

ARTS615  
Survey of Jazz Styles – Summer, 2011  
Wesleyan University Graduate Liberal Studies Program

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## **Overview**

In “Survey of Jazz Styles” we will be looking to understand “how jazz works.” We will be exploring historical developments, but it is not a history class. We will be delving into some structural issues, but it is not a music theory class – in fact, a background in music theory is not at all necessary for this course. In essence, we will be developing the awareness and tools that will allow us to understand and evaluate what we are hearing when we listen to live or recorded jazz. We will explore how and why the musicians do what they do, and the larger context into which a performance fits.

While the assignments are fairly straightforward, self-motivation is crucial in this class. To best understand the information, you will want to cross-reference often, putting the new information you learn each week in the context of the music we have already studied. For example, when we study “the jazz solo,” you are strongly encouraged to go back and listen to solos from recordings to which we have listened in the weeks before. By the same token, keep an eye out for assignments coming due so that you are prepared. Perhaps most importantly, absorbing and understanding music can’t be “crammed,” whether you are playing it or listening to it. It is a process that must take place over a period of time. Please take that into consideration when pacing your studying and listening – a little bit every day is much better than a concentrated “cramming session” the night before a listening quiz.

The web service Moodle will be the portal for course documents (including the in-depth Listening Guide and Assignment Addendum), out-of-class discussions and submission of assignments. Sound recordings will be the primary source material for this course, with required at-home listening of 72 songs over the course of the semester (more information later in the syllabus) plus many more in class. We will also read an array of articles and excerpts, all available through the Wesleyan library system’s Online Reserves.

## **Grades:**

Class Participation: 10%

Weekly “Reflections”: 20%

Essays: 50% (12.5% per essay – includes Critical Essay On A Musician, Comparative Essays, Live Performance Review)

Final Project: 20%

## **Attendance Policy:**

You are strongly encouraged to attend every class. While there are no specific penalties for missing a class (aside from “zero” grades for that day’s class participation, which can add up), it is unlikely that any student who misses class with any frequency will be able to succeed. With significant emphasis on listening to recordings (including some not easily available online), the information and perspective presented in class will be very important. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to submit that week’s assignment on time and to catch up on any missed information. You are encouraged to find at least one “buddy” who can share notes with you and/or record the class if you should miss one.

Assignments handed in late will be lowered by one letter grade per class session.

## **Assignments:**

*This is only a brief overview. More details on these assignments can be found in the “Assignment Addendum.”*

- **Weekly “Reflections”:** Before each class session you will be asked to write and submit (on the Discussion Boards on Moodle) brief reflections on what struck you in the week’s music and readings. This is a relatively informal assignment, and the highest six grades (out of eight reflections, since none will be due on the first or last class) will be averaged at the end of the term.
- **Critical Essay on a Musician:** For this assignment you will be asked to pick a musician, listen to some of his or her music and read some history/criticism relevant to that musician. The goal here is to critically and objectively assess the extent to which what you hear is in sync with the “conventional wisdom” about that musician.
- **Comparative Essays:** Each of these essays will compare several assigned pieces of music, picking apart the various elements that make up each performance. The “optional, ungraded essay” assigned early in the semester allows you to pick two songs of your choice (not necessarily from this course) and write analyze in this way to get feedback about whether you are on the right track in anticipation of the graded essays.
- **Live Performance Review:** This will be an analysis of a live jazz performance. This affords you the opportunity to take visuals and surroundings into account when listening, while encouraging you to take advantage of the diverse live jazz offerings in the area in the summer (many of them free). Anything from a large outdoor festival to a formal concert to a low-key restaurant gig can qualify. Alternate arrangements can be made for any student logistically unable to attend a live performance.
- **Final Project:** This will be an in-depth examination of a specific topic relating to jazz. There will be an ongoing dialogue between professor and student to explore, find and narrow down an appropriate topic. It will take the form of a written essay along with a brief in-class presentation in which you will share a summary of your findings.

## **Class-by-class overview**

*Shown in italics after each class date are assignments due that day and quizzes to be given that day. See separate "Assignment Addendum" for descriptions of assignments, information about recordings and other details.*

July 5: Introduction to class; Meet the instruments; How jazz works – the basics

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July 7: Overview of Jazz Styles

Optional non-graded essay: follow format of Comparative Essay, but choose your own topic – pick 2 songs you like that have something in common. Do this if you want feedback on your analytical writing before the graded essays begin.

Research libraries (online or physical) accessible to you that have selections of jazz recordings

Work out logistics of using "E-Res" (online reserves)

Work out logistics for using iTunes and/or Rhapsody and acquire songs.

### **Reading:**

Schoenberg: "The Story of Jazz," "Varieties of Jazz"

### **Listening:**

"Heebie Jeebies" by Louis Armstrong

"King Porter Stomp" by Fletcher Henderson

"Shaw 'Nuff" by Charlie Parker

"Broadway" by Gerry Mulligan

"The Preacher" by Horace Silver

"The Wizard" by Albert Ayler

"Birdland" by Weather Report

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July 12: Jazz Soloists: Improvisation/the Jazz Solo and Jazz Vocals

Begin email dialogue about final project topics

### **Reading:**

Coker: "The Improvised Solo"

Cooke: "The Virtuoso: Louis Armstrong"

Gridley: pg. 66 ("Bix Beiderbecke")

Porter/Ullman/Hazell: pg. 172-180 ("Coleman Hawkins" and "Lester Young")

Shipton: pg. 447-469 ("A Remarkable Partnership")

Listening:

“Dippermouth Blues” by King Oliver  
“Weather Bird” by Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines  
“Singin’ the Blues” by Bix Beiderbecke  
“Summertime” by Sidney Bechet  
“Body and Soul” by Coleman Hawkins  
“Taxi War Dance” by Count Basie  
“I Got Rhythm” by Benny Goodman  
“Solo Flight” by Charlie Christian  
“Mr. J.B. Blues” by Duke Ellington  
“Tiger Rag” by Art Tatum  
“Shaw ‘Nuff” by Charlie Parker  
“Lover Man” by Charlie Parker

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July 14: Jazz Soloists (continued)

Critical Essay On a Musician

Reading:

Szwed: “1959: Multiple Revolutions”  
Hentoff: pg. 201-217 (“Express Trane”)  
Lyons and Perlo: pg. 152-157 (“Miles Davis”)  
Lyons and Perlo: pg. 135-138 (“Ornette Coleman”)

Listening:

“Raise Four” by Thelonious Monk  
“Broadway” by Gerry Mulligan  
“I Feel a Song Coming On” by Sonny Rollins  
“Giant Steps” by John Coltrane  
“So What” by Miles Davis  
“The Inchworm” by John Coltrane  
“Lonely Woman” by Ornette Coleman  
“Rick Kick Shaw” by Cecil Taylor  
“The Wizard” by Albert Ayler  
“Masqualero” by Miles Davis

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July 19: Rhythm Sections

Initial Final Project Proposal

Reading:

Gridley: pg. 122-124 (from “The Count Basie Bands”)

Lyons and Perlo: pg. 116-117 (“Paul Chambers”)  
Lyons and Perlo: pg. 211-212 (“Red Garland”)  
Lyons and Perlo: pg. 317-318 (“Philly Joe Jones”)  
Gridley: pg. 244-247 (from “John Coltrane”)  
Gridley: pg. 282-290 (“Bill Evans”)  
Gridley: pg. 224-228 (from “Miles Davis”)

Listening:

“Taxi War Dance” by Count Basie  
“(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66” by Nat “King” Cole  
“Coppin’ the Bop” by J.J. Johnson  
“Squatty Roo” by Ella Fitzgerald  
“All of You” by Miles Davis  
“Billy Boy” by Miles Davis  
“King of the Road” by Jimmy Smith  
“The Inchworm” by John Coltrane  
“Waltz for Debby” by Bill Evans  
“Masqualero” by Miles Davis  
“Lonely Woman” by Ornette Coleman

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July 21: Jazz Vocals and intro to Tunes (song forms, song types, compositions, etc.)

Comparative Essay #1: Compare any the saxophone solos among any three of the following tracks: “Summertime” by Sidney Bechet, ““Body and Soul” by Coleman Hawkins,” ““Lover Man” by Charlie Parker or “Lonely Woman” by Ornette Coleman. The details of these solos should be the focal point, though other instruments can be cited insofar as their playing is relevant to the saxophone solo (through interactivity, rhythmic context, etc.).

Reading:

Martin: “Types of Songs Found in Jazz”  
Gridley: pg. 369-377 (various aspects of song form)

Listening:

“St. Louis Blues” by Bessie Smith  
“Heebie Jeebies” by Louis Armstrong  
“Every Day I Have the Blues” by Joe Williams and Count Basie  
“Lover Man” by Billie Holiday  
“(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66” by Nat “King” Cole  
“Squatty Roo” by Ella Fitzgerald  
“Lover Man” by Sarah Vaughan  
“Cottontail” by Duke Ellington  
“Cottontail” by Lambert, Hendricks and Ross  
“Medley: I Didn’t Know What Time It Was/All the Things You Are/I Could Write A Book” by Betty Carter

“King Porter Stomp” by Jelly Roll Morton  
“I Got Rhythm” by Benny Goodman  
“Shaw ‘Nuff” by Charlie Parker  
“Coppin’ the Bop” by J.J. Johnson  
“King Porter Stomp” by Fletcher Henderson  
“Lonely Woman” by Ornette Coleman  
“Blues for Pablo” by Miles Davis with Gil Evans

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July 26: Jazz Composers

Revised/Refined Final Project Proposal

Reading:

Gridley: pg. 56 (“Jelly Roll Morton”)  
Cooke: “The Composer: Duke Ellington”  
Shipton: pg. 484-491 (Thelonious Monk section from “Bebop Piano”)  
Shipton: pg. 762-772 (“Charles Mingus”)

Listening:

“King Porter Stomp” by Jelly Roll Morton  
“Black Bottom Stomp” by Jelly Roll Morton  
“East St. Louis Toodle-oo” by Duke Ellington  
“Ko-Ko” by Duke Ellington  
“Cottontail” by Duke Ellington  
“Ruby My Dear” by Thelonious Monk  
“Raise Four” by Thelonious Monk  
“Hackensack” by Thelonious Monk  
“Slop” by Charles Mingus  
“The Shoes of the Fisherman’s Wife Are Some Jive-Ass Slippers” by Charles Mingus  
“Django” by the Modern Jazz Quartet  
“The Preacher” by Horace Silver  
“Sister Sadie” by Horace Silver

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July 28: Fusion, Latin Jazz and “Cross-Pollination” with other styles

Comparative Essay #2: Compare and contrast the trio work among any three of the following tracks: “(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66” by Nat “King” Cole, “Waltz for Debby” by Bill Evans, “Billy Boy” by Miles Davis or “King of the Road” by Jimmy Smith. Focus on function as well as instrument (so, for example, bass lines on “King of the Road” are played on the organ, but would be compared to the bass on the other tracks).

Reading:

Gridley: pg. 341-344 (“Latin Jazz”)  
Porter/Ullman/Hazell: pg. 253-256 (from “The Fifties, Cool and Third Stream”)  
Nicholson: “Fusions and Crossovers”

Listening:

“Blue Rondo a la Turk” by Dave Brubeck  
“Masqualero (live version)” by Miles Davis  
“Birds of Fire” by the Mahavishnu Orchestra  
“Chameleon” by Herbie Hancock  
“Birdland” by Weather Report  
“The Köln Concert, Pt. 2c” by Keith Jarrett  
“Nuages” by Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli  
“Manteca” by Dizzy Gillespie  
“The Girl From Ipanema” by Antonio Carlos Jobim et al.  
“Captain Marvel” by Chick Corea

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August 2: Jazz from the 1980s to the Present

Reading:

Porter: “Traditionalism, Revivalism and the ‘Young Lions,’ 1980 to the present”

Listening:

“Caravan” by Wynton Marsalis  
“Doctone” by Branford Marsalis  
“As Time Goes By” by Dexter Gordon  
“Watermelon Man” by Conrad Herwig  
“Light Blue” by Paul Motian  
“Knives Out” by Brad Mehldau  
“All Matter” by Robert Glasper  
“Northern Lights” by Ken Vandermark  
“My Shining Hour” by Tia Fuller

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August 4: Final Project Presentations

Live Performance Review

Final Project

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## Listening to Music

Jazz is primarily an aural tradition. As such, the ability to hear things is the foremost tool we use in understanding the music. Most of our class time will be devoted to listening.

Some notes about listening assignments:

- Absorbing and understanding music can't be "crammed," whether you are playing it or listening to it. It is a process that must take place over a period of time. Please take that into consideration when pacing your studying and listening – smaller but frequent "chunks" of listening tend to work better than concentrated "cramming sessions" before class (or the night before a paper is due), and your work will bear witness to this fact.

- As with reading, it is useful to be sensitive to your lucidity level when you begin a session of listening. Just as, when tired, one can read the same paragraph over and over without absorbing its content, listening to music without concentrating will have limited study value. If you are simply looking for a general impression of a song, this can be fine. Just don't mistake that sort of listening for the sort of studying necessary to get the most out of the listening for a course like this.

This is especially relevant if music typically functions in your life as "background sound." There is nothing wrong with that, it is simply important to realize that greater levels of attentiveness and concentration are necessary in this context. Just as you would not expect to get much out of reading a chapter from a book while checking your email or cooking dinner, this music warrants your undivided attention when the time comes to really study it.

- Recognize that even under the best of circumstances you can only absorb a limited amount of information in a single listening to a piece of music. Try "zoning in" and listening to more specific elements with each successive listening session. For example:

- Listening #1: Get a general feel for the music.
- Listening #2: Determine the overall structure to the piece (for example, introduction, melody, trumpet solo, piano solo, repeat of melody with the last melody phrase repeated three times).
- Listening #3: Focus on the way the song's melody (if it has one) is played and on the playing of each soloist.
- Listening #4: Focus on the rhythm section.
- Listening #5: Focus on the soloists' interaction with the rhythm section.
- Listening #6: Pick a particular member (or two) of the rhythm section on whom to focus.

This could go on ad infinitum, exploring different elements of a particular musician's performance and the interactions between different combinations of musicians. Your own levels of experience, perceptiveness, seriousness and curiosity may lead you to give a particular piece more or fewer "spins." Just realize that if you are writing an essay and listen to the same song 10 times, you are simply doing your job (and should tell that to any household members who would prefer that you move on to something else).



- Whether you are preparing to write a Comparative Essay or simply doing your weekly listening assignment, look for significant similarities and differences between musicians and recordings. Doing this will give you a deeper understanding of the common elements that define a sub-genre or “movement” and of the divergent elements that define the styles of more individualistic musicians.

As you gain more experience, you will become better able to judge what constitutes a “significant” similarity or difference. For example, “song #1 was 4 minutes long, while song #2 was only 3 minutes and 55 seconds” probably does not qualify as a significant difference, nor does “both songs sound jazzy” qualify as a noteworthy similarity.

- While a listening assignment may pertain to the specific unit to be covered in the upcoming week’s class, you are encouraged to revisit that music following the class. What you have learned in class will likely impact your perception of the music and your ability to hear things within it. Consider this to be another form of reviewing your notes or readings after a class has taken place. Likewise, revisiting tracks from earlier in the semester can be illuminating as you put the pieces together.

### **ITunes/Rhapsody Information**

The 72 listening examples you will be expected to study for class assignments can be either listened to (on your computer and/or a compatible mobile device) with a subscription to Rhapsody ( [www.rhapsody.com](http://www.rhapsody.com) ) or purchased as an “iMix” from ITunes ( [www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com) ) and downloaded. There is more information, including instructions for accessing the playlists, in the Assignment Addendum on Moodle. Which service you choose depends on a few factors:

- Your listening habits. If you want to burn to a CD or listen on most iPods, ITunes will be the way to go. If you already do most of your listening on a computer or mobile device (iPhone, iPod Touch, etc.), then Rhapsody might be a good choice.

- Your budget. A two-month Rhapsody subscription will run you \$20-30 depending on the plan, which makes it (depending on your needs) a potentially low-budget alternative to the \$75 or so that you will spend on ITunes.

- Your inclination towards discovery. Rhapsody offers unlimited listening, so any further exploration of an artist, research for your Final Project and so on will come at no additional cost.

- The likelihood of continued listening when the course ends. This may be hard to predict, of course, but you lose the songs you listen to streaming on Rhapsody as soon as your subscription ends, so to have continued access after the course ends, you would need to purchase the tracks you want and/or continue your subscription. ITunes purchases are yours forever.