

Whether they be pianists, organists, collaborative pianists, or harpsichordists, keyboardists sometimes find themselves in situations in which improvisation skills are needed. A clearer understanding of the principles involved will give students a better chance to succeed in these situations, and will also help students better understand harmony in everything they play.

Course outline:

This course will address theoretical principles as applied to keyboard improvisation, beginning with a study of intervallic notation as found in figured bass. This will lead to a discussion of common chord progressions and cadences, and ways to embellish them. The course will be organized chronologically, beginning with figured bass and harmony, leading to classical style improvisation and cadenzas for concerti, variation, fantasia, romantic paraphrase, free improvisation in the style of various composers (pastiche), reading lead sheets, and 20th and 21st century improvisational techniques. Classes will be taught in a keyboard lab so that each participant has constant access to a keyboard instrument.

Weekly syllabus:

Week 1 and 2—Introduction

Basic concepts in improvisation

LaRue Guidelines for Style Analysis

Harmony by numbers (figured bass)

Intervallic drills

Chaconne—(Pachelbel Canon)

Skill mastered—playing continuo from figures, identify harmonies based on intervals, correct voice leading, interval identification, call and response

Week 3 and 4—Classical style

Harmonic conventions in classical sonatas

Written assignment: harmonic analysis of selected repertoire as figured bass

Melodic embellishment (as in Mozart K. 332)

Variation (Beethoven C minor variations)

Short cadenzas

Full cadenzas

Skills mastered—stylistically correct melodic embellishment of slow classical piece

Advanced—improvise cadenza based on concerto themes

Week 5 and 6—Romantic style

Harmonic expansion of romantic style

Common tone modulation—modulation by 3rds

Skills mastered--Variation in style of Schubert and Chopin (Berceuse), Hymn modulation

Week 7 and 8—Improvisation in the style of _____

Using LaRue to “reverse engineer” musical styles

Skill mastered—LaRue Stylistic analysis applied to improvisation

MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9, 10 , and 11—Reading Lead Sheets

Study of Jazz chord charts

Principles of voice leading in common progressions

Extended harmony

Skill mastered—Reading basic lead sheet

Week 12 and 13—20th and 21st Century techniques

Atonal harmony

Minimalism

Modal improvisation

Free improvisation

Skill mastered—improvisation in contemporary styles

Week 14, and 15

Free improvisation in various styles studied

Playing by ear

Skill mastered—interactive improvisation

FINAL EXAM

Class will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:50 in Room 225.

Disabilities

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (Graduates)

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per term. Students cannot exceed maximum timeframes established based on the published length of the graduate program. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may have the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. Please visit <http://financialaid.unt.edu/satisfactory-academic-progress-requirements> for more information about financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress. It may be wise for you to schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course being doing so.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of “F” in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at: <http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>.

Student Behavior in the Classroom

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 Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities 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 classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at:
www.unt.edu/csrr