“Man, if you have to ask what jazz is, you’ll never know.” - Louis Armstrong

“What is my definition of jazz? Safe sex of the highest order.” - Kurt Vonnegut

“Jazz is not just ‘Well, man, this is what I feel like playing.’ It’s a very structured thing that comes down from a tradition and requires a lot of thought and study.” - Wynton Marsalis

“Writing about music is like dancing about architecture.” - Thelonious Monk

“Jazz is too good for America.” - Dizzy Gillespie

“We never play anything the same way once.” - Shelley Manne

“The bottom line of any country is ‘what did we contribute to the world?’ We contributed Louis Armstrong.” - Tony Bennett

“I think I’ll give them another chance. Americans deserve another chance with my music.” - Albert Ayler

“No America, no jazz. I’ve seen people try to connect it to other countries, for instance to Africa, but it doesn’t have a damn thing to do with Africa.” - Art Blakey

“If it wasn’t for hustlers, gangsters and gamblers, there’d be no jazz. Wasn’t middle-class who said ‘Let’s hear Bird tonight.’” - Betty Carter

“I’ll play it first and tell you what it is later.” - Miles Davis

“By and large, jazz has always been like the kind of a man you wouldn’t want your daughter to associate with.” - Duke Ellington

“It bugs me when people try to analyze jazz as an intellectual theorem. It’s not. It’s feeling.” - Bill Evans

“Jazz is music made by and for people who have chosen to feel good in spite of conditions.” - Johnny Griffin

“The people in Japan know more about the history of jazz and the musicians than the people in the United States do.” - Billy Higgins
“The people in Japan love jazz music, man, and also in Europe, far more than they ever did here. And that always puzzled me until I went over there to really get into it for myself and find out what it is. It’s their tradition and culture, man. We’ve gotten away from that in America, man. We live in a country of complete fantasy.” - Milt Jackson

“Risk is at the heart of jazz. Every note we play is a risk.” - Steve Lacy

“Make no mistake, this music is for everyone. Jazz is not an exclusive, elite club. Go ahead, listen to your Snoop Doggy Dog, Pearl Jam, Garth Brooks, but add a little Ellington, Basie and Coltrane to your life as well.” - Christian McBride

“Jazz is a white term to define black people. My music is black classical music.” - Nina Simone

“The outer space beings are my brothers. They sent me here. They already know my music.” - Sun Ra

“Oh, jazz and love are the hardest things to describe.” - Mel Tormé

“This is so nice, it must be illegal.” - Fats Waller

“Jazz is not dead—it just smells funny.” - Frank Zappa

TEXTS

There are no textbooks for this course. There will be pdfs of articles as well as music files made available regularly on Blackboard. There will also be assignments of electronic books available through your red ID and the library. Finally, there will be films each student is required to view, again, mounted through Blackboard. In other words, you will want to be familiar with and ready to use Blackboard regularly.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is cross-listed as a seminar in Humanities as well as a seminar in MALAS (Master in Liberal Arts Studies). Because the course is listed in humanities, part of its aim is to approach a complicated thing like jazz from a multitude of disciplinary angles: music (naturally), but also history, literature, film, sociology and more. Because the course is listed as a liberal arts studies course, part of its aim is to approach a complicated thing like jazz from a cultural studies perspective. And taking aim at a moving target like jazz from a host of positions can ultimately seem terribly confusing. Thus to explain what this course is, it might be best to say what it is NOT. It is not a musicology course—no presumption of musical expertise is made here, though students will pick up and become comfortable with terms like harmony, rhythm and melody and more. Nor is it explicitly a music course—though students will, through a variety of listening exercises, become
familiar with jazz in general terms. Nor is it a jazz history course—though students will have an increasing understanding of general parameters of the music’s development in the last century as well as some recognition of the major figures in the music. Perhaps the best way to think about this course is to think of it as a kind of dialogue: sometimes we will use the disciplines associated with history to understand where the music comes from and how it evolved; at other times, the conversation will run the other way, as we listen to the music to think about how it comments upon and shapes the culture from which it arises. It should come as no surprise that issues of race and class will feature prominently in this conversation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students should:

• Have a general understanding of the development of jazz in the last century
• Recognize the major figures in the music
• Be familiar with major cultural issues and events that shaped jazz
• Be able to write and converse about how jazz shapes American culture in a variety of settings (in-class, exam, essay)

COURSEWORK

In this course you will have weekly reading assignments (articles or book chapters) as well as listening assignments. In some instances there will be required film viewing as well. There will be two in-class exams as well as a final exam and an essay due toward the end of the course.

PARTICIPATION

Regular and alert attendance is expected. This is not a lecture course—we will explore the readings, recordings and viewings together. This is a seminar, where discussion amongst interested peers (rather than a top-down lecture) is the norm. You will need to keep up with the reading, listening and viewing schedule in order for our time together to be most profitable.

POLICIES

Incivility will not be tolerated. That includes obviously disruptive or unproductive behavior as well as lesser forms of discourtesy such as texting, checking e-mail, sleeping, talking over others, and the like. I reserve the right to ask those who are disruptive or deliberately offensive to leave the room. Additionally, I reserve the right to ask you to leave if you are obviously unprepared or unwilling to contribute to the class.

This seminar deals with a host of cultural phenomena of the twentieth century. In the interest of historical accuracy, some materials and facts presented in the course may be offensive to some. Looking at jazz culturally demands that one think about racism,
sexism, human sexuality, drug and alcohol abuse, violence both political and domestic, among other things. Music and video materials in this course may involve subject matter that includes nudity, verbal obscenities and racist terms. While an attempt will be made to present these matters in the least offensive way possible, academic integrity requires that we face these things in an open, mature manner. If you find yourself unwilling or unable to deal with such issues in an academic setting, you are encouraged to withdraw from the course.

CHEATING

Copying from others is a form of theft and will result in a grade of F on the exam or quiz in question.

STUDENT DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

GRADING

Exam 1 - 15%
Exam 2 - 15%
Essay - 20%
Written listening assignment reactions (3) - 15%
Class participation - 20%
Final exam - 15%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug. 24 - Introductions (me, you, the course, the readings, the syllabus)
         Jazz (episode 1 - shown in class)
Aug. 31 - Roots
         Jazz (episode 2); "Jazz - The Word"; "The Nineteenth Century Origins of Jazz"; "Scatting Heads"; audio files
Sep. 14 - New Orleans, Chicago
         St. Louis Blues (film, 1958 - youtube link posted in Blackboard); "I Couldn't See Anything But Music"; "New Orleans Jazz" (from Gioia's The History of Jazz - available as ebook through SDSU library); audio files
Sep. 21 - Armstrong, Small Groups
"The First Great Soloist"; "White Chicago Jazz"; audio files

Sep. 28 - Harlem
*Cotton Club* (film, 1984); "The Wedding of the Races"; "The Market of Music"; audio files

Oct. 5 - Swing
"Harlem" and "The Swing Era" (from *The History of Jazz*); audio files

Oct. 12 - Ellington; **exam 1**
*The World of Duke Ellington* (excerpts); audio files

Oct. 19 - Bop
*Bird* (film, 1988); "Dizzy Atmosphere"; audio files

Oct. 26 - Cool
*Let's Get Lost* (film, 1988); *But Beautiful* (excerpts); audio files

Nov. 2 - Davis
"Miles, Politics and Image"; *Miles Davis: An Autobiography* (excerpts); audio files

Nov. 9 - Monk / Mingus
"Passions of a Man"; *Beneath the Underdog* (excerpts); *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (excerpts); audio files

Nov. 16 - Other Paths; **exam 2**
*Space Is The Place* (film, 1974); *Rahsaan Roland Kirk Live* (film, 1963, 1967); *Space Is The Place* (excerpts); *Bright Moments* (excerpts); audio files

Nov. 23 - Free
*Jazz Perspectives* (excerpts - ebook through library); audio files

Nov. 30 - Fusion
"A Jazz Generation and the Miles Davis Curse"; "Freedom and Fusion"; audio files

Dec. 7 - Future
**Essay Due at the beginning of class**

Dec. 14 - Final Exam 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.