

Music 24 / Black Studies 14
Jazz History to 1945 – Emergence, Early Development, and Innovation
Amherst College • Fall 2009
Tuesday/Thursday • 10-11:20am • Arms Music Center 212

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 1-2pm; Wednesday 2-4pm; and by appointment

Course Description:

This course examines the development of jazz from its early roots in late 19th century African American popular music to its evolution in the swing era of the 1930s and 40s. Although our primary focus will be the years 1900 to 1945, we will also examine how jazz relates to earlier developments in African American cultural production and we will see that jazz discourse during these years continues to influence the way it is understood in American culture today. We will see how jazz became an international phenomenon in its earliest years and we will look at several examples of jazz communities outside of the United States. The course begins by exploring what might be called jazz “tributaries,” a concatenation of early American and African American music styles that provided important influences on the emergence of jazz in New Orleans and elsewhere. The majority of the course will focus on the “Jazz Age” of the 1920s and the “Swing Era” of the 1930s and 40s. We will learn about many of the major figures in early jazz, such as Louis Armstrong, Mary Lou Williams, Billie Holiday, and Duke Ellington, but we will also locate these musicians within thriving communities comprised of numerous influential contributors to the development of jazz.

We will use current debates in jazz historiography to question today’s prevailing trope of jazz as “America’s classical music.” The notion that jazz has become “classicized” reflects a growing trend to acknowledge jazz’s vital role in American culture. While positioning jazz within public funding streams that have long been reserved for classical music, this “neo-classical” movement in jazz has created various controversies around issues of canonization, diversity, and history. This course seeks to question these developments by examining the social backdrop and influences that have prompted the major developments of the jazz tradition. While the “great man” model of music history has dominated most historical accounts of jazz, this course strives to (re)center the contribution of women and explores the intersection between musical expression and the social milieus that fostered the creation of the music.

Course Requirements:

Completion of Music 11 is a suggested requisite for this course. If you have not taken Music 11, speak with Prof. Robinson to determine your preparedness. You do not need to be able to read music notation. However, you will be expected to develop the ability to use music-specific vocabularies introduced in class. We will also use a variety of concepts to examine the creation of meaning around emergent jazz practices. These concepts include: improvisation, diaspora, gender, interculturalism, globalization, community, music as a social formation, appropriation, commoditization, and the intersection between racial identity and music making. A major thread running through the course will be the connection between improvisation and identity.

Intellectual Responsibility and Respect for Persons:

This course will abide by the Amherst College guidelines found in the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility, the Statement of Respect for Persons, the Statement of Freedom of Expression and Dissent, and the Honor Code. By enrolling in the course, you agree to uphold the principles set forth in these guidelines. Students are encouraged to review these college policies.

Required Reading and Listening:

All of the required reading and listening is available exclusively through E-reserves on the course website. This course uses an extensive “virtual” course reader comprised of a variety of different historical and analytical writings in jazz history and gender and cultural studies. Although there is no tangible “book” for this class – nothing that you can immediately hold in your hands – consider this “virtual” course reader the required text. You are expected to do all of the readings listed in the class schedule.

Likewise, all of the required listening is available through E-reserves. You can do all of the listening from home or in a computer lab on campus. The weekly listening assignments are fundamental aspects to the course curriculum and should be carried out on a daily basis.

Course website:

<https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/0910F/MUSI/MUSI-24-0910F>

Suggested Texts:

Although not required, students may wish to review one of the many survey-style jazz history texts now available:

Scott DeVeaux and Gary Giddins. *Jazz*. W.W. Norton & Co, 2009.

The much anticipated historical survey by two important jazz historians.

Henry Martin and Keith Waters. *Jazz: the First 100 Years*. 2nd ed. Schirmer, 2005.

Another suggested historical survey. Note: there is a reduced version of this text titled *Essential Jazz: The First 100 Years*. I recommend the full version.

Jeremy Yudkin. *The Lenox School of Jazz: A Vital Chapter in the History of American Music and Race Relations*. Farshaw, 2006.

A small paperback that examines the Western Massachusetts jazz scene in the 1950s and 60s. Its focus is the Music Inn and the Lenox School of Jazz.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance at all lectures is absolutely essential for successful student learning. You are encouraged to attend office hours to review required reading and listening, written assignments, exam grades, or simply to discuss music. I am particularly interested in speaking with you about how the themes of the course relate to your broader musical interests.

Performance-based Research Project:

The research project is a major part of the course. Detailed guidelines for the project are found at the Assignments link on the course website. Please take note of the multiple due dates: proposal (8pm on September 22), responses to other proposals (8pm on October 1), and project submission via email (5pm on December 22). Your project may take many shapes (ethnography, historical study, musical analysis); however, you are required to integrate the attendance and critical analysis of AT LEAST two jazz-related musical performances into your project. This requirement encourages you to engage jazz as a living, evolving tradition. In the end, your project should be 20-30 double-spaced pages, or equivalent (for alternative formats, such as video-based projects, see Prof. Robinson). You are strongly encouraged to meet with Prof. Robinson regularly throughout the semester to discuss the development of your project.

Listening Response Essays:

There are three listening response essays due that correspond with Part I, Part II, and Part III of the course. A detailed prompt for the essays is available at the Assignments link on the course website. You are asked to write a two to three page essay that utilizes the required readings to analyze related required listening examples.

Midterm Exam and Final Essay:

There will be an in-class midterm exam and a take-home final essay. There will not be an in-class final exam. The midterm will consist of two essay questions and a series of listening-based short answer questions. A review sheet will be made available through the course website one week before the midterm. The final essay will be discussed during the last week of classes and is due via email no later than 5pm on December 22 (the last day of final exams). You will choose between two or three possible prompts and write a five to eight page essay drawing upon reading, listening, and other materials examined in class. The midterm exam and final essay will require you to think critically about musical, historical, social, cultural, and other theoretical concepts related to the course material and class discussions.

Grading:

Research Project	35%
Listening Responses	15%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Essay	25%

Grading scale:

97-100	A+	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+
94-96	A	84-86	B	74-76	C	64-66	D
90-93	A-	80-83	B-	70-73	C-	60-63	D-
						0-59	F

Class Schedule

Part I

September 8-13

Course introduction: jazz in American culture

Reading:

Teachout – Can Jazz Be Saved? The Audience for America’s Great Art Form is Withering Away

Chinen – Doomsayers May Be Playing Taps, but Jazz Isn’t Ready to Sing the Blues

Taylor – America’s Classical Music

Marsalis – The Neoclassical Agenda

Listening:

Jazz roots 1

September 14-20

Locating jazz within the African diaspora

Jazz roots 1: work songs and spirituals

Reading:

Hall – What is This ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?

Hurston – Characteristics of Negro Expression

Floyd – African Roots of Jazz

Gabbard – The Word Jazz

Compendium: Jazz – Formal Definitions

Europe – A Negro Explains ‘Jazz’

Taylor – The Early Origins of Jazz

Southern – The Worship Service

Listening:

Jazz roots 1

September 21-27

Jazz roots 2: minstrelsy, the blues, and ragtime

Research project proposal due by 8pm on Tuesday September 22

Listening response essay 1 due via email by 8pm on Thursday September 24

Reading:

Lott – Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy

Southern – Black Ethiopian Minstrelsy

Riis – New York Roots: Black Broadway, James Reese Europe, Early Pianists

Morath – Ragtime Then and Now

Carby – The Sexual Politics of Women’s Blues

Murray – Playing the Blues

Davis – Blame It On the Blues: Bessie Smith, Gertrude ‘Ma’ Rainey, and the Politics of Blues

Protest

Listening:
Jazz roots 2

Part II

September 28 – October 4

Storyville and beyond: the emergence of jazz

Comments on research project proposals due by 8pm on Thursday October 1

Reading:

Ake – ‘Blue Horizon’: Creole Culture and Early New Orleans Jazz

Southern – Race Records and Jazz Band Recording

Wilson – Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music

Monson – Music, Language, and Cultural Styles: Improvisation as Conversation

Morton – I Created Jazz in 1902

Giddins - Jelly Roll Morton (Red Hot Dandy)

Listening:

New Orleans and beyond

October 5-11

Prohibition and speakeasies: New Orleans, Chicago, and Harlem during the Jazz Age

Readings:

Faulkner – Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?

Ernst – The Man Who Made a Lady out of Jazz

The Etude – The Jazz Problem

Fisher – The Caucasian Storms Harlem

Lopes – The Jazz Age: Professional Musicians and the Cultivated Vernacular

Listening:

Chicago and Harlem

October 14-18

Prohibition and speakeasies – continued

No class Tuesday October 13 (mid-semester break)

Readings:

Ogren – Prudes and Primitives: White Americans Debate Jazz

Kenney – The Evolution of South Side Chicago Jazz

Listening:

Chicago and Harlem

October 19-25

Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson: Harlem and the Race-ing of jazz

Reading:

Crease – Jazz and Dance

Tucker – Duke Ellington

Locke – Looking Back at ‘The Jazz Age’

Hughes – The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain

Hasse – Composing at the Cotton Club, 1927-1931

The New Cab Calloway’s Hepster’s Dictionary: Language of Jive

Listening:

Chicago and Harlem

October 26 – November 1

Catch up and Midterm Exam

Listening response essay 2 due via email by 8pm on Tuesday October 27

Midterm Exam takes place on Thursday Oct 29

Part III

November 2-8

The Swing Era 1: the roots of swing

Reading:

Baraka, Amiri (LeRoi Jones) – Jazz and the White Critic

Baraka, Amiri (LeRoi Jones) – The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)

Listening:

Swing Era 1

November 9-15

Swing Era 2: jazz as “America’s popular music”

Reading:

Erenberg – Swing is Here: Benny Goodman and the Triumph of American Music and News from the
Great Wide World: Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Black Swing Bands

Giddins – Chick Webb (King of the Savoy)

Duke Ellington Explains Swing

Listening:

Swing Era 1

Swing Era 2

November 16-22

Kansas City, “territory bands,” and the myth of New York

Reading:

Pearson – Kansas City Jazz Style

Williams – Music Everywhere

Dinerstein – Lester Young and the Birth of Cool

Davis – ‘Strange Fruit’: Music and Social Consciousness

Listening:

Swing Era 1

November 23-29

Thanksgiving break

Part IV

November 30 – December 6

Jazz “outhernational”: (re)sounding the jazz diaspora

Reading:

Johnson – The Jazz Diaspora

Tucker – Internationalism and the Sweethearts of Rhythm

Down Beat – Jazz and Gender During the War Years

Listening:

Swing Era 2

December 7-13

Ellington’s long forms: Black, Brown, and Beige

Listening response essay 3 due via email by 8pm on Thursday December 10

Reading:

Two Reviews (1943)

The Debate in Jazz (1943)

Listening:

Ellington’s extended forms

December 14-15

Catch up

Final essay due via email by 5pm on Tuesday December 22

Research project due via email by 5pm on Tuesday December 22