a process in which all grow."<sup>40</sup>

Diverting some control away from the teacher with the goal of creating a more student-centric classroom can help to create a less oppressive learning environment and promote student empowerment. Another issue that Allsup argues is that the conservatory-style classroom, while an effective teaching method for specific goals, is a style that does not naturally allow for dialogue between the teacher and student. It also limits the ways students engage with the course material, thus limiting their level of curiosity. Allsup uses the word "oppression" to describe how students can be made to feel in a conservatory-style classroom.<sup>41</sup> He continues to share that he wants to see a classroom setting where the teacher becomes a "coauthor" along with the student, rather than a dictator or master.<sup>42</sup> Difficult to accomplish, but Allsup believes it is possible. "Still, I remain convinced that our profession can find other ways to teach, methods with less cost to the majority of learners who have not elected for the path of *shokunin*."<sup>43</sup> While Allsup's sentiments are noble, he does not propose any suggestions as to how to create a classroom like the one he argues he wants to see.

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<sup>39</sup> Randall Allsup and Cathy Benedict, "The Problems of Band: An Inquiry into the Future of Instrumental Music Education," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 166.

<sup>40</sup> Allsup and Benedict, "The Problems of Band," 169.

<sup>41</sup> Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom*, 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom*, 17.

Ryan J. Daniel and Kelly A. Parkes also take issue with the typical master-apprentice approach in the instrumental lesson world.<sup>44</sup> Students are expected to study under the teacher and learn from their mastery. The issue that Daniel and Parkes present is that a student's education is predominantly teacher oriented. The goal of their article is to argue in favor of a more student-oriented environment. The master-apprentice classroom can tend to focus on the teacher, and the value of their knowledge above the student experience. This makes the student's role secondary. By shifting the focus more toward the student, Daniel and Parkes argue that the goal then shifts to helping students understand the course material.

During applied saxophone lessons, students are provided with direction and feedback from the teacher, and are typically assessed based on their playing performance. This singular way of assessing a student's understanding of material may not suit students of varying learning styles. In addition to this limited assessment approach, Daniel and Parkes observed that students who engage in this style of learning are not necessarily taught how to think critically and engage with the material they were taught.<sup>45</sup> Students are taught that the assessment is the most important aspect of learning, rather than the useful application of their newfound knowledge. By deemphasizing performance and exploring forms of assessment that require students to engage with course material in a variety of ways, the student experience with the material becomes more meaningful. This also helps to create more paths for how students will use the material past the

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<sup>44</sup> Ryan J. Daniel and Kelly A. Parkes, "Assessment and Critical Feedback in the Master-Apprentice Relationship: Rethinking Approaches to the Learning of a Music Instrument," in *Assessment in Music Education: from Policy to Practice* 16, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Springer, Cham, 2015) 107-124, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10274-0\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10274-0_8).

<sup>45</sup> Daniel & Parkes, "Rethinking Approaches to Learning," 115.

culmination of their studies. Ideally, teachers should find new ways to assess students in their one-to-one applied lessons that promote student engagement.

Classrooms thrive on democratic dialogue where learning is an open debate. Students need vigorous discussion in class for education to be active and challenging. On the other hand, teacher-talk depresses students. Teacherly monologue limits [students'] speech and development. Feeling limited, they will turn away from intellectual life as an uninspiring experience<sup>46</sup>

Ira Shor believes that the teacher should actively engage students to think critically.<sup>47</sup> This can be accomplished by asking questions and cultivating an environment open to dialogue between the teacher and the students. A teacher that spends too much time speaking “to” or “at” students does not allow enough time to speak “with” them or listen to them. Posing questions that create a dialogic setting can be hard. In an applied saxophone lesson, it is entirely dependent on the respective environment (a student’s focus level and/or preparation, the teacher’s ability to gauge a student’s mental state, etc.). Much like music making, creating a problem-posing environment “...is an art as much as a science. If there were only one way to do it, dialogic teaching would be easy and dull at the same time.”<sup>48</sup>

Shor goes on to argue that the dialogic process is aimed at creating critical consciousness. He developed a model based around three different types of thinkers: intransitive, semi-transitive, and critical-transitive.<sup>49</sup> The goal of the model is to help teachers adjust how they interact and create a dialogic classroom with students of

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<sup>46</sup> Ira Shor, “Rethinking Knowledge and Society: ‘Desocialization’ and ‘Critical Consciousness,’” in *Empowering Education* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 112.

<sup>47</sup> Shor, “Rethinking Knowledge and Society,” 112-134.

<sup>48</sup> Shor, “‘The Third Idiom’ – Inventing a Transformative Discourse for Education,” in *Empowering Education*, 237.

<sup>49</sup> Shor, “Rethinking Knowledge and Society,” 126.



respective thinking patterns. At Shor's first level, an intransitive thinker believes that what happens in life is controlled entirely by "divine forces" (fate).<sup>50</sup> They believe that the system, particularly the educational system, is permanent. Intransitive thinkers need to be prompted to speak. They are comfortable in the established hierarchical lessons system where teachers speak, and students listen/take notes. Helping intransitive students engage in dialogue during their lessons will help them to develop their critical thinking skills. The semi-transitive thinker will try to change things one at a time. The world, nearby and far away, are thought of as isolated pieces. Typically, they will not connect the pieces into a meaningful whole, but rather act on parts in a disconnected way.<sup>51</sup> Partially empowered by the idea that small concrete decisions can lead to big future change, the semi-transitive person is more critically conscious than the intransitive person that accepts they cannot make any real change to the system. However, while semi-transitive thinkers understand that they can be an agent for change, they still struggle to make connections from one aspect of their life to another. A semi-transitive student will benefit from a dialogic setting so the teacher can help them learn how to effectively and maturely manage the changes they make. Critical-transitive thinkers are Shor's third level. A critical-transitive person is able to make "broad connections between individual experience and social issues, between single problems and the larger social system."<sup>52</sup> These students are able to see the relevance of course material in their lives, but need guidance by the teacher and a dialogic system to make the meaningful connections. Dialogue in the classroom for all of Shor's modeled thinkers is beneficial for their

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<sup>50</sup> Shor, "Rethinking Knowledge and Society," 126.

<sup>51</sup> Shor, "Rethinking Knowledge and Society," 126-127.

<sup>52</sup> Shor, "Rethinking Knowledge and Society," 127.

connection with course material, the development of their critical thinking skills, and overall experience in class. In an applied saxophone lesson, the one-on-one environment allows teachers to learn about each of their students, and develop a dialogic setting most useful for them.

An article by Ryan Daniel and Kelly A. Parkes looks at two primary focuses for advancement in the higher education community.<sup>53</sup> Their first focus is aimed at pushing to make the learning more student oriented by promoting autonomy and independence.<sup>54</sup> This focus of a more student-oriented classroom relates back to Allsup's interests of creating a classroom where both the teacher and students are part of and responsible for the learning process.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, by redistributing some of the power away from the teacher and placing it with the student, the students become (hopefully) far more invested in their education.

Their second focus is aimed at a greater need for accountability from staff. Meaning, Daniel and Parkes believe that teachers should be held accountable for helping students with their respective learning needs in order to achieve the course's predetermined goals.<sup>56</sup> Their second focus for advancement in higher education pertains to the applied saxophone study when examining the master-apprentice construct. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this lesson format makes up the majority for how applied saxophone lessons are taught. To further explain why, they argue that a major factor for this is primarily due to continuity.<sup>57</sup> Teachers teach their students in a similar

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<sup>53</sup> Ryan Daniel and Kelly A. Parkes, "Applied Music Studio Teachers in Higher Education: Evidence of Learner-Centered Teaching," *Music Education Research* 21, no. 9 (March 2019), 269-281, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2019.1598345>.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel and Parks, "Evidence of Student-Oriented Teaching," paragraph 1.

<sup>55</sup> Refer back to Chapter 2 – Section B.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel and Parks, "Evidence of Student-Oriented Teaching," paragraph 2.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel and Parks, "Evidence of Student-Oriented Teaching," paragraph 28.

fashion to the way they were taught when they were students. It is a natural occurrence. This could mean that teachers continue teaching through old, and potentially outdated practices. Daniel and Parkes are reexamining how teachers are being held accountable for what their students learn in their classes.

Their article goes on to further illuminate the process of accountability in a music setting can be nebulous. Since the method of assessment in music is difficult to quantify, it becomes tricky to define a teacher's accountability level. Higher education applied saxophone lessons are typically one-on-one. While much of this chapter has been devoted to the potential difficulties associated with this classroom environment, there are also some distinct advantages. The one-to-one ratio of teacher to student in applied lessons helps to promote student engagement. The student receives direct and undivided attention from the teacher. When this is managed by the teacher to create a classroom setting that stimulates an active dialogue them and their students, helps their students pursue meaningful engagement of course material, and they make a conscious effort to release some control to promote a student-oriented classroom, one-on-one applied lessons can be very effective.

Diverting control in a classroom can be a productive practice. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is a Hungarian-American psychologist whose research focuses primarily on people's happiness and creativity. He is most known for his development of the concept of "flow."<sup>58</sup> The theory of flow focuses on the concept that people are happiest in any endeavor when they achieve a state of flow.<sup>59</sup> Flow is described as a state

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<sup>58</sup> Mike Oppland, "8 Ways to Create Flow According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi", PositivePsychology.com, last modified October 12, 2020, <https://positivepsychology.com/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi-father-of-flow/>.

<sup>59</sup> Oppland, "8 Ways to Create Flow."

of being where a participant of an activity is so immersed that they are completely absorbed to the point where nothing else matters.<sup>60</sup> This state of being is achieved through a careful balance between the activity's challenge level and the participant's skill level. Depending on the different ratios of these two components, different responses from the participant will be produced. Figure 1 below, the graph demonstrates how varying levels of challenge and skill produce different responses. The diagram illustrates that there are nine different responses, that can be found in different quadrants of the chart. When both the challenge level of the activity and the participant's skill level are too low (bottom left quadrant), the participant's response can be apathetic. If the challenge level rises, but the participant's skill remains consistently low (top left quadrant), their emotional response will turn to worry, or even anxiety if the challenge level is far enough beyond that of the participant's skill level. If the challenge level is too low for the participant's stronger skill level (bottom right quadrant), the elicited emotional response will be boredom or relaxation.<sup>61</sup> Last, in the top right quadrant, when the activity is adequately challenging enough for the participant's respective skill level, the emotional response and state of flow is achieved.

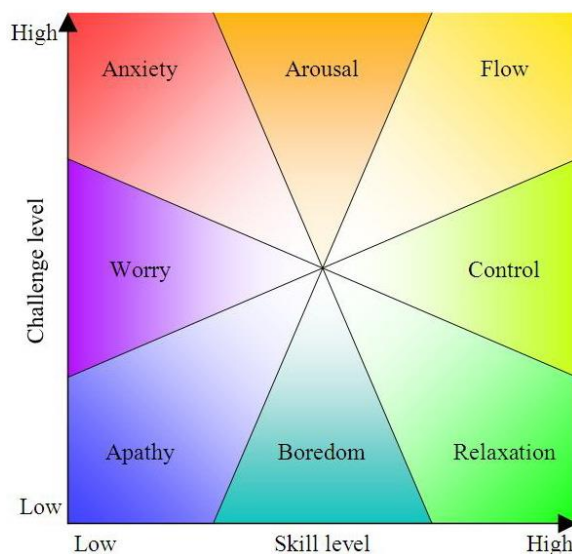
Figure 1 – The Challenge-Skill Level graph outlines the eight different types of participant responses<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Oppland, "8 Ways to Create Flow."

<sup>61</sup> These two emotional responses probably should be flipped. Boredom is a more extreme emotional response than relaxation. Furthermore, boredom can also be considered a response to prolonged relaxation. If a participant remains relaxed too long without any interesting stimuli, particularly in a classroom, the corresponding response will be boredom.

<sup>62</sup> "Flow Psychology," Planeta.com, last modified July 13, 2021, <https://www.planeta.com/flow-psychology/>.



Just like the emotional responses, to achieve flow, there are nine components.<sup>63</sup> These components include the challenge-skill balance, the merging of action and awareness, clarity of goals, immediate and clear feedback, concentration, a paradox of control, the transformation of time, a loss of self-consciousness, and an autotelic response.<sup>64</sup> When exploring these nine components through the lens of an applied saxophone lesson, recognizing each one as either an activity or response by the learner, becomes easier to identify when visualized in a table. Table 2.1 outlines which of the nine components are activities or responses by the student. The delineation of the activities helps to more clearly understand which of the components learners and educators actively control, and which are a result of their proper execution.

Table 2.1 – The Activity vs. Response chart of the nine components associated with achieving “Flow”

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Challenge-Skill Balance	Merging of Action and Awareness

<sup>63</sup> Oppland, “8 Ways to Create Flow.”

<sup>64</sup> Across the resources read, there is a discrepancy of whether there are eight or nine distinct components. Some sources combine the clarity of goals and feedback into a singular component. The author opted to list them separately because one of these components without the other and ultimately disrupt the achievement of flow by failing to include either.

Clarity of Goals	Transformation of Time
Clear Feedback	Loss of Self-Consciousness
Paradox of Control	Autotelism
Concentration <sup>65</sup>	

From a pedagogical standpoint, the components listed above as activities can be further broken down. A better understanding of these activities can be achieved when it is clearer which are controlled by the student and/or by the teacher. Table 2.2 displays which activities are controlled by the student or teacher.

Table 2.2 – The breakdown of student- vs. teacher-controlled activities associated with “Flow”

<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
	Clarity of Goals
	Clear Feedback
Challenge-Skill Balance	
Paradox of Control	

From Table 2.2 it becomes easier to visualize just how much influence the teacher has. It is also important to note that the challenge-skill balance and paradox of control components straddle the line between student and teacher activities. Both parties should be held responsible. Regarding the “challenge-skill balance,” the teacher and student need to be able to discuss the appropriate challenge level for the student’s respective skills.

The “paradox of control” activity takes several different forms. For example, in a solo activity, like when an applied saxophone student is practicing, control is described in terms of mastery over the material being studied.<sup>66</sup> The student is in complete control of the situation, and is responsible for one hundred percent of the learning taking place.

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<sup>65</sup> The author placed the concentration component across the middle because it is worth noting that concentration is both the activity of focusing on the task at hand, while continued and deeper focus is also a related response.

<sup>66</sup> Oppland, “8 Ways to Create Flow.”

However, in a collaborative setting, as in their lesson with their teacher, the control is more focused on the power dynamics between the teacher and student. As mentioned in earlier sections of this chapter by Shor, Daniel, and Parkes, the concept of the power dynamic in a classroom is a tricky yet important balancing act. In an applied lesson that is controlled primarily by the teacher, where the teacher dictates the focus of the lesson, the student's creativity and critical thinking skills can be limited. In a student-controlled lesson, where the student is allowed to make too many decisions, there can be too little structure in the lesson for flow to be achieved. Finding a balance between these two sides of the spectrum, while a difficult prospect, can promote the achievement of flow and allow for an improved experience by both parties.

In an applied saxophone lesson, student control can come in the form of listening critically and evaluation. Yes, students are expected to listen to their own playing, but the skill needs to extend beyond this level. When developing their critical listening skills, students learn how to listen to other sources to develop their sound, learn how to evaluate and assess what they are hearing, and develop communication skills that allow for clearer demonstration/explanation of their understanding. This activity can be one that defers some of the power away from the teacher and toward the student. This is accomplished by inviting the student to explore and learn on their own to develop this new skill.

A student's ability to appraise their and others' playing is the process of evaluating what they heard. This directly relates back to Duke's explanation of the differences between assessment and evaluation. In a student's own practice, this process then guides their future planning and activities. During the study of applied saxophone, this process is primarily applied to the evaluation of performances by others. One key

component to the appraisal process is the comparative nature of it. To adequately evaluate what they hear, they must first have a frame of reference. This is where the teacher comes in.

By introducing a students to a more formal process of listening and appraising, a teacher hopes that they will make choices that help to develop their musical preferences. This complex process needs to be handled carefully by the teacher. When developing their preferences, students may become overly critical toward their own playing and become discouraged. When adding activities/assignments that incorporate critical listening and appraisal to a curriculum, it is important for a teacher to set high standards for a student by providing high quality listening examples (both live and recorded). Furthermore, the teacher must be acutely aware of how manage the expectations in their students' own playing, so that they don't get too discouraged.

Critical listening skills are immediately related to critical thinking skills. Shor explains why critical thinking is such an important facet of education.<sup>67</sup> A curriculum that allows for a student to develop their critical thinking skills is far more effective than one where the student is simply told what they need to know. The content for a class is selected by the teacher. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to carefully construct this content in a way that is relevant to students, promotes cooperative study, and is framed in a way students can understand.<sup>68</sup>

Shor explains a democratic method in which students can develop this skill. His “outside-in” method is used to all a teacher to ask students to respond to a specific

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<sup>67</sup> Ira Shor, “Three Roads to Critical Thought: Generative, Topical, and Academic Thought,” in *Empowering Education*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 55-84.

<sup>68</sup> Shor, “Three Roads to Critical Thought,” 55.



prompt that they are provided.<sup>69</sup> The teacher then uses the students' answers to help direct future conversations. In this method the teacher guides the conversations forward, while allowing the students to have a say in what they are discussing. "Democracy thrives on the widest flow of ideas and the broadest points of view in public circulations."<sup>70</sup> Since the teacher is actively guiding the students to think about specific ideas, the topics must be carefully considered ahead of time. Shor's "outside-in" engages students to think critically about different topics, discuss them openly, and fosters a democratic teaching/learning environment rather than a top-down teacher to student hierarchy.

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<sup>69</sup> Shor, "Three Roads to Critical Thought," 62.

<sup>70</sup> Shor, "Three Roads to Critical Thought," 57.

### III. Creating a Mastery-Oriented Classroom

James Lang offers an alternative approach to improve student displays of understanding by creating a mastery-oriented classroom. To do this, he discusses his understanding of the differences between a performance-oriented classroom and a mastery-oriented classroom.<sup>71</sup> A performance-oriented classroom is designed around creating an environment where the focus revolves around task completion rather than the process of learning.<sup>72</sup> A mastery-oriented classroom focuses on student engagement by providing a variety of assessment options that allow for a broader range of evaluation tools. This helps students to better demonstrate their understanding of the material.<sup>73</sup> In a performance-oriented classroom, students that struggle still may have learned much of the course material, but were unable to demonstrate their new understanding because the assignment(s) set before them did not suit their skillset. In a mastery-oriented classroom, the students are asked to engage in multiple and various assignments, thus creating a more open-ended scenario where students are given the opportunity to demonstrate what they learned. This ultimately promotes a classroom where the objective of learning is paramount.

Due to the ability of students to display their understanding of the material learned in multiple ways, a weak performance in one area can be outweighed by a solid performance in another. Lang explains:

When learners of any kind have multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge or skill, or are able to choose the types of performances that will best allow them to showcase their knowledge or skill, or are able to make multiple attempts at a performance, the emphasis shifts away from

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<sup>71</sup> James Lang, "Learning for Mastery", in *Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 85-105.

<sup>72</sup> Lang, "Learning for Mastery," 86.

<sup>73</sup> Lang, "Learning for Mastery," 88.

the specific performance and falls more heavily on their mastery of what they must learn.<sup>74</sup>

Lang also introduces readers to Professor John Boyer of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where he teaches a “World Regions” class. More than 2,700 students enroll every semester. To effectively teach a class of this size, Boyer needed to develop new strategies for his teaching. Boyer’s mastery-oriented classroom uses a “gamelike” system for his syllabus where students earn points for completing a wide array of assignments from which they are allowed to choose. The following is an excerpt from Boyer’s class syllabus that explains how he hopes students will navigate through his class:

Instead of having a set amount of mandatory activities that you are required to do and then assessing your grade from your performance, I am going to provide a host of opportunities for you to earn points towards your grade, thus allowing you to choose your path according to your interests and skills... It’s a “create your fate” grade... Are you a good test taker? Take lots of tests. Not good at taking exams? Then do alternative written or film viewing assignments to earn your points.<sup>75</sup>

This style of teaching shifts the emphasis away from the completion of tasks, and focuses instead on providing students with “opportunities.”<sup>76</sup> His hope is that these opportunities will help students better demonstrate what they are learning. Despite the size difference between Boyer’s classroom to that of a one-to-one student/teacher ratio in an applied saxophone lesson, the author put together a case study to test the viability of a syllabus like Boyer’s for applied saxophone study.

### **Case Study – Creating and Testing an Alternate Syllabus**

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<sup>74</sup> Lang, “Learning for Mastery,” 88.

<sup>75</sup> John Boyer, “World Regions” (Syllabus), 6.

<sup>76</sup> The potential pitfalls that can arise from this style of syllabus will be addressed later on in this chapter.

Having outlined the potential benefits for this alternative approach to an applied saxophone syllabus, the author conducted a case study in the James Madison University saxophone studio during the 2021-2022 academic year. Approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and assigned protocol number 21-2504, the case study was designed around creating an alternative to the conservatory-style assessment setting for applied saxophone lessons. Boyer's goal for his "World Regions" class was to design a syllabus that created a "game-like" setting. Students had complete autonomy to select the assignments that they participated in. For each assignment they completed, they earned points toward a cumulative point total. At the end of the semester, the total points would be associated with the corresponding letter for their final grade. The author's case study worked in an identical fashion. Students received the same level of attention in their one-on-one saxophone lessons with particular care being placed on their respective technical and musical development. However, how they were asked to engage in the classroom to display their understanding of course material significantly deprioritized performance as the primary form of assessment. At the start of the semester, students were presented a syllabus that outlined an array of assignments that were designed to challenge students in new ways.

At the start of the case study, every student was presented with a Consent to Participate in Research form, provided in Appendix A.1. Each student was informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the case study at any point without any repercussions to their course grade. Each student was also ensured that any course assignments they completed that were ultimately used as

examples in this document would be done so anonymously, as per the IRB protocol.<sup>77</sup>

The next document they were provided was a copy of the syllabus they would follow for their applied saxophone lessons during the semester, provided in Appendix A.2. Once each student read through and understood the expectations of the syllabus, they were provided with the Assignments Agreement, provided in Appendix A.3. This agreement listed all available assignments, the total available points for each, and allowed students to calculate how many points they could potentially earn during the semester. This was based on the assignments they respectively chose to complete. After deciding which assignments they wanted to participate in, they signed and dated the bottom of the document. Upon completion of their participation in the case study, each student in the case study answered a survey of questions about their experience. The post-case study survey is provided in Appendix A.4.

The students who participated in the case study were current undergraduate students in the James Madison University saxophone studio. The goal was to involve students of all grade levels to gauge the value of a syllabus like this for each of the respective age groups. It was decided that the students' participation would be broken up across two different semesters. The Fall 2021 semester included four sophomores and two seniors.<sup>78</sup> To better serve the freshmen, they did not begin their college studies as members of a case study. As the syllabus used for the case study was untested at the time, it was determined that the first-year students should follow the traditionally prescribed

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<sup>77</sup> All student names have been redacted from the assignments that were included in later appendices.

<sup>78</sup> Juniors would have also been included in the Fall 2021 semester of the case study. However, during this year in the saxophone studio, there were no juniors enrolled.

syllabus for their applied saxophone study to start their college careers. The following Spring 2022 semester part of the case study included four freshmen participants.

To effectively develop a similar version of Boyer's syllabus for applied saxophone, several factors needed to be addressed. The first of which was acknowledging that Boyer's class is a lecture-style class, while saxophone lessons are a more hands-on applied class. This is a key difference, and would affect the type of assignments created for the class. The second factor to be addressed was the difference in class size from Boyer's class to applied saxophone lessons. Boyer's class has a roster of several thousand students. Applied saxophone lessons at JMU has a roster of roughly fifteen people, all of whom meet with the teacher on an individual basis. The third factor was developing a grading system for the assignments. Boyer's syllabus uses a point system, and the author's syllabus utilizes one as well. The difficult part was deciding how to weight each assignment, and setting a fair point value to each assignment. The last element that needed to be addressed was the course content. Boyer's class is built to suit a general audience of students. The students all learn the same material, and over the course of the semester they build a deeper understanding of the topics covered in class. In applied saxophone lessons, the course material covered for each student can vary greatly, and is completely dependent on each student's respective needs. The assignments that were created needed to be flexible enough to suit a wide range of students' varying skill levels.

When providing students with as much control in their education as this case study was designed to allow, it becomes important to address the potential problems that can arise. This case study, and the framework behind building a syllabus like this, are centralized around the promotion of student success. In Boyer's syllabus, he encourages

students to “play to their strengths.” This quote can be viewed both positively and negatively. When students are provided with the agency to select how they want to proceed through a course by selecting their own assignments, it is with the hope that they understand themselves well enough to know their strengths and weaknesses. This may not always be the case. In higher education, a typical undergraduate applied saxophone student is a young adult who is still in the process of discovering and deciding who they want to be. It is entirely likely that a student may not be aware of which assignments will best display for them to their understanding of course material. When deciding to try a syllabus with a menu of assignments, it is important to encourage students to ask questions and ask for help in the decision process.

This leads to the next potential negative of this kind of syllabus. Part of what makes college such an important experience in many people’s lives and education is the constant push they receive to exit their comfort zone. Students are often asked to give presentations, write research papers, take long exams, etc. Each of these experiences are valuable learning tools. It could be viewed that a syllabus for a course that makes these types of assignments optional, arguably robs the students from the learning experience of being pushed outside their comfort zone. Yes, for this case study students were encouraged to select assignments that would help them display their understanding of course material. However, to help counteract the potential for students only selecting assignments that are naturally easy or comfortable to them, a very specific grading scale was set in place.

The point system utilized for the case study was also based on Boyer’s “World Regions” syllabus. Every assignment in the syllabus for this case study was set

somewhere between 150 and 700 total points. Many of the assignments had numerous components, each of which allowed students to earn points toward the whole assignment's point total throughout the semester. In total, all assignments had a point value of 2,500. Table 3.1 below lists all the assignments and their corresponding point values. This table was extracted directly from the syllabus was provided to students at the start of the case study. To pass the course with a letter grade of C-, the students needed to earn a minimum of 1,700 points. As students accumulated more points, their corresponding letter grade would also go up. Once a student earned a minimum of 1,934 points, they would have earned an A for the semester. The translation of total accumulated points to final letter grades can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1 – The Fall 2021 available assignments and their corresponding point values

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Maximum points POSSIBLE</u>
13 Weekly Listening Reflections	400 (30pts each + 10pts for doing all 13)
Technical Midterm	250
Final Jury or Recital	700
6 Video Performance Submissions	150 (25pts each)
2 Studio Performances	150 (75pts each)
Teaching Assignment	200
Facebook Group Assignment	150 (10pts per post + 50pts for final reflection)
Interview Project	150
Saxophone History Project	150
Composition Project	200

Table 3.2 – The translation of points earned during the case to their final earned course letter grade

<u>Total Earned Points</u>	<u>Letter Grade Equivalent</u>
1700-1749	C
1750-1799	C+
1800-1833	B-
1834-1866	B
1867-1899	B+
1900-1933	A-
1934 and up	A



Students were not expected to complete all of the available assignments. Rather, they were expected to read through the syllabus and the available assignments and their descriptions, and decide which ones they wanted to complete before the semester commenced. Additionally, as the students continued to accumulate points by completing assignments, they were allowed to stop whenever the desired grade was achieved (i.e. – if a student was happy with receiving a B- for the semester, they could effectively stop completing assignments once their accumulated points total for the semester was 1800 points or higher).<sup>79</sup>

This case study was motivated by the deemphasis of performance as the primary assessment tool for applied saxophone. However, performance opportunities are still present. While the goal of the case study was to test the viability of other avenues for students to display their understanding of course material, asking students to perform can still be an effective way to demonstrate their learning. Performance should still play an important role in all the students' professional and musical development. So instead of removing it, other assignment types were added alongside it. As mentioned earlier, the point values for the assignments were deliberately set up to ensure that students were unable to only select assignments that were in their comfort zone. Additionally, as part of the James Madison University requirements for undergraduate music majors enrolled in applied lessons, every student must perform either a final jury or a degree recital during the semester they are enrolled. To adhere to this guideline in the case study, the final jury/degree recital was weighted very heavily. The final jury/degree recital assignment's

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<sup>79</sup> This is only partially true. This will be further explained in the next paragraph when the Final Jury/Recital assignment points breakdown is discussed.

total point value was set to 700 points. Given that the total of all assignments was 2,500 points, even if a student elected to not participate in the Final Jury/Recital assignment, but selected to complete every other available assignment and earned full marks on every assignment submission, the highest possible score for their semester total would be 1,800 points (B-).

As stated in the syllabus, the total point value of an assignment is the total available points for that assignment. Just because a student completed an assignment, it did not ensure that they would receive full marks. Content also mattered, just like on any other assignment or exam in any other class. While not impossible, it is highly unlikely for a student to score perfectly on every assignment submission throughout the semester. This means if a student did not complete a final jury or a degree recital, they most likely would land in the C, or even D, grade range at the end of the semester.

Students are most likely not familiar with a class that operates in this fashion. Thus, a path forward needed to be provided to them. To help provide students with some structure and assurance to the instructor, the author implemented a contract, the Assignments Agreement, that each participating student signed, and returned to the instructor before the start of the semester. The goal of the Assignments Agreement was to ensure that students both read and understood the expectations for the course, and the assignments in which they were choosing to participate. The students' understanding was paramount, given that this was a new type of syllabus for applied saxophone. As seen in Appendix A.3, the Assignments Agreement listed out each of the assignments found in the syllabus, along with their corresponding point values. The students were tasked with taking the time to carefully select which assignments they would complete and add up the

corresponding assignment points for the maximum potential point total. With this information outlined, both the student and teacher knew before the semester which assignments were to be completed and the overall potential point total that could be earned at the end of the semester. One final goal of the Assignment Agreement not explicitly specified by the instructor, or the syllabus, was that it hopefully helped the student to manage their time. All assignment due dates were provided in the syllabus at the start of the semester. With the contract filled out, hopefully students would then create a schedule for themselves so they could organize their time based on when respective assignments were due.

### **Syllabus 1.0**

Just like any other course syllabus, this experimental syllabus started with the generic course description, course objective, required texts, and included an attendance policy and all university-specific policies. Where the syllabus began to differ was in the grading policy and criteria for the assignments menu. The first iteration of the syllabus that was implemented for the case study had ten assignments from which students could choose. Each assignment was listed with their respective total available points, a description and requirements, and a weekly course calendar of assignment due dates was provided at end of the syllabus. The syllabus is provided in Appendix A.2.

The assignments were designed to challenge students in various ways, and hopefully provide them with different ways of engaging with the course material. When developing the different assignments, a balance across different categories of assignments was attempted to be created. The styles of assignments were Listening, Performing,

Academic, and Creative. Most assignments were designed to land in only one of the categories, while a few arguably applied to two of these categories.<sup>80</sup>

### **Listening Reflections**

One of the most important skills any student musician can cultivate is the ability to listen to music with a critical ear, and discuss it intelligibly. This skill can only be developed if one practices it. All students, particularly undergraduate saxophone students at JMU, are busy. Due to their busy schedules, the practicing of this skill may be something they may choose to ignore or even forget about entirely. With this in mind, the weekly Listening Reflections assignment was implemented for the case study's syllabus. Ideally, it encouraged those students who selected this assignment to practice listening critically and writing about what they heard because it was now implemented as a formal part of their course grade.

Over the course of the semester, students were asked to complete thirteen weekly listening reflection submissions. Each was due every Friday via Google Drive by 5:00pm. In the assignment description, students were given a prescribed list of prominent saxophonists from whom they should choose to listen. Depending on what the students were focusing on in their weekly lessons (technical proficiency, tone production, musicality, etc.), they were expected to write about that aspect in their reflection. Each listening reflection was worth thirty points. To bring the total value of this assignment to a round 400 points, and to motivate students to complete all of the weekly reflections, an additional 10 bonus points were provided to every student who completed all thirteen weeks of submissions. If a student submitted an assignment late, their submission would

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<sup>80</sup> A breakdown of the assignment categories will be provided in the "Assignment Categories" section later in this chapter.

not count for the passed assignment deadline. Instead, if there were more remaining reflections for the semester, their late submission counted toward the next upcoming reflection due date (i.e. – if a student missed the deadline for submission for reflection submission number two and submitted it late, the student would receive zero points for submission number two, and their reflection would be applied for a grade for submission number three). This assignment was designed to land in the Listening category, and all six students during the Fall 2021 semester of the case study elected to participate in this assignment.

### **Technical Midterm**

Many undergraduate saxophonists need to be motivated to practice their fundamentals (scales, long tones, articulation exercises, etc.). It can be difficult for them to see the benefits of these important exercises as it pertains to the other music they are working on. Fundamentals are a constant practicing need, and take a considerable amount of time to develop and play cleanly. Due to this, they can be far less enjoyable to practice than repertoire, or even some études. This means that the attention and dedication to these crucial exercises is often limited to a relatively small portion of students' practice time.

Even though many students do not spend enough time practicing their fundamentals, that does not mean they do not understand the value they can provide. Many students know they should practice their fundamentals. Just like in the Listening Reflection assignment, available time is a limiting factor. Students only have so much time to practice, and with the precious time they have, many believe that focusing on repertoire will be the best use of that time. They are able to hear the progress they make in the repertoire by the end of a singular practice session. Again, a formal assignment like

this can act as a motivator for students to dedicate more time to developing their fundamental skills.

The Technical Midterm assignment fits the Performing assignment category. It is important to remember that while performance is deemphasized in this syllabus, it is not entirely removed. This assignment appealed to many students in the Fall 2021 semester of the case study. Every case study participant for this semester elected to participate in this assignment. It was valued at a total of 250 points, and the “exam” was conducted individually during respective students’ lessons. Each student was allowed thirty minutes to complete thirty-six different scales and perform two different études of contrasting style. Upon completion, they were awarded the appropriate point total for their performance.

### **Final Jury or Degree Recital**

While still technically an “optional” assignment in the syllabus, JMU requires students to perform a final jury or a degree recital of all undergraduate music students enrolled in applied saxophone lessons. Due to this requirement by JMU, the Final Jury/Degree Recital was weighted very highly in the case study, with the total value being 750 points. This created an imbalance in the points structure for the assignments. The assignment was still optional, but, as mentioned earlier, even if a student selected to complete every other available assignment and earned a perfect score on every submission, they would only earn enough points to receive a grade no higher than a B-.

This is an important assignment. Much like a final exam in any other academic course, a final playing jury or degree recital is designed to be a presentation of what a student learned during their entire semester of work. Just as importantly, in the

professional field of music, performing is never going to be avoided. Without people performing, making music, and offering it to audiences, either live or through recordings, music will simply go away. No matter what a student's major is, performance, music education, industry, etc., students should have a firm understanding of how to navigate through a performance. However, this assignment does not need to be the primary way students are asked to engage with and show their understanding of their applied saxophone course material. That is why so many other assignments were made available to students in the case study. All six students from the Fall 2021 semester of the case study participated in this assignment.

### **Studio Performances**

Studio performances are not a new type of assignment, nor are they unique to JMU. It is standard practice in higher education applied saxophone studios for members of the studio to perform for their teachers and peers. After performing, other members of the studio and the teacher offer comments and feedback to the performer to help them improve.<sup>81</sup> This is a useful learning tool. One of the benefits of performing in studio class is that it provides students the opportunity to practice performing in a less stressful environment than in a more formal performance, like in a recital.

The Studio Performances assignment was provided to students with the expectation that they would perform on two separate occasions in class, with each performance being with 75 points. Students were expected to treat their performances for these classes as formally as possible. The level of playing, attire, and overall presentation

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<sup>81</sup> Learning how to offer useful feedback in a productive and concise manner is also an important tool. While there was no assignment for either semester of the case study that pertained to students listening critically in studio class and offering feedback, future iterations of the syllabus may include a formal assignment that focuses on this goal.

are designed to mimic that of the experience of a formal performance. This practice is important so that students can learn what it feels like to be on stage to perform. This was also an assignment in the Performing category, and all six students from the Fall 2021 semester of the case study participated in this assignment.

### **Video Performances**

The Video Performances assignment was another assignment that required students to submit numerous parts throughout the semester. This assignment also fit into the Performance category, but was designed to be a more casual experience for students, and hopefully helped to alleviate much of the performance anxiety associated with public performances. Over the course of the semester, students were tasked with recording six different 5-minute (minimum) performance videos.

These videos were also advertised in the syllabus as assignment submissions that do not need to be flawless. “While [other] performances are meant to be polished presentations, video submissions can be things that are still in the works” (Appendix A.2). This served multiple purposes for students. First, as it was a less formal performance, the lowered stakes hopefully allowed students to perform at a higher level. Instead of their nerves during a live performance potentially distracting them, hopefully this private performance allowed students to focus more attentively. The second purpose that it hopefully helped students with, was to get them into the habit of recording themselves. Recording practice sessions can be a tremendously beneficial tool. Listening and evaluating what they are hearing is an important skill for musicians to develop. This is particularly important in our personal practice sessions. Often times, what we think we are playing is not actually audible to other listeners. As students listen back to their



recordings, they can assess their own playing to see if what they thought was played was actually what the microphone heard.

Over the course of the semester, students were expected to submit six different video submissions. The due dates for each submission were listed in the syllabus. The videos were uploaded to Google Drive and shared directly with their teacher by 5:00pm of the due date. If a student submitted an assignment late, their submission would not count for the passed assignment deadline. Instead, if there were more remaining videos for the semester, their late submission counted toward the next upcoming video due date (i.e. – if a student missed the deadline for submission for video submission number two and submitted it late, the student would receive zero points for submission number two, and their video would be applied for a grade for submission number three). All individual submissions were worth twenty-five points, and students were awarded the appropriate number of points for the quality of playing they submitted in their video. The total value available to students for this assignment was 150 points, and all six students elected to participate in this assignment.<sup>82</sup> The Video Performances assignment fit the Performance assignment category, and all six students from the Fall 2021 semester of the case study participated in this assignment.

### **Teaching Assignment**

Another method to assess a student's understanding of a concept is to have them try to teach it to another student. The Teaching Assignment allowed students this

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<sup>82</sup> While all students selected this assignment, many students chose to complete a varying number of these video submissions. After calculating the total points they could earn from all the assignments they selected for the case study, some students decided that to earn their desired grade for the semester that they did not need to submit all six video performance submissions. One student only submitted two video performances, and still earned the necessary points to receive an A for the semester.

opportunity. Students who chose to participate in this assignment gave a 15-minute presentation where they were tasked with teaching one of their peers in the JMU saxophone studio a technical or musical concept of their choosing during studio class. This assignment was worth 200 total points, and all six students participating in the Fall 2021 semester of the case study selected this assignment. Due to time constraints for studio class, the teaching presentations were broken up across two different days, October 8<sup>th</sup> and October 29<sup>th</sup>. Students were given the opportunity to request which day they wanted to present via email to their teacher. This assignment straddled the line between the Performance and Listening assignment categories, and all six of the Fall 2021 case study participants elected to take part in this assignment.<sup>83</sup>

### **Facebook Group Project**

There is group on Facebook called “Saxophone Studio Class-online!” It was formed in response to the 2020 Covid quarantine. Members of collegiate saxophone studios all over the country were unable to be together and learn. Dr. Nathan Nabb, of Stephen F. Austin State University, took the initiative to create this group that allowed people to congregate online to learn in a new way. This Facebook group became a valuable forum where students and professionals could promote their work, upcoming events, and ask questions.

“The goal of this assignment is to utilize this forum to procure new ways of thinking. During your studies at JMU, people who receive the same education surround you, and because of this, you ultimately begin sharing similar ways of thinking” (Appendix A.2). This assignment tasked students with developing and asking a series of

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<sup>83</sup> This assignment has already been adjusted for future versions of the syllabus. These changes will be discussed in Chapter 4.

ten questions throughout the semester to get answers from the community. Each question was posted on the group's public page so all members of the group were able to see it and then respond in the comments section of the post. At the end of the semester, students wrote a reflection on what they learned from the answers to their questions.

The total point value for the assignment was 150 points. Each of the questions students posted were worth ten points, while the final reflection was worth fifty points. This assignment fit both the Creative and Academic categories of lessons, and during the Fall 2021 semester only one student elected to participate in this assignment.

### **Interview Project**

This assignment shares a similar reasoning for its implementation as the Facebook Group assignment. As students surround themselves with the same people at school, the ideas and way of thinking that circulate can become too similar. Students need to expand their circles of influence to gain new perspectives. In the Interview Project assignment, students were asked to reach out to a saxophone professor at another school to prepare a one-on-one interview with them.<sup>84</sup> This assignment had three important due dates that students needed to submit components for throughout the semester. First, students needed to submit their interview questions to their teacher so they could be reviewed, edited, and approved. In the syllabus, if a student missed this deadline, they were not permitted to continue with the assignment. This was of particular importance because the interviewee was essentially donating their time for this interview. Students needed to prepare properly by avoiding inappropriate questions, and not wasting the interviewee's time. This meant that a student would unfortunately forfeit all of the points for this assignment, and receive

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<sup>84</sup> Ideally, this would be an in-person interview, but Zoom was the preferred medium by students to complete this assignment.

a zero, if they missed the assignment's first deadline.<sup>85</sup> Second, the students needed to conduct their interview. There was no formal submission for this part of the assignment, but the interview needed to be conducted before the date specified in the syllabus. Last, students needed to write their reflection from the interview and submit it by the due date on the syllabus via Google Drive.

Even though there were three different components to the assignment, there was only one total point value. The assignment was worth 150 points. The Interview Project was placed in the Academic assignment category. While only one person elected to complete this assignment, several students mentioned in their post-case study survey that this assignment was one they wish they had tried.

### **Saxophone History Research Project**

Of the assignments made available to students, this one was the most aligned with a typical academic term paper. Many students do not relish the opportunity write lengthy research papers, so there was a fairly low expectation for the number of students selecting this assignment. Surprisingly, of the six students who agreed to participate during the Fall 2021 semester of the case study, all but one of them selected to complete this assignment.

The saxophone history paper was designed to serve several functions. One of the primary functions, and its largest benefit for inclusion in this syllabus is that it was not a performance-based assignment. This assignment landed squarely in the Academic category. Second, many students in applied saxophone are unaware of the instrument's history, how its history has affected its repertoire, how and where it is taught, and why

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<sup>85</sup> Luckily, this was not a problem, and nobody received a zero for this assignment.

certain things are important to learn. This assignment can help students gain a deeper appreciation for so many aspects that have become standard practice.

The third function that this assignment satisfied was that its format was familiar. In a semester that already had so many new aspects for students to manage, this assignment was something they understood. While their experience writing research papers most likely does not stem from their applied saxophone study, most, if not all, students have written at least one research paper during their formal education. Perhaps, the familiarity and structure of this assignment was part of the appeal for some of the students when selecting it.

### **Composition Project**

Another musical skill that some students want to try is composition. As mentioned earlier, students' hectic lives often prohibit them from trying new things. By implementing this assignment into the case study's syllabus, interested students were now able to designate time to composing because it was for a specific class, and not just part of their valuable free time.

The requirements for this assignment were left rather vague in the syllabus. As per the assignment description in the syllabus, "...students ha[d] the opportunity to write their own piece of around 5-7 minutes in length that demonstrate[d] some of the objectives that [were] covered during their lessons and practice sessions throughout the semester" (Appendix A.2). This assignment was intended to be implemented as part of the Creative assignment category. With the only parameters for the assignment being that it needed to be somewhere between 5-7 minutes and incorporate one or more elements

from their lessons, students were given a wide berth for what they wanted to write.

Across both semesters, three out of the ten students completed this assignment.

Table 3.3 outlines the ten assignments provided to students during the Fall 2021 semester of the case study, along with a color code designating which category they each fit into.

Table 3.3 – The breakdown of assignment categories for the Fall 2021 assignments

Assignment		
Listening Reflections	Listening	
Technical Midterm	Performing	
Final Jury / Recital	Performing	
Video Performance Submissions	Performing	
Studio Performances	Performing	
Teaching Assignment	Listening	Performing
Facebook Group Project	Creative	Academic
Interview Project	Academic	
Saxophone History Project	Academic	
Composition Project	Creative	Academic

Categories Color Key	
Listening	Listening
Performing	Performing
Academic	Academic
Creative	Creative

The goal was to provide a well-rounded balance of assignment categories for students to choose from. Table 3.3 also shows that there were several assignments that could not be defined by any singular assignment category. Those assignments straddled the line between two categories and are listed in the table as fitting both. The Teaching Assignment, Facebook Group Project, and Composition Project were all assignments that could not be categorized by any one assignment category. Both the Facebook Group Project and the Composition Project can be defined as fitting the Creative and Academic assignment categories. The Teaching Assignment was categorized as both the Listening and Performing assignment categories.

More importantly, Table 3.3 clearly illustrates that the anticipated balance of different types of assignments was not as well-rounded as expected. The Fall 2021

version of the syllabus had five Performing assignments, four Academic assignments, two Listening assignments, and two Creative assignments. Given that one of the primary goals of the case study was to deemphasize performance by providing students with other types of assignments, this first iteration of the syllabus can only be considered a marginal success. Yes, there are more types of assignments provided to students outside of performing. However, the Performing category was still the one with the highest number of available assignments for students to choose. Finding a way to create a more equal balance of these categories was something that needed to be addressed for the Spring 2022 semester of the case study.

### **Fall 2021**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, ten students participated in the case study during the Fall 2021 semester. Each student's experience was unique, as they elected to complete different assignments. In the following subsections of this chapter, some of their experiences will be summarized through the lens of the author. This will be accomplished with the aid of actual examples of the students' work from some of the assignments. Each student took a different approach as to how they wanted to navigate through the case study. Their individual approaches helped shed light on how currently implemented assignments could be improved, which assignments should be considered for removal, implementation for future iterations of the syllabus, and how the teacher can better help students succeed in this new format. Also, since students' names have been

redacted and will not be used for designation in the document, they will be listed in an ascending order (i.e. Student 1, Student 2, etc.).<sup>86</sup>

### **Student 1**

Student 1 chose to participate in the Listening Reflections assignment, the Technical Midterm, the Video Performances, Studio Performances, the Teaching Assignment, the Composition Project, and performed a degree recital. Their cumulative score at the end of the semester was 1,950 points, and they received an A.

As expected with all students, each student decided to navigate the semester differently than their peers. The first thing to note about Student 1 is that even though they chose to participate in the Video Performances assignments, they did so knowing that they did not want to complete all of the submissions for the assignment. The assignment included six submissions throughout the semester, each of which were worth 25 points. When planning their semester of assignments, Student 1 did the math to determine how many points they needed to receive the required 1934 points to receive an A. After calculating the total amount of points, they could potentially receive from the other assignments, Student 1 determined that they only needed to complete one of the Video Performance submissions to earn an A for the semester. Their answer to question five of the post-case study survey provided helpful insight into their thought process for how they chose their assignments. “I honestly chose the ones that I felt like would take me the least amount of time to do...” (Appendix B.1).

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<sup>86</sup> Not all students’ experiences have been written up in this document. Only the students whose experiences provided particularly useful insight as to how the syllabus can be improved for the future have been included.



This can prove to be a risky tactic to take with this syllabus. Student 1 essentially performed the exact minimum number of assignments they could complete and still earn enough points to earn the desired A for the semester. Fortunately for Student 1, they scored very highly on every assignment they completed throughout the course, but an interesting problem arose toward the end of the semester. Student 1 actually miscalculated their potential total points when adding up how many video performance submissions they wanted to complete. After only submitting one video, their math left them short of the point range for them to receive an A for the semester. The inaccuracy of their math meant that their semester total was only 1,925 points, and landed them in the A- grade range. The question, “What kind of teacher do you want to be?” continued to weigh on the author’s decision for how to handle the situation. The rules and expectations for the assignments explicitly state the requirements for what a Video Performance submission should be. The guidelines for how students earn their final grade and the points they earn throughout the semester are also explicitly stated in the syllabus. However, students cannot not be reduced down to numbers. They are people, and who they are must factor into how this scenario is handled.

Student 1 had proven themselves to be a strong student for years, and during the case study they scored very well in every assignment they participated in. Should their final grade really be affected so dramatically due to a simple miscalculation they made at the start of the semester? Ultimately, it was decided to help the student find a solution, and a suitable answer was selected. Student 1 participated in the JMU Student Composers recital during the semester. This was an entirely extracurricular recital for Student 1, but it was decided that since it was both a performance and recorded/streamed before the

deadline of the final Video Performance submission that they would receive credit for this performance as their second submission for this assignment, thus giving them the necessary points to bring their total semester score to 1,950 points, and earn them an A. While it worked out for Student 1 during the case study, it is not hard to imagine another student in the same scenario not planning for lower grades per assignment and coming up short with their point total at the end of the semester, earning a grade lower than they anticipated.

Student 1 also provided helpful thoughts about the Technical Midterm, and a potential adjustment that could be made. In their post-case study survey they said, “[t]he midterm would probably have to be adjusted depending on the specific needs of the student” (Appendix B.1). In hindsight, this comment makes complete sense. One of the overarching themes for this research is that students are unique, and how they best represent their understanding of course material will vary depending on their respective strengths. To create a one-size-fits all Technical Midterm assignment where everybody should be completing the same set of tasks does help support this understanding. Though the argument could be made that expectations for the Technical Midterm were made clear in the syllabus prior to Student 1 selecting the assignment, their sentiment holds true. A much more appropriate expectation for the Technical Midterm is one that sets the material to be tested on a student-by-student basis.

### **Student 2**

Student 2 chose to participate in the Listening Reflections assignment, the Technical Midterm, the Video Performances assignment, Studio Performances, the Teaching Assignment, the Composition Project, the Saxophone History Project, and

performed a degree recital. Their cumulative score at the end of the semester was 2105 points, and they received an A. Student 2 participated in more assignments than Student 1, and completed all of the submissions for Video Performances assignment. This provided them with a higher potential point total for the semester, and allowed them more room for any deducted points in each of their assignments.

When looking at this student's Listening Reflections submissions, two of them stand out as they will impact future versions of this assignment. Their submission from September 24<sup>th</sup> can be seen in Appendix C.1. This reflection focused on a famous recording of Jacques Ibert's, *Concertino da Camera*, by one of the world's foremost saxophonists and pedagogues, Claude Delangle. In their reflection, Student 2 focused on how Delangle's choice of equipment could affect his overall tone, sound in specific registers, and also the variety of his articulations. These are very advanced concepts to be addressing, and not ones that younger students would necessarily be listening for. This level of detail and analysis of active choices made by performers continued throughout the semester. Student 2 submitted another listening reflection on November 12<sup>th</sup>, seen in Appendix C.2, where they listened to an album by Christopher Creviston, another prominent saxophonist and pedagogue. Student 2 addressed the "spinning" quality of Creviston's vibrato, his use of short fingerings, and even made some inferences about how the performer may have approached certain passages in the music. Not every student has the experience and/or skill to listen at this level. Expecting this level from students across different grade levels is unrealistic. Therefore, grading each student with the same expectation through only one version of the Listening Reflections assignment is unfair. The level of listening that Student 2 consistently presented forced the author to reevaluate

how different students, particularly those of different grade levels, should be assessed differently.

In addition to being a strong student, Student 2 also provided excellent feedback in their post-case study survey. One of their most interesting answers came from their response to the question about which assignment they disliked the most. “The composition project – I still feel like I’m not good at composing... I thought doing this [assignment] would result in me getting past that, but it just stressed me out...” (Appendix C.3). While this student learned that composing is more stressful than rewarding, they should be commended for trying an assignment outside their comfort zone. One of the many goals associated with this case study was to provide students new opportunities. Student 2 tried an assignment they did not end up liking, and that will continue to happen with many students participating in a course that implements a syllabus with new assignment opportunities. Student 2 also provided insight as to which new assignments they would like to see for future iterations of the syllabus. “...I think there should be something to do with chamber music or duets” (Appendix C.3). Listening to, arranging/composing, participating in chamber music and/or duets are useful skills for musicians of all ages, and developing some new assignments that incorporate these suggestions would be valuable additions to the syllabus.

### **Student 3**

Student 3 chose to participate in the Listening Reflections assignment, the Technical Midterm, Video Performance assignment, the Teaching Assignment, the Saxophone History Project, performed a final semester jury, and was the only person

across both semesters of students to participate in the Interview Project.<sup>87</sup> Their cumulative score at the end of the semester was 1964 points, and they earned an A.

One of the most prominent observations made about Student 3 was how seriously they took each assignment. This is demonstrated early on in the semester with their Listening Reflection submission on September 9<sup>th</sup>. They decided to listen to Timothy McAllister's album, *In Transit*. The goal of each reflection was for students to select one or two specific aspects of the performer's playing to listen to and reflect on in a 250- to 500-word paper. As seen in Appendix D.1, Student 3 wrote a nearly 3-page paper where they listened critically and analyzed every track on the album. They presented a phenomenal level of insight into what they heard and how they planned to use what they learned in their personal practice. As an educator, this is beyond the desired product from a student. Rather than a student going through the motions, providing the minimum level of effort, and trying to simply get something submitted on time, Student 3 understood the value of the Listening Reflections assignment, and used it as an opportunity for deep learning.

Student 3 also took advantage of the opportunity provided by Interview Project. This assignment was designed to give students the ability to learn from and speak with pedagogues outside of their daily circle of friends and teachers at JMU. Stepping outside of this social and academic circle can be a challenging endeavor. There is a large chance that this may have been a leading reason as to why so few students chose to participate in this assignment. Student 3 not only pushed themselves to do this, but also enjoyed the assignment. Based on their answers to the post-case study survey, seen in Appendix D.2,

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<sup>87</sup> Student 5 also chose to participate in the Interview Project, but did not end up doing so because they withdrew from the case study.

they found the assignment to be quite beneficial. “My favorite [assignment] was the interview project. It gave me a reason to talk to someone I admire, and it was a very fulfilling conversation” (Appendix D.2). For their Interview Project, Student 3 decided to speak with Dr. Nathan Nabb, Associate Professor of Saxophone at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Appendix D.3 is a list of all the questions Student 3 asked of Dr. Nabb during their online meeting, and Appendix E.4 shows their write-up of the notes from their conversation. From Appendix D.3, it is clear that Student 3 planned to use their time with Dr. Nabb to discuss how they could prepare and plan for their musical and professional future. Student 3 broke their questions up into four categories – Recording Questions, Endorsements, Education process/journey to becoming a college professor, and Musical & Professional inspiration (Appendix D.3).

Student 3 took several pages of notes, seen in Appendix D.4, during their time with Dr. Nabb, and was able to garner some useful information about his process and path to becoming a saxophone professor in higher education. The opportunity Student 3 was provided by this assignment allowed them to speak directly with somebody in the concert saxophone field that they admire and respect. Without this assignment, there is a large chance that they may not have interacted until years later, if at all.

#### **Student 4**

One of the most interesting and useful student experiences during the Fall 2021 semester of the case study, came from Student 4. Appendix E.1 shows that when they were deciding which assignments to complete, they selected the Listening Reflections assignment, the Technical Midterm, the Video Performances, the Studio Performances,

the Saxophone History Project, and to perform a playing jury at the end of the semester. More importantly, Student 4's selected assignments only allowed for them to earn a potential 1,800 points. Assuming they scored perfectly on every assignment throughout the semester, 1,800 points would only be enough to earn them a B- for their final semester grade. Again, the correlation between total points earned and student's final letter grades for the semester was made clear to all case study participants. This student made a conscious decision to complete the assignments that would potentially earn them a final grade of B-. While some readers of this document may find this student's decision surprising, it is important to remember that a student's respective experience during their education is theirs, and theirs alone. As Boyer put it, this style syllabus utilizes a "create-your-fate" system. Student 4 knowingly chose a semester of assignments that would yield them a maximum score of 1,800 points, and was content with the corresponding letter grade.

After their first Listening Reflection submission, where they only earned 26 out of 30 available points, Student 4 realized that they would not receive their full 1,800 points because they did not score perfectly on their submission. Their total potential points score had slipped into the 1,700s, and ultimately into the C range of letter grades. A new question for the syllabus had surfaced. Should a student be allowed to alter their Assignments Agreement in the middle of the semester by adding/removing assignments they would complete? Two of the benefits to a syllabus like this is that in addition to learning the course material, they are also learning about themselves. They learn how they operate and how they best display their understanding. Student 4 learned that they could not only handle the workload of adding more assignments, but also learned that

they were not happy earning a grade lower than a B-. The second benefit is that there are constant due dates throughout the semester for different assignments. This made it possible for Student 4 to potentially complete more assignments should they decide they want to after submitting their Assignments Agreement.<sup>88</sup>

In the case of Student 4, they wanted to add two new assignments they did not initially plan on completing; they wanted to now complete the Facebook Group Assignment and the Saxophone History Project. Both assignments collectively brought their potential total up an extra 300 points. This provided them with a buffer of points for them to achieve their initial goal of a letter grade of B- or higher. Additionally, by adding the Facebook Group Assignment this meant that there was now a student participating in this previously neglected assignment.

As part of the Facebook Group Project, over the course of the semester, Student 4 posted different questions to the “Saxophone Studio Online!” Facebook group. The posts for which can be seen in Appendix E.2. At the end of the semester they wrote up a short reflection, seen in appendix E.3, about what they learned from the community members in this Facebook group. Unfortunately, the group is not as robust or as serious as it once was during the Covid-19 pandemic when it was first organized. The responses that Student 4 received were sometimes not as helpful, and sometimes would lead to different community members arguing in the comment sections of their post. Due to the lack of structure for what was required for both the online posts and the written reflection for the assignment, along with the lack of quality responses received, Student 4 received full marks for the entire assignment.

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<sup>88</sup> As seen with Student 1, this could also be only some submissions of an assignment (i.e. – only submitting the last 3 Listening Reflections in order to try to earn an extra 90 points).



Despite receiving full marks on the Facebook Group assignment, and doing well on other assignments, Student 4's total accumulated points for the semester only added up to 1,933. As stated in the syllabus in Appendix A.2 and listed in Table 3.2, the required point total to achieve an A for the semester was 1,934 points or higher. Student 4 was only one point shy of this benchmark, and should only receive an A-. It could be argued that Student 4 should be happy to receive an A- considering their initial goal for the semester was only to earn a B-. However, other factors were considered. First, the fact that Student 4 took the initiative to add two more assignments to their course load in order to potentially earn a higher grade demonstrated a level of commitment to their studies that deserved to be commended. Second, there was a lack of clear expectations by the teacher. Not all assignments had the necessary grading rubrics to help students understand how to adequately accomplish the tasks set before them for every assignment. Therefore, after reviewing these two factors, it was ultimately decided that Student 4 would receive an A for the semester, and more clear grading rubrics and expectations would be implemented in the future.

### **Student 5**

It is also worth noting that not all students' experiences in the case study were positive. In the case of Student 5, they withdrew from the case study on November 6<sup>th</sup>. At the start of the semester, Student 5 submitted their Assignments Agreement, seen in Appendix F.1, where they chose to participate in the Listening Reflections assignment, the Technical Midterm, the Video Performances, the Studio Performances, the Teaching Assignment, the Interview Project, and perform a final jury, all of which would provide

them with a potential total of 2,150 points. This potential total points score was well above the minimum needed to earn an A for the semester.

Unfortunately, they did not complete the case study. In fact, they did not complete many of the assignments they had elected to do. They completed the first three submissions for the Listening Reflections assignment on time and scored perfectly on all three. They submitted their first Video Performance on time and did well with that too. They also performed their two Studio Performances and scored perfectly on those. However, they stopped submitting their weekly Listening Reflections, did not participate in the Technical Midterm, stopped submitting Video Performances, and did not participate in the Interview Project, Saxophone History Project, or the Teaching Assignment. They found the burden of all the assignments to be too much and the case study to be a lot of extra work. As promised at the start of the semester and at the onset of all students' participation with the case study, each participant was assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences to their course grade. As seen in Appendix F.2, on Saturday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Student 5 withdrew from the case study and resumed their standard applied saxophone studies.

### **Syllabus 2.0**

The student experience from the Fall 2021 semester of the case study showed several areas where the syllabus could be adjusted to improve the Spring 2022 student experience. First, it was decided that the instructor should take a bit more of a hands-on approach. This was needed for two reasons. First, the Spring 2022 semester was provided exclusively to first-year students. These students had only completed one semester of

college by that point and would most likely benefit from the structure provided by the teacher being more involved. Second, several students from the Fall 2021 semester found the lack of teacher involvement make their experience overly challenging. Assignment due dates would sneak up on them, and they would scramble to find complete things on time (Student 3, Appendix D.3). To help offer more structure to the Spring 2022 participants, each student was provided a personal email with a timeline of when their selected assignments were due. As seen in Appendix G, a student from the Spring 2022 semester of the case received this email that outlined all of the due dates of their selected assignments.

In addition to helping students stay more organized with their assignment due dates, there was also a change in the assignments offered. First, the Studio Performances assignment was adjusted so that students who wanted to do more performances than the previous semester's two performances could do so. "There is no limit to how many points a student can earn in this assignment. Students can perform in studio class as many times as they wish to receive feedback, as long as they continue to present material that is ready. Every performance will continue to add points to the student's final grade" (Appendix J).<sup>89</sup>

Additionally, there were new assignments provided to students in the Spring 2022 semester of the case study. As new assignments were added and none were removed, this meant there were more assignments provided in the Spring 2022 version of the syllabus. Due to this, the semester yielded a higher total of available points to students. Table 3.4 below outlines the complete menu of assignments provided to students in the syllabus for

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<sup>89</sup> It is also important to note that the point value for each performance remained consistent from the Fall 2021 semester – 75 points each.

the Spring 2022 semester. To continue to comply with the JMU guideline of all applied saxophone students needing to perform a final jury or degree recital, this assignment in the syllabus for the Spring 2022 semester became the only required assignment. If it were not required, students could bypass this assignment by completing more of the other assignments and earn enough points to still receive an A for the semester. This semester's syllabus, seen in Appendix H, saw the addition of "Area Recital" Performances, a Repertoire Analysis project, a Memorized Piece/Étude Performance, a Transcription project, and a Pitch Map Series.

Table 3.4 – The Spring 2022 available assignments and their corresponding point values

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Maximum points POSSIBLE</u>
13 Weekly Listening Reflections	400 (30pts each + 10pts for doing all 13)
Technical Midterm	250
Final Jury ( <b>mandatory</b> )	700
6 Video Performance Submissions	150 (25pts each)
Studio Performances	50pts each
Teaching Assignment	200
Area Recital Performances	75pts each
Interview Project	150
Saxophone History Project	150
Composition Project	200
Repertoire Analysis	200
Piece/Etude Memorization	150
Transcription	150
13 Pitch Map Series	200 (10pts each + 70pts for the reflection)

### **"Area Recital" Performances**

Each week at JMU, the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts makes their Recital Hall available to students from different performing areas (woodwinds, brass, strings, etc.). Interested students perform in what is commonly referred to as an Area Recital. This is a great opportunity for students who want to perform in this professional space. Much like the Studio Performances assignment, the Area Recital is meant to be treated by

students as a professional experience. While a Studio Performance can be a work in progress, performing in an Area Recital should be a polished product, and students need their teacher's permission to sign up to perform.

The Area Recital assignment was graded very similarly to Studio Performances assignment of the Fall 2021 syllabus. The assignment allowed students to perform twice in Area Recital, each of which were worth 75 points. In total, students could potentially earn a total of 150 points for this assignment. Another important aspect of this assignment was that students did not need to play a solo piece to earn credit for this assignment. Students also received credit for performing chamber music, most commonly in a saxophone quartet, as well. This assignment was landed in the Performance assignment category, and was selected by all four participants during the Spring 2022 semester.

### **Repertoire Analysis**

Another way of demonstrating one's knowledge and understanding a piece of music is through analysis. By creating a harmonic and phrase analysis of a piece, a student demonstrates the understanding of how a piece of music's structure. This knowledge can help inform and influence their playing of the piece. This assignment was designed to integrate their music theory skills, and fell into the Academic assignment category. This assignment helped students demonstrate their understanding of the repertoire they were learning during their lessons. Students were asked to select a piece they were working on and complete a Roman Numeral analysis of the harmonic structure, and/or a phrase structure analysis, or write out a narrative analysis where they could write out a storyline for the piece that is supported by musical evidence found in the music.

Depending on their choice of analysis, students could also decide to accompany their analysis with a roughly 500-word written response to further explain their analysis. This piece was worth a total of 200 points, and only one student selected this assignment during the Spring 2022 semester.

### **Piece/Étude Memorization**

When a piece is memorized, the amount of time spent learning it is typically far greater than learning to play it proficiently when reading it during a performance. This deeper level of learning provided students the opportunity to explore and present more of the finer details of a piece. This is accomplished because they no longer need to read the information on the page. They are free from the need to read the notes, rhythms, etc. For this assignment, students were allowed to complete the performance of this memorized work in any of the performance-style assignments offered to them (studio class, area recital, or a video performance). This assignment could be completed at any point during the semester, but there was still a due date associated with it. The due date pertained to a student's selection of a piece. The selection of the piece needed to be made by the date specified in the course calendar in the syllabus. This assignment was worth a total of 150 points, was a part of the Performance assignment category, and was also only selected by one of the semester's participants.

### **Transcription Project**

Students who selected the Transcription Project were offered two different options for how they could choose to proceed with the assignment. In the world of music, depending on the style of music, a transcription can be associated with different things. For example, a jazz solo transcription is utilized by many, if not all, jazz students. They

use the recordings of jazz giants to help them learn the language associated with improvising, how to play over certain chord changes, and further develop their ears. Another option provided to students for this assignment was writing a transcription of an arrangement of piece of non-saxophone literature. There is a lot of music that predates the saxophone's existence. Composers like J.S. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, like many other composers from the early Romantic period and earlier, did not compose music for the saxophone.

To receive credit for this assignment, students only needed to complete one style of musical transcription. They did not need to complete both a jazz and a non-saxophone literature transcription. The assignment was worth a potential total of 150 points. It was also one of the only assignments to straddle three different assignment categories. The Transcription Assignment landed in the Listening, Academic, and Creative assignment categories.<sup>90</sup> and only one student decided to participate in the assignment during the Spring 2022 semester.

### **Pitch Map Series**

The purpose of a pitch map is to help students understand what their natural pitch tendency is for every note on the saxophone.<sup>91</sup> With this understanding, students can learn to adjust the pitches accordingly in order to play these notes more in tune when playing them in their repertoire. Tuning is a constant and forever process, and it is one that requires the diligent development of one's ears. Learning how to hear and adjust pitch on any note is a vital skill.

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<sup>90</sup> If a student decided that they wanted to perform their transcription, this assignment would then apply to all four of the assignment categories.

<sup>91</sup> For this assignment, "every note" meant the standard range of the saxophone – low B-flat to high F-sharp.

This exercise is best done with the help of a fellow student/friend. Ideally, the person playing should play each note, starting on low B-flat and working chromatically upward to high F-sharp, for roughly 3-4 seconds without looking at the tuner. The person not playing will watch the tuner, and mark down the pitch (plus or minus how many cents from being in tune) on the pitch map.<sup>92</sup> The pitch map was provided to all students who participated in this assignment and can be seen in Appendix I.<sup>93</sup> Over the course of the semester, students were expected to complete one pitch map each week for thirteen weeks, each of which was worth thirty points. After completing their pitch maps, students were then asked to complete a 150- to 200-word reflection, also worth thirty points, about what they learned about their pitch tendencies and how they hopefully improved. All the pitch maps together and the reflection were worth 390 total points. To bring the total potential points for the entire assignment to 400 points, students were provided ten extra bonus points if they completed all thirteen pitch maps and the reflection. The Pitch Map Series assignment fell into the Listening assignment category, and all four students from the Spring 2022 semester participated in this assignment.

### **Adjustments and Key Differences**

Table 3.5 outlines the fifteen assignments provided to students during the Spring 2022 semester of the case study, along with the same color code used for Table 3.3 that designates which category they each fit into.

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<sup>92</sup> For this assignment, students were expected to tune to equal temperament with the standard of A = 440 Hz.

<sup>93</sup> The provided Pitch Map extends beyond the standard top end range of high F-sharp, and into the extended altissimo range. Students were not required to practice or submit their pitch tendencies for these notes as part of the assignment. It was simply provided to them on the Pitch Map in case some students wanted to explore the altissimo range in their personal practice. Some students did decide to include their pitch tendencies for the altissimo range as part of their assignment submissions.



Table 3.5 – The breakdown of assignment categories by color for the Spring 2022 semester of the case study

Assignment			
Listening Reflections	Listening		
Technical Midterm	Performing		
Final Jury / Recital	Performing		
Video Performance Submissions	Performing		
Studio Performances	Performing		
Teaching Assignment	Listening	Performing	
Facebook Group Project	Creative	Academic	
Interview Project	Academic		
Saxophone History Project	Academic		
Composition Project	Creative		
Area Recital Performance	Performing		
Repertoire Analysis	Listening	Creative	Academic
Piece/Étude Memorization	Performing		
Transcription Project	Listening	Creative	Academic
Pitch Map Series	Listening		

Categories Color Key	
Listening	Listening
Performing	Performing
Academic	Academic
Creative	Creative

The goal for the Spring 2022 semester was to improve the balance of assignment categories for students to choose from. The balance for the Fall 2021 semester did not work out as initially planned, and the author worked to correct it for this semester. Table 3.5 shows that of the fifteen assignments offered to students during the Spring 2022 semester, seven land in the Performing category, five land in the Academic category, five of them land in the Listening category, and four land in the Creative category. Additionally, more assignments now straddle the line and fall into multiple categories. The Teaching Assignment, Facebook Group Project, and Composition Project still are categorized the same way as before. Both the Facebook Group Project and the Composition Project were defined as Creative and Academic, while the Teaching Assignment was categorized as both Listening and Performing.

Of the new assignments added, there are two more now straddled different assignment categories. For the first time, assignments now straddled the line for three

different categories. The Transcription Project and the Repertoire Analysis assignments landed in three different categories. Both assignments span the Listening, Academic, and Creative category lines. The Transcription project fell into the Listening category because no matter which path for the assignment students decide to navigate, jazz or non-saxophone repertoire, the first step was to listen critically. As students wrote their transcriptions, they needed to apply their music theory knowledge and get creative as to how they want to write out their transcription.<sup>94</sup> The Repertoire Analysis assignment also landed in the same three different categories. It overlaps the Listening, Creative, and Academic categories because it requires students to listen and think critically about the music before analyzing it. This assignment also incorporated students' music theory training/skills, and allows students to use their imagination to write up a narrative analysis that tells a story for the piece.

Most importantly, Table 3.5 clearly illustrates that the balance of different types of assignments, while not perfect, was improved from the Fall 2021 semester. The Fall 2021 version of the syllabus had five Performing assignments, four Academic assignments, two Listening assignments, and two Creative assignments. Every one of these categories saw an increase in numbers for the Spring 2022 semester. Again, for the Spring 2022 semester there were seven Performing assignments, five Academic assignments, four Listening assignments, and four Creative assignments. Yes, the Performing category was still the category with the highest number of available

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<sup>94</sup> This is especially true for the students who decide to go down the non-saxophone literature transcription path. The opportunities to arrange something new are almost limitless. For example, after one student's experience in this case study, they continued writing and arranging music on their own because they enjoyed the process. This would ultimately lead them to arrange their own rendition of Johann Pachelbel's, *Ciaconna in C Major*, for tenor saxophone trio.

assignments for students to choose. However, the increase of assignments for the other categories allowed for a better balance. By providing more assignments outside the Performing category, students who chose to strongly deemphasize performances as part of their grade could do more easily. They had more Academic, Listening, and Creative assignments to choose from for them to earn their points for their desired grade.

### **Spring 2022**

Four first-year students participated in the Spring 2022 semester of the case study. As expected due to their age and adjustments made to the syllabus, their experiences varied greatly from those of the students from the Fall 2021 semester. In the following subsections of this chapter, the students' experiences will be summarized through the lens of the author, with the aid of actual examples of the students' work from some of the assignments. Their individual approaches further helped explain how currently implemented assignments could be improved, which assignments should be considered for either removal or future implementation, and how the instructor can help students succeed in this new format. Again since students' names have been redacted and will not be used for designation in the document. Each of them will be listed in an ascending order that continues from the previous subsections (i.e. Student 6 and Student 7).<sup>95</sup>

### **Student 6**

Student 6 elected to participate in the Listening Reflections assignments, the Video Performances, Studio Performances, the Area Recital Performances, the Repertoire Analysis, the Memorized Piece/Étude Performance, the Transcription Project, the Pitch

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<sup>95</sup> Again, not all students' experiences have been written up in this document. Only the students whose experiences provided particularly useful insight as to how the syllabus can be improved for the future have been included.

Map Series, tentatively signed up for the Interview Project, and performed a final playing jury.<sup>96</sup> Their cumulative score at the end of the semester was 2,045 points, and they received an A.

Over the course of the semester it became clear that Student 6 took their participation in the case study very seriously. Student 6 started to explore jazz albums for their weekly Listening Reflection submissions.<sup>97</sup> In Appendix J.1 readers can see that Student 6 listened to Hank Mobley's iconic album, *Soul Station*. After providing a brief background of the piece, they begin to discuss Mobley's use of harmonic substitutions (Appendix J.1, paragraph 3). While they did an excellent job explaining this concept to their reader(s), Student 6 felt it necessary to include a transcription they wrote of some of the melodic ideas to help illustrate Mobley's use of the harmonic substitutions they heard. This transcription by Student 6 can be seen in Appendix J.2.

Student 6 also participated in one of the more promising new assignments, the Pitch Map Series. One of the main goals for this assignment is to help students improve their overall tuning by making them aware of their potential pitch problems. Student 6 absolutely accomplished this goal during their participation in this assignment. Appendix J.3 shows their pitch map submission from early in the semester, on January 28<sup>th</sup>. On the submitted pitch map, they highlighted two different things. Notes highlighted in blue were notes that landed +/- ten or more cents away from being in tune. Notes highlighted in pink were notes that landed more naturally in tune. From their submission, it can be

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<sup>96</sup> On their Assignments Agreement they did select the Interview Project, but their participation depended on how many studio performances and area recital performances they were able to accomplish. Student 7 did not end up completing the Interview Project.

<sup>97</sup> The addition of jazz listening and other non-saxophone listening to the Listening Reflections will be discussed in Chapter 4.

seen that eighteen notes throughout the range of the saxophone landed +/- ten cents away from being in tune, while only three notes landed in tune. This would improve dramatically later in the semester. Appendix J.4 shows Student 6's pitch map submission several months later, on April 1<sup>st</sup>. They used the same highlighting system to mark the notes on the pitch map. However, for this pitch map, there are zero notes highlighted in blue because they did not play any notes that much out of tune. Unfortunately, only two notes were highlighted in pink. Despite this decline in notes played in tune, it is easy to argue that Student 6's overall tuning did improve throughout the semester as they progressed through the Pitch Map Series assignment.

### **Student 7**

Student 7 participated in the Listening Reflections assignment, the Studio Performances, Area Recital Performances, the Saxophone History Project, the Memorized Piece/Étude Performance, and the Pitch Map Assignment. Initially, based on their completed Assignments Agreement, they had planned on performing in studio class and area recital twice each, for a potential total of 100 points and 150 points respectively per assignment. Collectively with these assignment totals, Student 7 planned on potentially earning a semester total of 1,900 points, which would result in an A- for the semester. However, as the semester progressed, Student 7 performed in four studio classes, earning them a total of 200 points for this assignment. Their final total for the semester was 1,986 points, and they earned an A for the semester.

Student 7's participation in the Pitch Map Series assignment provided further information as to how the assignment could be improved in the future. Appendix K.1 shows one of their early pitch map submissions. Two things can be learned from this.

First, this student did not date this assignment. It was not a requirement that was outlined in the syllabus. Therefore, they should not be penalized for this. Something as simple as adding a date to each pitch map is something that should be explicitly stated in the assignment description in the syllabus. These dates are important, as they help to illustrate the progression students are making with their tuning throughout the semester. Second, Student 7 either provided check marks in each of the notes' respective boxes where the pitch tendencies should be written, or they wrote the words "sharp" or "flat." This does not provide the necessary information this assignment is designed to provide. What does the check mark mean? How close did this student get to being in tune for them to decide it earned a check mark? How sharp or flat were they for each of the notes they respectively marked with these terms? Again, how the pitch map should be filled out was not explicitly stated in the syllabus, and this needs to be corrected for future editions. This was addressed mid-semester directly with Student 7, and they adjusted their future pitch map submissions. Appendix K.2 shows a pitch map from later in the semester that appropriately displays the tuning for each of the notes on their pitch map.

Student 7 also participated in the Composition Project. Composing was something new for them. They chose to participate in the assignment because it offered them a reason to try a new way of creating music that had interested them for a while. The result was a tenor saxophone duet they called, *The Great Debate*, seen in Appendix K.3. *The Great Debate* is a programmatic piece and was written to be performed by Student 7 and the author of this document. The inspiration for the piece stems from the conflicting time and energy many saxophonists spend when learning to play both classical and jazz styles. Throughout the piece, the different performers play a variety of different styles, and even

add visual and vocal exclamations to enhance the programmatic nature of the piece. Student 7's program notes for the piece, along with their overall experience with the Composition Project assignment can be seen in Appendix K.4.

*The Great Debate* would go on to be Student 7's final jury performance piece. Additionally, they enjoyed the process of writing music so much that they still continue composing their own music and arranging other music. Student 7 arranged a tenor saxophone trio of Johann Pachelbel's *Ciaconna in C Major*. This piece was performed in an area recital and in the author's lecture recital for this document.

### **Spring Semester Conclusions**

Much of the Spring 2022 semester of the case study was an improvement from the Fall 2021 semester. As expected, the students' experiences during this semester show that there are still more things that need to be improved. First and foremost, nothing can be implied. If the syllabus does not explicitly state something, there is always room for a student to misinterpret a teacher's intentions. To avoid this, the expectations for every assignment, and all the details associated with each of them, must be written and explained clearly. Second, each student needs a different level of structure in order to succeed. Some, like student 6, are very organized and are able to succeed with a syllabus like this with very little assistance. They know what the expectations are, what the due dates are for each assignment they selected, and they progress through the semester efficiently. Other students need more from their teachers. It is up to the teacher to decide what is an appropriate level of structure for each student, and this style of syllabus allows teachers the freedom to provide different students the respective tools they need. Whether that be weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly emails to check in with the student, progress

reports, more feedback on their listening reflections so they can improve future submissions, and/or meeting with students for office hours to discuss their potential questions about upcoming assignments, the options for how teachers guide their students can be tailored in many ways.



#### **IV. Future Adjustments, Impact, & Conclusion**

Both semesters of the case study provided so much insight as to the viability of a syllabus with a menu of assignments for students to choose from for applied saxophone. Neither semester went perfectly as planned. During each there were students who dropped the case study, students who did not enjoy the process, or felt like it was not a beneficial experience. There were also assignments that did not work as well as intended, and certain revisions need to be made to provide a better learning environment for students.

To start, let us examine the assignments that will be removed from future versions of the syllabus. The Facebook Group Assignment is the only assignment that will be removed outright. Unfortunately, the Facebook group, “Saxophone Studio Class Online!,” is not as organized as it once was, and the knowledge base that the forum once provided is not as reputable.<sup>98</sup> The goal of the assignment was to provide students with a wider range of ideas outside their typical learning circle. However, the comments provided to their questions now need to be vetted more rigorously, which detracted from the experience had by Student 4. This is not a huge loss for the syllabus. The goal of this assignment is still somewhat achieved through the Interview Project. Students can broaden their learning circle by speaking directly with a knowledgeable professional in the higher education applied saxophone field.

The assignment that will go through the most radical adjustment is the Teaching Assignment. The Teaching Assignment will no longer be a student teaching another student. The original assignment was presented as a student teaching another student

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<sup>98</sup> There may be other Facebook groups that could satisfy this assignment, but they have not been discovered at this time.

during studio class. While this version was effective, several problems arose that needed to be addressed. The first issue was performance anxiety. Part of what this syllabus is designed to do is reduce potential performance anxiety, by dispersing students' grades across a wider range assignment types. However, the first version of the teaching assignment exacerbated the problem. Teaching a lesson in studio class to a peer, in front of their peers compounded the issue and heightened their performance anxiety. The second issue was that a potential lack of teaching experience from different students made it challenging for them to effectively demonstrate their understanding. Much more structure was needed for the students to be successful. Third, not all students who participated were at the same grade level. There should be a different set of expectations for a first-year student from those of a fourth-year student.

Moving forward, the Teaching Assignment will be a student teaching something to their applied saxophone teacher in the privacy of their own lesson. The second adjustment addresses the issue of lack of lesson structure. Instead of the lesson acting as a blank slate for the student to address what they hear, the instructor can guide the lesson forward with a series of predetermined questions. The instructor will play for the student, and through a combination of the student answering questions and demonstrating their technique on the saxophone, the instructor can hopefully gauge the student's understanding of the material. Last, the lessons will now be broken up by grade level. In order to effectively evaluate a student's understanding of material, a series of age- and skill-level appropriate questions and demonstrations should be asked of that student. These will all be determined on an individual basis.

Student 1 from the Fall 2021 semester raised a good point in their post-case study survey about the Technical Midterm. They found that the assignment was not beneficial because it was more of a distraction than anything else. It took away from their degree recital preparation, rather than act as something that helped them. This exam-style assignment was presented with a predetermined set of expectations for what all students should play. However, different students are at different levels and are working on different fundamentals. Asking each student to prepare the same materials for their Technical Midterm is not appropriate. While one student could be beyond playing the specific scales and patterns outlined in the syllabus, another may find it to be wildly out of reach. The material for the Technical Midterm needs to be set on an individual level, so the assignment can suitably assess each student's learning and development.

The Listening Reflections assignment will also be adjusted in future versions of the syllabus. Student 6's experience with the Listening Reflections assignment presented an important potential addition and/or revision for future editions of the assignment. The prescribed list of listening examples in the syllabus, seen in Appendix H, only includes concert saxophonists. A wider variety of listening examples should be both provided and encouraged. There is much to be learned from listening to jazz and music for other instruments.

There were also some smaller logistical details that needed to be adjusted for several other assignments. For the Video Performances assignment, students were asked to submit files on Google Drive. Organizationally, this worked very well. However, this made it harder in other ways. A separate file needed to be created to submit comments to students. This created an overly complicated process for both parties. Students will now

submit YouTube links to “unlisted” videos. These are easier to send than .MP4 files, and the teacher can provide comments right in the video’s comments section. Also, since the videos will not be made public on YouTube, the teacher’s comments would also remain private to the student.

There should also be an adjustment made to the Interview Project. When reviewing Student 3’s reflection, and write-up of their notes, it is clear to see that they got a lot out of the assignment. However, they did not provide much of a reflection at all. They provided bulleted answers to the questions they asked the interviewee. A better and more useful presentation of the valuable information they received during the interview would be to write them up in a more formal document. This would help them to synthesize their thoughts and think critically about what they learned, rather than reiterating the information back to their teacher. Writing out clear expectations and guidelines for even the smallest details of every assignment is an important addition for the success of the students. As teachers provide more agency to students in a syllabus like this, students need this structure to guide them forward.

Along those same lines, another way to provide students with helpful structure is to create grading rubrics. It is more work for the teachers to do, but rubrics need to be created for each of the assignments. The assignment descriptions, point values, and guidelines that were present in both versions of the syllabi were helpful. However, when it came to grading the assignments fairly, and students understanding how they were being assessed, rubrics needed to be implemented for each assignment. These were not present in either semester of the case study.

Furthermore, different syllabi are needed. Having conducted two complete semesters of the case study where students of different grade levels were all assessed using the same assignments and the same grading metrics, it seems so obvious as to why this will not work in the future. To appropriately gauge students of different grade levels, different syllabi are needed for each of the grade levels being taught. Asking a first-year student and a fourth-year student to complete a listening reflection and grading them both effectively, must start with asking both students listen for elements that are appropriate for their respective learning levels.

A syllabus like this in applied saxophone constantly forces the teachers implementing it to ask the questions, “What kind of teacher do I want to be?” “What are my priorities with teaching this class?” “What is the point of each of the assignments I chose to include?” There are so many little scenarios that cannot possibly be planned for that will potentially arise during the semester. If a student does not select an assignment in their Assignments Agreement, do they not get to participate in that assignment? Should there be “wiggle” room for students who want to adjust which assignments they complete mid-semester, or should they be set in stone? During the Spring 2022 semester, a student broke their finger and was not able to complete some of the performance-based assignments while they were recovering. Should a student be penalized because they missed the due dates for these assignments? Should they get credit for the assignments? Should they be forced to scramble and try to complete other assignments still available to them in the syllabus.

Luckily, these are the types of questions that each teacher who utilizes this type of syllabus can answer for themselves. The ratio of “standard” syllabus material to this

“alternative” style can be scaled to each teacher’s liking. It does not need to be all of one or the other. Since the completion of the case study, there are teachers who have already seen the benefits of this style of syllabus and formally implemented several different ideas into their applied saxophone lesson syllabi. Professor of Saxophone at JMU, David Pope, has formally added parts of the syllabi used for this case study as part of his Spring 2023 syllabus for his entire undergraduate saxophone studio. Appendix L is an extract from Pope’s syllabus that outlines how he planned to incorporate alternative assignments in his class. In this section of Professor Pope’s new syllabus, he added a composition/arrangement project, a repertoire analysis assignment, a research project with an approved topic of the student’s choosing, a creative assignment that incorporates technology, a teaching/pedagogy project, and a presentation that incorporates improvisation. More and more syllabi in the applied saxophone field can benefit from additions like these. Students will be able to complete assignments that do a significantly better job of showing their understanding, because they are asked to engage with the material in a variety of ways.

Overall, reevaluating the ways students engage in their applied saxophone study has been a positive experience. However, implementing a syllabus like Professor Boyer’s is a challenging prospect. It requires much more work from the teacher to provide the necessary structure to students for their respective assignments, while also allowing each student the freedom of navigating through the course by completing the assignments they choose. More assignments need grading, and more trust in the students to stay organized make this type of syllabus in applied saxophone a demanding new experience. Despite these challenges, these new opportunities provided to the students promote their overall

success in the course and offer instructors a more comprehensive understanding of what students learn.

An effective approach to teaching can be one that works to create a more flexible methodology for student engagement. To achieve this, instructors can create an environment that allows students to select the assignments that will best demonstrate their understanding of course material. Through the understanding of how students process information, using Professor Boyer's syllabus as scaffolding, and creating a mastery-oriented syllabus for applied undergraduate saxophone lessons, teachers can better serve the needs of a greater population of students.

## **Appendix**

### Appendix A.1

#### **Consent to Participate in Research**

##### **Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Anthony S. Cincotta II from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to create a real-world environment where a focus group of students test an array of assessments for applied music lessons. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of his doctoral document.

##### **Research Procedures**

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a focus group that will be administered to individual participants in office 226 of the Music Building. Throughout the semester you will follow an alternate syllabus that the one prescribed to the control group of student. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to your experience with the alternative assessment syllabus.

##### **Time Required**

Participation in this study will require sixteen (16) sessions of fifty (50) minutes each. This translates to a full semester of applied music lessons.

##### **Risks**

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

##### **Benefits**

Potential benefits from participation in this study will include a better understanding of how to create a more inclusive syllabus for numerous learning types. The expected benefits to the higher education applied music will help instructors provide the best experiences for their students, thus promoting students of future generations to be more successful in their studies.

##### **Incentives**

You will not receive any compensation for participation in this study.

##### **Confidentiality**

The results of this research will be presented at the researcher's doctoral lecture recital. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher and advisor. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.



(including audio/video recordings, if applicable). Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

### **Participation & Withdrawal**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

### **Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Anthony Cincotta  
Department of Music  
James Madison University  
cincotas@dukes.jmu.edu

David Pope  
Department of Music  
James Madison University  
[popedj@jmu.edu](mailto:popedj@jmu.edu)

### **Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject**

Dr. Lindsey Harvell-Bowman  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
James Madison University  
(540) 568-2611  
[harve2la@jmu.edu](mailto:harve2la@jmu.edu)

### **Giving of Consent**

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent to be (video/audio) recorded during my interview. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

This study has been approved by the IRB, protocol #21-2504.

## Appendix A.2

**James Madison University**  
**MUAP 300 - Applied Saxophone Lessons**  
**Studio Class: Fridays, 1:25pm-2:15pm**  
**Lessons (50 minutes): TBD**  
(Lessons and classes are in-person)

**FALL 2021, COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Instructor & Contact Information**

Anthony S. Cincotta II

Phone: (508) 439-4257

Email: [cincotas@jmu.edu](mailto:cincotas@jmu.edu)

Office Hours: By appointment

**Course Description:**

The purpose of this course is to provide each student with an in-depth approach to their technical studies, sound productions, and overall musical development as it pertains to both the playing and teaching of saxophone. While much of what is covered through this semester's course load is familiar to students, there is a great deal of "new" assignments that are offered to students to help provide them avenues of success based for their respective learning styles (full list of assignments and descriptions posted below). Through these varied assignments, students will be provided opportunities to develop their skillset in new and exciting ways that are designed to promote enthusiasm for learning. While the tutelage provided by the instructor is paramount to a student's success, the amount of time spent together is quite limited. Students and the instructor only meet for a total of two hours a week (one hour for lessons and one hour for studio class). The ultimate goal is for the students to become better teachers of themselves, learning to listen and diagnose aspects of their own playing.

**Objectives:**

The instructor will work with each student to build a plan on developing competency in a variety of areas, selected from, but not limited to the following lists:

Demonstrate tone development through:

1. Dynamics exercises
2. Voicings across the entire standard range of the saxophone
3. Vibrato studies
4. Tuning (both with a drone and with a tuner)

Demonstrate technical development through:

1. Scales and intervals (chromatic and "36 scale pattern")
2. Etudes (both rhythmic and lyrical)
3. Articulation exercises
4. "Mechanisms" (found in "The Saxophonist's Workbook")
5. Altissimo development (as it pertains to the individual's development)

Demonstrate the application of these developed skills through:

1. Learning “standard” repertoire of saxophone literature (discussed on an individual basis)
2. Duets with the instructor during lessons
3. Performance and teaching opportunities

These objectives are designed as a guide for this semester’s work. No two students are alike in their development. Thus, no two student’s semesters will be identical in nature. Depending on the developmental needs of a student, the goals and objectives will be tailored accordingly. As a student progresses, it is expected that they can begin to develop their own practice routines based on their individual learning styles that will help them continue to progress.

### **Required texts:**

- Larry Teal, “The Saxophonist’s Workbook” (digital copy provided because it is sadly out of print)
- Wilhelm Ferling, “48 Famous Studies”
- Jean-Marie Londeix, “Les Gammes Conjointes et en Intervalles”

### **Suggested texts:**

- Hyacinthe Klose (edited by Timothy McAllister), “25 Daily Exercises for Saxophone”
- David Pope, “Practice Monster”
- Jean-Marie Londeix, “Hello Mr. Sax”

### **Required Materials:**

- A professional saxophone and mouthpiece in good working order
- LOTS of reeds
- A metronome - (any kind will do, but a Dr. Beat is the preferred but fairly expensive option)
- A tuner (there are very good options for smart phones. If you have a smart phone, I recommend Tonal Energy)
- A Gmail account for posting/sharing submissions on Google Drive

### **Suggested Materials:**

- A reed re-surfacer of some kind (reed knife or Reed Geek) – Reeds are constantly changing due to playing and weather, so having a tool to help extend their playable life is important.
- A pair of high-quality headphones (a bit of an investment, but worth it for hearing details for listening assignments)
- A subscription to a music streaming service (i.e. Apple Music, Spotify, or Amazon Music)
- A USB condenser microphone (Phones do a good job with video recording, but the audio quality of the internal microphones does not do well with music)

### **Grading Criteria:**

The typical plan of action for applied music lessons provides a grading model based solely off a student’s preparation for lessons, performances throughout the semester, and their final jury. This

model has been used for many years across many universities and has proven success. However, this model forces all students of various learning styles to fit into this paradigm without considering their individual needs. This class's approach to applied lessons provides students a wide variety of assignment options and creates an environment where students can demonstrate what they have learned in ways they are most proficient.

Because of the changed nature of the assignments, the grading criteria is also modified. The typical grading structure grades students based off percentages (i.e. 93-100% = A, 90-92% = A-, 87-89% = B+, etc.). The way this class is designed, students will earn points towards a cumulative score that will ultimately decide their grade.

Throughout the semester students will have the opportunity to select assignments that will both pique their interests and allow them to demonstrate their learning and understanding of the course's materials. The entire semester's assignments add up to a total of 2500 points. Students must earn a total of 1700 points to pass the class and any point totals over 1934 will earn the student an A for the semester.

Point ranges as they translate to grades:

- 1700-1749 points = C
- 1750-1799 points = C+
- 1800-1833 points = B-
- 1834-1866 points = B
- 1867-1899 points = B+
- 1900-1933 points = A-
- 1934 & up = A

**Assignments and Points Breakdown:**

The way this course is set up, it provides students with different activities to work on which lets them earn points until the desired grade is achieved. Students can approach this semester like a "choose-your-own-adventure" book. Students decide which assignments they do and do not participate in based on their interests and learning styles. Given the experimental nature of this assessment strategy, I would recommend a varied approach to the assignments. Try a little bit of everything. Learn what works best for you and make sure you earn enough points to pass the class.

Please note that point totals laid out for each assignment are the maximum points possible. Students do not receive all the points possible for an assignment just for participating in the activity. A student's point totals for each assignment are based on the quality of work submitted.

**NOTE:** The layout of the assignments and due dates are spread out throughout the course of the semester. Pay attention to the class calendar to see when things are due. Do not expect to be able to be successful in this course by waiting till the last minute to complete assignments and expect to earn enough points to pass the class. Read through the assignments, decide on the ones you will complete, and make a plan. When an assignment due date passes it is passed. Because of the amount of assignments and opportunities students have to earn points, there are NO MAKE-UPS or EXTRA CREDIT options.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Maximum points POSSIBLE</u>
1) 13 Weekly Listening Reflections	400 (30pts each + 10pts for doing all 13)

2) Technical Midterm	250
3) Final Jury or Recital	700
4) 6 Video Performance Submissions	150 (25pts each)
5) 2 Studio Performances	150 (75pts each)
6) Teaching Assignment	200
7) Facebook Group Assignment	150 (10pts per post + 50pts for final reflection)
8) Interview Project	150
9) Saxophone History Project	150
10) Composition Project	200

### Listening Reflections:

Listening to music is an invaluable component to developing one's musical skills. Each week, select an artist from list provided below, choose one of their albums and write a one to two paragraph reflection (double-spaced) regarding one of the numerous topics we are discussing in your lessons (technical proficiency, tone production, musicality, etc.).

#### *Artists:*

- Timothy McAllister
- Claude Delangle
- Otis Murphy
- Christopher Creviston
- Lynn Klock
- Steve Mauk
- Masato Kumoi
- Arno Bornkamp
- Jean-Yves Formeau
- Joseph Lulloff
- John Harle
- John Sampen
- Eugene Rousseau
- Jean-Marie Londeix
- Marcel Mule
- Simon Haram
- Donald Sinta
- Kenneth Tse
- Nobuya Sagawa
- Stephen Page

#### *Details:*

- One to two paragraphs (250-500 words) double-spaced,
- Name, date, class, artist's name and album selected for the submission in the heading

Example:

Anthony S. Cincotta II

10/13/2020

MUAP 200

Timothy Mcallister – "In Transit" Reflection

- Each submission is due via Google Drive by Friday at 5:00pm (any submissions submitted after that day/time will simply be counted towards the following week's submission)
- Focus on one aspect of playing for the album you are reflecting on and provide explanations on what you are hearing, supported by the artist's musical decisions.
  - Be sure to reference specific pieces (and movements as applicable) in your reflection.

### Studio Performances:

Performing in studio class is a great way to demonstrate the work you have been doing in your lessons and in the practice room. These performances are designed around creating a comfortable setting for students to perform and receive feedback from their peers.

Each week, studio class will be structured in a way that will allow for a maximum of three (3) students to perform. Each student will have 15 minutes to perform and receive feedback before moving on to the next performance.

#### *Details:*

- These performances are meant to be treated professionally (attire and proper performance practices are expected)
- Requesting a date for your studio performances must be done through email, and spots will be awarded on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- Performances are expected to be “performance-ready” presentations of etudes or pieces of repertoire
- Accommodations will be made if a student is preparing a piece longer than the 15-minute allotment. That student will receive a double time slot in order to fit the performance. Because of this, only one other 15-minute performance may be scheduled for the same day.

### Video Submissions:

Students are encouraged to record ALL their practice sessions because hearing oneself is a great learning tool. However, this assignment is a less formal version of the studio performance assignment and the videos will only be shared between the student and instructor. While studio performances are meant to be polished presentations, video submissions can be things that are still in the works.

#### *Details:*

- There are 6 due dates spaced out through the semester. Be sure to check the class calendar at the end of the course syllabus to see specific due dates. Each submission is due via Google Drive by 5:00pm of each respective due date (any submissions submitted after that day/time will simply be counted towards the following due date's submission)
- A video submission must include the following:
  - At the beginning of the video state your name, date, and performance selection (including title, composer, movement(s))
  - A video submission must be at least 5 minutes of playing (the introduction does not count towards the time)

- Videos are to be submitted as .MP4 files
- 

#### Final Jury or Jury:

**Non-Recitalists:** The final jury is meant to be a culminating performance of the objectives covered throughout the semester's lessons. Students are given the opportunity to perform for a panel comprised of professors from their instrument's area. Students have 10 minutes to introduce themselves, their performance selection, and perform. Performances of repertoire that includes an accompaniment **MUST** be performed with an appropriate accompanist.

**Recitalists:** Students performing a degree recital do not need to perform an end-of-semester jury. Their recital fulfills this requirement.

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#### Technical Midterm:

The technical midterm is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their progress with the scales and intervals taught throughout the semester. This is a one-on-one performance with the student and the instructor. The student will have 30 minutes to navigate their way through the following material:

- The 36-scale pattern with a metronome at no slower than 70bpm (scales and intervals)
  - 2 etudes of varying styles
- 

#### Teaching Assignment:

There are numerous ways a student can demonstrate their comprehension and application of a musical skill. One of these ways is teaching it another student. This is a 15-minute presentation where you teach a student a technical or musical concept in studio class (available topics to discussed on an individual basis).

There will be two different studio classes throughout the semester where times are designated for teaching assignments. Students must request via email which date they wish to teach (check the class calendar at the end of the semester to see which days are available). If enough people decide to participate in this assignment, we will add days as necessary to accommodate.

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#### "Saxophone Studio Class-Online":

**NOTE:** this assignment requires you to have a Facebook account.

There is a group on Facebook called "Saxophone Studio Class-Online." When Covid-19 swept through our nation early March 2020, Dr. Nathan Nabb of Austin State University created a group on Facebook dedicated to the online presentations of masterclasses by some of the country's top saxophone pedagogues. Unfortunately, Dr. Nabb has ceased the organization of masterclasses, but the video recordings of past masterclasses remain online in the group, and there are still hundreds of members who utilize the group as a forum for saxophone related questions.

The goal of this assignment is to utilize this forum to procure new ways of thinking. During your studies at JMU, people who receive the same education surround you, and because of this, you ultimately begin sharing similar ways of thinking. Over the course of the semester, you will submit seven (7) unique posts in the group with questions to be answered by members. Towards the end of the semester you will submit a reflection of what you learned from each of the questions prompted and people's responses (Check the class calendar for due dates for posts and the reflection)

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### Saxophone History Research Project:

Having a firm understanding of the pedagogical history of the saxophone is highly beneficial to the understanding of how saxophone is both learned and taught today. The techniques we use in teaching stem from specific sources, primarily in the French and American "Schools of Saxophone."

In this project, you will dive into the rich history of the saxophone and write a paper. The paper is to discuss, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- Adolphe Sax
  - The Selmer Company
  - Mechanical advancements made to the instrument
  - The French School of Saxophone
    - Marcel Mule
    - Jean-Marie Londeix
    - Marcel Mule
  - The American School of Saxophone
    - Larry Teal
    - Sigurd Rascher
- 

### Interview Project:

This assignment shares the same reasoning as the "Saxophone Studio Class-Online" assignment, in that both are centered around expanding one's radius from where information is received.

In this assignment, students are asked to reach out to a saxophone professor at another university to prepare a one-on-one interview/Q&A. Questions are to be submitted to both the course instructor and to the other saxophone professor ahead of time. Do your best to record the interview. You will need to ask permission from the person you are interviewing, but having a recording of their responses will make it a great source for future learning and make the reflection that follows the interview easier to write.

There are three due dates associated with this assignment (check the course calendar for specific dates)

1. Submission of questions to the professor and course instructor
2. The actual interview
3. The final reflection



The due date for the submission of questions is by far the MOST IMPORTANT. The questions must be submitted and approved in order to proceed with the remainder of the assignment. If this due date is missed, the student forfeits ALL the points for the assignment

**NOTE:** During these interviews, students are custodians of the saxophone studio and the JMU music program. Make sure to present yourselves and the university with professionalism. Be courteous, be prompt, and be prepared!

### Composition Project:

In this project, students have the opportunity to write their own piece of around 5-7 minutes in length that demonstrates some of the objectives that are covered during their lessons and practice sessions throughout the semester.

The piece is to be submitted to the instructor as a PDF file via Google Drive by 5:00pm on the due date specified in the class calendar.

Students are also encouraged to perform their composition either in a studio performance or in a video submission.

### **Attendance Policy:**

**Lessons:** Attendance to all lessons is required. Students are expected to arrive for their lessons ready to play with their instruments assembled and their materials prepared. There is a lot to cover over the course of the semester and lessons only meet for 50 minutes once a week. Ensuring that we can make the most of that time is paramount to our success this semester.

**Studio Class:** Attendance to all studio classes is required. Studio class is the only time in a week when the entire studio is able to get together as a class. This is a performance oriented class and the students performing work hard to prepare. We as a class will provide support, enthusiasm, and constructive feedback for EVERYBODY who performs. If a student is missing from our ranks, this is a noticeable loss to our class.

Students are expected to provide written notice via email no later than 12 hours prior to their lesson if they are unable to attend due to illness, emergency, etc. If it is considered an excused absence it is UP TO THE STUDENT to work to reschedule the lesson so that time is not lost.

If a student does not provide communication, they are expected to be in class. Should a student miss a class without proper notice, it will be considered an unexcused absence and their final grade will be reduced by half a letter grade for each missed class (i.e. – If a student has an A at the end of the semester, but has two (2) unexcused absences, their grade will be dropped to a B+).

**If I'm unable to attend class/your lesson:** I will send an email notifying all affected parties (if I need to miss a lesson, I will email the necessary students individually. If I need to miss studio class, I will email the class collectively).

### **No Electronics Policy:**

I have witnessed first-hand how accessing the outside world through our electronics (phones, computers, tablets, etc.) creates unnecessary temptation to let your mind wander away from class. We only meet twice a week (lesson and studio class), and during that time we have a lot to cover.

Making sure that you and your fellow classmates get the most out of this course is my highest priority. If you are texting, playing games, shopping, or whatever else on your devices, you are distracted and potentially distracting the people around you. If you are caught with a device out during class, you will simply be asked to leave. After getting caught two (2) times, your final grade will be lowered to the next grade down. Your grade will be dropped down for each time you are found to be using an electronic device. (caught 2 times, a B becomes a B-; caught 3 times, B becomes a C+; etc).

## **HONOR CODE**

JMU, much like any other university, has an explicit Honor Code. Each exam, quiz, and online assignment is to be your own work. Copying information from another student, assisting others during an examination, or presenting somebody else's ideas as yours (plagiarism) are considered violations of the Honor Code and such faults will be treated in compliance with the university's policies. Consult the student handbook for explicit details on the Honor Code.

## **STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

Please make sure you are registered with the Office of Disabilities Services, Wilson Hall, Room 107, 568-6705. You must provide me with an Access Plan letter outlining your accommodations in my class. I will be glad to meet with you privately to discuss your special needs.

## **INCLUSIVITY**

James Madison University is a community dedicated to diversity and inclusivity. The goal is to challenge students and faculty to engage in personal and collective reflection, development, and action through diverse curriculum in the arts, sciences, and humanities. Diversity of thoughts, perspectives, experiences, and identities are a crucial part of creating an inclusive community.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

We will comply with JMU's cancellation policy on inclement weather

(<http://www.jmu.edu/JMUpolicy/1309.shtml>)

## **POLICY ON ADDING AND DROPPING CLASSES**

Students are responsible for registering for classes and for verifying their class schedules on MyMadison.

The deadline for adding a Fall Semester 2021 class without instructor and academic unit head signatures is **September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**. Instructor and academic unit head signatures are required to add a Fall Semester class between **September 4<sup>th</sup>** and **September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021**.

No student will be allowed to register for a Fall Semester class after **September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021**. No exceptions will be made to these deadlines.

The course adjustment deadline to withdraw with a "W" grade or change credit options (from graded credit to credit/no credit or credit/no credit to graded credit) is **October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021**.

## **Class Calendar:**

<p><b>Week1</b> August 25-27</p>
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Lessons: No lessons this week Studio Class: Class discussion about syllabus	Assignments Due: Aug. 27 - Syllabus Contract
<b>Week 2</b> August 30 – September 3	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Sept. 3 – Listening Reflection #1, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #1
<b>Week 3</b> September 6-10	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Sept. 10 – Listening Reflection #2, Video Submission #1, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #2
<b>Week 4</b> September 13-17	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Sept. 17 – Listening Reflection #3, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #3, Interview Project Questions
<b>Week 5</b> September 20-24	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Sept. 24 – Listening Reflection #4, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #4
<b>Week 6</b> September 27 – October 1	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Oct. 1 – Listening Reflection #5, Video Submission #2, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #5
<b>Week 7</b> October 4-8	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: <u>Dedicated to Teaching Assignments</u>	Assignments Due: Oct. 8 – Listening Reflection #6, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #6
<b>Week 8</b> October 11-15	
Lessons: <u>Technical Midterms during lessons</u> this week Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Oct. 15 – Listening Reflection #7, Video Submission #3, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #7, Saxophone History Project
<b>Week 9</b> October 18-22	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Oct. 22 – Listening Reflection #8, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #8
<b>Week 10</b> October 25-29	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled	Assignments Due:

Studio Class: <u>Dedicated to Teaching Assignments</u>	Oct. 29 – Listening Reflection #9, Video Submission #4, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #9, Interview Completed
<b>Week 11</b> November 1-5	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Nov. 5 – Listening Reflection #10, “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Post #10
<b>Week 12</b> November 8-12	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Nov. 12 – Listening Reflection #11, Video Submission #5, Composition Project PDF
<b>Week 13</b> November 15-19	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Nov. 19 – Listening Reflection #12, Interview Reflection
<b>Week 14</b> November 22-26	
THANKSGIVING BREAK	
<b>Week 15</b> November 29 – December 3	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Last class of the semester	Assignments Due: Dec. 3 – Listening Reflection #13, Video Submission #6
<b>Week 16</b> December 6-10 (last day of classes)	
Lessons: By appointment only	Assignments Due: Dec. 10 – “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” Reflection
<b>Final Exams</b> December 11-17	
Final Juries	

## Appendix A.3

**Fall 2021 Assignments Agreement**

I, (print your name) \_\_\_\_\_, have read through the syllabus and understand the available assignments and the points grading system. From the list of assignments below, I have designated which I will be completing this semester. I have reviewed the total available points for each assignment, and have selected enough assignments that will allow me to pass the class (1700 needed to pass; 1934 to get an A).

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13 Weekly Listening Reflections  | 400 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Midterm                | 250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Final Jury (required assignment) | 700 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Video Performance Submissions  | 150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Studio Performances            | 150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Assignment              | 200 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Group Assignment        | 150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Project                | 150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saxophone History Project        | 150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Composition Project              | 200 |

Total cumulative points from selected assignments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix A.4

**Alternative Assessment Interview Questions**

- 1) Overall, did you feel you had a positive or negative experience with the Alternative Assessment Syllabus for your applied saxophone lessons this semester?
- 2) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which was your favorite and why?
- 3) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which did you dislike most and why?
- 4) Of the assignments you selected to NOT complete, which do you most wish you tried?
- 5) What was your process for choosing the assignments you completed this semester?
- 6) From the assignments you completed, were there any you would have adjusted or changed for future participants?
  - a. If so, how would you adjust them to improve future participants' experiences?
- 7) Are there any assignments you would add to this syllabus?
  - a. If so, what would they be?
- 8) Do you feel that this syllabus provided you with the opportunities to better display your understanding of the course's content?
  - a. If "yes" – please elaborate on why?
  - b. If "no" – please explain how the syllabus could be adjusted to better help participants in the future.

## Appendix B.1

Alternative Assessment Interview Questions

- 1) Overall, did you feel you had a positive or negative experience with the Alternative Assessment Syllabus for your applied saxophone lessons this semester?  
I think the experience was pretty good overall. I appreciate that it got me listening to more saxophone music than I had previously been doing.
- 2) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which was your favorite and why?  
The listening assignments because even though I had to listen to something new each week, it gave me a greater appreciation for all different saxophone artists.
- 3) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which did you dislike most and why?  
The midterm because I felt that it was not useful to me in my recital planning semester.
- 4) Of the assignments you selected to NOT complete, which do you most wish you tried?  
The interview project
- 5) What was your process for choosing the assignments you completed this semester?  
I honestly chose the ones that I felt like would take me the least amount of time to do and/or had already been planning on doing this semester.
- 6) From the assignments you completed, where there any you would have adjusted or changed for future participants?  
a. If so, how would you adjust them to improve future participants' experiences?  
The midterm would probably have to be adjusted depending on the specific needs of the student. I also think that the listening assignment didn't necessarily have to be from the list or include the entire album (one piece from the album is sufficient I think)
- 7) Are there any assignments you would add to this syllabus?  
a. If so, what would they be?  
No
- 8) Do you feel that this syllabus provided you with the opportunities to better display your understanding of the course's content?  
a. If "yes" – please elaborate on why?  
i. Yes, because I feel that almost all of the assignments helped me grow or had the potential to help me grow as a saxophonist, specifically in my academic knowledge. This syllabus provided opportunities to grow in areas away from simple saxophone playing which I think is really important  
b. If "no" – please explain how the syllabus could be adjusted to better help participants in the future.

## Appendix C.1



24 September 2021

MUAP 300

Claude Delangle - "*Works for Saxophone and Orchestra*" reflection

As I have been looking into new mouthpieces (specifically what Claude plays), I decided to revisit his playing for this assignment. I wanted to approach this listening keeping in mind what could be affected by his choice of mouthpiece. That being said, I could not ignore that he rushed through part of the first phrase of the piece. I still find it amazing that players such as him can make silly mistakes like this. As I listened to more of the album, I realized he has more issues with tempo than most players at his level.

Claude still sounds like Claude. In the Ibert recording, he has a less abrasive sound than I have sometimes heard from him, and his articulations tend to be less harsh than the typical American (especially compared to Jonathan Yanik, whose intensity I have grown to like even more). This piece feels very relaxed when Claude plays it because many of the articulations are not separated.

He sounds best in the middle register and at quieter dynamics - too high or too low, his sound gets more of an edge, and if he plays louder than mp, I find his sound starting to get a little thin. Before the return of the A section in the first movement of the Ibert, his sound is undesirable - I don't know the best way to describe it.

When his sound is actually controlled, I could actually find situations in which I would want to sound like him. I think any situation involving strings could benefit from the use of a lighter, delicate tone like Claude's. That being said, I don't think I would want to play something more angry like Ibert entirely with a tone like his. There are definitely sections that would benefit from a fuller sound.

Grade: 30/30

Commented [1]: Very interesting topic

Commented [2]: Which piece?

Commented [3]: How much do think are "mistakes" vs "artistic license"?

Commented [4]: I agree that his articulations are less "harsh." Do you think this is typical of the French players in general, or Claude specifically?

Commented [5]: Do you find undesirable because that's not what the sound that is most appropriate for that section of the music, or because it's not a sound you personally want to play with? Or both?

Commented [6]: I have never heard anybody ever describe the Ibert as "angry"

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## Appendix C.2

12 November 2021

MUAP 300

Christopher Creviston - "the snell sessions" reflection

While Creviston's vibrato on Fantasie (I should know the composer but I don't) was

somewhat enjoyable, I disagree with his use of vibrato in the opening of Muczynski. It is slow and wide, which I can understand in this context, but I think it was too wide to be effective, as it ended up drawing my attention. I am glad that it was somewhat spinning as opposed to being super angular, as that would have made his vibrato unbearable. His vibrato at 0:28 was phenomenal - it was still fairly wide, but it oscillated far quicker, resulting in more of a spinning effect. At 1:32, he begins to use the same type of vibrato in the same areas of the phrase, which, again, makes sense, but quickly stagnates. I would like to hear more differences in his execution of his vibrato.

While I may not agree with his vibrato, I do agree with his use of short fingerings; I think that I used the same short fingerings when I was preparing this piece. I will say, however, that I instantly noticed he was using short fingerings whenever he made that choice. Is the right choice still to use short fingerings? I think that he should have worked on more tone matching exercises before committing to including those choices. Short fingerings work there, but Creviston's short fingerings had a tone noticeably thinner than the other tones he was producing, even his middle C#.

Around 1:48, the first altissimo note of the entire piece is played. I completely disagree with the phrasing at this time. It sounds like he's scared of high notes and is swelling into each one as he is confident they are stable. While this may be the safe bet for accuracy, this was annoying to listen to, as I know it could sound far better than that.

Grade 30/30

**Commented [1]:** I love this album

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**Commented [2]:** Bedard

**Commented [3]:** his always seems to have this "spinning" quality

**Commented [4]:** I have never thought about his employing of short fingerings. Thank you for making me aware of them.

**Commented [5]:** One important aspect of short fingerings is that there is an inherent difference in tone. This isn't always a bad thing. He may have employed them where he did INTENTIONALLY for that reason. While being able to match tones for short and long fingerings is important, WHEN YOU WANT THE TONE TO MATCH, there are times a more "hollow" tone of a short fingering is entirely intentional

**Commented [6]:** Interesting. His altissimo is some of the cleanest and homogeneous I have heard. To think he is "scared" of these notes would be surprising. I would be more inclined to think he wanted to play it this way. But to your point, why??

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## Appendix C.3

**Alternative Assessment Interview Questions**

- 1) Overall, did you feel you had a positive or negative experience with the Alternative Assessment Syllabus for your applied saxophone lessons this semester?

I felt neutral about it- I think the assignments are valuable, but I constantly found myself scrambling to complete them at the last minute.

- 2) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which was your favorite and why?

I think the research paper is cool. I don't like writing, but the learning that occurred while I wrote this paper is something I value.

- 3) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which did you dislike most and why?

The composition project- I still feel like I'm not good at composing and that I have to be in a very specific mood to compose. I thought doing this one would result in me getting past that, but it just stressed me out because I felt like I was overusing bad ideas.

- 4) Of the assignments you selected to NOT complete, which do you most wish you tried?

The interview- it would have been a good excuse to get in touch with a professor for which I am auditioning (Dr. Murphy, Dr. Page, etc.)

- 5) What was your process for choosing the assignments you completed this semester?

I chose the assignments that wouldn't result in me having to contact people about this class. I felt particularly glad I didn't choose the Facebook assignment whenever I would see Tommy post something in the page, as I think he is the only person that posts in there anymore.

- 6) From the assignments you completed, where there any you would have adjusted or changed for future participants?

- a. If so, how would you adjust them to improve future participants' experiences?

I did fine on the research paper, but freshmen may struggle with such an assignment without guidance. I would advise having them check in every few weeks, completing checkpoints that you establish (for example, the first two weeks, they should be searching for sources, the next two weeks, they should have two pages, the next two weeks, etc.). This way they won't forget about the paper too.

- 7) Are there any assignments you would add to this syllabus?  
a. If so, what would they be?

I don't know how one would go about doing this, but I think there should be something to do with chamber music or duets.

- 8) Do you feel that this syllabus provided you with the opportunities to better display your understanding of the course's content?  
a. If "yes" – please elaborate on why?  
b. If "no" – please explain how the syllabus could be adjusted to better help participants in the future.

Yes- The assignments I chose allow the student to showcase multiple aspects of their musicianship and knowledge (performance, composition, knowledge of history and contemporary saxophonists).

## Appendix D.1

September 9, 2021  
 MUAP 300  
 Timothy McAllister - "In Transit" Reflection

First of all, I would like to point out I chose this album *without* the knowledge that it was your favorite, Anthony. However, I can say that after listening to it, I can completely understand why you feel so strongly about it. As an overview of the whole album, I thought that Tim's playing on this album was completely phenomenal, and I don't think that there's a better word to describe it.

The standout performance on this album to me was his Albright Sonata, which I thought was even better than his performance on his album, "Notturmo." However, just because his Albright stood out to me the most doesn't mean that the rest of the album was lacking. Each moment was packed with virtuosity, some of which I will continue to explain in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The first piece on this album is entitled "Streetlegal," written by Roshanne Etezady. I was really interested in the way the piece started; I'm not sure if it was because of Tim's use of timbral color, the quiet dynamic, close voicings, or just my speakers/earbuds not doing his performance justice, but it sounded a lot like a saxophone quartet playing somehow when I first listened to it. As per usual with Tim's playing, his runs are all extremely clean and his altissimo is spot on. His control of the widely different dynamics really pulls the listener in; his control when playing quietly is unmatched with the amount of precision he can achieve at such a silent dynamic, and he sounds amazing on soprano as always. Lastly, the ending of the piece was very virtuosic and performed extremely well!

The next piece on the album is the Albright Sonata, and I would consider this to be the best performance of this sonata that I've ever heard. I am in awe at how well he can match the piano in terms of articulation, timbre, and intonation. When he plays in unison with the piano, it

**Commented [1]:** You are certainly not alone in thinking that the "standout performance" of this album is the Albright. For a long time, this was one of, if not THE definitive recording of this piece.

**Commented [2]:** Be very cautious (just for your own sanity and mental health) using this wording when discussing music. Recordings/performances can be different without being better or worse. For years I constantly compared myself to Tim and other players, rather than using their knowledge and recordings as tools to help me create my own music. It has not always yielded the healthiest version of myself. Just a word of caution from somebody who has been down this path.

**Commented [3]:** another thing to listen for in this piece is just how intense his rests are. You can honestly hear just how intently he's counting and keeping good silent time. It's quite remarkable when you think about it. There is "no" music being made in these spots, but the energy is still able to push!

**Commented [4]:** You should try to find some recordings of him TALKING about these aspects of the piece. He really understands on a deep level which articulations make sense WHEN and WHY throughout every moment.

just sounds like one voice, and he gets notes to speak with such ease that you often can't even tell he articulated. When I sat down to listen to the album, I can honestly say that I sat through the entirety of the **second movement without moving a muscle or taking any notes**. Everything about this movement is so beautiful that I just didn't want to interrupt it by even breathing too heavily. While I think that the composition itself is beautiful, Tim's performance truly takes it to a whole other level. **I heard moments that gave me goosebumps**, and I was amazed at how he used **tuning in some phrases to help with phrasing, like he would hit a note just a few cents too high and fall back into it to release that slight tension**. Before I move on to the other movements, I would like to ask: **What's the significance of the piano repetition at about 7:13?** I couldn't find anything online about it, and knowing what the piece is written about, I assume it must have some symbolic meaning, and if anyone would know, it would be you. The third movement was very virtuosic as usual, and Tim did an amazing job with the contrasts between dynamics in different phrases as well as making the runs more interesting than just fast notes on a page. Lastly, the fourth movement was just phenomenal in every way. I loved his performance of the Dance section, especially since he absolutely nailed every bit of it. He played the section with **sixteenth notes between low Eb and C** so well that he made it sound easy. On the other side of the spectrum, he plays between the normal register of the saxophone and the altissimo register so easily that it's honestly staggering. I couldn't find a single thing wrong with this performance, and I'm definitely going to listen to it more from here on out.

I'm going to try and not say too much about the next three pieces since I've already said so much! I thought that **"Accompanied Recitative"** was a very interesting piece, and I hadn't heard of it before. It was short but sweet, and showed off even more of Tim's skills on soprano. He then moved onto "Sonata deus sax machina," which from his performance is definitely a

**Commented [5]:** Turn the lights off and close your eyes.

**Commented [6]:** I have no doubt!

**Commented [7]:** This is one of the deeper aspects of this movement (and his style of playing as a whole) I have really started to analyze. Obviously, your ears need to be little radars in order to hear these minute changes in pitch, but you also need to have that extreme level of control throughout the horn.

In addition, if you listen to Tim's recording of the Albright from Notturmo, he doesn't use this technique. Just pure tones and tuning throughout. And because Tim is such a master at playing with the tuning and using it as part of the phrase in his In Transit recording, you don't even realize it's there until it's gone when you're listening to Notturmo.

**Commented [8]:** The piece as a whole represents a dream (we can discuss this more later). The piano after the soliloquy is the alarm clock hammering notes that are designed to wake up the dreamer and drag them back to reality.

**Commented [9]:** PAIN. IN. THE. BUTT.

**Commented [10]:** Listen to John Sampan's recording of this same piece. Very different!

piece I want to play! He continued to excel at what I mentioned multiple times above throughout this piece as well, and he really showed off a lot of his use of extended techniques like multiphonics and slap tonguing throughout the piece. Lastly, he played “In Transit,” the album’s title piece. This was my first time sitting all the way through this piece and listening to the whole thing, and I can honestly say I really enjoyed it! My favorite movement was certainly “Mango Cafe” since I loved the style. It’s another piece on this album that I would be very interested in playing sometime in the near future! To wrap it up, I thought that “The Dream” was a very interesting movement since it was so different from the others. It was very mellow for the most part, especially for a final movement of such a large piece, and I could tell there was a lot of jazz influence. It was a lot different from the other movements, which helped to pull me in as a listener. To wrap it up, I really enjoyed listening to this album, and I could definitely see myself coming back and listening to it over and over again.

Really nice observations, [REDACTED] As you’ve already mentioned, this is far and away my favorite album. There are a lot of wonderful pieces, and some even better playing all wrapped up in this album. As you begin to really dive into this album and dissect every nuance of even just singular measures, or even just singular notes, you will start to appreciate just how special Tim’s playing really is. But I also want to caution you about this path. While the level of playing is beyond reproach, you need to remember that it isn’t perfect (I still struggle with this). You can play things differently, and that won’t necessarily make it less/worse than what you’ve heard on his album(s). Have fun listening to this album 23,253 more times.

**Grade: 30/30**

**Commented [11]:** He uses the same tuning for phrasing in this movement as he does in the Albright. He does it A LOT! When you go back and re-listen, see if you can spot all the times he does this.



## Appendix D.2

**Alternative Assessment Interview Questions**

- 1) Overall, did you feel you had a positive or negative experience with the Alternative Assessment Syllabus for your applied saxophone lessons this semester?
  - a. I would say I had a positive experience! I think I learned a lot about the history of the saxophone as well as how other players sound and what I can learn from others just by listening.
- 2) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which was your favorite and why?
  - a. My favorite was the interview project. It gave me a reason to talk to someone I admire, and it was a very fulfilling conversation.
- 3) Of the assignments you selected to complete, which did you dislike most and why?
  - a. I didn't truly dislike any of the assignments. I just think that there were too many listening assignments. For someone who is focused on a lot of other performances and music related things, sitting down to listen to a whole album every week isn't all that reasonable.
- 4) Of the assignments you selected to NOT complete, which do you most wish you tried?
  - a. I wish I tried the Facebook group questions, because I feel like there is a lot to learn in fielding answers from the community.
- 5) What was your process for choosing the assignments you completed this semester?
  - a. I chose more than enough assignments to make sure that if I missed a couple then I could still get an A. I also chose ones that I thought would be the most enjoyable.
- 6) From the assignments you completed, where there any you would have adjusted or changed for future participants?
  - a. If so, how would you adjust them to improve future participants' experiences?
    - i. Yes! As previously mentioned, the listening assignments are a great idea, but it's just a lot for a busy music student. Maybe you could either make them less often or possibly even just require a really in depth analysis of a specific piece. If you gave a list of possible pieces and saxophonists to listen to that the student could choose any combination of, I think it would be really interesting. The student could even compare performances. Also, I think that instead of studio performances, you should just list all public performances, or at least include area recitals.
- 7) Are there any assignments you would add to this syllabus?
  - a. If so, what would they be?
    - i. Nope! I think this is a good selection of assignments.
- 8) Do you feel that this syllabus provided you with the opportunities to better display your understanding of the course's content?
  - a. If "yes" – please elaborate on why?
  - b. If "no" – please explain how the syllabus could be adjusted to better help participants in the future.
    - i. Yes, I think that the assignments of this syllabus helped me to better understand the background of the saxophone (which is very important) and helped to give me a better understanding of the saxophone community as a whole.

## Appendix D.3

## Interview Project Questions

## Recording Questions:

- Funding (your money vs applying for grants)
- Picking the repertoire
- What it's like in the studio (atmosphere, process, editing, post-production, promoting)

## Endorsements

- How did you build your connections with D'Addario and Selmer, and ultimately become an endorser of these brands?
- What changed for you when that happened?
- What are the expectations of you from these companies?

## Educational process/journey to becoming a college professor

- When did you know that was your career path? Undergrad? Sooner? Later?
- Was there a specific moment/event that helped you make that decision?
- Any Regerts?
- What tips might you have for an aspiring collegiate professor?
- What was your first year teaching at a collegiate level like?

## Musical &amp; Professional inspiration

- How do you push yourself to continue to grow at your current level of playing and teaching?
- How did you think of creating the Saxophone Studio Class Online Facebook group, and do you feel like you've succeeded in helping others grow?



## Appendix D.4

- 1) What was your journey to becoming professor of saxophone at SFASU?
  - a) Influential band directors, wanted to become a band director
  - b) Undergrad at Illinois with Richtmeyer, loved the collegiate experience and wanted to be a college professor, switching from music education to music performance
  - c) Masters and Doctorate at Northwestern with Hemke
  - d) Unique career path, was quite lucky in getting a job: applied for four jobs his final year of doctorate, got called back for all four and ended up on tenure track at Morehead State University in Kentucky as a 25 year old, stayed there for five years
  - e) Spot at SFASU opened up, with Texas' reputation of music was a very good opportunity even though he wasn't really looking to leave
  - f) Usually people will have more private teaching and adjuncts before landing a full time job
  
- 2) What tips do you have for an aspiring college professor?
  - a) Find your own interests and your own voice
  - b) Don't fit into somebody else's mold of what their career is and try to model that
  - c) When there's so many people applying for one job, how do you stand out?
  - d) Have orchestral experience
  - e) "In most people's eyes, all saxophonists are avid composers of contemporary music." Take into consideration who you are auditioning for; most times, they will not be saxophonists, and to many, music written in the 20th century is considered contemporary

## 3) Orchestral experience

- a) We are students of *music*, don't just listen to saxophone music; expand your musical horizons.
- b) Has played over 50 unique pieces for orchestra with saxophone.
- c) Put together a performance resume (competitions, degree recitals, local gigs, recordings)
- d) Send this kit to agents of symphonies
- e) If you get called back, work hard! Study scores and know your part, blend in with the ensemble and you're likely to be hired again
- f) With orchestral experience, it's way easier to get more jobs
- g) Look for local symphonies, send some emails and make opportunities!

## 4) What was your first year teaching at a collegiate level like?

- a) Forgot to mention earlier that he taught as sabbatical replacement for Dr. Richtmeyer at Illinois spring semester after he graduated
- b) Look the part (dress clothes), act the part, even though you are young
- c) You might have students that are older than you when you start out
- d) Establish boundaries with students
- e) There's no class on how to be a colleague; at a university you are part of a school and part of a system, not just teaching a private studio
- f) When writing a syllabus, contact other professors for their syllabus, find commonalities and implement those as well as your own policies and the school's policies (mostly housekeeping stuff)

- g) Repertoire lists aren't necessary in the syllabus because it is constantly changing, this information is much easier to find now
- 5) How did you get your endorsements?
- a) Was originally with Selmer and Vandoren
  - b) Dr. Hemke put him in touch with someone at Selmer, got a paper letter asking to be a selmer artists, but the process has changed a lot
  - c) Dr. Hemke wanted him to get on board with Rico, Vandoren approached and he signed with them
  - d) His friend, principal clarinet of Houston Symphony reintroduced him to D'addario (had already tried them and wasn't impressed) and he really liked them since they were more consistent and he could get more reeds out of a box
  - e) Wanted to switch to become a D'addario endorser because he didn't want to tell his students to buy Vandoren reeds when they were less consistent and you would get less reeds per box
- 6) Recording project
- a) About recording Creston, Bonneau, Bozza
  - b) Explains how in the saxophone world we "use" the core rep to move through to get to the big repertoire like Albright and such
  - c) "If those pieces are standards, why aren't they celebrated by students and professionals alike?"
  - d) Very few recordings on YouTube by professionals with high quality audio and visuals, students wouldn't listen to professionals because there are less videos
  - e) Wanted to celebrate the core repertoire

- f) Doesn't like self-promotion for the sake of self-promotion, wants to contribute to the community; that was the purpose of those recordings, and they made an impact on students of all levels
  - g) Recognize a market and a need and continue to contribute to the community
- 7) How do you push yourself past your current level?
- a) Pursue your musical interests, even when they swing wildly
  - b) Your ears always have to be ahead of your playing
  - c) Think about how you want to say the words on the page! Intention and inflection make the music mean something different and more interesting than just the ink on the page
  - d) Don't aim to improve, improve as a result of hard work
  - e) On imagining as you play: he doesn't imagine a whole piece, but he thinks about style a lot like sounding like a violin or a voice
  - f) Not focusing so much on time, violinists or singers often do interesting moves with time that many wind instrumentalists don't do because concert band is so focused on strict time

■■■■ this is excellent! I'm so happy that you got the opportunity to speak with him. I know that he is one of your favorite performers and pedagogues.

It seems like he shared a great deal of knowledge with you regarding so many great topics about our profession (some of which that don't get addressed enough). There are also some important things here that he seems to have gleaned over a very successful career. Use what he has shared with you so that you don't have to learn them for yourself down the road when you are teaching.

Really great!

**Grade: 50/50**

## Appendix E.1

**Fall 2021 Assignments Agreement**

I, (print your name) [REDACTED], have read through syllabus and understand the available assignments and the points grading system. From the list of assignments below, I have designated which I will be completing this semester. I have reviewed the total available points for each assignment, and have selected enough assignments that will allow me to pass the class (1700 needed to pass; 1934 to get an A).

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 13 Weekly Listening Reflections	400
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical Midterm	250
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final Jury (required assignment)	700
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6 Video Performance Submissions	150
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 Studio Performances	150
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Assignment	200
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Group Assignment	150
<input type="checkbox"/> Interview Project	150
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saxophone History Project	150
<input type="checkbox"/> Composition Project	200

Total cumulative points from selected assignments: 1800

[REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

8-26-2021

Date

## Appendix E.2

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November 5, 2021 · 🌐

What are some of the most standard or under-appreciated repertoire for sax quartet? Right now I am working on Bozza's Andante et Scherzo and am looking for new music to work on. (I would also love to hear about some non-traditional setups! AATB or AAAA or anything else you can think of.)

Thanks saxos!

5 7 comments

October 7, 2021 · 🌐

Who is the most influential historical saxophonist? I have recently been putting together an essay on the French and American schools of saxophone and how they developed in the lives of Marcel Mule and Larry Teal, and have wondered who truly pushed the saxophone to be what it is today? And what is the biggest accomplishment of Sigurd Rascher?

8 30 comments

September 26, 2021 · 🌐

Is there any set amount of time that you all warm up/ what exercises you do before practicing repertoire? And how does this differ from your warm up for a performance?

2 8 comments

September 17, 2021 · 🌐

Does anyone believe there is a benefit to playing different styles of music on the same gear?

For example, with the insane quantity of new mouthpieces made of different materials, new synthetic reeds, and things like weighted screws, is there a benefit to trying to play in a big band on a classical mouthpiece, or vice versa?

2 5 comments

September 10, 2021 · 🌐

Hi everyone,

I've been struggling with my altissimo lately and wondered what sorts of exercises are out there to work on. All I've been doing has been chromatically walking up from F# on my horn and slowly moving up to try and solidify each note. Does anyone else have any exercises they like to do to help strengthen their altissimo?

3 10 comments

September 1, 2021 · 🌐

Hi everyone!

I'm a sophomore student at JMU and have been trying to work on my articulation at faster tempos as well as double tonguing.

Does anyone have any recommendations on practice routines or exercises that will help me out!

2 4 comments

## Appendix E.3

Facebook Studio Online Reflection

Fall 2021

From the Online Studio on Facebook, I have learned a lot about saxophone pedagogy, some technical tips as well as technique books, and most importantly, a consensus on many ideas in the saxophone world.

By asking people in this Facebook group, I have learned about a few warm up exercises that have helped me work on my altissimo and articulation, as well as being referred to a few technique books including Dan Graser's *Chops* and Rosemary Lang's book on Altissimo, which has helped me in my understanding as well as how to practice my altissimo. These warm ups and tips for practicing have helped me to discover things about my own playing that I did not know about before, like a more exact idea of tongue position as well as my jaw being fairly far away from the bottom of the mouthpiece, with my teeth rarely touching my bottom lip.

When it comes to saxophone pedagogy, I have really gained a grasp on the timeline of when different professors taught, and how the technique of playing the saxophone was formed by them. Starting with Marcel Mule, I learned a great deal about his embouchure, as well as his view on jazz music, which I was surprised by because of my very classical preconception of who I thought he was. I also learned that Sigurd Rascher was much more important to the saxophone than I initially thought, and really popularized and boosted the growth of the saxophone around the world as a versatile and virtuosic instrument.

**Commented [1]:** Have you implemented any new exercises into your daily practice routine?

**Commented [2]:** I haven't personally used the Lang for altissimo, but I have heard people who have loved it.

I am currently waiting for my copy of Chops to arrive, but I'm excited!

**Commented [3]:** What were you using before?

**Commented [4]:** very interesting! Has this been helpful?

**Commented [5]:** SUPER IMPORTANT

**Commented [6]:** Very good takeaways! I would love to speak with you about all of this more in depth in the near future. Seems like you got a lot of helpful tools to help you move forward.



## Appendix F.1

**Fall 2021 Assignments Agreement**

I, (print your name) [REDACTED], have read through syllabus and understand the available assignments and the points grading system. From the list of assignments below, I have designated which I will be completing this semester. I have reviewed the total available points for each assignment, and have selected enough assignments that will allow me to pass the class (1700 needed to pass; 1934 to get an A).

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 13 Weekly Listening Reflections	400
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical Midterm	250
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 Studio Performances	150
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teaching Assignment	200
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Group Assignment	150
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interview Project	150
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saxophone History Project	150
<input type="checkbox"/> Composition Project	200

Total cumulative points from selected assignments: 2,150

[REDACTED]  
Participant Signature

08/26/2021  
Date



## Appendix F.2

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, November 6, 2021 5:03 PM  
**To:** Cincotta, Anthony Salvatore - cincotas  
**Cc:** Pope, David J - popedj  
**Subject:** Withdrawal from Alt Syllabus

Hello,

This is just my official withdrawal from Anthony's alternative syllabus this semester.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

## Appendix G

### Case Study Dates

Hello [REDACTED]

I have gone over the assignments that you have opted to participate in and below are the dates that you need to be aware of for each assignment this semester (**REMINDER:** All of the dates below are in the syllabus as well).

**Listen Reflections** – These are due on Google Drive in the shared folder with me every Friday by 5:00pm (1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/18, 2/25, 3/4, 3/11, 3/25, 4/1, 4/8, 4/15, 4/22, 4/29)

**Final Jury** – These will happen during finals week, and you will sign up for a time that works for you when you get closer to that date.

**Video Performances** – These happen more spread out than every week and need to be uploaded to Google Drive in the shared folder on the specified dates by 5:00pm. Because they are more spread out, they can sneak up on you. So make sure you get these in your calendar and set reminders for yourself (2/4, 2/25, 3/11, 4/1, 4/15, 4/29)

**Studio Performances** – There are no set dates for when you sign up to perform for studio class. Just remember that you will get credit for solo **AND** quartet performances.

**Area Recital Performances** - There are no set dates for when you sign up to perform for studio class. Just remember that you will get credit for solo **AND** quartet performances.

**Interview Project** – There are several components to this project, and without completing the first one (the submission of interview questions), you will not be permitted to proceed to the following two portions. These questions and the reflection are due on Google Drive in the shared folder by 5:00pm by the dates listed below.

Interview Questions are due 2/11

Interview must happen before 4/22, because the Reflection is due 4/22

**Repertoire Analysis** – All written analysis and any score analysis must be submitted to Google Drive in the shared folder by 5:00pm on 4/22.

**Piece/Etude Memorization** – There is no set date for when this must happen by, but it must happen before finals week. I highly recommend that you try to accomplish it during studio class or area recital, or a video submission (2 birds with one stone)

**Transcription** – The transcription must be uploaded to Google Drive in the shared folder by 5:00pm on 3/25.

**Pitch Maps** – These are due on Google Drive in the shared folder every Friday by 5:00pm (1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/18, 2/25, 3/4, 3/11, 3/25, 4/1, 4/8, 4/15, 4/22, 4/29). The Reflection will be due 5/5.

I hope you find these assignments helpful in your learning, and that you enjoy a lot of them!!!

All the best,  
Anthony

## Appendix H

**James Madison University**  
**MUAP 300 - Applied Saxophone Lessons**  
**Studio Class: Fridays, 1:50pm-2:40pm**  
**Lessons (50 minutes): TBD**  
(Lessons and classes are in-person)

**Spring 2022, COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Instructor & Contact Information**

Anthony S. Cincotta II  
Phone: (508) 439-4257  
Email: [cincotas@jmu.edu](mailto:cincotas@jmu.edu)  
Office Hours: By appointment

**Course Description:**

The purpose of this course is to provide each student with an in-depth approach to their technical studies, sound productions, and overall musical development as it pertains to both the playing and teaching of saxophone. While much of what is covered through this semester's course load is familiar to students, there is a great deal of "new" assignments that are offered to students to help provide them avenues of success based on their learning styles (full list of assignments and descriptions posted below). Through these varied assignments, students will be provided opportunities to develop their skillset in new and exciting ways that are designed to promote enthusiasm for learning. While the tutelage provided by the instructor is paramount to a student's success, the amount of time spent together is quite limited. Students and the instructor only meet for a total of two hours a week (one hour for lessons and one hour for studio class). The ultimate goal is for the students to become better teachers of themselves, learning to listen and diagnose aspects of their own playing.

**Objectives:**

The instructor will work with each student to build a plan on developing competency in a variety of areas, selected from, but not limited to the following lists:

Demonstrate tone development through:

5. Dynamics exercises
6. Voicings across the entire standard range of the saxophone
7. Vibrato studies
8. Tuning (both with a drone and with a tuner)

Demonstrate technical development through:

6. Scales and intervals (chromatic and "36 scale pattern")
7. Etudes (both rhythmic and lyrical)
8. Articulation exercises
9. "Mechanisms" (found in "The Saxophonist's Workbook")
10. Altissimo development (as it pertains to the individual's development)

Demonstrate the application of these developed skills through:

4. Learning “standard” repertoire of saxophone literature (discussed on an individual basis)
5. Duets with the instructor during lessons
6. Performance and teaching opportunities

These objectives are designed as a guide for this semester’s work. No two students are alike in their development. Thus, no two student’s semesters will be identical in nature. Depending on the developmental needs of a student, the goals and objectives will be tailored accordingly. As a student progresses, it is expected that they can begin to develop their own practice routines based on their individual learning styles that will help them continue to progress.

### **Required texts:**

- Larry Teal, “The Saxophonist’s Workbook” (digital copy provided because it is sadly out of print)
- Wilhelm Ferling, “48 Famous Studies”
- Jean-Marie Londeix, “Les Gammes Conjointes et en Intervalles”

### **Suggested texts:**

- Hyacinthe Klose (edited by Timothy McAllister), “25 Daily Exercises for Saxophone”
- David Pope, “Practice Monster”
- Jean-Marie Londeix, “Hello Mr. Sax”

### **Required Materials:**

- A professional saxophone and mouthpiece in good working order
- LOTS of reeds
- A metronome - (any kind will do, but a Dr. Beat is the preferred but fairly expensive option)
- A tuner (there are very good options for smart phones. If you have a smart phone, I recommend Tonal Energy)
- A Gmail account for posting/sharing submissions on Google Drive

### **Suggested Materials:**

- A reed re-surfacer of some kind (reed knife or Reed Geek) – Reeds are constantly changing due to playing and weather, so having a tool to help extend their playable life is important.
- A pair of high-quality headphones (a bit of an investment, but worth it for hearing details for listening assignments)
- A subscription to a music streaming service (i.e. Apple Music, Spotify, or Amazon Music)
- A USB condenser microphone (Phones do a good job with video recording, but the audio quality of the internal microphones does not do well with music)

### **Grading Criteria:**

The typical plan of action for applied music lessons provides a grading model based solely off a student’s preparation for lessons, performances throughout the semester, and their final jury. This

model has been used for many years across many universities and has proven success. However, this model forces all students of various learning styles to fit into this paradigm without considering their individual needs. This class's approach to applied lessons provides students a wide variety of assignment options and creates an environment where students can demonstrate what they have learned in ways they believe most proficient for their respective learning styles.

Because of the changed nature of the assignments, the grading criteria is also modified. The typical grading structure grades students based off percentages (i.e. 93-100% = A, 90-92% = A-, 87-89% = B+, etc.). The way this class is designed, students will earn points towards a cumulative score that will ultimately decide their grade.

Throughout the semester students will have the opportunity to select assignments that will both pique their interests and allow them to demonstrate their learning and understanding of the course's materials. The entire semester's assignments add up to a total of 2500 points. Students must earn a total of 1700 points to pass the class and any point totals over 1934 will earn the student an A for the semester.

Point ranges as they translate to grades:

- 1700-1749 points = C
- 1750-1799 points = C+
- 1800-1833 points = B-
- 1834-1866 points = B
- 1867-1899 points = B+
- 1900-1933 points = A-
- 1934 & up = A

**Assignments and Points Breakdown:**

The way this course is set up, it provides students with different activities to work on which lets them earn points until the desired grade is achieved. Students can approach this semester like a "choose-your-own-adventure" book. Students decide which assignments they do and do not participate in based on their interests and learning styles. Given the experimental nature of this assessment strategy, I would recommend a varied approach to the assignments. Try a little bit of everything. Learn what works best for you and make sure you earn enough points to pass the class.

Please note that point totals laid out for each assignment are the maximum points possible. Students do not receive all the points possible for an assignment just for participating in the activity. Your point totals for each assignment are based on the quality of work demonstrated.

**NOTE:** The layout of the assignments and due dates are spread out throughout the course of the semester. Pay attention to the class calendar to see when things are due. Do not expect to be able to be successful in this course by waiting till the last minute to complete assignments and expect to earn enough points to pass the class. Read through the assignments, decide on the ones you will complete, and make a plan. When an assignment due date passes it is passed. Because of the amount of assignments and opportunities students have to earn points, there are NO MAKE-UPS or EXTRA CREDIT options.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Maximum points POSSIBLE</u>
10) 13 Weekly Listening Reflections	400 (30pts each + 10pts for doing all 13)

11) Technical Midterm	250
12) Final Jury ( <b>mandatory</b> )	700
13) 6 Video Performance Submissions	150 (25pts each)
14) Studio Performances	50pts each
15) Teaching Assignment	200
16) Area Recital Performances	75pts each
17) Interview Project	150
18) Saxophone History Project	150
19) Composition Project	200
20) Repertoire Analysis	200
21) Piece/Etude Memorization	150
22) Transcription	150
23) 13 Pitch Map Series	200 (10pts each + 70pts for the reflection)

### **Listening Reflections:**

Listening to music is an invaluable component to developing one's musical skills. Each week, select an album (a prescribed list of artists is provided below, but there are many others from which to choose. Students are encouraged to explore many genres of music throughout the semester) and write a single-page (150-200 words) reflection regarding one of the numerous topics discussed in their lessons (technical proficiency, tone production, musicality, etc.).

#### *Artists:*

- Timothy McAllister
- Claude Delangle
- Otis Murphy
- Christopher Creviston
- Lynn Klock
- Steve Mauk
- Masato Kumoi
- Arno Bornkamp
- Jean-Yves Fourmeau
- Joseph Lulloff
- John Harle
- John Sampen
- Eugene Rousseau
- Jean-Marie Londeix
- Marcel Mule
- Simon Haram
- Donald Sinta
- Kenneth Tse
- Nobuya Sagawa
- Stephen Page

#### *Details:*

- One (1) page double spaced,
- Name, date, class, artist's name and album selected for the submission in the heading

Example:

Anthony S. Cincotta II

10/13/2020

MUAP 300

Timothy McAllister – “In Transit” Reflection

- Each submission is due via Google Drive by Friday at 5:00pm (any submissions submitted after that day/time will simply be counted towards the following week’s submission)
- Focus on one aspect of playing for the album you are reflecting on and provide explanations on what you are hearing, supported by the artist’s musical decisions.
  - Be sure to reference specific pieces (and movements as applicable) in your reflection

### **Studio Performances:**

Performing in studio class is a great way to demonstrate the work you have been doing in your lessons and in the practice room. These performances are designed around creating a comfortable setting for students to perform and receive feedback from their peers.

Each week, studio class will be structured in a way that will allow for a maximum of three (3) students to perform. Each student will have 15 minutes to perform and receive feedback before moving on to the next performance.

There is no limit to how many points a student can earn in this assignment. Students can perform in studio class as many times as they wish to receive feedback, as long as they continue to present material that is ready. Every performance will continue to add points to the student’s final grade.

*Note:* While there is no strict limit to the number of times a student performs in studio class, priority to who is permitted to perform will be based on the following hierarchy

- 1) Students with upcoming recitals/performance
- 2) Students who have not yet performed
- 3) First come, first serve

*Details:*

- These performances are meant to be treated professionally (attire and proper performance practices are expected)
- Requesting a date for your studio performances must be done through email, and spots will be awarded on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- Performances are expected to be “performance-ready” presentations of etudes or pieces of repertoire
- Accommodations will be made if a student is preparing a piece longer than the 15-minute allotment. That student will receive a double time slot in order to fit the performance. Because of this, only one other 15-minute performance may be scheduled for the same day.

### **Video Submissions:**

Students are encouraged to record ALL their practice sessions because hearing oneself is a great learning tool. However, this assignment is a less formal version of the studio performance assignment and the videos will only be shared between the student and instructor. While studio

performances are meant to be polished presentations, video submissions can be things that are still in the works.

*Details:*

- There are 6 due dates spaced out through the semester. Be sure to check the class calendar at the end of the course syllabus to see specific due dates. Each submission is due via Google Drive by 5:00pm of each respective due date (any submissions submitted after that day/time will simply be counted towards the following due date's submission)
  - A video submission must include the following:
    - At the beginning of the video state your name, date, and performance selection (including title, composer, movement(s))
    - A video submission must be at least 5 minutes of playing (the introduction does not count towards the time)
  - Videos are to be submitted as .MP4 files
- 

### **Final Jury:**

The final jury is meant to be a culminating performance of the objectives covered throughout the semester's lessons. Students are given the opportunity to perform for a panel comprised of professors from their instrument's area. Students have 10 minutes to introduce themselves, their performance selection, and perform. Performances of repertoire that includes an accompaniment **MUST** be performed with an appropriate accompanist.

**NOTE:** The final jury is an important assignment worth a large amount of points. I highly recommend that you participate in this assignment. Without participating it is impossible to receive an A for the semester, even if you participate in every other assignment.

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### **Technical Midterm:**

The technical midterm is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their progress with the scales and intervals taught throughout the semester. This is a one-on-one performance with the student and the instructor. The student will have 30 minutes to navigate their way through the following material:

- The 36 scale pattern with a metronome (scales and intervals)
  - 2 etudes of varying styles
- 

### **Teaching Assignment:**

There are numerous ways a student can demonstrate their comprehension and application of a musical skill. One of these ways is teaching it another student. This is a 15-minute presentation where you teach a student a technical or musical concept in studio class (available topics to discussed on an individual basis).

There will be two different studio classes throughout the semester where times are designated for teaching assignments. Students must request via email which date they wish to teach (check the class calendar at the end of the semester to see which days are available). If enough people decide to participate in this assignment, we will add days as necessary to accommodate.



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## **Area Recital Performances:**

While this syllabus is designed around providing students an array of assignment options outside of performing, performing is still an excellent way of assessing a student's learning and understanding of material.

Students who opt to complete this assignment will receive points for as many performances as they wish to participate in. This will only be limited by the level of preparation and by availability of space on area recitals.

### *Details:*

- These performances are meant to be treated professionally (attire and proper performance practices are expected)
- Requesting a date for your area performances must be done through the proper channels (Area Recital Request Form, and written signature of Professor Pope), and performance spots will be granted by the faculty in charge of managing the area recital schedules.
- Performances are expected to be "performance-ready" presentations of etudes or pieces of repertoire.

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## **Saxophone History Research Project:**

Having a firm understanding of the pedagogical history of the saxophone is highly beneficial to the understanding of how saxophone is both learned and taught today. The techniques we use in teaching stem from specific sources, primarily in the French and American "Schools of Saxophone."

In this project, you will dive into the rich history of the saxophone and write a paper. The paper is to discuss, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- Adolphe Sax
- The Selmer Company
- Mechanical advancements made to the instrument
- The French School of Saxophone
  - Marcel Mule
  - Jean-Marie Londeix
  - Marcel Mule
- The American School of Saxophone
  - Larry Teal
  - Sigurd Rascher

### *Details:*

- 3-4 paged double-spaced
- Name, Date, Class, and Professor should be listed at the paper
  - Example:

Anthony S. Cincotta II  
10/13/2020  
MUAP 300  
Professor David Pope

- Sources, citations, and bibliography should be completed in either MLA or Chicago style.
    - This decision is at the sole discretion of the student. However, whichever style is selected, it must remain consistent throughout.
  - This is intended to be a work of scholarly writing. In addition to factual information being presented, grammar and language are paramount.
- 

### **Interview Project:**

This assignment shares the same reasoning as the “Saxophone Studio Class-Online” assignment, in that both are centered around expanding one’s radius from where information is received.

In this assignment, students are asked to reach out to a saxophone professor at another university to prepare a one-on-one interview/Q&A. Questions are to be submitted to both the course instructor and to the other saxophone professor ahead of time. Do your best to record the interview. You will need to ask permission from the person you are interviewing, but having a recording of their responses will make it a great source for future learning and make the reflection that follows the interview easier to write.

There are three due dates associated with this assignment (check the course calendar for specific dates)

4. Submission of questions to the professor and course instructor
5. The actual interview
6. The final reflection

The due date for the submission of questions is by far the MOST IMPORTANT. The questions must be submitted and approved in order to proceed with the remainder of the assignment. If this due date is missed, the student forfeits ALL the points for the assignment

**NOTE:** During these interviews, you are an acting custodian of JMU’s saxophone studio and the music program as a whole. Make sure to present yourselves and the university with professionalism. Be courteous, be prompt, and be prepared!

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### **Composition Project:**

In this project, students have the opportunity to write their own piece of around 5-7 minutes in length that demonstrates some of the objectives that are covered during their lessons and practice sessions throughout the semester.

The piece is to be submitted to the instructor as a PDF file via Google Drive by 5:00pm on the due date specified in the class calendar.

Students are also encouraged to perform their composition either in a studio performance or in a video submission.

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### **Repertoire Analysis:**

Another way of demonstrating one's knowledge and understanding a piece of music is through analysis. By creating a harmonic and phrase analysis of piece, a student demonstrates the understanding of how a piece of music is intended to be performed based on the composer's intentions.

*Details:*

- Select a single piece of standard literature that you are currently working on in your lessons with Professor Pope to complete a harmonic and phrase analysis.
  - This can include a Roman Numeral analysis and a phrase structure analysis where it is outlined on a copy of the score and uploaded to Google Drive
  - This outline will be accompanied by a written response (roughly 500 words) explaining the analysis the student completed.
- 

### **Piece/Etude Memorization:**

When a piece is memorized, the amount of time spent learning it is typically far greater than learning to play it proficiently when reading it during a performance. This higher level of learning provides students the opportunity to explore and present more of the finer details of a piece, because they will be free from the need to read the notes, rhythms, etc.

The performance of this memorized work can happen in any performance style setting during the semester (studio class, area recital, etc.).

The selection of the piece must be made by the date specified in the course calendar.

---

### **Transcription:**

There are two avenues in which a student can navigate this assignment.

- 1) Jazz Solo Arrangement
  - Select a jazz solo of the student's choosing that is at least three (3) minutes long and transcribe it.
  - Students will submit their transcription via Google Drive by the date provided in the course calendar
  - There is NOT required of this transcription, but students are encouraged to share and perform their work with the studio.
- 2) Non-Saxophone Literature Transcription
  - Select a piece of non-saxophone literature and transcribe it for the saxophone of their choosing.
  - Students will submit their transcription via Google Drive by the date provided in the course calendar

- There is NOT required of this transcription, but students are encouraged to share and perform their work with the studio.

### **13 Pitch Map Series:**

The purpose of a pitch map is to help students (and professionals) understand where their natural pitch position is for every note on the saxophone. With this understanding, they can learn to adjust the pitches accordingly in order to play these notes more in tune. Tuning is a forever process. Developing one's ears to hear and adjust pitch on any note in any context vital.

This exercise is best done with the help of a fellow student/friend. The person playing should play each note (starting on low B-flat and working chromatically upward to high F-sharp) for roughly 3-4 seconds **WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE TUNER**. The person not playing with look at the tuner and mark down the pitch on the pitch map (the pitch map will be provided by the professor).

Each submission is due via Google Drive by Friday at 5:00pm (any submissions submitted after that day/time will simply be counted towards the following week's submission). The goal of this exercise to see improvement week to week. After the last pitch map is completed, a short reflection (roughly 150-200 words) should be written explaining what the student learned about their pitch over the course of the semester.

Some questions to consider for the reflection:

- Did your overall pitch improve?
- Are there notes that still give you trouble to play in tune?
  - If so, what are they, and what are some ways you have learned to correct the pitch when playing?
- Are you finding it easier to hear pitches when they are in tune?
- What tuning exercises have you been using to help improve your pitch?
  - Have you developed any exercises that work particularly well for you?

### **Course Calendar:**

<b>Week 1</b> January 18-21	
Lessons: No lessons this week Studio Class: Class discussion about syllabus	Assignments Due: Syllabus Contract
<b>Week 2</b> January 24-28	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Jan. 28 – Listening Reflection #1, Pitch Map #1
<b>Week 3</b> January 31 – February 4	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Feb. 4 – Listening Reflection #2, Pitch Map #2, Video Submission #1
<b>Week 4</b> February 7-11	

Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Feb. 11 – Listening Reflection #3, Pitch Map #3, Interview Project Questions
<b>Week 5</b> February 14-18	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Feb. 18 – Listening Reflection #4, Pitch Map #4
<b>Week 6</b> February 21-25	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Feb. 25 – Listening Reflection #5, Pitch Map #5, Video Submission #2
<b>Week 7</b> February 28 – March 4	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: <u>Dedicated to Teaching Assignments</u>	Assignments Due: Mar. 4 – Listening Reflection #6, Pitch Map #6
<b>Week 8</b> March 7-11	
Lessons: <b><u>Technical Midterms during lessons</u></b> this week Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Mar. 11 – Listening Reflection #7, Pitch Map #7, Video Submission #3, Saxophone History Project
<b>Week 9</b> March 14-18	
SPRING BREAK	
<b>Week 10</b> March 21-25	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: <u>Dedicated to Teaching Assignments</u>	Assignments Due: Mar. 25 – Listening Reflection #8, Pitch Map #8, Transcription Project
<b>Week 11</b> March 28 – April 1	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Apr. 1 – Listening Reflection #9, Pitch Map #9 Video Submission #4, Interview Completed
<b>Week 12</b> April 4-8	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Apr. 8 – Listening Reflection #10, Pitch Map #10
<b>Week 13</b> April 11-15	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Apr. 15 – Listening Reflection #11, Pitch Map #15, Video Submission #5, Composition Project PDF

<b>Week 14</b> April 18-22	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Studio Performances	Assignments Due: Apr. 22 – Listening Reflection #12, Pitch Map #12, Interview Reflection, Analysis Project
<b>Week 15</b> April 25-29	
Lessons: Lessons meet as scheduled Studio Class: Last class of the semester	Assignments Due: Apr. 29 – Listening Reflection #13, Pitch Map #13, Video Submission #6
<b>Week 16</b> May 2-5 (last day of classes)	
Lessons: By appointment only	Assignments Due: May 5 - Pitch Map Reflection
<b>Final Exams</b> May 9-12	
Final Juries	



## Appendix J.1

3/25/22

MUAP 300

Soul Station

*Soul Station* was recorded in 1960. It features Hank Mobley on tenor sax, Art Blakey on drums, Wynton Kelly on piano and Paul Chambers on bass.

Over the pandemic lockdown of 2020 an Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers album was released to Apple Music named *Just Coolin*. I listened to it and was blown away by the sax playing, especially on *Hipsippy Blues*. I did some research and was shocked to find that the player was Hank Mobley. I had listened to his stuff in the past, but it never really interested me. A couple weeks ago I was talking to Dr. Dotas about playing *Hipsippy Blues* in my combo and he told me that if I liked Hank Mobley on this I should listen to *Soul Station*. I have listened to it many times now and have some thoughts.

This album is absolutely stellar. This is another album I tried to listen to in middle school that I didn't really like but now with more context love. My favorite type of saxophone playing is the type of playing that relies on flawless melodicism, instinctual feel and a great sound as opposed to super fast super high stuff. The playing Mobley does on this album fits squarely into that category. In particular, I loved his use of harmonic substitutions as that is something I struggle with.

One day in jazz band, Prof. Thomas told us that substitutions and extended techniques are great ornaments on the tree of great feel and a true harmonic understanding of the song. Things that make the solo shine a little, but when used excessively it becomes obnoxious. Mobley uses extended techniques in a way that is not overwhelming but still keeps the solo interesting. I noticed Mobley used the tritone substitution a couple times, and I transcribed some segments where he uses this technique (see Hank Mobley Substitutions PDF).

Essentially, the tritone substitution switches the regular V7 chord for a dominant seventh chord a tritone away from the V. For example, instead of the traditional ii-V7-I in C, Dm7-G7-Cmaj7, the tritone sub would go Dm7-Db7-Cmaj7. This works because the third and the seventh of a G7, the important notes, are the same as the seventh and third of a Db7.

A tritone substitution opens up many possibilities for chromaticism, as the roots of the chords go down chromatically. As shown in the PDF, Mobley mainly plays a figure in the first chord, and then plays the same figure a half step down (See *Remember* and *Dig Dis*). I enjoyed this technique tremendously, and will continue to transcribe the solos in this album to learn more about this technique.

Once again, [redacted] great job!

Grade 30/30

**Commented [1]:** One of my absolute favorite albums. Also the first one I ever transcribed fully.

**Commented [2]:** Very cool that there is still music of his being released. He passed almost 40 years ago!!!

**Commented [3]:** sound advice!

**Commented [4]:** I find this interesting. This album is not one that I find needs a supercritical ear to listen to and enjoy. It is pretty straight-ahead jazz.

**Commented [5]:** Excellent

**Commented [6]:** Excellent analogy. Too many ornaments and you can't see the tree anymore!

**Commented [7]:** Maybe not "obnoxious," but definitely overwhelming and not as musical as it good be.

**Commented [8]:** See previous comment :)

**Commented [9]:** Great ears!

**Commented [10]:** A wonderful addition to this reflection!



Appendix J.2

# Remember

written: C<sup>7</sup>  
implied: C<sup>7</sup>

F<sup>7b9</sup>  
B<sup>7</sup>

B<sup>9</sup>  
B<sup>9</sup>

# Dig Dis

written: Dm<sup>7</sup>  
implied: Dm<sup>7</sup>

G<sup>7</sup>  
D<sup>b7</sup>

C<sup>7</sup>  
C<sup>7</sup>

# Soul Station

written: C<sup>7</sup>  
implied: F<sup>#7</sup>

F





Appendix K.1

Note	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
Pitch Tendency	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	✓	✓	✓	✓	sharp	sharp	✓	✓
Note	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
Pitch Tendency	✓	✓	✓	✓	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	✓	sharp	✓	✓
Note	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
Pitch Tendency	✓	✓	✓	sharp	✓	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp
Note	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
Pitch Tendency	✓	✓	✓	sharp	✓	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp
Note	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
Pitch Tendency	✓	✓	✓	sharp	✓	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp	sharp

Conclusion: Either I am frequently sharp, or I didn't tune properly. Also, after writing "sharp" 16 times, the word looks weird.



## Appendix K.3

## The Great Debate

♩ = 120  
Rubato

Tenor Sax

Tenor Sax

6

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

10

♩ = 120

Swung

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

14

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

19

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

♩ = 120  
Straight

a Tempo

23

2

T.Sax. 

26

♩=120

♩=120

T.Sax. 

T.Sax. 

Slight swing

A bit more swing

30

♩=120

♩=120

♩=120

T.Sax. 

More swing

Swung

Straight

35

T.Sax. 

T.Sax. 

40

♩=120

♩=120

♩=120

T.Sax. 

Sudden swing

Swung

Swung

3

44 3

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

48

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

52

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

55

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

58

T.Sax.

T.Sax.



61  $\text{♩} = 120$  Straight  $\text{♩} = 120$  4

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

65  $\text{♩} = 120$   $\text{♩} = 120$

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

69  $\text{♩} = 160$  Angry

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

73  $\text{♩} = 120$   $\text{♩} = 120$  Swung

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

77  $\text{♩} = 120$

T.Sax.

T.Sax.

## Appendix K.4

### *The Great Debate* – Program Notes

I've been interested in composing for a while, but my busy student schedule never allowed me the time to compose. This assignment provided me a reason to make the time to do so. When I began writing, I didn't really have an idea of what I was doing. I just had a vague concept of what I wanted to represent. I had some trouble starting, but the structure of the assignment deadline motivated me to continue. I ended up changing a lot throughout the process: the instrumentation, the title, the key, the time signature, basically most of it. Much of what the piece is now is not like it was when I started. I had many ideas, and Anthony and I met frequently to play through some of them to decide together which ideas were scrapped, and which were kept and developed further. I appreciate that the assignment did not specify what elements my piece needed, as this allowed for flexibility and freedom. I find the simplicity of my piece to be quaint. The easy rhythms and basic harmonic structure gave me, a first-time composer, a more natural approach to my ideas. The result is my first piece, a tenor saxophone duet, called *The Great Debate*.

This piece means a lot to me. I spent so much time creating it and bringing it to life with Anthony that Professor Pope let me to change my jury piece to this. It demonstrated a comprehensive growth of my musicianship and overall experience throughout the semester both in my lessons and Anthony's case study.

*The Great Debate* is designed to be comedic. I meant to show the audience the struggle between a saxophonist's decision to be a jazz or classical artist. Essentially, this piece is supposed to be an argument between the two saxophonists. One wants to play classically, while the other wants to play jazz. These musicians and their personalities represent the demand for saxophonists to be able to play both styles, and the "debate" over which is better. The saxophone has a very wide range of repertoire, and nowadays saxophonists are typically expected to be versatile.

In this piece, both musicians need to be able to seamlessly switch from jazz to classical and vice versa. The theatrics, including body movements and facial expressions, are part of the performance. They can convey confidence, if you've made a mistake, your overall interest and enjoyment, etc. Additionally, since the saxophonists are arguing in the music, I wanted to show the argument visually. I included the brief use of spoken words, some non-verbal gestures, and exaggerated facial expressions to convey the humor and argumentative nature of this duet.

## Appendix L

**Alternative Assessment Projects**

Students can substitute up to 10% of the “best of ten lesson grades” with a pre-approved alternative assessment project. These could include, but are not limited to:

1. A substantive composition or arrangement project
2. Analysis of an appropriate work
3. An approved original research project
4. Creative uses of technology
5. Teaching/pedagogy projects
6. Presentations incorporating improvisation

These optional projects are available to give students more control over their assignments and how they are assessed. In all cases, the project must be proposed *in writing*, **no later than the fifth week of classes.**

If approved by the instructor, a contract will be created in collaboration between teacher and student, clearly defining the parameters of the project, a timeline, and a grading rubric. This contract must be signed by the instructor *and* the student, **no later than the end of the fifth week of classes.**

**Failure to complete an alternative assignment will result in a reduction of the lesson grade corresponding to the agreement between teacher and student.**

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