

Improvisation I

MUSA 2217

Instructor: Dr. Chris Reyman

Office: FFA 133

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Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30am-12:20pm

Location: FFA 101

Office Hours:

Mondays-Thursdays 10:30-11:30AM

*Please let me if you'd like to meet (even if it is during my scheduled office hours). I will do my best to make myself available at times other than these listed - just ask!

Required Materials:

- 1) staff paper for assignments and notes
- 2) metronome or metronome app
- 3) ability to listen to recordings while playing your instrument
- 4) ability to record assignments with video and audio
- 5) all social distancing and hygienic materials (face mask, hand sanitizer, etc.)
- 6) access to your instrument and practice space off campus

Attendance policy:

Students will be given daily grades for participation and progress in class. If a student is not in class (including tardiness), they will not receive credit for that class period. Of course, you will be excused for university-related events as long as they are approved by me at least two weeks in advance via email correspondence. **DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE SICK.** Each student will be given 3 excused absences due to illness; further absences can be made up on a case by case basis. Please stay in communication with me when you miss class for any reason.

Course Description

Introduction to improvisational practices of commercial styles focused on theoretical analysis, ear training and improvising with diatonic melodic and harmonic devices.

Course Goals

- Develop music skills through listening, analysis and performance
- Demonstrate deep listening and theoretical skills through transcription and improvisation

- Develop flexibility to adapt to ever-changing musical environments

Course Activities

- 1) ear training
- 2) theory tests
- 3) playing assignments
- 4) listening assignments
- 5) theory analysis
- 6) transcription projects

Assignments

MODULE I: Cantaloupe Island

Week 1: syllabus, intro to improvisation

Assignment #1 (5pts): Get into the Groove – improvising over I chord/tonality

Week 2-4: Cantaloupe Island and Transcription Project #1

- Listen to Herbie Hancock's Cantaloupe Island. See if you can keep track of the 16-measure form throughout the entire recording. Use cues from the rhythm section (accents/fills leading to phrases, especially the beginning of the form) and the harmonies (improviser, piano and bass) to keep track of where you are in the form.
- Start **Transcription Project #1** (Cantaloupe Island), **due October 13** (see Assignment in blackboard)
- Practice/learn the melody along with the original recording and the play-along version
- Pentatonic Scales (major and minor) and Circle of 5ths
- **Assignment #2 (5pts):** Play the melody 2 times through (32 measures), then improvise using the F minor pentatonic scale 2 times through (32 measures), then play the melody 2 times to end (32 measures). Listen to your recording. Turn in your recording. **Due Sept. 8**
- Modes
 - Major = Ionian
 - Dominant = Mixolydian
 - Minor = Dorian
- play/sing all 12 major scales, 1 octave, moving through the circle of 5ths (up by 4th or down by 5th)
- **Assignment #3 (5pts):** play/sing all 12 Mixolydian modes, 1 octave, moving through the circle of 5ths (up by 4th or down by 5th) **Due Sept. 15**
- Practice Cantaloupe Island improvisation focusing on the groove and phrasing. Improvise through 2 choruses (32 measures) with good, clear 4-measure phrasing and rhythms that lock into the rhythm section (piano, bass, drums). **Due Sept. 20.**

Week 5-6:

- Play/sing through the scales/modes that correspond to the 3 chords for Cantaloupe Island. Play/sing eighth-notes in time with the track and change scales when the chord changes. You can play/sing in any octave you want, but stick to stepwise motion.
- **QUIZ 1 (10pts):** play/sing all 12 Dorian modes, 1 octave, moving through the circle of 5ths (up by 4th or down by 5th) **Due Sept. 27.**
- **Assignment #4 (5pts):** Improvise through Cantaloupe Island with the play-along recording using the F minor pentatonic scale and the 3 scales that correspond to the 3 chords of the composition. Be sure to focus on performing with good time and style, making clear 4-measure phrases. **Due Oct. 4**

Week 7: EXAM #1 (20pts),

Oct. 11 Execute the following things:

- Melody 2 times
- Improvise using F minor pentatonic scale 1 chorus
- Improvise using the scales/modes that go with each chord for 2 choruses

Focus on performing with good rhythm that locks in with the rhythm section and clear 4-measure phrasing that has a distinct beginning and end.

Oct. 13 Transcription: perform transcription along with recording. Turn in notation of transcription.

MODULE 2: The Blues

Week 8-9: B-flat blues

- Listen to examples of blues recordings. Count the 12-measure form using cues from the rhythm section (drums and harmony) to keep track of where you are in the form.
- Start **Transcription Project #2** (Blues on My Mind), **due December 1.**
- Learn the riff blues melodies (C-Jam Blues, Sonny Moon for Two, Night Train, Centerpiece) from the recording and practice playing them with the B-flat blues play-along.
- **Assignment # 5 (5pts):** Improvise through 2 choruses of blues (24 measures) with blues scales. **Due Oct. 25.**

Week 10: **QUIZ 2** (10pts):

- Play/sing through riff blues melodies (2 choruses = 24 measures) from memory with play-along
- Improvise through blues with blues scales and parts of riff blues melodies (2 choruses = 24 measures)
- melodies. **Due Nov. 1.**

Week 11: Jazz Blues form

- Outline triads, 7th and 9th chords with the F blues play-along.
- ii V I
- Secondary dominants

- Lead sheet melodies (Straight No Chaser, Billie's Bounce)

Week 12:

- Improvise through the jazz blues in this format:
 - Measures 1-7 use blues scales
 - Measures 8-12 outline the chords
- **Transcription Project #2 check-in (5pts)** first chorus (12 measures) of the transcription. **Due Nov. 10.**

Week 13

- Play/sing through the modes that correspond to each chord of the jazz blues form
- **Assignment #6 (5pts):** Improvise through 2 choruses of the jazz blues in this format:
 - Measures 1-7 use blues scales
 - Measures 8-12 outline the chords
 - Listen back to your recording
 - Re-record 2 choruses and turn in. **Due Nov. 17.**

Week 14-15: Preparation for the Final Exam

- **Assignment #7 (5pts):** Perform 1 riff blues melody of your choosing (2 choruses = 24 measures) and improvising through 2 choruses of the jazz blues using any/all concepts we have worked on. **Due Nov. 24.**
- Wrap up progress on Transcription Project #2
- Practice blues improvisation
- Practice blues melodies

FINAL EXAM Dec. 8, 1-3:45PM (20pts):

- Perform 2 riff blues melodies
- Improvise through the bass blues form using blues scales
- Improvise through the jazz blues form in the following format:
 - Blues scale for 1 chorus
 - Outline chords for 2 choruses
- Perform Transcription Project #2 and turn in notation

Grade Breakdown

Assignments: 40%
 Quizzes: 20%
 Transcription projects = 20%
 Exams: 20%

Statement for Accommodations and Support

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact *The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)* at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/CASS.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID 19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org

**I want this class to be beneficial to you individually. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any concerns you may have about a particular assignment, the class as a whole or anything else.

***The content of this course is subject to change at any time. I will be adjusting the course to fit the particular needs and interests of this group of students. If anything changes in how I will evaluate you, I will let you know as soon as I can.