Sonatas, Rondos, and Cupcakes: The Efficacy of Collaborative and Creative Project Formats in Undergraduate Music Theory Courses

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This poster details my experience teaching Form and Analysis in the Fall of 2011, 2013, and 2014, and focuses specifically on my evolving approach to designing creative-format group projects.

Differences among my three years designing this project include the class size, group sizes, group selection method, number of group projects assigned during a given semester, time to complete the project, sizes of forms examined, and, most notably, the project format itself (instructor- or student-selected).

**INTRODUCTION**

While group projects across all years were fairly to quite successful, the project designs were also correlated with overall end-of-term content retention.

**RESULTS**

- Fall 2011:
  1. Group Projects = Fairly successful
  2. Individual Final Papers, Exams = Fairly poor
  3. SLO’s = Marginal proficiency

- Fall 2013:
  1. Group Project = Successful & quite creative
  2. Individual Final Analysis Papers = High quality
  3. SLO’s = Fairly high proficiency

- Fall 2014:
  1. Group Project = Successful & fairly creative
  2. Individual Final Analysis Papers = High quality
  3. SLO’s = High proficiency in content assessed

**DISCUSSION**

The years in which I utilized creative-format projects for group work (2013 & 2014) were correlated with stronger end-of-term individual papers, as compared to the year in which I assigned standard group paper formats (2011). Moreover, my 2014 end-of-course assessment data show an increase in retention of the content specifically covered in the creative group project, over other content taught in that same year.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Group work is dreaded by many students; large, open-format creative projects can easily become too vague, subjective in grading, or time-consuming. However, creative, student-driven group projects, when executed correctly, have a net benefit for students. Therefore, we as educators should make more frequent and effective use of them in our courses.