Jeffrey Levenberg
Micro-Module Courseware Development Grant
Scheme 1
May 15, 2016

Progress report

Thus far, we have completed five micro-modules for the project, "Flipping Practice Rooms and Classrooms." Three are submitted here, two are still undergoing final editing at ELITE.

The first module, "Micro-module 1_CMA," is an introduction to the many resources available to students in the Chinese Music Archive. As this archive is otherwise reserved to faculty and RPG students, it was deemed prudent to give the undergraduate students a behind-the-scenes "sneak peak" of the room right next door to the audio-visual library they're typically doing their homework in. In that vein, the module is modeled on a film likewise introducing restricted materials at the Vatican's "Secret Archives." Now that the students know (and will come to know) essentially what is in the collection, they may request materials through my teaching assistant in the course next fall. As this module was filmed by my RPG assignee, Clara (who is fluent in these matters), and "co-stars" several of our undergraduate students, it had an immediate appeal to the Western Music History course, in which it was previewed. That said, generating wide interest in Chinese music in this department's undergraduate cohort will remain a challenge.

The second module, "Levenberg.mov," introduces students to musical tuning and temperament, and provides a framework for them to use a computer program to convert the seemingly arcane aspects of these musical theoretical topics into interesting sounds. It uniquely (within the grand scheme of undergraduate music curricula) incorporates both Western and Chinese tunings. For their assignment, the students are asked to extrapolate the tunings and find points of common intersection between both cultures. This module has not yet been tried in a class, as it is too advanced and off-topic for the Western Music History survey I am teaching now. It will have to be used in the fall elective course and be evaluated at that time.

The third module, "MM1.mov," is a mini-lecture on sound and significance in Chinese minority music. It focuses in particular on the Yi people in the Yunnan province, and provides a foundation for students to explore others of China's ethnic groups. The module was designed by my RPG assignee, Pengxuan (a doctoral candidate), who has done extensive fieldwork and already helped edit a book and sound recordings on this topic. In particular, the module reveals striking connections between the Yi peoples' use of physical sounds to address the metaphysical soul; the students thus may try to recreate the experience for themselves. This module and topic, although potentially esoteric to many of our undergraduates, notably found resonance with one of my advisees who has needed additional academic encouragement, and will now join the team.