Syllabus
MUS 315; Improvisation: Spring 2018
Dr. Timothy Bonenfant
Carr Education Fine Arts Building (CARR-EFA) #217; (325) 486-6029
Email: tbonenfant@angelo.edu

Office Hours: MWF 9-10AM; TW 11:30-12:00PM: W 2-4PM; Th 5:30-6:30PM: F 11AM-Noon & 1-3PM

Required Text:
- Jamey Aebersold Play-A-Long Series: All three books include a CD recording. They may be ordered directly from the publisher at 1-800-456-1388, or by visiting the publisher’s website http://www.jazzbooks.com/
  - Volume 2 - Nothin’ But Blues
  - Volume 54 - Maiden Voyage
  - Volume 70 - Killer Joe

Students will need to have access to a CD player/computer capable of sound playback and a volume that will allow the student to hear both themselves and the prerecorded examples.

In addition, there will be heavy emphasis on two YouTube channels devoted to jazz improvisation, both hosted by Greg Lutz. They can be found at:
- Jazz Lesson: Drive-By Jazz Theory: Lesson 1: 14 videos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHFT3Y1hPXg
- Jazz Lesson: Transcription Series: 8 videos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tgMKOnVZyw&list=PLa1xOwWGlrrxdGESSTUYWpH_EJYrBzaai

Supplemental Texts (not required):
- Music Lesson: Mind Matters (MM): 5 videos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QW_obSefoQ&list=PLa1xOwWGlrrybjvCzCSv3fvcNoXtqqWj

Course Description:
A study of the techniques, practices and styles of improvisation in music through the use of practical experiences, with the goal of gaining a practical understanding of improvisation. Expanding one’s capacity for creativity is the desired goal. This course will discuss improvisation in the context of popularly based genres (jazz, blues, etc.). The student should develop critical listening and thinking skills as well as the ability to improvise in various styles on one’s own instrument or voice.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of Music 2312. If you have not completed MUS 2312 (Theory IV), you should not be registered for this course. It is also highly suggested, but not required, that you have completed MUS 2117 (Aural Skills IV) as well. Without the proper theoretical knowledge AND the corresponding ability to hear that theory in practice, success in improvisation will be limited at best.

Major Course Objectives:
- Developing specific skills, competencies and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course
- Developing creative capabilities (writing, inventing, designing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.).
- Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.)
- Developing a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values.

Student Learning Outcomes:
The students will be able to:
- Recognize, define & employ significant terms/concepts discussed in readings/lectures.
- Identify the appropriate scales for the chord symbols used in the jazz tradition.
- Demonstrate the ability to improvise solos in a modern jazz style.
- Critique both your own and your colleagues’ improvisation and identify specific solutions for the improviser in question.
Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes:
Learning outcomes will be assessed by:

- Ten (10) in-class improvisations (25 points each: 250 points total)
- Three (3) written assignments (50 points each: 150 points total)
- One transcription project (300 points)
- Final Improvisation: Jazz (200 points)
- Total points for course – 900 points

The grading scale is as follows:

- 90-100% (810 to 900 points): A
- 80-89% (720 to 809 points): B
- 70-79% (630 to 719 points): C
- 60-69% (540 to 629 points): D
- 59% and below (0 to 539 points): F

In-Class Improvisations:
The student will be evaluated ten times on in-class improvisations. Each student will be expected to perform on the dates listed in the Class Schedule (see below) on the tune specified in the course calendar. Each assignment will be worth 25 points, for a total of 250 points for this section. There will be no makeups for these assignments.

Written Assignments:
The student will be assessed three times with written assignments. Each assignment will be worth 50 points, for a total of 150 points for this section. At the beginning of each section, a take-home assignment will be given on the theoretical aspects of improvisation, which will be due at the following meeting of class. Assignments a week late or less will be accepted, but with 10 points taken off of the total earned. Assignments late by more than a week will not be accepted.

Transcription Assignment:
This assignment will be worth 300 total points.
Each student will transcribe a solo from a recording, including the melodic line, corresponding chord changes, and as much stylistic detail as is possible to notate. The professor has chosen solos for each of you, which represent each of your instruments. That is, each flautist will transcribe a solo by a flautist, each vocalist will transcribe a solo by a vocalist, etc.

On every 3rd Thursday of the semester (that is 2/1, 2/22, 3/22, & 4/12), students will turn in a rough draft of their transcription. The first “draft” of the solo will be an in-class performance along with the recorded solo. I will expect ALL of you to sing your solo (yes, even the instrumentalists!). Being able to sing the solo along with the artists in question will make the task of notating the solo much easier when it comes time to do that.

Each successive draft will be written, and handed back to the students with comments and/or notations about what needs to be corrected. The 1st (sung) draft will be worth 40 points. The 2nd draft will be worth 45 points. The 3rd draft will be worth 55 points. The 4th and final draft will be worth 60 points. The four drafts will comprise a sub-total of 200 possible points.

The final version of the Transcription Assignment will be due on Tuesday, May 1st, 2018, and will be worth 100 points, making the entire assignment worth 300 points over the course of the semester.

One Final Improvisation in a Jazz Style:
This improvisation will be worth 200 total points.

Thursday, May 3rd, 2018
Students will improvise on a tune included in one of the Aebersold texts. This tune may be one of the tunes we have covered during the semester, or the student may choose a different tune.

Cell-Phone Policy:
Cell phones, while a great convenience, are NOT generally used as an educational tool, and more often than not, function as a hindrance to the educational process. Therefore, the use of cellular phones (including for texting) during class will not be tolerated without prior permission from the professor, and this will only be granted in emergencies. Cell phones will be turned to the “off” or “silent” position for the duration of class. If your phone rings, you will be asked to leave class for the remainder of the day, and you will be marked as absent for the entire lecture.
**Academic Honesty:**
Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the Student Handbook. In essence, the willingness to cheat undermines our purpose at the university.
To read more, check out the Center for Academic Integrity.

**Student Responsibilities:**

**Attendance:** “Seventy percent of life is showing up.” - Woody Allen

According to the ASU Bulletin, p. 150: **Students are expected to be present for all class meetings of the courses for which they are registered. An accurate record of attendance for each student must be maintained by the instructor.**

A large part of student academic responsibility is attendance. Students who attend class on a regular basis perform much better than students who don’t. The attendance policy for this course is as stated below:

- three (3) absences are allowed during this course
- four (4) absences will result in a reduction of ONE letter grade (ex. A to a B)
- five (5) absences will result in a reduction of ONE letter grade (ex. A to a C)
- six (6) absences will result in a reduction of ONE letter grade (ex. A to a D)
- seven (7) or more absences will result in an automatic F for the course

**Please note:** Failure to attend a full class period will be counted as an absence.

Absence in a performance class cannot be made up, as these performances happen in real time. Students are responsible for material covered in class during their absence. Please be aware that class attendance also carries the expectation that you arrive having adequately prepared for that class. It is also expected that all students participate in class discussions.

**University Course Withdrawal Policy:**
The last day to drop or totally withdraw from regular session courses and the University is **Monday, April 4th, 2018.**
Withdrawal grades will be indicated with W.

**Students with Disabilities:**
Angelo State University is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and subsequent legislation. The Student Life Office is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, at (325) 942-2191 or (325) 942-2126 (TDD/FAX) or by e-mail at Student.Life@angelo.edu to begin the process.

**Official ASU Policy on Religious Holiday absence exemptions**
1. “Religious holy day” means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Texas Tax Code §11.20.

2. A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known **in writing to the instructor prior to the absence.** A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.

3. A student who is excused under section 2 may not be penalized for the absence; however, the instructor may respond appropriately if the student fails to complete the assignment satisfactorily.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 1-16</td>
<td>Introduction; Syllabus: Assignment of tunes for transcription project</td>
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<td>Thursday 1-18</td>
<td>Explanation of Jazz chord terminology; ii / V7 / I progression: Formal structures: AABA; ABAC; Blues, etc.</td>
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<td>Tuesday 1-18</td>
<td>Transcription Lesson 1 (9:55)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 1-23</td>
<td>Drive Thru Jazz Theory 0, 1, 2, &amp; 3 (2:50; 6:55; 6:58; 9:24; Total 26:07)</td>
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<td>Thursday 1-25</td>
<td>Drive Thru Jazz Theory 4, 5, 6, &amp; 7 (4:47; 8:08; 8:18; 7:31; Total 28:44)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 1-30</td>
<td>Drive Thru Jazz Theory 8, 9, 10, &amp; 11 (7:01; 6:53; 5:47; 9:33; Total 29:14)</td>
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<td>Thursday 2-1</td>
<td>Drive Thru Jazz Theory 12 &amp; 13 (8:56; 5:33; Total 14:29)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 2-6</td>
<td>Transcription Lesson 3, 4 &amp; 5 (6:51: 8:59: 7:21; Total 23:11)</td>
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<td>Thursday 2-8</td>
<td>Transcription Lesson 6, 7 &amp; 8 (5:07: 3:44: 5:29; Total 14:20)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 2-13</td>
<td>Introduction/Preparation: &quot;Maiden Voyage&quot;; Vol. 54 (Maiden Voyage) Written assignment 3</td>
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<td>Thursday 2-15</td>
<td>TMEA: No class meeting; Work on your transcriptions during this hour.</td>
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<td>Tuesday 2-20</td>
<td>Performance: &quot;Maiden Voyage&quot;; Vol. 54 (Maiden Voyage); 4:44 Each student to play 8 bar segment (1 chord). (In Class Improv 1)</td>
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<td>Thursday 2-22</td>
<td>Performance: &quot;Maiden Voyage&quot;; Vol. 54 (Maiden Voyage); 4:44: (In Class Improv 2) Introduction and Preparation: &quot;Slow Blues in F&quot;; Vol. 2 (Nothing But Blues)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 2-27</td>
<td>Dr. B traveling: No class meeting; Work on your transcriptions.</td>
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<td>Thursday 3-1</td>
<td>Dr. B traveling: No class meeting; Work on your transcriptions.</td>
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<td>Tuesday 3-6</td>
<td>Wind Ens. Tour: No class meeting; Work on your transcriptions.</td>
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<td>T/Th. 3-14/16</td>
<td>Spring Break; No class.</td>
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<td>Tuesday 3-20</td>
<td>Performance: &quot;Slow Blues in G&quot;; Vol. 2 (Nothing But Blues): (In Class Improv 4)</td>
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<td>Thursday 3-22</td>
<td>Introduction and Preparation: &quot;Minor Blues in C&quot;; Vol. 2 (Nothing But Blues) Third draft of transcription assignment due</td>
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<td>Thursday 3-29</td>
<td>Introduction and Preparation: &quot;Summertime&quot;; Vol. 54 (Maiden Voyage)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 4-3</td>
<td>Performance: &quot;Summertime&quot; (2 choruses); Vol. 54 (Maiden Voyage): (In Class Improv 6)</td>
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<td>Thursday 4-5</td>
<td>Introduction and Preparation: &quot;Misty&quot;; Vol. 70 (Killer Joe)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 4-10</td>
<td>Performance: &quot;Misty&quot;; Vol. 70 (Killer Joe); (In Class Improv 7)</td>
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<td>Thursday 4-12</td>
<td>Introduction and Preparation: &quot;You Stepped Out of a Dream&quot;; Vol. 70 (Killer Joe) Fourth draft of transcription assignment due</td>
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<td>Tuesday 4-17</td>
<td>Perform.: “You Stepped Out of a Dream”; Vol. 70 (Killer Joe); (In Class Improv 8)</td>
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<td>Thursday 4-19</td>
<td>Introduction and Preparation: &quot;Satin Doll&quot;; Vol. 54 (Maiden Voyage)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 4-24</td>
<td>Performance: “Satin Doll”; Vol. 54 (Maiden Voyage): (In Class Improv 9)</td>
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<td>Thursday 4-26</td>
<td>Introduction/Preparation: &quot;Sweet Georgia Brown&quot;; Vol. 70 (Killer Joe)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 5-1</td>
<td>Performance: &quot;Sweet Georgia Brown&quot;; Vol. 70 (Killer Joe); (In Class Improv 10) Completed transcription assignment due.</td>
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<td>Thursday 5-3</td>
<td>Review for Final Exam Performance</td>
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<td>Thu. 5-10; 8-10</td>
<td>Final Exam; tune of student's choosing from Vol. 2, 54 or 70.</td>
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