Course Overview

Jazz music has been and continues to be a significant and complicated force in both American and global culture. This semester, we will be studying this music in its various temporal, geographic, social, economic, and political contexts to examine the ways in which music and culture interact with and co-create each other. In addition to important factual knowledge about jazz history, this course will help you build critical listening skills, and offer vocabulary and techniques to communicate about aural experience in depth both orally and in writing. If, as the old saying goes, “writing about music is like dancing about architecture,” this course assumes that, with sufficient training and practice, anyone can moonwalk the Eiffel Tower.

In addition to a substantial collection of recordings, we will spend a lot of time working with primary source materials and film to see the wide range of reactions people have had, and continue to have, to jazz. As such, this course also asks you to engage in critical discourse analysis as we ponder how various agents have constructed jazz history and what kinds of cultural work these narratives perform.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- identify significant jazz artists, recordings, and styles
- describe the social and sonic changes in jazz music over time
- analyze musical sound in detail, applying specific musical terminology within a “timeline” format
- critically evaluate other writers’ appraisals of jazz musicians and jazz recordings and their explications of jazz history
- contextualize individual musicians and compositions within broader musical and social histories
- construct original arguments about sound recordings and live performances that integrate observations about history, politics, identity, and musical sound.
See course description for an up-to-date list of materials.

**Grades**

**Grading System**

Your grade will be the weighted average of your scores on the assignments listed in this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening Journals</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concert Report</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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**Grading Scale**

I will grade all your assignments on a 100-point numerical scale and convert your final grade to a letter grade on the following -/+ scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90–92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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**Course Structure**

This course will consist of a weekly listening and reading assignment as well as online lesson notes and a discussion forum. You may notice that the lesson notes are often quite different from each other. In some lessons, the notes will cover an entire historical time period or musical scene in rather broad brushstrokes. Other times, we will focus exclusively on a single piece, or even part of a piece, for an entire lesson. This is on purpose, and it’s designed to help show you the multiple angles from which one can tackle understanding jazz music and its history and culture. At the same time—and I can’t stress this enough—while the lectures are often not “comprehensive” of everything in the assigned reading, you are still responsible for all the assigned reading and listening. I expect you to integrate the concepts, histories, and musical knowledge/skills the textbook offers to help you develop. My exams and other grading expectations will work from the premise that you’ve been
actively engaged with doing the reading and listening, and that I can thus test you on information readily available in those sources that we did not, for one reason or another, cover in the prepared lesson notes.

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**Assignments**

**Discussion Forum**

In each lesson you will find a question or questions aimed at generating discussion among you and your classmates. You are responsible for making at least two contributions to the discussion for each lesson: one post that fully addresses the discussion questions and one response that responds directly to a classmate’s post. I expect you to read through the existing posts before submitting yours and make sure your post offers something new.

In the discussion forums, you will find a topic entitled “Weekly Discussions,” that contains a separate thread for each lesson’s discussion. Please add your posts by replying to the appropriate thread, and your responses by replying to your classmate’s message. Your contribution to each lesson will be awarded between 0 and 5 points based on thoughtfulness, originality, and substance (simply stating that you agree with someone will not earn you much credit). Be sure to write in complete sentences and follow the standard rules of grammar and punctuation (no textspeak). Your forum participation constitutes 15 percent of your final grade, so make sure you give your submissions careful consideration. Contributions must be submitted by the deadlines posted on the course schedule. Late submissions will not receive credit.

There is also a “General Discussion” topic, which is a place for any discussion beyond the lesson prompts. I will try to post concert opportunities and other information here; please feel free to create a new thread for anything you think is germane to the class!

**Listening Journal**

Most of your other graded assignments will involve giving substantial descriptions of musical sound. To practice this throughout the semester, you will write four listening journals, which are one- to two-page reactions to a piece of music you will choose from our assigned listening. As the semester progresses, I will expect you to continue applying new terms and concepts as you encounter them.

**Concert Report**

We will be attending a live performance by the Wayne Shorter Quartet together this semester. In addition to writing about the musical sounds that you hear, you should describe the appearance and behavior of the performers, as well as the setting of the performance, including observations about the audience. Apply the same questions that we ask of our recorded examples, and try to write in sufficient detail (including specific vocabulary) so that your reader (me) can really get the sense of being there. This paper should be 800 to 1,000 words. If you have circumstances that prevent you from attending the concert in person, contact me to discuss an alternative assignment.

**Final Paper**
For your final project, I’m asking you to compose an original research paper—2,000 to 3,000 words in length—that either builds on our course material or covers a jazz topic we missed this semester. You will build this paper in stages as I ask you for an initial topic proposal, an outline, a rough draft, and a final draft. Each student will have the opportunity to meet individually with me to discuss the rough draft. If you want, we can meet multiple times, and I will read multiple drafts; if you’re willing to put in the work to produce an excellent paper, I will be available to give you the help you need.

**Midterm Exam**

This exam will focus on the analytical and descriptive skills for discussing sound that we will develop this semester, and will follow the format of a “take home” exam. You will have a full week to complete it, though you may not consult outside materials with the exception of the recordings I will provide and any glossaries, models, or other class resources whose use I authorize.

**Final Exam**

This will be a standard, timed exam, closed book and closed notes, which you will have 2.5 hours to complete. It will be broader in scope than the midterm and will test your ability to apply course material pertaining to both jazz analysis and jazz history.

**Assignment Policies**

Upload all written work to the appropriate assignment within the Assignments section by 11:55 pm on the listed due date. This is a hard deadline, so please don’t wait until the last minute or you risk subjecting yourself to the fickle whims of technology.

**Late Work Policy**

Unless an extension is granted in advance or you provide a compelling excuse (medical/family emergencies, and so on) with documentation, the following penalties will be assessed on late work.

- Assignments up to twenty-four hours late will be penalized one full letter grade.
- Assignments between twenty-four and forty-eight hours late will be penalized two full letter grades.
- Assignments between forty-eight and seventy-two hours late will receive a grade no higher than 50 (100-point scale).
- No written work will be accepted more than seventy-two hours late.
- No credit will be given for late forum posts.

**Academic Policies**

**Honor Code**

All students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity, and so am I as your instructor. As such, plagiarism or the receiving of unauthorized assistance will absolutely not be tolerated. In this course, we will follow UNC’s Honor Code, and any violations thereof may result in disciplinary action via the Honor Court. Please familiarize yourself with the UNC Honor Code’s
definitions of various violations and its policies and procedures in The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance.

**Technology Policy**

By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette, and privacy protection.

As part of this course, you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC-Chapel Hill Information Security Policies when participating in online classes.

When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill, such as Google or YouTube, please note that the terms and conditions of these companies and not the University’s terms and conditions apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC-Chapel Hill.

When links to sites outside of the unc.edu domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

**Accommodations for Disabilities and Learning Differences**

I am happy to make reasonable accommodations for disabilities and learning differences. Requests for accommodations should follow the guidelines and procedures of UNC’s Accessibility Resources and Service.

The earlier I am informed of a student’s need for an accommodation, the more options we have, so please be proactive about this.

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**Course Outline**

- Lesson 1: What is “Jazz”?
- Lesson 2: Improvisation and Form: Constructing a Timeline
- Lesson 3: New Orleans and the Roots of Jazz
- Lesson 4: Jazz in the 1920s: New York’s “Jungle Music” and Chicago’s “Hot Style”
- Lesson 5: Listening to Great Soloists: Louis Armstrong’s “West End Blues”
- Lesson 6: What to Listen for in a Live Concert
- Attend Live Jazz Concert In-person
- Lesson 7: Big Bands and Hot Soloists
- Lesson 8: The Birth of Bebop: Disruption and Forward Motion
- Lesson 10: Miles Davis: From Cool to Fusion
Lesson 11: Third Stream, Free Jazz, and the Avant Garde
Lesson 12: In-person Lesson

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Send comments and questions to fridaycenter@unc.edu.