

Poster Title:**Improving Graduate Students' Individual Practice: A Case Study of a Pilot Class to Improve Practice and Learning Strategies Among Piano, String & Wind Players****Project Description:**

Researchers and practitioners agree about the need to help all music students implement and develop self-regulation and deliberate practice strategies. Yet, there are few resources for systematic development to improve practicing available for students at the advanced level. Music majors tend to receive only evaluative feedback from teachers during the weekly lesson. Mindfulness and reflective practice before, during and after practice improved one graduate pianist's practice in one case study. Research with more students and various instruments is needed.

In this study, the researchers worked with graduate music majors ($N=7$) biweekly to introduce and develop specific learning, practice and mindfulness strategies. Instruments represented included violin, viola, cello, clarinet and piano. During bi-weekly meetings, throughout a 14-week semester, the researchers:

- (1) Systematically introduced concepts about learning and memory (cognition, habit formation, procrastination, sleep) and self-regulation.
- (2) Had the students write practice logs and record 7 practice sessions per week.
- (3) Provided written and verbal feedback on practice logs and videos.
- (4) Had students reflect on practice progress, in light of the readings, discussions and practice feedback.

The researchers analyzed and triangulated data from practice videos, logs, focus groups, in-class reflections and observations. Results demonstrated that students improved self-regulation and attention during practice due to: identifying specific goals in practice logs; receiving weekly feedback on practice videos from the researchers; and analyzing their own learning and rehearsal, based on readings and mindfulness.

Excerpts from the Syllabus**Class description:**

Learning is the basis for knowledge of any kind and one of the pillars of college life. Yet, we are all thrown into it, to figure out on our own how to do it best. Wouldn't you like to know how to do it better, faster, and to make the knowledge stay longer? We can help you do this!

The course will be divided into four sections:

- 1) The act of learning (and how the brain processes information) and memory. How to practice!
- 2) Science of habit: how to create good ones and how to break negative ones. What willpower really is
- 3) Attention, concentration, and focus.
- 4) Sleep and taking time off. The power of boredom. Creativity.

Course objectives:

- 1) You will improve your overall approach to learning and practicing, by understanding the latest psychological, neurological and pedagogical research on the science of learning.
- 2) You will evaluate your current habits (not just related to learning, but in your life in general), and find ways to change the bad ones and enhance the good ones!
- 3) You will improve your memory and your ability to focus on the task at hand.
- 4) You will put all this knowledge into practice from Day 1, and we will evaluate together your progress in all these different areas.

Assignments:

One of the main elements of the class will be a **practice log**. You must record in your written log AT LEAST 30 minutes of your practice per day, every week. Video-record yourself playing short passages. For every entry, you

must write your goal for that session, the starting and ending times, and immediate feedback about the passages you recorded and their progression compared to previous days. Finally, you will devise a goal for the next session. You must bring the log with you to every class, where we will choose randomly three students to share their experience.

Other assignments will include:

- Watching each other practice
- Analyzing and discussing assigned readings
- A 60-day assignment that involves monitoring a habit that the student wants to create/change
- A deep musical, formal, and interpretative analysis of a piece the student is working on
- A Final, self-assessment project

Class schedule:

Week	Topic(s)
Week 1	Introduction to Learning & Practicing (Metacognition & Self-Regulation); Begin Practice Log
Week 2	Assignment: Practice Video & Reflection; Learning Continued
Week 3	Attention, Concentration & Focus
Week 4	Attention, Concentration & Focus
Week 5	Creating and modifying habits
Week 6	Presentations and discussions on how your learning and practicing has changed
Week 7	
Week 8	Procrastination and its role in our lives. Assignment: practice observations
Week 9	More on willpower and procrastination
Week 10	Sleep, technology and modern society
Week 11	Sleep, technology and modern society
Week 12	Motivation
Week 13	Motivation
Week 14	Cognition Revisited
Week 15	Wrap-up & Reflection

Testimonials from the Student Evaluations (anonymous)

“I am really grateful to Dr. Otamendi and Dr. Pike for teaching this course.”

“The practice journals and videos with feedback were really helpful. Discussing our practice, techniques, and helping each other come up with new ideas was really enlightening and promoted growth. This course transformed my life! Thank you thank you! I think every performance major should take this course. The course opened whole new realms for practice and performance.”

“Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the class and feel that the knowledge and habits gained will not only affect my life as a musician but also as a healthy and well-balanced individual.”

“I am very thankful to both of them. Really great experience!”

“A transforming experience with two professors.”

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