Lessons in jazz improvisation on an instrument or voice including an introduction to basic principles of jazz improvisation through lecture, demonstration, listening, writing, and performing. Students complete assignments by using traditional methods and by using the tools of music technology. Prerequisites: Admission to the Bachelor of Music with emphasis in Jazz Studies or permission of the Department Chair.

Requisites
Prerequisites: 

Corequisites: 

Contact Information
Instructor: Dr. Ben Geyer
Email: bgeyer@westga.edu
Office: HUM 334

Office Hours
Email for Appointment
HUM 334

For any class business, please email me to schedule an appointment. We will meet at the earliest mutually available time.

Meeting Times

Materials
Basic Materials
Spiral-bound manuscript paper for practice journal (this link) or an equivalent)

Mechanical pencils

Good erasers

Charlier Parker Omnibook in your instrument’s key (available online)

Headphones
Device speakers lack much of the low frequency range, so you will need headphones to get a full picture of what music sounds like. You will sometimes be required to bring headphones to class. It makes sense (though it isn’t required) to invest in a good pair if possible. I love the ones I bought for $70–80 (Grado SR-60).

Recordings

You’ll need a way to access music digitally - either a streaming subscription or a budget for downloading.

Outcomes

1. The ability to perform a variety of scales which are used in jazz improvisation.
2. Knowledge of the various styles of jazz and how improvisations relate to those styles.
3. Knowledge of the various chord formations used in jazz improvisation.
4. The ability to perform a jazz composition and improvise over the “changes” of that composition in a variety of jazz styles.
5. Knowledge of the various terms and practices of a variety of jazz styles.

Evaluation

Criteria

Regardless of the specific content we work on, a primary outcome of jazz improvisation lessons is to learn how to improve regularly. Improvement is a matter of hard, consistent work. In order to encourage your own individual ownership of the process, you will learn to take ownership in setting goals, working towards them, and assessing them. The further you go in the curriculum, the more independent you will learn to be.

All of these processes are subject to the instructor’s approval, but here is an outline of our approach to goal-setting, work, and assessment:

- At the first lesson you will develop a spreadsheet of areas in which you would like to improve, including specific goals and strategies that will help you work towards those areas of improvement.
- In each lesson you will set goals. Make sure they’re “SMART” (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based - watch this video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQ5Uj1nryBc)). We will enter these goals in a Google Drive document shared between us.
- You will keep a practice journal, recording when and what you have practiced over the course of each week.
- In the next lesson you will assign yourself two grades - one for your practice journal (based on its organization, clarity, and the work it demonstrates) and a second grade for your ability to play through the exercises documented in that practice journal.
- Your self-grading will be based on the rubric below, but you may tweak or rewrite the rubric as you see fit.

Grading Rubric. Medium-stakes and high-stakes projects will be graded either on a percentage of correct questions or on the following rubric, which measures your command over the assignment and your demonstrated commitment to the work:

- 100%: complete command and commitment
- 90%: “almost there” except for a minor problem
- 80%: Satisfactory
- 67%: Struggling
- 0%: Incomplete or unsatisfactory

Breakdown

Final Grade Calculation. Your final semester grade will be calculated according to the following scale as an average of your lesson grades.

90–100%: A
80–89%: B
Assignments

Schedule

Course Policies and Resources

Policies

- For each credit of lessons, you are expected to practice one hour per day, every day of the week. It is wise to break up your practicing into multiple sessions per day (two thirty-minute sessions or three twenty-minute sessions). You will keep a record of your practice times in your practice journal.
- The practice journal should be laid out neatly and clearly. You must stick to the goals laid out in your previous lesson's Google Drive document. If your week of practice changes direction, please do follow this direction organically. However, you must report these changes to your goals via email. Your assessment may only incorporate these revised weekly goals for the proportion of the practice week occurring after the revision has been filed.
- Our work during lessons depends on your preparation. If you have not prepared enough for us to work productively, you will be asked to spend the remaining lesson time practicing individual. This will earn a grade of zero. If you are missing required materials, your grade will be reduced according to the impact of the missing materials on our in-lesson work.
- Except for university sanctioned absences, missed lessons will be averaged in as a zero. I will do my best to reschedule lessons if you give me twenty-four hours' notice or if your absence is excused. If I need to miss a lesson, I am responsible to make it up.
- If you miss four lessons, you will automatically earn an F for the semester.

Resources

Information on Wellness: [https://www.westga.edu/music/wellness/](https://www.westga.edu/music/wellness/)

Institutional Policies

Online Courses

UWG takes students' privacy concerns seriously: technology-enhanced and partially and fully online courses use sites and entities beyond UWG and students have the right to know the privacy policies of these entities. For more information on privacy and accessibility for the most commonly used sites, as well as technology requirements visit the UWG Online ([https://uwgonline.westga.edu/](https://uwgonline.westga.edu/)) site.

Students enrolled in online courses can find answers to many of their questions in the Online/Off-Campus Student Guide ([http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php)).

If a student is experiencing distress and needs help, please see the resources available at the UWG Cares ([http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/](http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/)) site. Online counseling ([https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/index.php](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/index.php)) is also available for online students.

Academic Support

Accessibility Services: Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty
cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. For more information, please contact Accessibility Services [https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php].

**Center for Academic Success:** The Center for Academic Success [http://www.westga.edu/cas/] provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6280 or cas@westga.edu.

**University Writing Center:** The University Writing Center [https://www.westga.edu/writing/] assists students with all areas of the writing process. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6513 or writing@westga.edu.

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**Honor Code**

At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student’s conduct record at UWG.

Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student’s account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. For more information on the University of West Georgia Honor Code, please see the Student Handbook [https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpsa/handbook-code-of-conduct.php].

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**UWG Email Policy**

University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student’s responsibility to check his or her email.

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**Credit Hour Policy**

The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

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**HB 280 (Campus Carry)**

UWG follows University System of Georgia (USG) guidance: [http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information](http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information)

You may also visit our website for help with USG Guidance: [https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php](https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php)

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**Mental Health Support**
If you or another student find that you are experiencing a mental health issue, free confidential services are available on campus in the Counseling Center. Students who have experienced sexual or domestic violence may receive confidential medical and advocacy services with the Patient Advocates in Health Services. To report a concern anonymously, please go to UWGcares.