
Although this course outline presents jazz chronologically, the music I will play in each class is not rigidly confined to specific decades. My classes are as interactive as possible; your reactions, questions, and observations are welcome, and help direct the discussion.

Class One: The Diversity of Jazz and Its Historical Roots
Jazz embraces a great variety of music, but there are characteristic that unite its diverse styles linking all of them as jazz. By focused, active listening, Class One introduces seven “markers” that distinguish jazz from other types of music.

Class Two: New Orleans and the Jazz Solo
The idea the New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz is not a myth, and in this class we focus on why New Orleans society was so conducive to the development of jazz. Then we introduce the genius of the jazz solo, a totally new phenomenon in music and the real reason behind jazz’s reverence for Louis Armstrong.

Class Three: Composition and improvisation (the Innovation of Jelly Roll Morton and the Genius of Duke Ellington)
The originator of jazz composition was a Creole musician, Jelly Roll Morton. This class also focuses on the influential music of The Red Hot Peppers. Duke Ellington’s music – the “soundtrack of a people” – became a cornerstone of jazz, expanding the music’s palette into orchestral form.

Class Four: Jazz Becomes “Modern” Under the Banner of Bebop
Out of the ranks of the big bands came soloists, such as vocalist Billie Holiday and tenor saxophonist Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins. The predominance of the soloist in jazz evolved into modern jazz, also known as “bebop.” This class examines the music of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and the young Miles Davis.

Class Five: “Hard Bop,” Born in the 1950s, Is Alive and Well in the 21st Century
After bebop, there were two significant trends in jazz: one was in the direction of “funky,” hard-driving blues. This class focuses on the hard-bop bands of Miles Davis, early John Coltrane, Horace Silver, Clifford Brown, and Art Blakey; and also the “modal” style of John Coltrane, Miles Davis (in another incarnation), pianist Bill Evans. Wayne Shorter, and others. Most jazz played today on the radio and in jazz clubs derives directly from this style.

Class Six: Modal Jazz and Sensuous Individualism
Through the use of “modes” (scale patterns), Davis, Coltrane, Bill Evans, George Russell and others challenged improvisers to become more lyrical and less confined to harmonic structure. Composer and bassist Charles Mingus explored the elasticity and emotional range of jazz. This class focuses on Coltrane, Mingus, and how they provided the framework for recent artists like Herbie Hancock and Keith Jarrett and contemporary masters like Wynton Marsalis and Josh Redman.