

# Vocal Jazz Techniques Syllabus - Fall 2025

MULB 1820 and 5174

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](mailto:katelyn.robinson@unt.edu)



Thank you so much for playing for the vocal course MUJS 3120 this semester. Below are some objectives and information concerning this course.

**IMPORTANT: LAB CREDIT:** In order to receive lab credit for this course, please enroll in MULB 1820.505 or the graduate course number MUJS 5174.528. (Or you can enroll in the actual course number for this class, MUJS 3120, and it can serve as an upper-level music elective. The choice is yours.)

## Objectives for Rhythm Section

The purpose of this course is:

- To gain experience playing in a small group with a vocalist;
- To gain familiarity with standard vocal repertoire and practice transposition;
- To become familiar with various grooves commonly called by professional vocalists;
- To practice the art of sounding “rehearsed” quickly when sight-reading;
- To exercise recovery reflexes in the event a chart or a bandleader’s signals are unclear;
- To practice generating energy at various tempi while playing transparently;
- To help bridge the communication gap between instrumentalists and vocalists.

## Masterclass

During each masterclass, two vocalists will get an opportunity to perform with the rhythm section. The vocalist will present a lead sheet or basic arrangement to the players, verbally offering any additional information needed. The vocalists will be responsible for all count-offs.

When the performance has ended, the room will open for comments from the class. The constructive (yet courteous) input of the instrumentalists is welcome and appreciated.

### **Subs/Attendance Policy**

As with any other jazz performance ensemble, you are required to attend each class. If you have a personal/family emergency or illness that prevents you from attending class, you are required to get a sub who either meets or exceeds your playing level. **An absence that occurs without prior communication (at least an hour before the start of class) of the legitimate excuse will be marked unexcused. 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](mailto: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.

### **Final Grade**

The final grade is determined in the following manner:

Participation 40%

Attendance 30%

Application of Feedback 30%

### **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!

For your knowledge, here is the information for the masterclasses and other assignments given to the vocalists:

### **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.

### **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/](http://eagleconnect.unt.edu/)

### **ODA STATEMENT**

See: [ODA](#)

LINK: [disability.unt.edu](http://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>