Western Michigan University School of Music

MUS 565: Seminar in Music Theory
Fall 2003
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Final Pedagogy Project

Each student will be expected to prepare a written project, due by the final exam, that compares the pedagogical perspectives and approaches of three different college-level textbooks. To minimize congestion in the library, each student will be assigned a different set of three books for the project. Assignments will be made in class on Oct. 1 and the completed project is due by 5:00 p.m. on Thurs. Dec. 11, 2003.

Students will have the option of preparing a project that compares textbooks in either harmony, music fundamentals, counterpoint, or other subjects assigned by the instructor. The project should consist of the following components:

1. Construct a data collection sheet (a sample is attached) for collecting information about your three books. Your evaluation form should use a standard bibliographic format that includes publisher, ISBN (the unique international number assigned to books), and library call number (to help you easily locate or order the book in the future). Indicate what type of text it is (comprehensive, syllabus-like, workbook, self-programmed, etc.) and for what kind of course it would be appropriate (fundamentals, first year theory, aural comp., counterpoint, etc.). Include concise information (e.g., keywords, yes/no boxes, etc.) which will quickly remind you of those features which you consider to be most relevant. Note also any significant omissions that you perceive in the book. In addition to the concise information, your form should include a place for detailed comments and a description of the author’s point of view. Most importantly, you need to state why you would or would not use it in a course, and give specific reasons.

2. The project should also include 6–8 double-spaced pages (minimum 1,500 words) of narrative comparing the three textbooks (the “compare-and-contrast” method). Topics for discussion in the paper should include the intended audience for each textbook [this information is often given by the authors in the preface—comment on whether or not you think the authors achieved their stated goal], thoroughness with which it covers the topic, use of musical examples (common practice period only? other style periods\(^1\) including twentieth century, popular music, jazz, folk music?), method(s) of musical analysis presented, usefulness of exercises, comprehensiveness of approach (incorporates aural comp., composition, improvisation, performance?), etc. Also examine the musical terminology used in the book and observe any differences; for instance, the terminology for non-chord (non-harmonic) tones often differs from book to book.

\(^1\)If appropriate—will be limited for subjects such as counterpoint and twentieth-century harmony.
Reference should be made in the narrative to points addressed in pertinent readings in the class coursepack.

An important key component of the narrative should be a comparison among all three books of the same lesson topic (i.e., you will “zoom in” for a closer look at a specific lesson topic). Examples of suitable lesson topics include secondary dominants, augmented sixth chords, or modulation for harmony textbooks; key signatures, intervals, or qualities of triads for music fundamentals; invertible counterpoint or fugue (the exposition alone is often a lesson topic in itself) for counterpoint; etc.

An especially fruitful topic of discussion for students examining harmony textbooks is the teaching approach to harmony as either a linear or a vertical phenomenon (or a combination of the two). Many textbooks will exhibit a marked preference for one approach or the other (and this will somewhat depend on the age of the book). The Benjamin-Horvit-Nelson text, for example, clearly supports the linear approach; notice how it presents $\text{6}^{\text{4}}$ chords and diminished seventh chords primarily as linear phenomena. The $\text{6}^{\text{4}}$ chord, in particular, is a bellwether for determining whether a book presents a more linear or harmonic approach: the degree to which a book identifies the cadential $\text{I}^{\text{6}}$ as a preparation for $\text{V}$ or even part of $\text{V}$ rather than as an actual I chord is indicative of how much it espouses the linear approach. An adoption of Schenkerian analytical principles is also indicative of a linear approach to harmonic phenomena.