

Beijing Jiaotong University

2020 Summer Program

MUS 110 History of Jazz

Course Outline

Term: June 01-July 03,2020

Course Code: MUS 110

Instructor: Bert Seager

Home Institution: New England Conservatory, Boston Massachusetts

Office Hours: TBA

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Credit: 4

Course description and goals:

From its very beginning about one hundred years ago and throughout its entire history, jazz music has evolved by bringing together elements of overlapping cultures. Understanding its evolution as a reflection of the places and times it sprang from helps us appreciate the mystery, majesty, and genius of its creators.

In this course you will learn not only the relevant facts of American history that allowed this indigenous art form to flourish, but also gain an understanding of the musical innovations that propelled this art form to the future.

In this course you will gain an appreciation of how to listen and understand the music. Jazz has always excited people and I trust that this will be the same for you.

We will, of course listen intently. You will learn about rhythm by drumming on your laps and marching in-place to the music, and even, on your own, singing along with it; all as a way to understand, hear, and feel it better. You will begin to both intellectually and intuitively sense the basic symmetries and forms of the music. And then be able to grasp the music's inner meanings, its ties to the blues, and its relationship with popular culture and high-brow artistic culture.

By learning to how listen, you will increase your familiarity with the sounds that the individual instruments make, giving rise to a new depth of your appreciation. We will learn about the roles that each instrument plays and the innovations and departures from those roles that these great musicians discovered. My goal is to help you begin to discern for yourselves the skill level and

breadth of imagination of the performer, composer, and arranger so that you leave class with a desire to listen further to the artists you enjoyed the most, exploring more deeply the artists that piqued your interest, and cultivating a life-long love of this music.

Required video (rather than a text) : Ken Burns 10-episode film documentary “Jazz.” 19 hours. Available on iTunes, YouTube, Amazon Prime.

Everyone must demonstrate that they have downloaded the entire film. And there will be spot two-question quizzes to make sure that you are keeping up with watching the movie. Normally we would do our homework by listening and reading a text, and I would show parts of this video in class. But since we are not meeting live, and I cannot record a copyrighted film for the classes - so you are being asked to watch this movie on your own. It is a wonderful movie, with great music, and performances, interviews and history, and it will ignite your passion for this great art form.

Course requirements:

It is important to recognize this fact, that we will not be able to meet in person due to the pandemic which keeps us apart. This requires that the class be taught via pre-recorded lectures. Four lectures per week - and once each week we will meet remotely - discuss the assignments and musical concepts that are best demonstrated with live questions and answers.

Participation in the weekly live class sessions is not only fun, but essential to pass this class. The listening and musical skills we will develop are learned by doing. We will spend some time practicing as a group.

A short paper about a musical piece will be assigned. Your writing should be informed by our classwork and will demonstrate your repeated close listening of a track of music.

The other assignments have to do with demonstrating an understanding of song form, which is a topic we will cover through out the course.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance will be taken by the platform we are using to distribute the lectures. ECNU policy is that any student who has more than three “absences” will fail the course. Any unexcused absence may impact a students grade. ECNU requires a medical certificate to be excused. Arriving late or leaving early will count as a partial absence.

Grading:

ECNU awards grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, and F. Most colleges and universities do not award transfer credit for grades of D or F.

In this course, grading will be based on the following:

Attendance and participation and quizzes based on the video:	25%
One paper:	20%
Three assignments:	30%
Final in-class essay/listening exam	25%

Course schedule

- Week # 1 Precursors of Jazz: Up to 1890s
The Blues - origins
In class musical topics to practice together: pulse - meter -
US History Civil War to 1910
New Orleans Jazz - the advent of recording technology
Blues assignment - due Monday, June 15
- Week # 2 In class musical topics to practice together: the blues scale and blues form
Chicago Jazz
New York piano jazz.
Kansas City Jazz
Duke Ellington
First paper assigned - due Monday, June 22
- Week # 3 The Swing Era
The Advent of Radio
The Birth of Bebop
Bebop
Assignment: Lyrics and song forms of Fats Waller tunes.
- Week # 4 Hard Bob
The Blue Note recordings
In class musical topics to practice together: subdivision of the beat, triplets and even
eighth-notes.
Miles Davis
John Coltrane
Assignment: making a recording of your talking or singing Miles Davis solo
on “So What.” - or Lambert, Hendricks & Ross “Twisted”
- Week # 5 The Fragmentation of Jazz Styles
Free Jazz
Fusion
European Jazz
Latin Jazz
Current Artists and trends
The advent of the internet
Final Exam.