

Ruth van Baak Griffioen: Excerpts from W&M Student Evaluations

Music 213, History of Western Music (Spring 2009)

"I want to be Ruth Griffioen when I grow up."

"So much fun! Thinking about a music major now :)"

"Good times, Griffioen, good times."

"Prof. Griffioen was great, she really made the class enjoyable. I learned a lot and really appreciate her enthusiasm for the material."

"The Professor's command of this subject is awe-inspiring and inspiring in general! I think the course accomplished its goals---I have a deeper love and appreciation for western music, as well as so much more understanding of historical periods and the philosophical ideas that went with them. I loved every class! Thank you!"

"My only complaint was that Rachmaninoff was not included."

"Great course. I learned a tremendous amount about music which I would have never been exposed to otherwise. Thank you."

"Great course! I loved the enthusiasm Prof. Griffioen shows for the material; it really makes it fun and easy to learn."

"One of the only classes that I learned something practical."

"Well-taught course that covers a bunch of great material; only really wish it had been longer ;)"

"Great enthusiasm---thought I already knew a lot about the music, but definitely learned more about why it sounds like it sounds."

"Excellent course, excellent professor. Her energy and enthusiasm made the class a pleasure."

"Covered a huge range of music in an effective, organized, in-depth manner. Very cohesive and informative, and intellectually stimulating. Great focus on the big picture."

"Professor Griffioen is a great professor, who is obviously enthusiastic about what she teaches and has great knowledge of it. I have thoroughly enjoyed this class. One thing I would say she could work on is her time management - sometimes she talks about a particular subject too much and we get out late (which sucks because everything she says is really cool)."

"Professor Ruth is amazing! Her enthusiasm for the material she teaches is contagious. She made the class interactive and interesting by playing period instrument, having the students show off their instruments, or stand in front of the class with costumes and signs with music excerpts, etc. She is the best professor I've had at William & Mary! When questions are asked she is able to answer them and she even encourages going to concerts and reads us current events. We love Prof. Ruth!"

Early Music Ensemble (Spring 2009)

"Great experience for anyone seeking extra challenges in music. Lots of things to be learned which improve overall musicianship."

"Dr Griffioen is an excellent professor and ensemble director. She is very eager to work with student musicians and to use their talents to enhance the Early Music Ensemble as a whole. She is a patient but challenging professor and explains early music techniques and styles very well. Plus she writes the best program notes :)"

Music 213, History of Western Music (Spring 2008)

Music 213 taught by Prof. Griffioen keeps me sane at W&M! I'm not a music major, but I'm a total classical music buff, so I enjoyed the class so much. Prof. Griffioen cares a lot about her students and she is passionate towards the course material. I hope she continues to teach at W&M, because it was my favorite class so far. She is truly a brilliant teacher, and a valuable asset of W&M.

Professor Griffioen's biggest strengths are her clear command of the course material and her creative attitude towards teaching. She always had a ready answer for student questions and gave thorough descriptions of music styles, the

culture surrounding the music, composers, etc. so that we had a good comprehension of the music and its context. At the same time, she presented material in a way so that the students could understand the course regardless of their previous musical experience. Her use of "lab days" and additional creative exercises in class got the students involved and thus aided in comprehension. For example, teaching Gregorian chant in the stillness of the Wren Chapel, presenting Leitmotiv through a student skit, "show and tell" of period instruments, etc. One of my favorite courses at W&M! Great job!

The class was very well taught; however, I feel as though it would have been beneficial for the department to set up the class differently. There is so much to learn, and many important topics are not given justice. It should be in two parts. Professor Griffioen was an excellent professor. This is a perfect class for her to teach.

Professor Griffioen is incredible! The course material is interesting, but it's difficult, especially for those who aren't proficient in music. But she uses modern examples and humor to make sense of concepts. Her class is both informative and entertaining. And Professor Griffioen is very approachable; she's accommodating and always available to help, and it's easy to form a more personal relationship with her. Excellent class, excellent professor.

Professor Griffioen's enthusiasm for the material is contagious and she really cares about the success of her students. This has been such a vital course because it has put together the history I already knew into a culturally contextually understood whole. The efficient grading and availability for help outside class were exceptional and very much appreciated.

I loved how excited she always was to teach us! It made learning the material a lot easier and interesting, and coming to class easier as well.

Professor Griffioen is an excellent teacher and is extremely enthusiastic about this class. I've recommended this class to all of my friends and many of them are taking it next semester. This was definitely my favorite class this semester!

Loved this class! Maybe a little more emphasis on 20th-century music?

Definitely one of my best classes since coming to W&M. It will impact me for the rest of my life as it has given me an appreciation for classical music.

Music 213, History of Western Music (Fall 2007)

Professor Griffioen is great. The course was organized flawlessly. We covered the material presented thoroughly and at a great pace for us to grasp it. Her enthusiasm for the subject made learning a lot easier. She had a very innovative teaching style having lots of class participation which again made learning easier. I absolutely loved the class and would love to take another one with her.

Professor Griffioen has such incredible passion about the subject and the music within it, one cannot help but get some of that passion too. She is very knowledgeable in the field, but more importantly, she knows how to elucidate the material in a way that easily relates it to people our age.

Great professor. Her enthusiasm was contagious. My only problem was that the course tried to cover too much in a limited time frame. Wish we could have gone more in depth.

Music 365, Music in Jamestowne 1607 (Spring 2007)

I completely changed my class schedule over winter break, dropping two classes, to register for this course and have not regretted it. Ruth is an extremely enthusiastic professor and can make even a three-hour Friday afternoon class exciting and interesting. It's a rare class that I consistently look forward to attending. I thought it was well-organized and assignments easy to understand which was a plus. The field trips were amazing and I really appreciated the effort that went into organizing all the guest presentations.

Fantastic course! Definitely teach this again (even though it won't be the 400th anniversary). The field trips and guest speakers really added a lot.

I really enjoyed this class. All the field trips were really interesting and I learned so much about history and music. I now have a new appreciation for 17th-century music and actually enjoy listening to it, now that I understand its significance. Thanks so much! It was a great experience!!!

It was good to bring in specialists of other fields. It was great to be able to touch rare manuscripts and play the Wren organ. Her teaching approach was unorthodox but interesting.

MUS 101, Introduction to Tonal Theory (Fall 2006)

"Professor Griffioen is an amazing professor. I took piano for 6 years and I still managed to learn a great deal that I didn't know. Thanks for a great semester."

"Professor Griffioen made what would have been a very mundane and simplistic course interesting and as enjoyable as an 8:30am class can be. Her historical references to the evolution of music served to both intrigue me and give me a firmer grasp on the trends of music theory. She clearly worked very hard to make the material as clear as possible and was always available for help."

"Professor Griffioen makes Music 101 both very informative and enjoyable. She is always interested in helping students do their best and has creative ideas to help them learn. I look forward to taking more of her classes. Also, the course seems to cover the right amount of material, move at a good pace, and effectively prepare students (and encourage them!) to move on to Music 201."

"I thought that the daily quizzes were an excellent way to make sure that we attended class. I missed class one time when we weren't having one, and on the next class' quiz I didn't do so well. I have been to every class since, and her wonderful teaching has been invaluable in helping me understand the material (especially when it became increasingly challenging toward the end of the semester!). She comes with my highest recommendation!"

MUS 150W, J.S. Bach (Fall 1996)

"This course is fantastic! It was my favorite class, despite the 8 AM time slot, because I learned so much and had fun doing it too. Dr. Griffioen is a wonderful professor---friendly, accessible, and knowledgeable."

"This was my favorite course of the semester. I learned a great deal about Bach and his music and was interested in the course material. Professor Griffioen is always available for help and shows her concern for her students."

MUS 383, Baroque & Classical Music (Fall 1996)

"Ruth Griffioen is one of the best professors I've had here at William and Mary. I hope to be able to take another class with her next year. The worksheets on the listening made a big difference this semester---I think I will be able to remember much of what we covered even in the years to come. Thanks! Ruth Griffioen's enthusiasm and love for her subject have fostered my appreciation of various types of music immensely."

"Prof. Griffioen is a tremendous teacher. She brings excitement and happiness into the classroom and her pure enjoyment of music rubs off on all her students. Thank you, professor, for opening my eyes to this music!"

"I felt like the worksheets, although a pain in the ass, taught me more than any textbook could. I also thought videos showing modern renditions of music which seems ice ages old was helpful, esp. "Don Giovanni in the ghetto. Professor Griffioen is fabulous! I truly enjoyed every day & I felt like her love of the subject matter rubbed off on everyone. Assignments were fairly graded & she was ALWAYS ready to help."

"Professor Griffioen is an exciting teacher and genuinely concerned for her students."

"Professor Griffioen is incredible. Her enthusiasm, energy, & unbelievable command of the material make her second to none in this department."

"What can I say? She's a wonderful, brilliant, charismatic professor!!"

MUS 213, History of Western Music (Spring 1996)

"Mrs. Griffioen is an excellent teacher with a strong command of her music. Her love of music as well as her joy of teaching has shown through the entire semester. Her voice (singing) and piano playing had helped me numerous times throughout this semester understand certain pieces. As a second semester senior I took this course for pure enjoyment---and it was. I have quickly developed a love of classical music. P.S. I love that she plays the music LOUD."

"Both the class & the professor are fantastic; this has been my favorite class so far at W&M."

"Wonderful professor with a fantastic enthusiasm for music which she passes on to her students. She makes the information accessible to musicians and non-musicians alike."

"I was impressed with the way Prof. Griffioen was able to tie so many works together---she is respectful toward students & has a great sense of humor."

MUS 381, Medieval & Renaissance Music (Spring 1996)

"I was challenged so much in this course by the wealth of information presented (almost 10 centuries), and learned so many wonderful things. It was exhilarating to study a piece in depth and suddenly have it come into focus and make sense. Prof. Griffioen's excitement and love of the subject came across in every piece and musical genre we studied. I can't wait to take the Baroque music class in the fall."

"Prof. Griffioen rocks our world! This class was wonderful & Prof. Griffioen has demonstrated an exceptional knowledge & command of the material---her enthusiasm & passion are contagious! At times, it seemed she had a little too much to say, which made some of the lectures less cohesive---erring on the side of having too much knowledge, however, isn't such a bad thing."

"Professor Griffioen did an excellent job in this class: her love for the subject matter really shone through. Her expectations were challenging and the tests bordered on impossible."

Professor Griffioen was extremely knowledgeable about the course material, even making discoveries of her own throughout the course. She also has shown a true appreciation for the material and never displayed disinterest [sic] in the subject. In addition, she was always available to answer questions, during and after class. By far, she is the finest professor I have had in this department."

"Keep her, please! She is one of my & lots of other students' favorite professors!"

"This is a difficult course with a demanding workload, but the professor makes it seem worthwhile and is able to generate enthusiasm."

MUS 150W, J.S. Bach (Fall 1995)

"Professor Griffioen is the best professor I've ever had. Not only does she have an amazing command of the subject material, but she also has an infectious enthusiasm which makes us students want to learn and put forth even extra effort outside of class."

"The professor was amazing. Her enthusiasm for the material made the course interesting & exciting. She presented it well & made me feel my comments in class were appreciated & helpful to discussion. I would recommend this course to anyone interested in music, not just Bach."

MUS 391, Senior Thesis (Spring 1995)

"The professor was very helpful, particularly in research techniques and motivation. The only weaknesses are that she stretched me a bit thin and led me in directions I didn't necessarily want to go. As a result, I couldn't cover what I initially wanted to cover in as much depth as I wanted to. But overall, she was an invaluable resource as an advisor (and friend), and the course was an immensely rewarding experience."

MUS 113, History of Western Music (Spring 1995)

"I've gotten so much out of this course, both in terms of knowledge and enjoyment, and I think that Prof. Griffioen did a wonderful job teaching it. She is simply an excellent teacher who enjoys teaching and conveying her enjoyment to her students. I look forward to taking more courses by Prof. Griffioen."

"Energetic and charismatic; one of a few professors at this school who truly bring their feelings about what they are teaching to the classroom. THANK YOU: she made me consider being a music major and I can't say thank you enough."

"I was doing poorly in this course and she spent a good deal of time helping me with the material. One of my most caring teachers to date."

"Professor Griffioen brings great energy, knowledge, and a love for music to this course"

...Professor Griffioen is a marvelous teacher with a very engaging style; she is never boring, even when the subject material is. Give her a raise! Give her tenure!"

"Professor Griffioen really draws on elements of art, culture, and personality to illustrate and convey the course material, which I find to be a very effective way of teaching. Sometimes it seems as though the class turns into a multi-media presentation! Prof. Griffioen teaches with a very exuberant style, and I am impressed by the passion and scrutiny she brings to this class."

"Unlike many other female teachers I've had in the past 4 yrs, Prof. Griffioen is mature enough not to focus on the feminist movement within her area of expertise...too many Area I teachers tend to push their own beliefs on us, so I appreciate it when a professor goes out of their way to teach us what to look for and not just how they think we should be interpreting it...She encouraged me to learn/hear more about her subject matter, which is the highest compliment I can pay a professor."

"This is the course I have been waiting to take for 4 years at W&M and Professor Griffioen is the professor I've been waiting to have...I am recommending her and this class to everyone."

MUS 150W, J.S. Bach (Spring 1995)

"Professor Griffioen's enthusiasm for Bach is contagious and the class was never boring and always worthwhile."

"I found this course very rewarding & altogether challenging. I would recommend it to anyone and I am sure I will remember taking the course for years to come. Professor Griffioen is a friend and I have the utmost esteem for her. She makes the course material inviting and I was consequently very enthusiastic about the class."

MUS 113, Western Art Music (Fall 1994)

"The strength of this course lies in the professor. The professor is interesting, approachable, easy to understand and explains concepts very well. Lectures are great fun to attend...I like classical music now and have actually bought CDs of

it. This is a class I've recommended to all my friends and I've even convinced a punk-metal fan to sign up."

"Prof. Griffioen is a creative, thoughtful professor. She always finds new ways to present us the music. I thoroughly enjoyed this class."

MUS 113, Western Art Music (Spring 1994)

"This is definitely one of the best courses I've taken at this school. Not only have I learned basic music concepts and techniques, I've also learned how to appreciate a wider variety of music. The material was presented in an easy-to-understand manner through in-class discussions and also visual demonstrations. Professor Griffioen was incredible and I hope she continues teaching this course."

"Displayed much enthusiasm for music and a full understanding of its historical context. Cared more about her subject than any other professor I had this semester."

"My favorite class this semester, and second in my years here only to American Vernacular Music. Keep her! William & Mary needs more professors not so involved with their own knowledge, but with the teaching itself. Prof. Griffioen can teach."

"Outstanding strengths---it was a surprise to find that she was new because she has such a good grasp of music and that shows in her teaching. Her class is a delight. She makes it so interesting for all of us that it is really worth waking up early for."

"I've never had a professor show so much enthusiasm for the material in a course or concern for really getting the students to understand it."

MUS E17, Early Music Ensemble - Instrumental

EME this semester was not just an ensemble credit---it took over my life (in a good way). While I've never felt so challenged in terms of repertoire, rehearsals, or closely-scheduled performances, the semester has been equally rewarding. Ruth's positive, upbeat attitude (and often funny emails) were a constant source

of encouragement and inspiration. (S07)

Ruth v. B. Griffioen continues to be one of the best teachers I have ever had. Her understanding of, excitement about, and commitment to her job and to music in general is quite remarkable. She makes it so enjoyable to be a music student at the College, and should be considered one of the department's greatest assets. (S07)

Early Music Ensemble has become such a significant component to my college experience. Each successive semester, I've been introduced to new, fascinating concepts of medieval/baroque music, been provided with exciting performance opportunities, and not least, integrated into a fun community of musicians with similar interests. Ruth puts so much effort into this ensemble and her never-failing enthusiasm is what holds everything together. (S07)

Ruth's enthusiasm for the Early Music Ensemble makes even 9AM rehearsals an enjoyable experience. I appreciated her patience as I continued to learn a relatively new instrument. While I initially chose to join the EME for my major ensemble requirement, it's been exceptionally rewarding. I've loved having the opportunity to perform on historical instruments, all while learning the context of the music played. Our "1607" theme this semester was especially appropriate (S07)

"I loved how every rehearsal turned into a mini history lesson. Knowing about the pieces we played in Early Music Ensemble helped us to perform them better. Ruth really demonstrates her enthusiasm for early music. I appreciated the effort she took to remember to give me extra pieces to work on, as well as her encouragement as I learned a new instrument."

" I can't imagine life without EME!!"

"Professor Griffioen is hands-down my favorite professor at the College. She loves her work, loves what she does, and especially enjoys working with young people. Her interest, excitement, and commitment to music is truly inspiring. There are few professors I have seen who work like she does, someone who goes above and beyond the call of duty on a daily basis, and all the while do it with a smile and a daily renewed zeal for her work. I would recommend Prof. Griffioen to anyone interested in getting involved with Music at William & Mary."

(Most of my evaluations from 1997 and S98 are missing as an after effect of a house renovation)

"Excellent command of subject matter. Went "above & beyond the call of duty" in helping students prepare for performances." (F96)

"Prof. Griffioen is a lot of fun to work with and is amazingly knowledgeable about Early Music. She's also very proficient on all the instruments. She's great!" (S96)

"The ensemble gives students a chance to perform & learn about music that is not often performed in other groups. Concert programs are always well chosen, and include the highest quality of music so performers and audience alike get a taste of the best early music has to offer. Prof. Griffioen gives an enormous amount of time & effort to the ensemble, and her enthusiasm inspires us all." (S96)

"I love this course---I'm going to take it all four years!" (S96)

"Ruth Griffioen has been an absolutely wonderful professor to work with. She is constructive, gives credit & praise when due and fosters team spirit in the group. I cannot say enough in praise of her." (S96)

"Another fantastic semester!" (S96)

"She remains focused until the job is done and encourages us to practice to perfection. She is extremely dedicated & knowledgeable in the field and this enthusiasm emanates in the classroom. I felt motivated to do well." (F95)

"Prof. Griffioen is highly dedicated to the success of this ensemble. She shows incredible command of Med & Ren music. She is highly effective in rehearsal and shows a lot of respect for the students she works with. She is by far the most effective and pleasant conductor I've ever worked with (I have been under many many conductors for the past thirteen years.) The only weakness I see is our lack of funding..." (F95)

"The Early Music Ensemble is not just a performance ensemble---it is a learning experience which I am very sorry I didn't have the opportunity to draw on earlier. Please keep it around & support it, and support Prof. Griffioen in her efforts to teach & manage this ensemble." (S95)

"The performance of Early Music requires academic preparation in addition to musical preparation. Prof. Griffioen and the other musicians who assist with the group are particularly good at incorporating the academic aspects of the music into rehearsals. I have learned more about music as a whole while in this course than I have in any other ensemble or course. This ensemble provided me with a great deal of room for expansion. I plan to continue in this ensemble until I graduate." (S95)

"I count the Early Music Ensemble as the highlight of my freshman year here at William and Mary, and this group is one of the main reasons I have loved making music here so much. I am eagerly looking forward to the fall. Thanks you!!" (S95)

"Ruth Griffioen is a wonderful professor. I am always amazed at how knowledgeable she is, and yet how unpretentious she is. I'm learning so much from her." (F94)

"Prof. Griffioen is invaluable---this has been the best course I've taken this semester!" (F94)

Mus W15/25/35/45 (Recorder Lessons)

"This is by far my favorite course at the college. I learned so much from Professor Griffioen. I wish I had realized it was offered my 2 years here. But I plan on taking Recorder for my last 3 semesters."

"Patience is a great quality she has."

"Another *wonderful* semester studying with Ruth. Not only is she an excellent recorder teacher, but each lesson involves a history lesson to go with the music we are playing! One of my favorite courses at the College."

"Course is great. Prof. Griffioen has a good, well-organized idea of what the progression through the recorder repertoire should be. Plenty of on-hand music to choose from for juries, etc."