

Jazz Improvisation | Spring 2019

Prof. Kris Tiner

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Bakersfield College

MUSC B8

CRN 33636

T/Th 11:10AM-12:35PM

Classroom: PAC-2

1 Credit

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Improvise a solo in a jazz setting with appropriate technique, phrasing, and harmonic choices.
2. Analyze and discuss the elements of creative improvisation in terms of style, phrasing, motivic development, and basic harmonic theory.
3. Accurately complete dictation and transcription assignments of increasing complexity.
4. Perform assigned scales, arpeggios, and melodic patterns on the student's primary instrument or voice.

These outcomes will be assessed through performance skills exams, dictation and transcription assignments, written critiques, and participation in classroom activities.

Catalog Course Description

This course is an introduction to the creative practice of improvisation for all instrumentalists and vocalists. Fundamentals of jazz theory are addressed through practical application, and musicianship skills are developed through dictation, transcription, analysis, and performance of standard jazz tunes, melodic patterns, rhythms, and chord progressions. Students will explore different stylistic and idiomatic approaches including motivic, harmonic, modal, and free improvisation.

Introduction

This goal of this course is to develop your musicianship and creativity, no matter what style or genre of music you usually play. Prior jazz performance experience is not necessary. Students should have successfully completed the prerequisite course MUSC B2 Basic Elements of Music, and should be able to play major and minor scales and arpeggios in all twelve keys.

Students are expected to dedicate **at least 30 minutes of daily practice** to the assignments for this course on their primary instrument or voice. Percussionists will practice the material on mallets or keyboard. By mastering the fundamental tools and expanding your musical vocabulary, you will be able to take the next step towards creative self-expression on your instrument!

"The interest in the language of art is quite simply an interest in the tool that can lead one to being honest, which used without great care leads one inevitably to the lie, the cliché, the standardized, and to all one thinks one thinks and feels rather than to what one actually does."

- Robert Motherwell

"Music always tells you what to do next."

- Steve Lacy

Course Materials

Required for treble clef instrumentalists and vocalists:

Patterns for Jazz: For Treble Clef Instruments, by Jerry Coker
1982, Alfred Music, ISBN 9780898987034

Required for bass clef instrumentalists and vocalists:

Patterns for Jazz: For Bass Clef Instruments, by Jerry Coker
1986, Alfred Music, ISBN 9780769230177

Recommended for rhythm section players and Jazz Studies majors:

The Berklee Book of Jazz Harmony, by Joe Mulholland and Tom Hojnacki
2013, Hal Leonard, ISBN 9780876391426

You will also need a **music notebook** (or a 3-ring binder filled with staff paper) to use for taking notes during class and for completing written assignments. Music notebooks are available in the BC bookstore or at any local music store. PDF staff paper can be downloaded from the class website.

Spotify Playlist

Students are required to have a Spotify Premium account for the duration of this course. Sign up at spotify.com/us/student for the student discount (\$0.99 for 3 months then \$4.99/month). On our class website there is a link to the **Music B8 Jazz Improvisation** playlist on Spotify. This playlist contains all of the music you will need to study for this course. Once you are logged in to Spotify, click the “follow” button on this playlist so it will show up in your account.

Exams and Assignments

Skills Exams (4 x 150 points each) – 60% of Final Grade

You will demonstrate your progress as an improviser at regular intervals in this course. Each performance skills exam will consist of assigned activities from the *Patterns for Jazz* book, as well as additional improvisation and skills assignments to be determined. These will be one-on-one sessions. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board outside the band room.

Notebook Assignments (4 x 100 points each) – 40% of Final Grade

Use your music notebook to complete transcription assignments, composition assignments, and written observations about recordings that are discussed in class. Keep it organized. Notebooks will be reviewed at each skills exam.

Grading Scale

There is no curve. Final grades are assigned based on a 1,000-point scale:

900+	A
800–899	B
700–799	C
600–699	D
0–599	F

Attendance Policy

District policies require instructors to drop all non-attending students. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Students have up to 24 hours after an absence to email the instructor with a valid excuse. Absences will only be excused for serious and/or compelling reasons. After the equivalent of two weeks (six class hours) of unexcused absences, or any unexcused absence during the first two weeks of the semester, the student may be dropped or withdrawn from the class.

In the case of an unavoidable absence it is the student's responsibility to keep up with the class progress, download any missed handouts from the class website, and obtain a copy of the lecture notes from another student. Lectures will not be posted online. Lecture topics and assignments are listed in the course schedule below. The grading scale is clearly presented in this syllabus so that students will be able to track their own progress in the course. If you have a specific question or concern, please make an appointment to meet with the instructor during office hours.

Communication

It is important that students check their college-assigned email account regularly. When sending email to krtiner@bakersfieldcollege.edu please be sure to include **MUSIC B8** in the subject line.

When emailing your instructors, a little bit of courtesy and professionalism goes a LONG way. State your request clearly, be respectful, and don't use informal language or texting abbreviations, emojis, etc.

Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing accommodation, including those who had an IEP in high school, should make requests to Disabled Students Programs and Services in CSS-10 (661-395-4334). Requests for accommodations require appropriate advance notice to avoid a delay in services. Please discuss approved accommodations with me so we can work together to ensure your access and success at BC.

Class Policies and Academic Integrity

- ▶ Bring your instrument, textbooks, notebook, this syllabus and all handouts to each class.
- ▶ Mobile phones and personal electronic devices (including laptops) will be turned OFF or set to SILENT and put away before the start of class.
- ▶ To preserve academic freedom for both the instructor and students, video and audio recording is not permitted during class.
- ▶ As per campus policy, food and candy are not allowed in the classroom. Beverages are allowed as long as they are in a container with a lid.
- ▶ Please do not wear strongly scented perfume or cologne in class - it's not fun for people with allergies.
- ▶ Do not begin packing up your belongings until you have been excused by the instructor.
- ▶ Leaving class early is an unwelcome disruption, and it constitutes an unexcused absence, unless your reason for leaving has been cleared with the instructor in advance.
- ▶ Plagiarizing, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a zero grade on the assignment, and may lead to a failing grade in the course and disciplinary action by the College.
- ▶ Final grades earned in this course cannot be changed once posted, except in case of a clerical error.
- ▶ By enrolling in this course, you agree to the conditions of this syllabus.
- ▶ Should you choose to drop this course, it is your responsibility to notify Admissions and Records and also communicate your decision to the instructor.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

WEEK 1 – Introduction to Creative Improvisation

- ▶ Approaches to improvisation: melodic, harmonic, modal, motivic, intervallic, blues, free, etc.
- ▶ Examples of improvisation in folk, classical, popular, and world music traditions
- ▶ Importance of developing a personal sound
- ▶ Solo and collective improvisation strategies
- ▶ How do you practice improvisation?

PFJ #29, 30

WEEK 2 – The Language of Jazz Improvisation

- ▶ Anatomy of a jazz solo
- ▶ Transcription, transposition, variation and permutation of simple ideas (“The Lick”, etc.)
- ▶ Importance of rhythm, practicing with the metronome, applying metric subdivisions
- ▶ Practicing with play-along recordings
- ▶ Basic dictation and rhythmic call-and-response exercises
- ▶ Review major scales and triads in all 12 keys

PFJ #1, 3, 11, 12

WEEK 3 – Major Chord-Scale Relationships

- ▶ Major 6th and 7th chords
- ▶ Working with chord-scale numbers, arpeggiating chord progressions
- ▶ Major and minor pentatonic scales and applications

PFJ #15, 19, 20, 44, 50, 52, 56

WEEK 4 – Upper Extensions and Alterations

- ▶ Upper extensions and alterations: 9th, 11th, 13th
- ▶ Non-chordal tones (p. 31)
- ▶ SKILLS EXAM 1

PFJ #26, 28, 68, 73, 77

WEEK 5 – Dominant Chord-Scale Relationships

- ▶ Mixolydian mode, dominant 7th and 9th chords (pp. 50-52)
- ▶ Voice-leading an improvisation, tensions and tendencies, maintaining a sense of tonality

PFJ #87, 88, 90, 95, 99

WEEK 6 – The Blues Form

- ▶ Anatomy of the 12-bar blues form
 - ▶ Minor pentatonic scales and tensions over I7, IV7 and V7 (Sonny Rollins, “Sonny Moon for Two”)
 - ▶ Arpeggiating the blues progression
 - ▶ Blues turnarounds and common chord substitutions
 - ▶ Playing blues progressions and bass lines at the keyboard
- Write out and play blues scales in all 12 keys
- “Now’s The Time” guided transcription

WEEK 7 – Improvising the Blues

- ▶ 3-7 resolution (Jimmy Smith, “Prayer Meetin”)
 - ▶ Blues + mixolydian composite scales
 - ▶ Improvising on the blues form (Charlie Parker, “Now’s The Time”)
 - ▶ Creating strong melodic motives and phrases
 - ▶ Playing, transcribing, and composing blues heads
- Compose a 12-bar blues head

WEEK 8 – Minor Chord-Scale Relationships

- ▶ Dorian mode, minor 6th, 7th, and 9th chords (pp. 62-65)
 - ▶ Review harmonic and melodic minor scales, m(M7) chords
 - ▶ SKILLS EXAM 2
- PFJ #102, 104, 105, 111, 114

WEEK 9 – Modal Improvisation

- ▶ Review diatonic triads and seventh chords (pp. 36-39)
 - ▶ Major scale modes (pp. 41-44)
 - ▶ Motivic development in modal improvisation (Miles Davis, “So What”)
 - ▶ Examples of modal improvisation in other traditions: Sargam, Gamelan, Maqam, etc.
- PFJ #79, 80, 83, 119, 120, 121
- “So What” guided transcription

WEEK 10 – The ii-V7-I Progression

- ▶ Harmonic functions of diatonic seventh chords (pp. 81-84)
 - ▶ Identifying ii-V7-I progressions in standard tunes
 - ▶ Voice-leading ii-V7-I progressions at the keyboard
- PFJ #126, 135
- ii-V7-I keyboard voice-leading

WEEK 11 – Rhythm Changes

- ▶ Improvising on AABA “I Got Rhythm” Changes
 - ▶ Rhythm Changes contrafacts (“Lester Leaps In”, “Rhythm-A-Ning”, “Steeplechase”, “Oleo” etc.)
- PFJ #136, 138
- Compose a Rhythm Changes head

WEEK 12 – Standard ii-V7-I Progressions

- ▶ Arpeggiating and building chord-scales on standard tunes
 - ▶ Motivic improvisation over ii-V7-I (Clifford Brown, “Pent-Up House”)
 - ▶ SKILLS EXAM 3
- PFJ #147

WEEK 13 – Other Modes, Altered Chords and Scales

- ▶ Common dominant chord alterations: b5, #5, b9, #9, #11, b13
 - ▶ Whole-tone scales and augmented chords (pp. 101-104)
 - ▶ Diminished scales and chords (pp. 108-110)
 - ▶ Lydian augmented and lydian dominant scales (pp. 145-146)
- PFJ #149, 151, 156, 158, 161, 251

WEEK 14 – Post-bop and Intervallic Improvisation

- ▶ Chromatic (Dolph/Davis), pantonal (Russell), and atonal approaches
 - ▶ Polychords (pp. 121)
 - ▶ Permutations of intervallic motives
 - ▶ Coltrane changes, “Giant Steps”
- PFJ #180, 182, 202, 278, 282, 290
- “Giant Steps” voice-leading

WEEK 15 – Free Forms

- ▶ Examples of approaches to free improvisation (Giuffre, Mingus, Ayler, Braxton, Bailey)
 - ▶ Ornette Coleman and Harmolodics
 - ▶ Creating and interpreting symbolic and systemic scores for improvisers
- Compose a symbolic or graphic score for improvisation

WEEK 16 – Final Exams

- ▶ SKILLS EXAM 4 on **Thursday, May 9 at 10AM**