

Music 117: Jazz Repertoire and Improvisation

Asher Tobin Chodos

achodos@ucsd.edu

[Course Website](#)

Spring 2019

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs noon-1pm
Office: CPMC 232

Lecture: T/Th 11am-12:20pm
Lecture Room: CPMC 145
Final Exam: 06/13/2017, 11:30a-2:29p

Course Description

In this course, students will immerse themselves deeply in the repertoire and aesthetic contributions of a handful of Jazz masters. Students will also learn strategies for developing fluency in the Jazz idiom on their own. The learning strategies are simple, but the workload will be demanding. There are substantial weekly memorization tasks, and large projects involving transcription of solos. Some background in Jazz improvisation is expected. If you have never transcribed a solo before, this course might not be for you. With that said, the course can serve improvisers at various levels.

Course Structure

- In the 10 weeks of this course, we will be cover three units: Ellington/Strayhorn, Charlie Parker, and Wayne Shorter. For each unit, there will assigned the same culminating project, detailed below.
- The idea is to immerse yourself fully in the musicians covered in a given unit, and to memorize, for each unit, 30 compositions (detailed on the course website).
- We will spend a lot of class time playing through these compositions, which will help the memorization process, but you are expected to prepare these compositions on your own. In order to succeed in this course students should expect to put in 1-3 hours of practice daily.
- In addition to this syllabus, there is a [course website](#), where detailed memorization and, occasionally, reading assignments will be posted. Make sure you prepare the assigned materials **before** the class meeting in question.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites: proficiency in Jazz, as demonstrated in audition. Ability to transcribe solos from recordings, memorize them, and notate them.

Course Objectives

Successful students:

1. Have memorized a substantial amount of Jazz repertoire from these three musicians, and understand their contributions to the Jazz tradition.
2. Have increased confidence transcribing and memorizing Jazz solos.
3. Have a portfolio of three compositions, one in the style of each of the three units.
4. Have an enriched understanding of the arc of Jazz history.

Course Structure

Three units

For every unit, there is a list of 30 works posted (see the course website). Listen continually to these recordings throughout the unit, and memorize them – this means knowing the melody and form, regardless of your instrument. **For each class meeting, there will be a subset of those songs posted – you are required to memorize this subset for each meeting.** We will spend a lot of time playing through these forms in class. By the end of the unit, you should be completely confident on all 30 songs.

Unit Projects

At the end of every unit, you will prepare a three-part unit project:

1. From one of the recordings, transcribe a solo so that you can play it **without the recording playing**. This means that you have to be able to perform it with a human accompanying you, in class (not with the recording going in the background). This does not necessarily have to be a solo by the musician in question, but can be any soloist on any of the 30 tracks.
2. From one of the recordings, prepare an **annotated transcription**. This is a solo transcribed **to notation (not necessarily memorized)**, with 3-4 key moments highlighted. These are moments you think are especially characteristic or interesting in this solo. A brief statement of why they're interesting (2 paragraphs or so) should be stapled to this transcription.
3. A **stylistic composition**. This means writing a piece in the style of the artist in question. Stapled to the back of this composition is another brief statement (2 paragraphs max) explaining why you think it's in the style of the artist in question.

These three projects, plus your attendance and participation, are the whole of your grade. There is no final exam.

Class meetings

Students should come prepared with their instruments in hand, tuned up, and ready to play at the beginning of class. For each class, I will indicate a subset of songs to be prepared for the next meeting. These have to be memorized by the next meeting, as **no notation will be used in class**.

Required Work/Grade Breakdown

1. Unit 1 project, due 4/21 at the beginning of class – 20%
2. Unit 2 project, due 5/12 at the beginning of class – 25%
3. Unit 3 project, due 6/2 at the beginning of class – 25%
4. Attendance and class participation – 30%

Attendance will be taken every day in lecture and discussion section.

Course Policies

During Class

Please keep noodling to a minimum, as it is extremely disruptive. Show up ready to play, but not to practice. Make sure you have memorized the songs for a given meeting, as no notation will be allowed in class.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required at all course meetings. The 30% of your grade that is represented by attendance/participation is truly a mixture of the two; attendance alone will not earn you those 30 points.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

When students cannot complete the course work, I will grant incomplete grades. These can be amended, as outlined in the official policy on incompletes. ([click here](#)). I will accept late work up to two days after the deadline. After the third day, late assignments will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Homework is not collaborative unless specifically noted in class. Instances of plagiarism and cheating will be taken seriously and could lead to a failing grade in the course. Official policy is available [here](#).

Accommodations for Disabilities

Students registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities are to provide copies of their AFA (Authorization for Accommodation) letters to both the course instructor and the OSD Liaison of the Music Department. If you have any questions about utilizing your OSD accommodation, please contact Lynn Ennis at mus-ug@ucsd.edu or 858-534-8226. You may also contact the Office of Students with Disabilities directly at osd@ucsd.edu or 858-534-4382.

Course Overview

The schedule is subject to change – check on the course website for up-to-date assignments. **For specific reading and listening assignments, refer to the course website, which will be actively maintained to reflect our progress if it should diverge from the attached schedule.**

- Week 01, 04/03 - 04/07:** Ellington // Strayhorn I
- Week 02, 04/10 - 04/14:** Ellington // Strayhorn II
- Week 03, 04/17 - 04/21:** Ellington // Strayhorn III – **unit 1 project due 4/21**
- Week 04, 04/24 - 04/28:** Charlie Parker I
- Week 05, 05/01 - 05/05:** Charlie Parker II
- Week 06, 05/08 - 05/12:** Charlie Parker III – **unit 2 project due 5/12**
- Week 07, 05/15 - 05/19:** Wayne Shorter I
- Week 08, 05/22 - 05/26:** Wayne Shorter II
- Week 09, 05/29 - 06/02:** Wayne Shorter III – **unit 3 project due 6/02**
- Week 10, 06/05 - 06/09:** Student compositions performed and discussed in class