THE FIVE O'CLOCK LAB BAND

Sec. 2500: MW 10-10:50 | Room 263 (Lab East)

Instructor: Kai Wagner
Email: Kai.Wagner@unt.edu
Office: Music Building 280A
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Philosophy:

Big Band is a longstanding tradition, both inside and outside the walls of UNT. As jazz has evolved, big band has always been a part of it that has grown and changed with it, from the earliest band that featured some of jazz's most famous performers and composers to the modern bands that continue the tradition and push the genre forward.

Within UNT, the lab bands have been a place for students to experiment and try their hand at the craft as they grow. Here is where we can push each other to be better while creating art together. I have a few goals for you as you and I work toward a great semester of big band music.

You'll learn as much as you put in this class. There is a lot you could stand to gain by investing in your time here: apart from being in touch with the history of this music and of the folk music of the American culture, you have the chance to grow your proficiency as an instrumentalist and as a musician in facility and reading, your gig-readiness as you practice disciplined punctuality and rehearsed preparedness, and most importantly, your ability to create something bigger than yourself and the musicians around you through mutual leadership and cooperation.

I hope this time you spend in this class will be something you can look back on as a place where you leave it all on the bandstand to make sure you and your friends push each other to do what you couldn't at the beginning of the term. I am deeply honored to and greatly look forward to working with you all.

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini is not permitted.

While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy.

Additionally, tools like Grammarly, spellcheck, predictive text, speech-to-text, and translation tools are not allowed as they blur authorship and misrepresent your independent work. All work must be your own.

Any exceptions must be approved by the instructor directly. I don't really know how you would use AI here but there you go.

Kai Wagner's Tips for Students:

- **I cannot possibly care more about you in this class than you care about you in this class.**
- **Don't expect help from me if you aren't helping me to help you.**
- Conversely**, if you demonstrate your effort in this class, I will honor that as best as I can**.
- **Act like you want to be hired.** If I hire you, I'm making a bet based on your past behavior that you'll arrive punctually, prepare reliably, and act professionally. There are too many people out there for you not to do any of these things, starting now. Remember, this is a field where you are already on the scene, not graduating to get a license to work.
- **Communicate early** with me about anything that might come up. The earlier you communicate, the easier our lives will be.
- Be eager to **ask for help** or to answer questions, I'm paid to teach you, not to make you go through the motions.
- I'm far from the perfect teacher, so **if you have a way to improve this class, tell me as soon as you think of it**, although the SPOTs are a great way of doing that too. You may be helping generations of students that way, not just yourself.
- **Respect your fellow students as equals.** None of us are here because we're good; we're all here because your major professor thought that, with enough time, dedication, and access to UNT's resources, you *could* be good by the time you graduate (and UNT can make some money in the meantime). You don't have the right to be acting better than anyone.

Required Texts:

None. All materials will be given by the instructor.

You should have access to demo recordings of the tunes we play, either on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music, or another place for reference throughout the semester.

Spotify Playlist:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3xYnbOI1KDGtD1aeQlg5IK?si=bb4ebf70a5ba4734
YouTube playlist add-ons:
https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHvNP3CHsMCc&si=3P7muC3dHJ2awFqy

Evaluation:

The following are considered for the final grade:

- Adherence to Attendance Policy
- Adherence to Jazz Concert Attendance Requirement
- Musical Preparation
- Professionalism

Without any major issues in any categories, you can expect to receive an A or the course.

Grading Scale:

A=90-100%
B=80-89%
C=70-79%
D=60-69%
F=59% and below

Attendance policy:

Rehearsals

- Attendance is required at all rehearsals.
- Excused absences due to illness, school-related events, high-paying gigs, or auditions may be allowed *with earliest possible advance notice to and permission from me*.
- If you know you will be absent for a rehearsal, as soon as possible, notify me and your section leader (or the rest of your section if you are a section leader) know who your substitute will be. Your substitute must be qualified to perform well enough not to slow or stop the rehearsal for the rest of the ensemble more than you would.
- If you do not obtain permission from me with appropriate notice, your absence will not be excused, barring extraneous circumstances.
- Each unexcused absence will lower your grade by one letter.
- Any four absences will result in the reduction of one letter grade. I reserve the right to adjust on a case-by-case basis.

Performances

- Attendance is required for all performances, soundchecks, and dress rehearsals.
- Rare exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.
- An unexcused absence will result in the letter grade of an F.

Course Schedule:

***The following performance schedule is subject to change.

- Fri 9/11, 5:00 PM – Denton Arts & Jazz Festival (arrive early)
- Wed 9/23, 9:00 PM – 4/5 Syndicate (sound check around 8?)
- Wed 10/28, 9:00 PM – 5/4 Syndicate (sound check around 8?)
- 11/3, 8:00 PM – Lab West 5/4 Fall Concert
- Informal Concert, likely sometime November

Jazz Concert Attendance Requirement:

Concert attendance Concert attendance is an extraordinary opportunity to support your colleagues, learn from observing guest artists, and experience creative music that informs your future artistic self. This is an assessed component of your Lab Band Course. All undergraduate jazz majors in a jazz lab band are required to attend a select series of Jazz Studies concerts each semester. Each unexcused absence from a required Jazz Studies concert will result in a half letter grade deduction from your Lab Band grade.

If conflicts arise with the classical ensembles at the Murchison, we will coordinate with Dr. Trachsel to ensure that no student is placed in a difficult position when selecting which concert to attend.

If you have an excusable reason for an absence from one of these ensembles, email Professor Robert Parton and CC me with your request for absence. If the absence is not approved, it would be counted unexcused.

Required Performances for Fall Semester 2026:

- Mon 11/2, 8:00 PM – Jazz Strings
- Sat 11/7, 6:30 PM – Latin Jazz Lab
- Mon 11/9, 8:00 PM – Two & Three O'Clock
- Fri 11/13, 8:00 PM – Jazz Singers
- Mon 11/16, 8:00 PM – One O'Clock Lab Band
- Tue 11/17, 8:00 PM – Zebras (Commercial Music Lab)

Academic Dishonesty:

In general, only use materials that I approve when completing homework, tests, and other assignments in this class. In the case that I find that a student has violated academic integrity, I will be referring to the following policy from the university that enumerates standard procedure for violations, reports, meetings, and other possibilities.

https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.003%20Student%20Academic%20Integrity.pdf

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities that affect their work in this class are invited to speak with the instructor privately about how to best accommodate any needs. Students must proactively speak with instructor for any accommodations to be considered legitimate and actionable. As a doctoral student, I sometimes do not automatically receive notification of student disabilities, so please talk to me directly for each semester.

SPOT Evaluations:

The standard UNT SPOT evaluation will be done at the end of the course. This class is relatively new, and any suggestions for teaching methods or content will be taken into consideration. If you have comments or suggestions for improving the course before then, please let the instructor know at any time.

See Canvas Course for updated UNT Syllabus Information.