

JAZZ IMPROVISATION

MUAP 1125 & 3125 001-003 | FALL 2026

Undergraduate Course Syllabus

In Jazz, improvisation isn't a matter of just making any ol' thing up. Jazz, like any language, has its own grammar and vocabulary. There's no right or wrong, just some choices that are better than others.

-Wynton Marsalis

Course Description

Materials and practices for improvisation or extemporaneous performance in the jazz idiom. Students will study basic jazz harmony through the practical use of scale-chord relationships, jazz notation, ear training, rhythmic concepts, jazz style, and articulation. In addition, to learning the theoretical elements, students will be exposed to and responsible for learning jazz standards. Each student will be required to improvise on the instrument of his/her choice.

This syllabus was created to provide you with an overview of the learning expectations for this course. You can find additional details about class assignments and course policies on the Canvas Course Syllabus page.

Fall 2026 Class Times

- All students enrolled will meet once weekly as a class
- Students can also receive individual instruction TBD throughout the semester.
- Time signup sheet on office board)

MR GARY FREEMAN

My office is in the Cowan Fine Arts Center room 1019 You can reach me at sroberts@uttyler.edu or 417-239-4168

In person and virtual appointments can be scheduled. Please email or call for an appointment. My door is always open, so please do not hesitate to contact me!



Course Learning Objectives

Jazz is America's music. This course pertains to the longstanding traditions of big band and large ensemble jazz performing.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

- 1. Demonstrate rudimentary understanding of basic jazz chord notation and its various scalar components.*
- 2. Demonstrate knowledge of jazz style and important historical aspects as they relate to the appropriate subject.*
- 3. Apply proper jazz style and interpretation into performance practice.*
- 4. Recognize and use the appropriate rhythmic patterns and articulations for any given jazz style.*
- 5. Combine aural, written, and cognitive skills acquired to formulate unique interpretations of improvisation and evaluate their success.*

Required Course Materials

- Your instrument in good working order
- All music provided in class
- A pencil
- iReal app downloaded on any device
- Ability to notate music (finale, sibelius, noteflight)
- A recording device/way to record video

Teaching Methods and Assignments to Achieve Learning Outcomes

- A. Assigned repertoire, technical studies, and pedagogical concepts will be taught.
- B. Performance experiences will be achieved in a myriad of performance opportunities.
- C. Students will have the opportunity to apply pedagogical and rehearsal techniques during student-led sectional rehearsals.
- D. Artist performances and recordings of assigned repertoire may be analyzed and evaluated as performance models.
- E. Master classes with guest instructors may be offered as pedagogical enhancements.
- F. Through active participation, students will discover about each work to be performed the following (but not limited to): composer information, analytical evaluation, notational considerations, individual performance challenges represented, recordings reviewed working with composers, or other sources consulted in preparation for the performance.

Supplementary Materials

Additional instructional materials will be provided for students on canvas. It is the students' responsibility to become familiar with the course canvas page and frequently check for updates throughout the week.



[Link to UT Tyler Spotify Playlist](#)



Daily Grades/Assignments

- A. Quality and Consistency of preparation
- B. Consistency of preparation
- C. Consistency in progress
- D. Attendance/Punctuality

% of total Grade

40%

Playing Exams

- A. Performed at the end of each unit
- B. Demonstrate comprehension of learning objectives from unit
- C. Administered virtually
- D. Students will be responsible for recording and submitting

% of total Grade

40%

Midterm Exam

% of total Grade

10%

Final Exam

- A. Demonstrate chord/scale knowledge
- B. Demonstrate repertoire knowledge
- C. Perform transcription from memory

% of total Grade

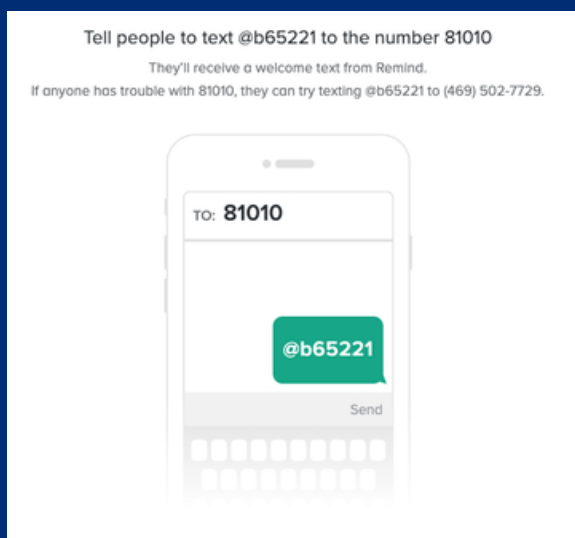
10%

Grading Scale

A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%
C	70%-79%
D	60%-69%
F	Less than 60%

INFORMATION

Sign up for the Course Remind



Assignment Submissions

All assignments must be submitted by time/date listed on the course schedule. No late assignments will be allowed unless there are emergency situations and documentation is provided. I highly encourage you to start working on your assignments early. This ensures you have time to contact the appropriate person(s) if unforeseen technological issues impact your ability to complete the assignment. Technical problems, even if they are not your fault, do not automatically qualify you for an extension or a "do-over" for the assignment.

Make-Up Assignments

You will be given the opportunity to make-up missed quizzes, exams, and assignments for excused absences only. Excused absences include documented emergencies (e.g. doctor's note, subpoena) or school-related activity. Vacations, regularly scheduled doctor's appointments, and work schedules do not qualify as exceptional reasons and will not be accepted as an excused absence.

Policies

- Attendance is required at all rehearsals, masterclasses, recitals and concerts.
- Students will need to complete the Attendance form for every class they are in attendance.
- Please contact the instructor at least 24 hours in advance if you must cancel a lesson.
- Be on time and warmed up for each rehearsal. Bring all assigned music and your instrument and all parts in good working order.
- Each student is expected to practice his/her assignments on a daily basis.

**It always seems
impossible until it's
done.** - Nelson Mandela

Technology Policy

In order to ensure that you can participate in all of the activities within the course, you will need access to a smart device (phone, tablet, and/or computer). If you do not have a smart device available to bring to class, please email me and we can arrange for a rental device for class purposes.

Please also check out a USB microphone from the music office to assist in recorded assignments.

TRACK 1

For students who have never taken jazz improvisation

WEEK	TOPIC	EXAM
Week 1	Introduction/Placement	
Week 2	Making Melodies & Modes	
Week 3	Modes & So What	P.E. 1 - Melodies
Week 4	Modes & So What	
Week 5	Dominants & The Blues	P.E. 2 - So What
Week 6	Blues & Blues Melodies	
Week 7	Blues & Blues Melodies	
Week 8	Blues/ii-V-I Progression	
Week 9	ii-V-I Progression/ Autumn Leaves	P.E. 3 - Blues
Week 10	Autumn Leaves	
Week 11	Autumn Leaves	
Week 12	minor ii-V-i progression	P.E. 4 Autumn Leaves
Week 13	Blue Bossa	
Week 14	Blue Bossa	
Week 15	Blue Bossa	P.E. 5 - Blue Bossa

Schedule is subject to change at any time.

TRACK 2

For students who have completed track 1

WEEK	TOPIC	EXAM
Week 1	Blue Bossa	
Week 2	Blue Bossa	
Week 3	Blue Bossa	P.E. 1 - Blue Bossa
Week 4	Straight, No Chaser	
Week 5	Straight, No Chaser	
Week 6	Straight, No Chaser	P.E. 2 - Straight, No Chaser
Week 7	All The Things You Are	
Week 8	All The Things You Are	
Week 9	All The Things You Are	
Week 10	All The Things You Are	P.E. 3 - A.T.T.Y.A.
Week 11	Rhythm Changes/Oleo	
Week 12	Rhythm Changes/Oleo	
Week 13	Rhythm Changes/Oleo	
Week 14	Rhythm Changes/Oleo	P.E. 4 - Oleo
Week 15	Review tunes	P.E. 5 - Final Exam

Schedule is subject to change at any time.

TRACK 3

For students who have completed track 1 and track 2

WEEK	TOPIC	EXAM
Week 1	Introductions/Placement	
Week 2	<u>Caldonia - Louis Jordan</u>	
Week 3	<u>Caldonia - Louis Jordan</u>	
Week 4	<u>Caldonia - Louis Jordan</u>	P.E. 1 - Caldonia
Week 5	<u>Watermelon Man - Dexter Gordon</u>	
Week 6	<u>Watermelon Man - Dexter Gordon</u>	
Week 7	<u>Watermelon Man - Dexter Gordon</u>	P.E. 2 - Watermelon Man
Week 8	<u>Bye Bye Blackbird - Sonny Stitt</u>	
Week 9	<u>Bye Bye Blackbird - Sonny Stitt</u>	
Week 10	<u>Bye Bye Blackbird - Sonny Stitt</u>	
Week 11	<u>Bye Bye Blackbird - Sonny Stitt</u>	P.E. 3 - Bye Bye Blackbird
Week 12	Student's Choice	
Week 13	Student's Choice	
Week 14	Student's Choice	
Week 15	Student's Choice	P.E. 4 - ??

Schedule is subject to change at any time.

Student Resources:

Faculty can update student resources to provide additional supports appropriate for each course.

Resources to assist you in the course

- [UT Tyler Student Accessibility and Resource \(SAR\) Office](#) (provides needed accommodations to students with document needs related to access and learning)
- [UT Tyler Writing Center](#)
- [The Mathematics Learning Center](#)
- [UT Tyler PASS Tutoring Center](#)
- [UT Tyler Supplemental Instruction](#)
- [Upswing \(24/7 online tutoring\)](#) - covers nearly all undergraduate course areas
- [Robert Muntz Library](#) and [Library Liaison](#)
- [Canvas 101](#) (learn to use Canvas, proctoring, [Unicheck](#), and other software)
- Digital Support Toolkit (for supported courses only. Students are automatically enrolled in the toolkit for supported courses)
- LIB 422 -- Computer Lab where students can take a proctored exam
- [The Career Success Center](#)
- [UT Tyler Testing Center](#)
- [Office of Research & Scholarship Design and Data Analysis Lab](#)

Resources available to UT Tyler Students

- [UT Tyler Counseling Center](#) (available to all students)
- [MySSP App](#) (24/7 access to Student Support Program counseling through phone or chat and online wellness resources available in a variety of languages)
- [Student Assistance and Advocacy Center](#)
- [Military and Veterans Success Center](#) (supports for our military-affiliated students)
- [UT Tyler Patriot Food Pantry](#)
- [UT Tyler Financial Aid and Scholarships](#)
- [UT Tyler Student Business Services](#) (pay or set up payment plans, etc.)
- [UT Tyler Registrar's Office](#)
- [Office of International Programs](#)
- [Title IX Reporting](#)
- [Patriots Engage](#) (available to all students. Get engaged at UT Tyler.)

University Policies and Information

Withdrawing from Class

Students may [withdraw](#) (drop) from this course using the [Withdrawal Portal](#). Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully [read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions](#) on using the [Withdrawal portal](#).

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. **CAUTION #1:** Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the [Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule](#). **CAUTION #2:** All international students

must check with the [Office of International Programs](#) before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. **CAUTION #3:** All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. **CAUTION #4:** All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the [Military and Veterans Success Center](#).

* Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).

Final Exam Policy

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the Dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members must maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in place of a grade *only when all of the following conditions are met*: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all coursework or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor, and (c) the student presents these reasons before the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to meet all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has yet to be assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or NC. If the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis, this may adversely affect the student's academic standing.

Grade Appeal Policy

Disputes regarding grades must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade by filing a Grade Appeal Form with the instructor who assigned the grade. A grade appeal should be used when the student thinks the final course grade awarded does not reflect the grades earned on assessments or follow the grading scale as documented in the syllabus. The student should provide the rationale for the grade appeal and attach supporting document about the grades earned. The form should be sent via email to the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member reviews the rationale and supporting documentation and completes the instruction section of the form.

The instructor should return the form to the student, even if a grade change is made at this level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the department from which the grade was issued. In situations where there is an allegation of capricious grading, discrimination, or unlawful actions, appeals may go beyond the Chairperson to the Dean or the Dean's designee of the college from which the grade was issued, with that decision being final. The Grade Appeal form is found in the [Registrar's Form Library](#).

NOTE: The Grade Appeal Form is different from the Application for Appeal form submitted to the Student Appeals Committee, which does not rule on grade disputes as described in this policy.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical, and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler/> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <https://www.uttyler.edu/disability-services>, the SAR office located in the Robert Muntz Library, LIB 460, email saroffice@uttyler.edu, or call 903.566.7079."

Military Affiliated Students

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. The [Military and Veterans Success Center \(MVSC\)](#) has campus resources for military-affiliated students. The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Students on an F-1 Visa

To remain in compliance with Federal Regulations requirements you must do the following:

- Traditional face-to-face classes: Attend classes on the regular meeting days/times.
- Hybrid Classes: Attend all face-to-face classes convened by the instructor according to the schedule set for your specific course.
- Online course: Only one online course can count toward your full-time enrollment. Students are expected to be fully engaged and meet all requirements for the online course.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the [Student Conduct and Discipline policy](#) in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

FERPA

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in [University Policy 5.2.3](#). The course instructor will follow all requirements to protect your confidential information.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for University Events or Activities](#) as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Religious Holidays

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for Religious Holy Days as noted in the Catalog](#).

Absence for Pregnant Students

This course follows the requirements of Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, SB 597/HB 1361 to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students. Part of the supports afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty who are informed by a student of needing this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison. NOTE: Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison [in order to](#) receive these supports. Students should reach out to the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and also complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form](#).

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.