



MUJS 3360 – JAZZ IMPROVISATION III
(MUJS 5360 – GRADUATE REVIEW OF JAZZ IMPROVISATION)
Spring 2020 | MU262 | Tu/Th 10 - 10:50 am

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COURSE PHILOSOPHY/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: language. Namely, we will reinforce the idea of jazz as a living, breathing language, and we will work to develop a broader vocabulary, with the ultimate goal of creating a lasting method by which students can continue to develop on their own, even after this course.

COURSE CONTENT/MATERIALS

There is no textbook required for this course, but students should be able to seek out recordings on their own through legal means.

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%: Language Journal Entries (6 entries at 5% each, **lowest dropped**)
- 15%: Solo Singing Exercises (4 entries at 5%, **lowest dropped**)
- 15% each: Exam 1, Exam 2, Exam 3, Exam 4

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" (for a total of 25% of the grade). This should 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.

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, "out-of-context." In the third, you will synthesize a new solo in a new context using the language you have internalized.

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

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. 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). 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. While this is a valuable method of learning improvisation, it can be equally valuable to 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 do not need to 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, and to absorb the general "sound" of the jazz language. It is akin to learning your first language: picking up general phonetics, rhythmic flow, etc.

EXAMS:

The four 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 this course*, not your overall improvisational skill, nor your improvisational vocabulary acquired prior to this course.

Being a great player is not enough to pass an exam. Regular practice is essential for success on these exams; you should not procrastinate or “cram”.

Furthermore, all exams are considered to be essential tasks for passing this course. The following grading policy should be understood very clearly, and by taking this course you are agreeing to this policy:

A score of 75% or above on all exams is required in order for a student to pass this class, regardless of performance in other course assignments.

If a student fails to achieve a 75% or above on a given exam, the student will be afforded extra help and opportunities to retake that exam before the end of the semester. If, on the last day of the course (as determined by instructor), any exam grades below 75% remain in the gradebook, that student will receive an “Incomplete (I)” for the class and must retake the relevant exams in the following semester.

Receiving an “Incomplete (I)” in this course could prevent registration in subsequent courses.

In short, you cannot pass this class without passing all four of the exams with a 75% or above.

If you do not pass an exam, it is recommended that you begin attending office hours regularly for short lessons. You may retake an exam at any time during office hours, or a designated “exam retake” day will be offered during **finals week** every semester.

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. After your third absence, the policy is strictly enforced.

Excused absences are, of course, permitted with ample notice and reasonable cause. These absences do not count towards the three unexcused. 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.

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. Do not wait until the end of the semester when grades are published.

COURSE SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

Unit 1: Advanced Bebop Fundamentals

Week 1:

Tues Jan 14 - **No Class**

Thur Jan 16 - Syllabus/Foundational Concepts: Improv as SLA, Bloom's Taxonomy, Learning Methods

Week 2:

Tues Jan 21 - Transcription Masterclass

Thur Jan 23 - Review of Bebop Gestures (Enclosures, Arpeggiations, Chromatics)

Week 3: Journal 1 Due

Tues Jan 28 (Prof. Dizack Out) - Bebop Commonalities: Harris Book

Thur Jan 30 (Prof. Dizack Out) - Introduction to Bebop Drills in 12 keys: Baker Book

Week 4: Solo Singing 1 Due

Tues Feb 4 - Analysis of Transcribed Solos, Isolate Words/Phrases/Devices

Thur Feb 6 (Prof. Dizack Out) - Learning Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices in 12 keys, Continue Bebop Drills in 12 keys

Week 5: Journal 2 Due

Tues Feb 11 - Synthesizing a New Solo from Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices, Group Solo Construction

Thur Feb 13 – (Prof. Dizack Out) **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, and new vocabulary from the assigned solos for this unit).

Week 6: Solo Singing 2 Due

Tues Feb 18 (Prof. Dizack Out) - Application of Bebop Devices to Blues (Playing Day)

Thur Feb 20 (Prof. Dizack Out) - Application of Bebop Devices to Rhythm Changes (Playing Day)

Week 7: Journal 3 Due

Tues Feb 25 - Application of Bebop Devices to a Standard (Playing Day)

Thur Feb 27 (Prof. Dizack Out) - Exam Review, Application of Bebop Devices to a Standard (Playing Day)

Week 8:

Tues Mar 3 - Analysis of Student Assignments, Unit Review

Thur Mar 5 - **Exam #2**

Exam #2 Objective: Students will be able to employ previous discussed bebop vocabulary effectively over a blues progression, rhythm changes progression, and medium tempo standard.

SPRING BREAK

Unit 2: Advanced Uses of Bebop Language

Week 9:

Tues Mar 17 - Introduction to Alternate / Substitute / “Backdoor” / Chromatic ii-V’s (ASBC for short)
Thur Mar 19 - ASBC ii-V Drills/Patterns

Week 10: Journal 4 Due

Tues Mar 24 - Analysis of Transcribed Solos, Isolate Words/Phrases/Devices
Thur Mar 26 - Learning Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices in 12 keys, Continue ASBC Drills in 12 keys

Week 11: Solo Singing 3 Due

Tues Mar 31 - Simple Applications of ASBC ii-V’s / Common Substitutions on Blues/Rhythm Changes
Thur Apr 2 - Practice/Review for Hurdle #3

Week 12: Journal 5 Due

Tues Apr 7 - Practice/Review for Hurdle #3
Thur Apr 9 - **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 vocabulary within 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 chord.

Week 13: Solo Singing 4 Due

Tues Apr 14 - Identifying Substitution Points in American Songbook Tunes
Thur Apr 16 - Synthesizing a New Solo from Isolated Words/Phrases/Devices, Group Solo Construction

Week 14: Journal 6 Due

Tues Apr 21 - Application of ASBC ii-V’s to Standards (Playing Day)
Thur Apr 23 - Application of ASBC ii-V’s to Standards (Playing Day)

Week 15:

Tues Apr 28 - Flex Day, Exam Review
Thur Apr 230 - **Exam #4**

Objective: Students will be able to take a standard American Songbook tune and effectively identify places to substitute minor subdominant ii-V’s, tritone ii-V’s, ii-V’s to iii, and chromatic ii-V’s in place of the original harmony. They will be able to improvise idiomatically through these progressions. Students will also be able to employ various common blues and rhythm changes substitutions.

FINALS WEEK:

Tues May 6 from 9 am to 12 noon - Exam Retakes

IMPORTANT: NO EXAM RETAKES WILL BE OFFERED AFTER THIS DATE/TIME.

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

EMAIL USE:

It is expected that you use your **UNT** email address for all correspondence related to your degree. Any university-related questions emailed to Prof. Meder 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 Prof. Meder (or any other professor or administrator) should be responded to within 24 hours. For better or for worse, effective use of email is essential to your career as a professional musician. In the modern-day music business, timely responses are mandatory in order to be considered for many gigs and opportunities. Consider your use of email at UNT to be training for your professional career.

PROFESSIONALISM AND INCLUSIVITY:

All students are expected to contribute to an environment of inclusivity and mutual respect, in this course and in all department courses. Please consider how some words, phrases and actions that you feel are harmless and acceptable may actually be perceived by others as an attack on their very identity. Show proper respect for all of your peers and treat others how *they* would like to be treated.

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://deanofstudents.unt.edu/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)

2018-2019 Semester Academic Schedule (with Add/Drop Dates)

<http://catalog.unt.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=2120>

Academic Calendar at a Glance, 2018-2019

<https://www.unt.edu/catalogs/2018-19/calendar>

Final Exam Schedule

<https://registrar.unt.edu/exams/final-exam-schedule/fall>

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