

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Timothy Francis

*Associate Professor of  
Music*

*September 2021*

**DSU**™

CENTER FOR  
TEACHING & LEARNING



# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: TIMOTHY FRANCIS

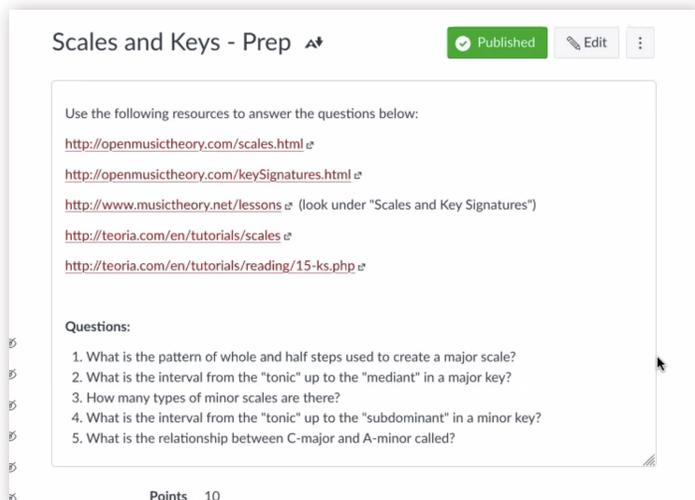
By Malia H Adamson

Dr. Timothy Francis, Associate Professor of Music, has been at Dixie State University (DSU) since 2012. His primary area of expertise is Music Theory, and he also plays trombone in the Southwest Symphony and the Rebel Jazz Band. Outside of work, he focuses on his family and religion, which influence his personal musical work. He gardens, and is proud to have a mini-orchard in which he grows a multitude of fruits. He also enjoys hiking and cycling.

## INNOVATION IN TEACHING

### Just In Time:

When it comes to preparing for classes, Dr. Francis follows a technique called "Just in Time" teaching. Before class, he posts links to each topic they will cover in the following class in a prep assignment. The students complete their reading and the assignment before physical class. Dr. Francis then reviews the answers to the prep assignment, figures out what topics the class isn't quite understanding, and then adjusts the lesson and activities of the class to address those topics. It encourages students to get into the material ahead of time, and allows Dr. Francis to find what areas the students are struggling with very quickly.



The screenshot shows a Canvas LMS assignment page titled "Scales and Keys - Prep". At the top right, there are buttons for "Published", "Edit", and a menu icon. The main content area contains the following text:

Use the following resources to answer the questions below:

- <http://openmusictheory.com/scales.html>
- <http://openmusictheory.com/keySignatures.html>
- <http://www.musictheory.net/lessons> (look under "Scales and Key Signatures")
- <http://teoria.com/en/tutorials/scales>
- <http://teoria.com/en/tutorials/reading/15-ks.php>

Questions:

1. What is the pattern of whole and half steps used to create a major scale?
2. What is the interval from the "tonic" up to the "mediant" in a major key?
3. How many types of minor scales are there?
4. What is the interval from the "tonic" up to the "subdominant" in a minor key?
5. What is the relationship between C-major and A-minor called?

At the bottom left, there is a "Points" section showing "10".



Prof. Timothy Francis (UMAC 2017)

**WHAT IS ONE OF  
YOUR FAVORITE  
CLASSES TO  
TEACH, AND  
WHY?**

Music itself is a very active learning experience. However, in Music Theory and Music History – the academic areas of Music study – it can be hard to create an active learning environment. Dr Francis takes a conscious effort to create active environments for students. One of these areas of effort is the final exam. Instead of a written test, his students design and execute a project throughout the semester. Dr. Francis feels that students enjoy the hands on approach, and learn to apply the class principles in real life situations through the project. To balance the removal of the exam, he uses short quizzes and assessments throughout the semester that test students' understanding of the principles.

#### **From Lecture and Solo Work to Discussion and Collaboration:**

When it comes to in-class interactions, Dr. Francis jokes that his syllabus is the biggest lecture that he does during the year. He uses a discussion-based approach to classes, where he and the students will look at a musical piece, listen to audio, or watch a short video. They then discuss the piece, and identify what the piece shows and how it relates to what they are learning. Dr. Francis loves the approach because it gives students a chance to discover the answers for themselves.

Dr. Francis also places an emphasis in his classes on collaboration. In Orchestration, a class which involves writing and composing music for large ensembles, Prof. Francis works with other faculty to have their classes come in to either play student compositions, or answer questions students have about their particular group of instruments. It gives students in Prof. Francis' class to get hands-on experience with the instruments, and gives the other class a chance to show off their expertise in their field. Last year, the Orchestration class was able to go and visit a woodwind class, and learn all about woodwind instruments. They also were able to have a brass ensemble come and visit the class and play for them during the period.

#### **Collaboration in the Community:**

Prof. Francis has also reached out to the community to participate in his classes. The Orchestration class is a bringing together of many different instruments, so Dr. Francis believes it is only fitting that the class also brings together so many different people. In Music Theory classes, the music education students will often create teaching plans for their assignments and projects. Dr. Francis encourages them to practice and assess their techniques as part of the project. Some students even work with local teachers on trying out the lessons they have created during their classes to see how effective they are in a real classroom setting.

As well as this, Dr. Francis encourages students to share their ideas and accomplishments outside of class at local events or conferences, which has lead to a couple of students presenting their Music Theory projects at UCUR.

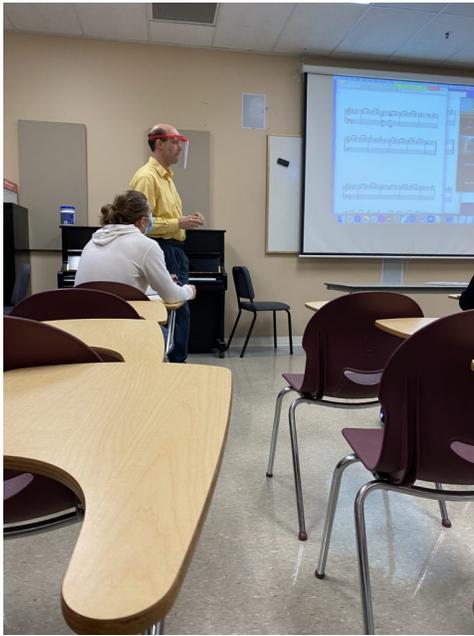
Dr. Francis' favorite class is the last semester of Music Theory. The class focuses on modern day compositions as opposed to older classical music. Examining modern work is refreshing, and the class helps students and Dr. Francis remain aware of many trends and recent ideas in the world of music that they might encounter throughout their lives.



## **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COME TO DSU?**

Prof. Francis originally moved to DSU from Oregon. He chose DSU for its can-do attitude. Regardless of where you come from, he feels you can still succeed and have input at the university.

## **GET TO KNOW ME BETTER**



## WHAT IS YOUR MOST CHALLENGING TEACHING EXPERIENCE?

A challenging part of music is finding in-class examples that work well. Often, while trying to find a piece to showcase a certain concept or technique, Dr. Francis will find a lot of examples of what not to do. He was reluctant to share these at first. However, when he ended up showing them to the class, it was a great opportunity for the students to reverse their thinking. By presenting a far from perfect example, the students were able to brainstorm as to what would make the composition better, or what they could do differently in the same situation. Now, he uses a mixture of both in his classes, as it shows the students another perspective.

## WHAT INSPIRES YOU IN YOUR TEACHING?

Dr. Francis is inspired by what he learns by teaching students. Teaching helps him to grow as a musician and helps him to better appreciate his field of study.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TEACHING EXPERIENCE?

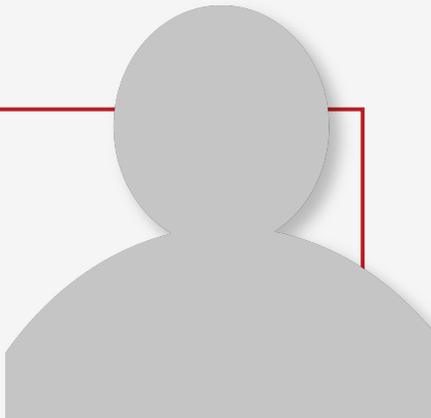
Dr Francis' favorite teaching experiences are when students who struggle with a subject finally understand. Seeing the lights come on, and them getting excited about the subject makes it one of the best experiences in teaching.

Making connections between students and the subject that you are teaching is also Dr. Francis' favorite experience. It makes the information you are teaching so much more valuable to the students, which is especially true when it comes to unprompted connections.



## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER FACULTY TEACHING AT DSU?

Dr. Francis' best advice for other instructors is to connect with the student. Checking in on them, and making them feel included in the class goes so far in their learning experience, and leaves an impact on them. Be a resource for them in the classroom and during office hours.



## STUDENT REVIEWS:

*"Dr. Francis is a great instructor. He has an in-depth knowledge of the subjects he teaches and does a great job at presenting it to the class in a way that we can understand it and even get excited about it. He cares about each student and is willing to listen and answer questions. He has great control of the class and we learn a lot in the time given. I have enjoyed this class."*

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*"Dr. Francis is really good at explaining things. Some of the concepts we learned were kind of hard for me to wrap my brain around, but as soon as I asked for help, I could understand a lot better. Dr. Francis is also good at staying on topic, while still letting the students ask questions and keep the class fun and interactive."*

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*"Dr. Francis is a fabulous professor! He is an expert in his field. I am always amazed at how patient he is with all of his students as our class has a wide age range of students. He helps each student feel confident in whatever stage of learning they are in and provides a safe learning environment for all of his students. I appreciate him being available to help as needed outside of class. Dr. Francis is very organized and thus his preparations for class make the class run smoothly."*

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*"Dr. Francis is a genius and knows his stuff and is always willing to help the students in any way that he can. He is also willing to explain things and do examples until all the students understand."*

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