

**MUS 258 • Elementary Jazz Improvisation**  
UNLV  
**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Study and application of the techniques involved in jazz improvisation as related to all styles of the jazz idiom.

This course is a methodology course on the construction & development of Improvisation, the premise behind America's only true art form, Jazz. Live Performance; Audio & Video recordings introduce the student to the techniques, styles, & performers found within the jazz tradition. Key fundamentals will turn the student from a beginning improviser into a skilled musician & knowledgeable teacher.

Music is about communicating – Improvisation is the art of creating new music spontaneously thus communicating musically at the highest level. Learning to play jazz and improvise is like learning to speak a new language. In order to learn a new language, we must immerse ourselves in that language. Whether you want to or not, listening is so important and should be a part of your daily practice.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- The Student will synthesize through Imitation, Assimilation and Innovation
- The Student will analyze Jazz language by using Numbers versus the thought of actual pitches themselves
- The Student will implement all knowledge through ALL 12 keys
- The Student will formulate Jazz improvisational language through the concepts of Sound, Time & Ideas
- The Student will recognize the Major, Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> & various forms of the Minor Scales
- The Student will identify the Modes
- The Student will demonstrate by applying Arpeggios' & Extensions'
- The Student will describe basic Chord Progression Nomenclature
- The Student will construct Jazz improvisational language through basic Harmony (relationships of scales/modes to chords)
- The Student will formulate a NEW look at Classical music & beyond
- The Student will differentiate the various styles of Jazz
- The Student will list both the names & the instruments of the most influential jazz musicians in addition to the famous groups with which they played.

## **LECTURE CONTEN**

The basics-how to improvise musically

- The Elements of Music found in Improvisation; i.e. Jazz
- How to Listen
- Learning Tunes
- Transcribing

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGIES**

- Lecture
- Group Discussion
- Group Playing Participation
- Audio & Video Presentations
- In Class Activities & Participation
- Listening Assignments

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

- Required Out-of-class Practicing & Listening
- Required In-class Participation, Practice & Commitment to Explore the unknown Musically
- Two Listening Assignments (opinion based)
- One Solo Transcription

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR *MyUNLV* EMAIL & PERSONAL EMAIL REGULARLY!!!!**

## **TEXT**

NO TEXT REQUIRED – various handouts, recordings and other materials to be handed out IN CLASS as needed. Supplemental App: iReal Pro

## **GRADING**

- Attendance & Participation = 120 points
- Assignments & Quizzes = 90 points
  - Listening Assignments = 20 points each (40 points total)
  - Other Assignments & Quizzes = 50 points total
- Exams = 45 points each (90 points total)

**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE = 300**

A = 300 - 271 points equals 90-100%

B = 270 - 241 points equals 80-89%

C = 240 - 211 points equals 70-79%

D = 210 - 181 points equals 60-69%

F = 180 - 0 points below 59%

## Make-ups

Tests may only be made up for exceptional circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency) & only if the student has contacted the instructor PRIOR to the start of our class session. Additionally, the instructor reserves the right to refuse a makeup exam.

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR MyUNLV EMAIL & PERSONAL EMAIL REGULARLY!!!!**

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Week 1

*Wednesday 8/31* – introduction; discuss syllabus; listening assignment; transcription assignment; questionnaire; talk about SLO's if time

*Friday 9/2* – review SLO's; explain scale types; go over basic theory (3rds & 7ths); common chord nomenclature; explain arpeggio's & extension's; explain modes; explain ii7 – V7 – I's; play major's & mixolydian's in ALL 12 keys; listen; **Assignment:** write out ii7 – V7 – I's in all keys

### Week 2

*Wednesday 9/7* – review scale types, modes, chord nomenclature, arpeggio's & extension's, & ii7 – V7 – I's in all 12 keys; review the number system again; play selected scales, arpeggio's & extension's, & ii7 – V7 – I's in all 12 keys; have students quiz one another; listen

*Friday 9/9* – create chord progressions & look for ii7 – V7 – I's; select one of the example progressions & discuss the 3rds & 7ths; play over this progression; listen; **Assignment:** continue to practice your ii7 – V7 – I's in all 12 keys; challenge yourself in the minor key center as well

### Week 3

*Wednesday 9/14* – review & play all major's, mixolydian's; 3rds & 7ths; introduction to the minor scale forms; explain the application of scales & chords (forwards & backwards); talk about simple idea creations; listen

*Friday 9/16* – continue to recognize ii7 – V7 – I's or V7 – I's in lead sheets; review the minor scale forms; review the blues; transcribe a 1-2 measure lick/idea; play in a different key; listen; **Assignment:** practice

### Week 4

*Wednesday 9/21* – review, review, review; how to create an idea; everyone creates ideas; everyone plays someone else’s idea in a new key; start to write a blues; listen; **Assignment:** transcribe a one measure lick/idea & write in out in all 12 keys for future use in your blues assignments. Context is important so make sure to include the chord changes over which the lick is played. Drummers, you can use the keyboard for this assignment OR learn 5 different licks on the drums. DUE ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

*Friday 9/23* – the blues reviewed; play the blues in a selected key; explore the Lydian dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord & scale; don’t go crazy; **Assignment:** compose two melodies over a blues key, tempo & style of your choice. One must be a lyric melody while the other must be for an instrumentalist.

### **Week 5**

*Wednesday 9/28* – listen to everyone perform their assignments on the blues

*Friday 9/30* – finish listening to everyone’s blues’ assignments if needed; improvising on one note; rhythmic & melodic improvisation; listen

### **Week 6**

*Wednesday 10/5* – introduction to ‘Rhythm Changes;’ review for mid-term

*Friday 10/7* – review for mid-term

### **Week 7**

*Wednesday 10/12* – mid-term exam

*Friday 10/14* – listening assignment # 1 due; review mid-term tests; play some blues & further explore & play over ‘Rhythm Changes;’ listen

### **Week 8 (usually this week is your mid-term) – mention Transcriptions**

*Wednesday 10/19* – **NO CLASSES** – *Presidential Debate on Campus* – **Assignment:** to write a 12 bar blues melody including a title, one for each candidate, in reflection of the candidate’s personality traits and your manner of paying tribute to them through a blues melody.

*Friday 10/21* – **NO CLASSES** – *Presidential Debate on Campus* – **Assignment:** to explain your melodic choices for each of your candidate’s blues melodies in a one paragraph, typed and attached, paper

## Week 9

*Wednesday 10/26* – collect Presidential assignments; speak about the transcription project; continue discussion & playing over ‘Rhythm Changes;’ play in different keys; review Lydian mode; introduce Phrygian, Aeolian and Locrian modes; listen

*Friday 10/28* – **NO CLASSES** – **Assignment:** 1.) memorize the chord changes on ‘Rhythm Changes;’ 2.) to listen to three different artistic versions of this standard song form and compare each of them in a single, one page, typed, review. This assignment again is opinion based.

## Week 10

*Wednesday 11/2* - learn ‘I got Rhythm;’ play melody in different keys – students choice; improvise over ‘Rhythm Changes;’ open up conversation about popular standard tunes & how what we are learning relates to all songs; listen

*Friday 11/4* – discuss transcription project again; ideas, ideas, ideas; listen

## Week 11

*Wednesday 11/9* – listen; **Assignment:** to listen to, learn, & memorize a tune which you will play in class (melody & chord changes) from the following list: *There Will Never Be Another You, Softly As In A Morning Sunrise, Bye Bye Blackbird, or Just In Time.* DUE ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

*Friday 11/11* – **NO CLASSES** – continue to work on your assignment

## Week 12

*Wednesday 11/16* – play for one another, classmates give feedback; transcription help if needed; listen

*Friday 11/18* - play for one another, classmates give feedback; transcription help if needed; listen

## Week 13

*Wednesday 11/23* – transcription assignment due; push your limits playing, listening & creating ideas; listen

*Friday 11/25* – **NO CLASSES** – *Thanksgiving Break* – no assignment

## Week 14

*Wednesday 11/30* – group playing; 3rds & 7ths; scales, arpeggio's & extension's;  
review for final exam listen

*Friday 12/2* – listening assignment # 2 due; group playing; 3rds & 7ths; scales,  
arpeggio's & extension's; review for final exam listen

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR *MyUNLV* EMAIL & PERSONAL EMAIL REGULARLY!!!!**

UNLV Policies (see next page)

**Academic Misconduct**—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

**Copyright**—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)**—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Religious Holidays Policy**—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor **within** the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or **within** the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Transparency in Learning and Teaching**—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

**Incomplete Grades**—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

### Library Resources

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is

[https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians\\_by\\_subject](https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

**Tutoring and Coaching**—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

**UNLV Writing Center**—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

**Rebelmail**—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always [@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:@unlv.nevada.edu). **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

**Final Examinations**—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

**Any other class specific information**—(e.g., absences, make-up exams, status reporting, extra credit policies, plagiarism/cheating consequences, policy on electronic devices, specialized department or college tutoring programs, bringing children to class, policy on recording classroom lectures, etc.)