



MUJS 3360 – ADVANCED JAZZ IMPROVISATION **(MUJS 5370 - GRADUATE REVIEW OF JAZZ IMPROVISATION)**

MU263 | MW 10:00 - 10:50 am

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COURSE PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

The concept of “jazz improvisation” is very broad. An individual, as a soloist, must first know a tune or a form, then have enough melodic and harmonic materials prepared so that they can recall them in a seemingly spontaneous fashion, with the right tone, stylistic idioms and expressions in order for these materials to actually sound authentic. As if all that were not enough, the improvising soloist must also negotiate group dynamics, allowing the contributions of others to change their own vocabulary and musical behavior in real time.

Any one of these elements of improvisation could fill several courses. Teaching all of them here is not practical, so instead we will attempt to hone one aspect: vocabulary. Namely, we will reinforce the idea of jazz as a set of living, breathing language. In establishing methods of acquiring a broader and more diverse vocabulary, we create a lasting method by which students can continue to develop on their own, even after this course. In achieving a broader vocabulary, students can better explore their own creativity and artistic vision, with more musical tools at their disposal.

COURSE CONTENT/MATERIALS

There is no textbook required for this course, but students should be able to seek out recordings. You should create a playlist of the following tunes/solos and begin ***actively listening*** to them NOW:

- Wynton Marsalis on *Four in One* (from Wynton Marsalis Septet, *Live at the Vanguard*)
- Cannonball Adderley on *Dizzy’s Business* (from Cannonball Adderley, *Live in New York*)
- Mulgrew Miller on *Reflections* (from Joe Lovano, *Quartets Live at the Village Vanguard*)
- Michael Brecker on *If Ever I Would Leave You* (from Don Grolnick, *Medianoche*)

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

GRADING: Your grade is determined by the following criteria.

25%: Assignments (Language Journals and Solo Singing Exercises)

25% each: Exam 1, Exam 2, Exam 3 (**retakes allowed, see below**)

The final grade is determined by the following scale:

A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%, C = 70-79%, D = 60-69%, F = below 60%.

Grades that are one point or less below a cutoff can be rounded up at the sole discretion of the instructor based on a student's overall effort, disposition, and attendance both in class and in office hours. For example, 89.1 and 89.0 *can* be rounded at the instructor's discretion, 88.9 *cannot*.

LANGUAGE JOURNALS:

Each student is expected to keep a "language journal". This should ideally be kept as one file in a notation program. It should be continuous throughout the whole semester: you should not re-order anything. The goal is to track and remember all of your favorite "bits of language" from various solos we study in class, and to witness your own growth in real time.

There are **two units** in this class. The first unit continues the content of Jazz Improvisation II, further developing skill and fluency with bebop vocabulary. The second unit then uses this vocabulary as a starting point to explore various substitutions and advanced creative applications.

Within each unit, there are **three journal assignments**:

- In the first assignment, you will simply transcribe excerpts from two different solos.
- In the second, you will break down the solos into "words/phrases" (licks), analyze them, and internalize them in twelve keys, absorbing their melodic, harmonic and rhythmic components.
- In the third, you will synthesize a new solo into a new context, using the vocabulary you have previously internalized and incorporating a variety of rhythmic and phrasing ideas.

The same pattern continues in the second unit, making for a total of **six language journal entries**.

On **exams**, you are expected to use the words/phrases from these language journal assignments in your solos, in new and creative ways. The goal is not to force you into playing a certain way, but rather to ensure that you know how to internalize language from one solo and reuse it in a novel way in a different context. Ultimately, the language journals are about teaching you a **skill** that you can use for the rest of your performing career, not necessarily about making you learn a specific set of tunes, patterns, etc.

You are free to handwrite assignments for your own benefit, but all submissions must be **computer notated** and in **concert key (treble or bass clef)**. Neatness and presentation are a part of your grade.

All journal assignments are submitted through **Canvas** by **10 am on Mondays** of the weeks in which they are due. This is a **firm deadline: no late work is accepted for any reason** except an excused absence. If you email the instructor to ask about submitting a late assignment, you will simply be referred to the policy here in the syllabus. Allow yourself enough upload time to account for "Murphy's Law" (anything that can go wrong *will* go wrong). Illegibility, unclear images or recordings will not be graded. Do not email assignments to the instructor, only use the Canvas platform.

The instructor will provide individual feedback through the Canvas platform and advise if extra work is needed in office hours. Please be sure to check Canvas for comments and feedback on your submissions.

SOLO SINGING EXERCISES:

In the language journal assignments, we spend a long period of time on a small amount of material (just two solo excerpts in each unit). We go into tremendous depth, breaking down concepts, devices, and vocabulary. It is akin to learning a second language: breaking down the grammar and learning to piece words together in a very focused way according to set of rules. While this is a valuable method of learning improvisation, it can be equally valuable to just learn a high volume of material with much less depth - this is what some would call “learning by osmosis.”

For this reason, you are also expected to submit examples of yourself singing along to great solos. You should **NOT** transcribe these solos, and your singing does not have to be pitch-perfect. But it must be clear that you know the solo inside-and-out, that you are aware of the phrasing, articulations, and other unique elements of each solo. This exercise is designed to help you (or force you, if need be) to keep listening to the great recordings of this music, and to absorb the general “sound” of the jazz language. It is similar to how you learned your first language: you probably did not study grammar, but rather you just picked up general phonetics, rhythmic flow, idiomatic expressions, etc.

EXAMS:

The three exams will be highly specific musical tasks related to the concepts and language discussed in each unit. It is important to note that the exams measure your internalization of the concepts discussed **in each unit**, not your overall improvisational skill or “vibe,” nor your improvisational vocabulary acquired prior to this course. This course is meant to be **objective**, not subjective.

To clarify, **being a great player is not enough to pass an exam**. You have to demonstrate a clear internalization of the language and ideas learned **in each unit**. **Regular practice is essential for success on these exams; you should not procrastinate or “cram”**. The instructor recommends at least twenty to thirty minutes of **daily** practice specifically for this course.

You are permitted to retake each exam **one (1) time** within a semester for a higher score. I count the higher of both scores. There will be designated “retake days” in finals week. If you do not pass an exam, it is recommended that you begin attending office hours regularly for short lessons with the instructor.

ATTENDANCE:

Please note: Attendance is not directly factored into any of these grading criteria, but each unexcused absence **after the THIRD** will lower your **final grade** by 5%, regardless of performance in any of the above criteria. This is a generous attendance policy that allows you to miss approximately 10% of class meetings with no questions asked. So, after your third absence, the policy is strictly enforced. The instructor takes attendance at promptly at 10 am and then once more around 10:05 am. You can receive a “tardy” if you attend late but before 10:05 am. Two tardy marks will equal one absence. Attending after 10:05 am results in an absence, but it would still be beneficial for you to attend given the relatively quick pace and cumulative nature of the course.

Excused absences are, of course, always permitted with reasonable cause and ample notice (when possible). **These absences do not count towards the three unexcused absences.** Please email the instructor to clear these in advance, or as soon as possible after-the-fact in case of emergency. Please provide documentation/verification.

For any missed classes, **you** are responsible for covering missed material and obtaining handouts. Extra class handouts are posted at MU272. If you feel overwhelmed in any way, or if you are dealing with something that is causing you to miss a significant amount of class, the best thing to do is speak with the instructor as soon as possible, not at the end of the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Advanced Bebop Fundamentals

Week 1: (Jan 19)

Syllabus/Foundation Concepts: Improvisation as Second Language Acquisition, Bebop as *Lingua Franca*, Studying Improvisation via Bloom's Taxonomy, Other Learning Methods, Transcription Masterclass

Week 2: Journal 1 Due (Jan 24, Jan 26)

Review of Improv II/Advanced Bebop Drills in 12 keys: Baker Book, Analysis of Transcribed Solos, Isolate Words/Phrases/Devices

Week 3: (Jan 31, Feb 2)

Learning Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices in 12 keys, Continue Bebop Drills in 12 keys

Week 4: Journal 2 Due (Feb 7, Feb 9)

Drills for Connecting Bebop Gestures/Introduction to Exam 1, Rhythmic Variation, Solo Singing, Time Feel and Phrasing Considerations

Week 5: (Feb 14, Feb 16)

Synthesizing a New Solo from Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices, Group Solo Construction, Application of Bebop Devices to a Blues/Rhythm Changes/Standards

Week 6: Solo Singing 1 Due (Feb 21, Feb 23)

Exam #1

Exam #1 Objective: Students will be able to play idiomatic bebop vocabulary with a continuous rhythmic flow through randomly projected chord changes, using all the previously discussed devices (enclosures, appropriate arpeggiations based on chord type, chromatic gestures, scales, and new vocabulary from the assigned solos for this unit).

Week 7: (Feb 28, Mar 2)

Application of Bebop Devices to a Blues/Rhythm Changes/Standards

Week 8: Journal 3 Due (Mar 7, Mar 9)

Application of Bebop Devices to a Blues/Rhythm Changes/Standards, Analysis/Feedback on Selected Journal 3 Solo Submissions

SPRING BREAK

Week 9: (Mar 21, Mar 23)

Exam #2

Exam #2 Objective: Students will be able to play idiomatic bebop vocabulary with rhythmic variation and a comfortable time feel through a blues progression and “rhythm changes” progression in any key, using all the previously discussed devices (enclosures, appropriate arpeggiations based on chord type, chromatic gestures, scales, and new vocabulary from the assigned solos for this unit).

Unit 2: Bebop-Based Substitutions and New Applications

Week 10: Journal 4 Due (Mar 28, Mar 30)

Introduction to Alternate / Substitute / “Backdoor” / Chromatic ii-V’s (ASBC for short), Analysis of Transcribed Solos, Isolate Words/Phrases/Devices

Week 11: (Apr 4, Apr 6)

Learning Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices in 12 keys, Continue ASBC Drills in 12 keys

Week 12: Journal 5 Due (Apr 11, Apr 13)

Simple Applications of ASBC ii-V’s / Common Substitutions on Blues/Rhythm Changes

Week 13: (Apr 18, Apr 20)

Identifying Substitution Points in American Songbook Tunes, Synthesizing a New Solo from Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices, Group Solo Construction

Week 14: Solo Singing 2 Due (Apr 25, Apr 27)

Exam #3

Exam #3 Objective: Students will be able to see a tonic (resolution) chord and instinctively play through various substitute ii-V’s that will move to that resolution chord. Random tonic chords will be displayed on a screen, students will be able to play idiomatic bebop vocabulary through a minor subdominant ii-V, tritone ii-V, ii-V to iii, and a set of chromatic ii-V’s, all leading to the displayed tonic resolution chord.

Week 15: (May 2, May 4)

Flex Week, Class Meetings TBD, Individual Meetings and Consultations Available

Week 16 (Finals Week): Journal 6 Due

NO FINAL EXAM AND NO CLASS MEETINGS (Submit Journal 6 through Canvas)
EXAM RETAKES OFFERED ON MONDAY OF FINALS WEEK (Schedule TBD)

The course schedule is subject to change with advance notice.

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

EMAIL AND CANVAS USE:

The instructor uses Canvas notifications to communicate with the class. Please ensure that these are enabled and are forwarded to your email client if necessary. It is expected that you use your **UNT** email address for all correspondence related to your degree. Any university-related questions emailed to the instructor from your personal email address, through Facebook or any other social media platform, or through SMS (text messaging) will not receive a response. Furthermore, you must check your **UNT** email **DAILY**. All inquiries from the instructor (or any other professor or administrator) **should be responded to within 24 hours**.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam [or specify alternative sanction, such as course failure]. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

LINK: <http://vpaa.unt.edu/dcgcover/resources/integrity>

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 classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

LINK: Student Code of Conduct - <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/conduct>

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. For more

information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect.

LINK: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

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 Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation.

LINK: disability.unt.edu. (Phone: (940) 565-4323)

FINANCIAL AID AND SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS:

Undergraduates

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per term. Students cannot exceed attempted credit hours above 150% of their required degree plan. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

Students holding music scholarships must maintain a minimum 2.5 overall cumulative GPA and 3.0 cumulative GPA in music courses.

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. It is recommended that you 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.

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

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. Music scholarships require a 3.5 cumulative GPA. 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. It is recommended you schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college, an advisor in UNT-International or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course.

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

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS:

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard/Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates.

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

COUNSELING AND TESTING:

UNT's Center for Counseling and Testing has an available counselor whose position includes 16 hours per week of dedicated service to students in the College of Music and the College of Visual Arts and Design. Please visit the Center's website for further information:

<http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>. For more information on mental health issues, please visit: <https://speakout.unt.edu>.

The counselor for music students is:

Myriam Reynolds

Chestnut Hall, Suite 311

(940) 565-2741 | Myriam.Reynolds@unt.edu