

Students learn more effectively through experience, and the habit of trying out ideas and concepts fosters critical thinking and autodidactic processes. This habit must be applicable not only to the topic of a class; besides being prepared for their careers, people need general and self-knowledge that enriches their life. For example: when grasping the differences between the analog and the digital, a classroom should do more than define concepts; the discussion should involve the human body, personal experiences, nature, the history of technology, and artistic works related to this dichotomy. Furthermore, students must carry out experiments illustrating points from the discussion. Students that are proficient at critical thinking, adapting and reframing concepts, social interacting (online or not), and understanding their individual capabilities will be better prepared for the future.

The main strategies I use involve promoting active learning processes that engage students in the investigation of theories, regarding different types of learners by having at least two different approaches to each topic, and fostering an environment of consistent dialogue, clarifying what is expected in terms of student achievements and encouraging their feedback concerning the teaching and learning process.

When I taught counterpoint to my Theory classes at Marywood University, I realized that students learn better if they first try writing music for two voices with no rules, then gradually incorporating stylistic practices suggested by the class, with each concept being discussed and played live. After this process, students quickly understand a set of guidelines for writing good counterpoint, as they created these guidelines as a class. Furthermore, this investigation shows music composition as a fluid activity, with its practices constantly challenged and repurposed. I also enrich the class by showing counterpoint principles in other musical styles, such as pop, Romantic, modern, and jazz.

My theory students were excited about counterpoint, performed very well on tests, and absorbed not only the contrapuntal concepts, but also the learning process, engendering a faster learning rate for subsequent topics. The positive student evaluations I receive often praise this set of strategies, showing that students retained the learning process itself, along with the class content.

In sum, my pedagogical strategies are designed to promote a consistently active behavior towards knowledge, so that students will be able to better teach themselves long after they leave my classroom.