

Vocal Jazz Techniques Syllabus - Fall 2025

MUJS 3120 and 5120

Syllabus and Course Requirements – Fall 2025

Class Meetings - MW 1:00 -1:50pm (MU 292)

Instructor - Katelyn Robinson

Office - Bain 213. **Cell** - (562) 896-1842.

Email – katelyn.robinson@unt.edu



Course Prerequisites: MUJS 1132 (Jazz performance fundamentals), MUAG 1012 (keyboard), MUTH 1500 (Music Theory II)

Course Objectives

The student will develop their jazz solo style, ear training, jazz piano skills, and communication skills; study the artistic style of respected jazz vocalists; and develop a personal repertoire and song book. Due to the different levels of experience among the students, the course requirements may be tailored for individual students.

Attendance Policy

Due to the nature of the class, **full attendance is required at all sessions**. You are not only performing regularly as part of a carefully organized schedule, but you are also the audience for your peers and benefit greatly from seeing them perform. **An absence that occurs without prior communication (at least an hour before the start of class) of the legitimate excuse will be marked unexcused.** (Excused absences include things like illness or family emergency.) **Only 2 excused absences will be allowed. Beyond that, the student may be asked to drop the course.**

*While attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community. If you are feeling ill, text me prior to being absent. If needed, please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider.

Expectations

Each student will be expected to participate in every class by being on time, listening attentively to the performance, and by offering comments courteously and in a positive manner. Tardiness will result in the lowering of the daily participation grade. **Any student who is unable to sing at their allotted time must contact me prior to class.** Failure to do so may result in a zero for that performance grade.

Required Materials

- Fake Book (or other means of broadening repertoire)
- **Video recording device** (your phone is fine)
- Access to music software for creating charts (Finale/Sibelius/Dorico)
- **Five** binders or folders for gig book.
- (You may bring your own microphone and cable if you wish.)

Masterclass

Each student will bring 5 copies (one for each player, one for class) of a properly formatted chart on their designated singing day (each performance will be with piano, bass, guitar, and drums). While one student is singing, the rest of the class will serve as the attentive audience. The performer is expected to video record the performance (if using a cell phone, make sure there is sufficient memory space). After each performance, the class will have a brief discussion, and students are encouraged to offer their comments, suggestions, and constructive criticism in a positive manner. Two to three singers will sing on each masterclass day.

Vocalists should make sure you program at least one song from each of the following styles: ballad (straight and/or swung), swing (medium and up), bossa nova and/or samba, and blues. Optional: shuffle. If you have questions about your chart, ask me! Please tape the pages together on multipage charts. **All songs should be performed from memory.**

Each performance gets a grade. The grade is based mostly on preparation (is the chart in the right key, are pages taped together, does the singer have the song and arrangement learned, did the singer show growth from the previous masterclass (or make the same mistakes again?))

Chordal Transcription

Each student will complete a lead sheet after having transcribed the chord changes from 32 bars of one of the five jazz recordings on the chordal transcription list. (Refer to Chordal

Transcription Guide for tips on the process.) The melody does not have to be present. If there are significant hits or figures in the rhythm section, please include them on your chart. Lead sheets must be made using notation software and properly formatted (see handout). Please use headphones or good speakers with adequate bass EQ when doing these assignments to ensure you can hear the correct bass notes. Please do not get help from anyone for this assignment. Use it as an opportunity to see where your ears are and to challenge yourselves. It is the sole responsibility of the student to upload the transcription to Canvas on time with the artist's name, song title, and album of reference recording.

Late Work Policy

1-2 days late = 10% reduction

3-6 days late = 25% reduction

7-13 days late = 50% reduction

14+ days late = no credit

Transcriptions are due as a canvas submission on the allocated day.

Midterm Evaluation

You will each perform one song of your choice, including a verbal introduction for the audience (entire performance no more than 6 minutes long).

Guidelines:

1. Choose a song from the Great American Songbook that you haven't yet done in class.
2. Research the song. Plan a 15-30 second verbal introduction to the performance that helps prepare the listener. It can include history about the song, information about the composer, a personal connection or anything else pertinent you think we would like to know (like, "this arrangement was inspired by Tierney Sutton's version of Blue Skies" or "and we'd like to feature our drummer Ashton."

Here is an example of a nice introduction:

"I have felt connected to this song every since I first heard it sung by a guest artist at my high school. It was written by the wonderful writing duo of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, originally for a show called Simple Simon back in 1930, but it actually never made it to the show. It's been recorded by many great artists, from Carmen McRae to Carly Simon. This is "He was too good to me."

3. Arrange it with a "this is a concert, but we need to be successful without any rehearsal" mindset. It should have an intro and an ending clear on the chart. Don't forget how effective layering can be (and so easy), and also some easy rhythmic hits with the chords written directly above. It doesn't take much to make a song "concert worthy" but readable.

4. Memorize the song and arrangement so that you can perform well for the audience.
5. Give the count-off with the appropriate dynamic and energy to match what you want the arrangement to sound like (and loudly enough so the band can hear)

Visually, here are the guidelines:

- Eyes open and up (not looking directly at us) 90% of the time.
 - Confident, calm stance (not pacing or holding ribcage, for example)
 - Face is relaxed, and facial expressions match the song and reflect each line as you sing them (the emotions change from line to line - express those subtle changes!)
 - If there is a groove, reflect it in your body appropriately.
6. Anticipate moments in the arrangement that require you to lead the band (cueing a soloist, signaling a ritardando)
 7. Sing confidently, be expressive (practice bolder expression so you are not surprised), make great intonation a high priority so that your audience can listen without distraction.
 8. Accept the applause - just stand there and smile (nod a little), and acknowledge the band

The entire performance should take no more than 6 minutes, including the talk-down with the band and verbal introduction.

Piano Bar

The students will sing while accompanying themselves on the piano (no bass and drums), playing and singing a song of their choice (in an appropriate vocal key) using idiomatic jazz voicings as taught in MUJS 1470. (Don't wait until the last minute! Please ask if you need any help with voicings.) This must be an arrangement, including an intro and ending. The song must contain more than just triads. Grading will be based on the following: accuracy of chords, effectiveness of voicings, existence of arrangement, consistency of time-feel/tempo (if applicable), vocal performance, and overall effect.

Final Exam

The student will sing 2 songs (one their choice, one chosen by the instructor) for Katelyn Robinson, Rosana Eckert or Jennifer Barnes, and the class. The repertoire will be chosen from a list of 10 that the student provides. The songs should be sung from memory. The charts must be put into 5 different binders or folders to be handed to the jury players and the evaluation panel. The charts must look professional (see lead sheet guideline as discussed in Performance Fundamentals), be in an appropriate key specific to the vocalist, and have acceptable chord changes. Arrangements (with intros and endings written in) are highly effective in this setting (as opposed to a simple lead sheet) but not required for all songs. It is required that a chart contains the lyric and melody for any section being sung rubato. Otherwise, melody and lyric on a chart is

recommended, but not required. If the arrangement is too involved (multiple hits, etc.), then it may be more effective for the band to leave off the melody. Consider putting only the lyrics at the start of sections as a safety net. Grading will be based on memorization, format and clarity of chart, bandstand communication (pre-performance, solos, ending, etc.), visual presentation, and vocal presentation (tone, time, expression).

Performance/Participation

This weekly grade is based upon the level of student preparedness for class performances (presentation and accuracy of chart, song memorization, arrangement memorization, vocal readiness). It also includes involvement as an audience member, readiness to record the performance, and general attendance. See "masterclass" section for grading on class performances.

Final Grade

The final grade is determined in the following manner:

Performances/Self-Evaluations and Participation 40%

Chordal Transcriptions 10%

Mid-Term 20%

Piano Bar 10%

Final Performance 20%

Performance Exam Grading Rubric

A+ 97-100, A 94-96, A- 90-93

An A+ would be given based on the following:

Performance was thoroughly prepared and delivered effectively.

- song and arrangement memorized
- singing was in tune, delivered with a stable and idiomatic tone quality/technique/style
- time-feel was stable and style appropriate
- delivery contained some personal elements such as unique phrasing, effective changing of the melody, dynamics, communication with the band, spontaneous creativity/improvisation
- visual presentation was professional, confident, and stylistically appropriate
- arrangement was effective and well-prepared/communicated

B = 80-89

Performance was mostly effective and/or prepared. Some of the elements above were achieved, but enough were missed to take away from the overall effect (some of the more common missed

elements include memorization problems, intonation problems, or lack of creativity/expression, or lack of preparation on chord changes for improvisation).

C= 70-79

Performance was sometimes effective and/or prepared, but a significant number of the above elements were not achieved such that the overall effect suffered significantly (often a large memorization problem with song or arrangement).

D = 60-69

Performance was mostly unprepared and unsuccessful. Almost none of the above elements were achieved, mostly due to lack of preparation.

F = 0-59

Performance was unsuccessful, incomplete, or non-existent.

Tentative Class Schedule

(Group 1 = Naomi/Reece, Group 2 = Scarlet/Justin, Group 3 = Cailyn/Jae)

Wk 1 Aug. 18 Intro, meet the band

Aug. 20 Bandstand communication, charts discussion, grooves

Wk 2 Aug. 25 Bandstand communication, charts discussion

Aug. 27 Bandstand communication

Wk 3 Sept. 1 Holiday – no class

Sept. 3 Masterclass: Group 1

Wk 4 Sept. 8 Masterclass: Group 2

Sept. 10 Masterclass: Group 3

Wk 5 Sept. 15 Masterclass: Group 1

Sept. 17 Masterclass: Group 2

Wk 6 Sept. 22 Masterclass: Group 3

Sept. 24 Masterclass: Group 1 **Chordal Transcription #1 due**

Wk 7 Sept. 29 Masterclass: Group 2

Oct. 1 Masterclass: Group 3

Wk 8 Oct. 6 Midterm Preparation (each singer gets 15 min with band): Naomi, Reese, Scarlet

Oct. 8 Midterm Preparation (each singer gets 15 min with band): Justin, Cailyn, Jae

Wk 9 Oct. 13 **Midterm (see syllabus for details)**

Oct. 15 Discussion - piano bar (**band attendance optional**)

Wk 10 Oct. 20 Masterclass: Group 1

Oct. 22 Masterclass: Group 2

Wk 11 Oct. 27 Masterclass: Group 3

Oct. 29 Masterclass: Group 1

Wk 12 Nov. 3 Masterclass: Group 2

Nov. 5 Masterclass: Group 3 **Chordal Transcription #2 due**

Wk 13 Nov. 10 Final Masterclass: Group 1

Nov. 12 Final Masterclass: Group 2

Wk 14. Nov 17 Final Masterclass: Group 3

Nov 19 Duets: Justin and Cailyn, Reece and Jae, Scarlet and Naomi

**** Nov. 24/26 FALL BREAK

Wk 15. Dec. 1 Gig Sit-In! (see Canvas for details)

Dec. 3 Piano Bar (no rhythm section)

Official Final Exam time **Saturday, Dec. 6, 10:30am-12:30pm** – this will be a concert open to the public. Invite your friends!

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

See: [Academic Integrity](#)

LINK: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

See: [Student Code of Conduct](#)

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

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

See: [Eagle Connect](#)

LINK: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

ODA STATEMENT

See: [ODA](#)

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

Health and Safety Information

Students can access information about health and safety at:

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

Registration Information for Students

See: [Registration Information](#)

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/students>

Academic Calendar, Fall 2025

See: [Fall 2025 Registration Information](#)

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

Final Exam Schedule, Fall 2025

See above

Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress

Undergraduates

See: [Financial Aid](#)

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

Graduates

See: [Financial Aid](#)

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

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

See: [FERPA](#)

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

COUNSELING AND TESTING

UNT's Center for Counseling and Testing has an available counselor for students in need. Please visit the Center's website for further information:

See: [Counseling and Testing](#)

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

For more information on mental health resources, please visit:

See: [Mental Health Resources](#)

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

ADD/DROP POLICY

Please be reminded that dropping classes or failing to complete and pass registered hours may make you ineligible for financial aid. In addition, if you drop below half-time enrollment you may be required to begin paying back your student loans. See Academic Calendar (listed above) for additional add/drop Information.

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

STUDENT RESOURCES

The University of North Texas has many resources available to students. For a complete list, go to:

See: [Student Resources](#)

Link: <https://success.unt.edu/aa-sa-resources>

CARE TEAM

See: [Care Team](#)

Link: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>