



MUS-210: JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Effective Term

Fall 2026

BOT Approval Date

05/15/2025

Discipline

MUS - Music

Course Number

210

Course Title

Jazz Ensemble

Short Title

Jazz Ensemble

Credit Status (CB 04)

D - Credit - Degree applicable

Units**Lab Units**

1.00

Total Units

1.00

Hours**Lab Contact Hours**

48-54

Out of Class Hours Lab

0.00

Total Contact Hours

48 - 54

Total Out of Class Hours

0 - 0

Total Student Learning Hours

48 - 54

Is this an existing Extensive Lab?

Yes

Distance Education

No

C-ID (Admin Only)

C-ID MUS 180

Catalog Description

This course is a collegiate jazz ensemble that rehearses and performs a variety of historical and modern styles in both large and combo-sized ensembles. Skills in improvisation are developed; no prior experience with improvisation is required. The ensemble performs publicly each semester, both on and off campus.



Requisites

Prerequisite(s)

Prerequisite(s) (must be taken before)

Demonstrate proficiency on a musical instrument by audition or interview.

Codes

TOP Code (CB 03)

1004.00 - Music

CIP Code

50.0903 - Music Performance, General.

Repeatability Code

Yes

Number of times course can be repeated

4

Reason for Repeatable

Repetition is necessary to meet the major requirements of CSU or UC for completion of a bachelor's degree

Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Music (Masters Required)	End

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives

Learning Objective

1. Develop jazz-specific instrumental performance skills and technique.
2. Devise effective sight-reading strategies.
3. Produce a balanced, musical sound within sections and across the band.
4. Synthesize written music into performed rhythms, articulation and phrases appropriate to the style, genre, or era of the music.
5. Organize a personal practice schedule to produce a professional-level performance.
6. Create an improvisation over chord changes at a level appropriate to one's experience.
7. Critique a jazz performance based on an understanding of extra-musical characteristics, including historical inequities and marginalized minority music-making populations.
8. Exhibit professionalism and appropriate rehearsal and performance etiquette.

Learning Outcome Information

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome

1. Students will perform selected level jazz ensemble repertoire with correct pitches.
2. Students will perform selected jazz ensemble repertoire with accurate rhythm.
3. Students will perform selected level jazz ensemble repertoire with good blend.

Content

Course Lab Content

1. Proper rehearsal/practice technique
 - a. Professionalism and rehearsal etiquette
 - b. Personal and section practice strategies
 - c. Learning from historically or stylistically important recordings
 - i. Jazz as folk music from historically oppressed or disadvantaged populations
 - ii. Jazz as an African-American folk music and art music
 - d. Sight reading strategies
2. The group dynamic
 - a. Listening across the ensemble: balance and tuning
 - b. Reacting to other students in the section and in the band
 - c. Making performance practice and other creative decisions for the section
3. Performance practice considerations
 - a. Translating written music notation into sound
 - i. swing rhythms, accents and phrasing
 - ii. cultural/historical norms and practices
4. Preparing and performing various styles and genres of music, such as:
 - a. Blues
 - b. Count Basie, Duke Ellington and the foundation of swing and large jazz ensemble playing
 - c. Swing era dance music
 - d. Latin jazz, including Afro-Cuban and Brazilian styles
 - e. Bebop
 - f. Progressive big band music, such as the music of Stan Kenton
 - g. Fusion
 - h. Avant garde
 - i. Reappropriations of popular music into a jazz context, such as songs by the Beatles, Nirvana, Radiohead, etc.
 - j. Modern big bands, such as the music of Gordon Goodwin, Bob Mintzer, Maria Schneider, etc.
 - k. 21st century collaborations with other genres, such as the music of Kendrick Lamar and Flying Lotus
5. Creating a jazz sound on the instrument
 - a. Rhythmic interpretation
 - b. Blues influences
 - c. Understanding of extra-musical characteristics, including historical inequities and marginalized minority music-making populations
 - d. Differences in style and technique across history and world locations
6. Jazz theory, arranging and composition
 - a. Relating melody to harmony
 - b. Rhythmic style
 - c. Idiomatic writing
 - d. Typesetting standards and considerations
7. Introduction to improvisation
 - a. Pacing, development and phrasing
 - b. Rhythmic vocabulary in different jazz styles
 - c. Major and minor pentatonic and blues scales
 - d. Historical and modern uses
 - e. Modal improvisation
8. Performing in a variety of settings
 - a. Audience and performer etiquette
 - b. Jazz as concert music
 - c. Music as entertainment
 - d. Proper use and handling of live sound equipment

Methods of Instruction

Method

Critique

Integration

The ensemble will listen to jazz recordings as a group while the instructor points out important musical detail and provides historical and cultural context for the recording. Students discuss the fundamental characteristics of the music and relate them to cultural, social, historical, and racial influences.

Method

Individualized Instruction

Integration

Instructor will guide students to most effective practice strategies that will lead to improvement over the course of the term.

Method

Observation and Demonstration

Integration

Instructor and more advanced students will demonstrate proper performance practice, improvisation techniques, and jazz rhythms and articulations. This leads to the development of skills necessary to perform the music disseminated in class.

Method

Activity

Integration

New music will be introduced regularly to address and improve sight reading skills.

Methods of Evaluation**Method**

Class Participation

Integration

Students will be observed at every class meeting and their participation in class will be evaluated on their proper rehearsal technique and their active practice of the jazz ensemble repertoire. Students' participation at all performances will also constitute part of a participation grade.

Method

Self-Evaluation

Integration

The student will measure the improvement of their playing throughout the term based on their level at the beginning of the term.

Method

Other

Integration

Improvisation will be evaluated based on students' ability to play pitches that fit the chord changes, appropriate style, and creativity.

Method

Final Performance

Integration

The final evaluation will take place at the final on-campus concert. Each student's performance will be evaluated based on their use of proper jazz technique, improvement over the course of the semester, and demonstration of proper performance practice and etiquette.

Assignments**Assignment Type**

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Work on learning your music outside of group rehearsal, using various recordings and rehearsal tools provided by the instructor.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Perform all works programmed for the concert with correct pitches, rhythms, dynamics and blend. Respond appropriately to changes in your section and in the rhythm section.

Assignment Type

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Read the assigned article by Charles Mingus from Mainliner Magazine (United Airlines, July 1977). Reflect on the quote, "Anybody can play weird, that's easy. What's hard is to be as simple as Bach. Making the simple complicated is commonplace. Making the complicated simple—awesomely simple—that's creativity."

As a class, discuss how we can apply the idea of simplification to enhance our performance and improvisations of our assigned jazz works.



Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Write a short program note for one of the pieces on our concert program. The program note should be written to be accessible to a general audience, giving the non-musician concert-goer specific things to listen for to enhance their understanding of the work. Provide relevant extra-musical considerations, including how race, gender, culture, politics, etc. affected the development of the music.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Prepare John Coltrane's "Alabama" for performance, using both the written music provided by your instructor, as well as recorded performances by John Coltrane. Also prepare by reading about the September 15, 1963 Birmingham, Alabama church bombing, and reading and listening to the Martin Luther King, Jr. eulogy that Coltrane's piece is based on. As a class discuss the responsibility that we as performers have to understand the relationship between music and history, and on ways that we can reflect King's eulogy in our performance of the piece.

Course Materials**Textbooks**

John McNeil, Ryan Nielsen, The Classroom Guide to Jazz Improvisation (Oxford University Press 2024). ISBN: 978-0197614655

Other Resources

Sheet music provided by the instructor

Class Size Information**Class Size**

30

Class Size Category

F - Individualized, skills#based instruction/field practice 30

Diversity and Inclusion

Course Design and Materials: Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

Inclusive Learning Environment: Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

Accessible Instruction: Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

Equitable Teaching Practices: Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies: Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

Ongoing Reflection and Improvement: Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.

All of the performing ensembles at the college are "team sports" where all students must work together to create an inclusive, welcoming environment for the learning objectives to be mastered. A wide variety of music is selected in order to expose students to diverse cultures, historical periods and perspectives. An emphasis is placed on exploring, understanding and incorporating the history of marginalized populations in the United States into performance, such as in the example assignment relating to Coltrane's Alabama.

Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.

This course promotes equitable learning through individualized instruction and feedback, and students building a community of support for each other. For learning objective mastery, students must work together, building each other up; the instructor must critically assess each student individually and devise a path for them to achieve mastery. Jazz performance is a highly interactive activity that emphasizes mutual respect, professional collaboration, and artistic excellence.

Interactions

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.

Jazz is a collaborative art form that requires a significant amount of non-verbal student-to-student interaction for successful mastery of the learning objectives. Based on instructor and peer feedback, students learn to listen and adapt their sound to blend and compliment those around them through the preparation and performance of jazz music in a variety of genres and historical styles.

Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.

The instructor engages students as the band leader, through direct instruction, demonstration, leading discussions, answering questions, and leading them to an individualized, unique and historically/culturally informed interpretation of the music being studied and performed. The jazz tradition has always been a mix of a written and aural tradition, so the instructor as an experienced jazz musician, will demonstrate things like rhythmic interpretation, jazz phrasing, jazz articulation, rehearsal and performance etiquette, etc. and correct and guide students to master these things.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.

Students engage with the content through direct instruction and self-study of the music outside of class. The instructor chooses repertoire partly based on what students registered for the class need to improve on. Readings, such as program notes, blog posts from jazz musicians, and pedagogical articles are assigned or read in class to provide deeper insights into the jazz idiom. Videos and audio examples are used extensively to lead students into learning the unwritten aspects of jazz performance.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).

Students are asked to reflect on their personal progress in learning the assigned jazz repertoire and improvisation technique, and identify areas for improvement, ranging from identifying mistakes in sight-reading to considering how their sound can better incorporate extra-musical considerations to exploring alternate approaches to jazz improvisation.