



VOCAL JAZZ STYLES

GRADUATE IMPROVISATION (VOCAL)

SYLLABUS - FALL 2026

MUJS 4120/MUJS 5130/MUJS 5490

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Office: MU339 (Office hours by appointment)

CLASS TIMES

Tuesdays and Thursdays (Fridays – Graduate Improvisation Section Only)

11:15 a.m. – 12:05 p.m.

CLASS LOCATION

Music Building - Room 292

COURSE PREREQUISITES

MUJS 3120 (two credit hours), and completion of MUJS 2370 with a grade of C or better. Corequisite: MULB 1820. Recommended: completion of Upper Division Exam.

COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES

Catalog description: “4120. Vocal Jazz Styles. 2 hours. (1;1) Advanced vocal and recording techniques for the jazz studies major with a vocal concentration. Performing and recording with instrumental groups.

Prerequisite(s): MUJS 3120 (two credit hours), completion of MUJS 2370 with C or better. Recommended: completion of Upper Division Exam. Corequisite(s): Concurrent enrollment in MULB 1820, Jazz Singers, required. May be repeated for credit, contingent on a minimum grade of B.”

Vocal Jazz Styles is the final classroom curriculum course for vocalists in the UNT Division of Jazz Studies. The intent of this course is to fuse the many facets of professional jazz vocal performance practice. There will be heavy emphasis on vocal improvisation skills at high levels, with the goal of transcending an academic approach to achieve the artistic.

Graduate students who are enrolled for Graduate Improvisation will follow the same syllabus and curriculum for the class, but will use more advanced song selections for the various assignments, and often with different parameters commensurate with a graduate level of study. Graduate students will also meet one additional 50-minute lab period during the same time on Fridays to further explore and reinforce the more advanced topics of the class.

General Learning Objectives for the course are:

- Increase improvisational skills both syllabically and using lyrics competently in a variety of settings.
- Develop methods for effective improvisation practice over linear harmonic movements both theoretically and aurally.
- Survey a wide variety of jazz vocal artists.

- Increase confidence and prowess with regard to musical programming, performance logistics, and staging aesthetics in any setting.

Specific learning objectives for the course will be divided among five units of study:

UNIT 1 - Foundational Concepts – Hearing, Listening, Language, and Communication

Students will examine, discuss, and demonstrate understanding of various fundamental concepts. Students will demonstrate vocal elemental interest devices at current levels of improvisatory skill. Students will apply fundamental concepts over standard blues changes.

UNIT 2 – Rhythmic Concepts

Students will explore various rhythmic considerations and apply them in multiple settings. Students will demonstrate understanding of rhythmic concepts as they apply vocally to harmonic motion.

UNIT 3 – Linear Harmonic Movements

Students will explore and apply methods to identify various standard harmonic progressions. Students will explore and apply methods to identify common resolutions and transitory material. Students will demonstrate methods to create interest with contour and shape concepts. Students will explore and demonstrate vocal improvisatory skills over “rhythm changes.” Students will analyze and demonstrate motivic solo concepts.

UNIT 4 – Stylistic Applications

Students will explore and demonstrate vocal improvisatory skills in a variety of stylistic settings including Brazilian jazz, modal, odd meter, and fast tempo settings.

UNIT 5 – Performance Logistics

Students will demonstrate understanding and apply vocal-centric concert programming. Students will examine and apply logistical considerations for effective performances. Students will demonstrate understanding with staging aesthetics for solo, chamber, big band, and pop orchestral settings.

Interspersed among these units will be related and/or supporting skills or concepts such as:

- Keyboard skills and applications
- Review of seminal and current vocal artists with representative material
- Philosophical parallel concepts
- Transcription applications

COURSE MATERIALS

1. You must have note taking materials, including a **manuscript paper notebook** of some kind.
2. All topics and concepts will be presented via exercises, assigned readings, class lectures, and group exercises throughout the course. These concepts will be presented without the use of a primary text.
4. There are **many** books or methods available, at varying costs, focused on ear training, aural skill development, jazz theory, and improvisation. These texts are recommended, but not required for you to purchase. Below is a partial list and there are many others which may be helpful to supplement your growth and acquisition of greater listening and vocal improvisational skills.

- *A New Approach to Ear Training for Jazz Musicians* by David Baker

- *Training the Ear* by Armen Donelian
- *Relative Pitch Ear Training Super Course* by David Burge
- *Jazz Ear Training* by Steve Masakowski
- *Jazz Theory Resources, Vols. 1& 2* by Bert Ligon
- *Ear Training for Jazz, Rock, and Pop Musicians* by Tom van der Geld
- *Jazz Ears* by Thom Mason
- *Beginning Ear Training* by Gilson Schachnik
- *How to Improvise* by Hal Crook
- *Jazz Handbook* by Jamey Aebersold
- *Jazz Theory* by Dariusz Terefenko
- *Arranging and Composing* by David Baker
- *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* by George Russell
- *Inside the Score* by Rayburn Wright
- *The New Guide to Harmony with Lego Bricks* by Conrad Cork
- *Insights in Jazz* by John A. Elliott

3. Supplementary handouts, readings, or recordings may be utilized and will be made available via Canvas in the module, “Additional Materials.”

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- Be ready for class to begin promptly at 11:15 a.m. on class days. This means in your seat, vocally warmed-up, with manuscript notebook, pencil, etc. ready to go.
- Be musically and materially prepared for class. All readings, exercises, assignments, or homework assigned for that day are to be done prior to the class.
- This course will be a minimal technology use environment. **Cell phone use is not permitted during class**, and phones should be put away, silenced and/or turned completely off. Tablets/iPads may be permitted for use during class with instructor approval, but for course content only (i.e. music reading or note-taking). Text or email (and other apps) must be disabled for tablet/iPad usage. If you disrupt the instructional cycle in class with cell phone (or other technology) use, you will be called upon to adhere to the policy, and repeated infractions will result in direction for you to leave the classroom. See section on Student Behavior below.
- Course information will be disseminated in class, Canvas announcements, or Canvas course postings. Check often for updates and new information.
- I pledge to treat you with fairness, firmness, dignity, and respect.
- I expect you to participate in class by being attentive, asking questions, volunteering to try things in class, and supporting others by giving positive and constructive feedback when they sing.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

- Attendance is required for all class activities and is factored into your grade (see Grading Criteria below).
- You will be granted only two unexcused absences during the semester.
- Any unexcused absences beyond two will affect your grade to a degree decided by the instructor and communicated clearly to you, up to 41%.
- Absences may be excused on a case-by-case basis with **advance notice**. **In the case of an excused absence**, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes or assignments.

- Absences that do not fall under Pregnancy and Parenting, Military Service, Religious Holy Days, and Official University Functions, as defined by the official University policy (see link below) are deemed a matter between the student and their faculty member. If the absence is an illness or extenuating circumstance that exceeds five (5) consecutive days, the faculty member may request for the student to provide documentation through the Dean of Students' office.
- If you miss class without prior notice it will be considered an unexcused absence until you communicate with the instructor. It is your responsibility to inform the instructor as soon as possible after an unexpected absence.
- It is important that you **communicate** with the instructor prior to any expected absence, so you can mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals.
- Concerning other extenuating circumstances, per official University policy, the decision to excuse any absence remains with the faculty member.

GRADING CRITERIA

The final grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

- Class attendance, participation, and preparation - 20%
- Assignments - 60%
- Final Performance - 20%

There is no final exam for this course. A final performance will be in lieu of a final exam.

The final grade is weighted according to the above categories and graded on the following scale: A (90-100%), B (80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%), F (0-59%).

The following factors will affect your grade in various measures:

- Professional, respectful, and collegial attitude at all times.
- Quality and consistency of preparation for assignments. All printed work must be formatted according to the assignment parameters.
- Timely submission of all assignments. Late work will not be accepted.
- Preparation and participation for every class.
- This is primarily a performance-based class and as such you are expected to do any preparatory exercises before each respectively scheduled class. You are also expected to participate in all group activities and may be called upon for individual performance on any given exercise or demonstration.
- This is also a lecture and discussion-based class. Every student may be called on for individual class discussion or questions.
- Chronic unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade. This circumstance may require a meeting with the student, the instructor, and/or the Head of the Jazz Division. This meeting will determine any subsequent actions to be taken.
- Extra Credit: There are no extra credit options.

ASSIGNMENTS

You will complete several assignments in a variety of formats. These will be detailed in class and on the respective weekly assignment page in Canvas. In general, there will be at least one assignment per unit, but sometimes more depending on the unit content.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

The table below is the general course schedule. Acquisition of material and class flow will be taken into consideration. Class time is relatively short in relation to all of the information related to the course and the schedule may need to be adjusted to achieve class learning objectives.

Therefore, the **course schedule is highly subject to change** as necessary to meet the collective needs of the class based on actual progress and comprehension. The goal for the course is to foster an engaging environment where you can be inspired to build and apply your aural skills organically with initiative, energy, and confidence.

There may be a substantial amount of outside practice necessary in this course. Students are encouraged to manage time and other responsibilities accordingly.

In the event of any changes with schedule or materials, you will be informed in class and receive notice via Canvas announcement of any necessary adjustments. If any class schedule change precludes the inclusion of certain information for a quiz or assignment, the task will be altered accordingly.

Students should NOT schedule an end-of-semester jury during one of our regularly scheduled class times.

NOTE for Graduate Students: You will follow the course schedule below; however, the Friday lab sessions will have related and supplemental (but separate) agendas and material which will not be listed on the schedule below. These parameters will be discussed in our first meeting.

In the table below the left column is a general list of daily activities or topical discussions. The right column contains assignments, readings, or homework **due on that specific class day**. ALL of the course assignments are NOT listed in this course schedule. The modules in Canvas will contain all of the assignments for which you are responsible and we will discuss these in class.

GENERAL CLASS SCHEDULE – FALL 2026

Weekly Schedule	ASSIGNMENTS
<u>Week 1</u> Tuesday 18 AUG - PRELUDE Course introduction, syllabus review, explanation of policies, assignments, expectations, philosophy and purpose	
Thursday 20 AUG – UNIT 1 - Hearing vs Listening, Language, Communication - It's Elementary, My Dear!	The Blues
<u>Week 2</u> Tuesday 25 AUG - Clues, Blues, and Vocal Dues - Isolation Exercises - The MATRIX	Assignment 1 - BLUES SOLO I
Thursday 27 AUG – UNIT 2 - The Rhythm of Life - Long Walks on Short Changes	Assignment 1.1 - BLUES SOLO II
<u>Week 3</u> Tuesday 1 SEP	RHYTHM APPLICATION

• Rhythm Circle Variations • Syncopation Nation • Lyrical Miracles	
Thursday 3 SEP • Rhythm AND Blues • Standard Rhythm • Rhythmic Implications on Contour and Shape	Assignment 2 – It's About Time
<u>Week 4 – UNIT 3</u> Tuesday 8 SEP • I Walk the Line	
Thursday 10 SEP • End of the Line and Detours • KEYS to Success • Dr. Diminished's Handy Dandy Guide	
<u>Week 5</u> Tuesday 15 SEP • Applications with Standard Progressions • Triadic Embellishment	BLUES on KEYS
Thursday 17 SEP • Blues Cycle Variation with <i>Keyed</i> Elements • Spin Class	
<u>Week 6</u> Tuesday 22 SEP • Guide Tones & Melodic Soloing • Rhythm Changes • Contour and Shape Considerations	ALONE TOGETHER I REMEMBER YOU Singing Roots
Thursday 24 SEP • Motivic Development	SINGING GUIDE TONE LINES
<u>Week 7</u> Tuesday 29 SEP • More Motivic Development	
Thursday 1 OCT – NO CLASS • Remote Assignment	Assignment 3- MOTIVIC DEVELOPMENT
<u>Week 8</u> Tuesday 6 OCT • <i>Interlude: LEGO-LAND</i>	
Thursday 8 OCT • Singers Choice	
<u>Week 9 – UNIT 4</u> Tuesday 13 OCT • What's Your Style? • Brazilian/Latin	CORCOVADO
Thursday 15 OCT • Brazilian/Latin	SPAIN
<u>Week 10</u> Tuesday 20 OCT • Modal Considerations	MAIDEN VOYAGE
Thursday 22 OCT • Miles and Miles of Horizon	SO WHAT
<u>Week 11</u> Tuesday 27 OCT • Odd- Meter Considerations • You Can Count On Me	TIME FOR A CHANGE TAKE FIVE
Thursday 29 OCT	

Up-Tempo Considerations	
Week 12 Tuesday 3 NOV BURNIN'!!!	Assignment 4 – Your BURNIN' TUNE
Thursday 5 NOV	<i>HOT HOUSE</i> (RHYTHM CHANGES)
Week 13 – UNIT 5 Tuesday 10 NOV - Programming - Things Aren't Always What They Theme	
Thursday 12 NOV - Anatomy of a Band - Tunes & Keys	Assignment 5 – Final Performance Program
Week 14 Tuesday 17 NOV Final Performances	TUNES & KEYS List
Thursday 19 NOV Final Performances	
Week 15 Tuesday 24 NOV – THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS Holiday Routine!	
Thursday 26 NOV – THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS Holiday Routine!	
Week 16 Tuesday 1 DEC Final Performances	
Thursday 3 DEC - LAST CLASS! Holiday party! Postlude: Conclusions and Consequences	Postlude Assignment

UNT OFFICIAL POLICIES/STATEMENTS:

ODA STATEMENT

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter. You can now request your Letters of Accommodation ONLINE and ODA will mail your Letters of Accommodation to your instructors. You may wish to begin a private discussion with your professors regarding your specific needs in a course. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester. For additional information see the Office of Disability Access.

<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>

(940) 565-4323

UNT OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE POLICY

<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039>

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the

student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

<https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

DEFIBRILLATOR LOCATIONS IN THE COLLEGE OF MUSIC

- Music Building: Across from the west side of the Music Commons, directly across from the elevator
- Music Building: Third floor hallway, across from the staircase that comes up from the Copy Room. Next to Room 322
- Music Building: Across from the Copy Room next to Room 293
- Music Building: Voertman Lobby by the big double set of doors that lead out to the courtyard
- Music Building: Main Office (247) under the student worker's desk
- Music Annex: Next to room MA117, near the triple set of doors on the east side of the building
- Music Practice Building North: First floor on the Avenue C side
- Music Practice Building South: First floor on the Avenue C side
- Bain Hall: First floor by the restrooms
- Murchison Performing Arts Center: Located off the main lobby, beyond the grand staircase, across from the single occupancy restroom (next to the public water fountains)

REGISTRATION INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-academic-calendar.html>

SEMESTER CALENDAR, FALL 2026

<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-academic-calendar.html>

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE, FALL 2026 - See above

FINANCIAL AID AND SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Please visit the webpage and search for criteria for either undergraduates and graduates.

<http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

<http://ferpa.unt.edu/>

COUNSELING AND TESTING

<http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

<https://disparities.unt.edu/mental-health-resources>

ADD/DROP POLICY

See Academic Calendar (listed above) for additional add/drop Information.

<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-academic-calendar.html>

STUDENT RESOURCES

The University of North Texas has many resources available to students. For a complete list, go to:
<https://success.unt.edu/aa-sa-resources>

CARE TEAM

The Care Team is a collaborative interdisciplinary committee of university officials that meets regularly to provide a response to student, staff, and faculty whose behavior could be harmful to themselves or others.
<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION & PROCEDURES

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to the Jazz Division Canvas page for contingency plans for covering course materials.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

Your access point for business and academic services at UNT occurs at my.unt.edu. All official communication from the university will be delivered to your Eagle Connect account.
eagleconnect.unt.edu/

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.
<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Academic Integrity - Academic misconduct is present in an academic work wherever AI assistance has been used when unauthorized, or when authorized, has not been disclosed as required.

Expect changes - The developments around generative AI are in flux and the rules that are expressed in this syllabus may need to change on short notice. This may affect the contents of assignments, as well as their evaluation.

Generative AI Use Is Prohibited - The use of generative AI is strictly prohibited in this course.

General Writing - The use of generative AI tools is not permitted on any writing, arrangement, composition, or transcription assignments in this course. By submitting a writing assignment, you attest that you are the only and original author.
<https://guides.library.unt.edu/artificial-intelligence/AIfaculty>

COURSE SAFETY PROCEDURES

Safety during rehearsals and performances is of the highest priority. Various procedures will be discussed in class to facilitate proper actions during a campus emergency.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ANY UNT or COURSE RELATED TOPIC please visit the university web pages.

<https://www.unt.edu>