

JAZZ STUDIES*

*Jazz Studies is offered exclusively as a concentration.

The Center for Jazz Studies: Prentis Hall, 4th floor (632 W. 125th Street); 212-851-9270
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cjs>

Jazz at Columbia:

[Louis Armstrong Jazz Performance Program \(LAJPP\)](#)

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Starting in Fall '24, the Special Concentration in Jazz Studies is no longer available for students to declare. Students who declared the Special Concentration in Jazz Studies in Spring '24 or prior are allowed to complete this concentration.

The Special Concentration in Jazz Studies is an interdisciplinary liberal arts course of study that uses jazz music—and the jazz culture from which the music emanated—as a prism through which to study jazz culture during what might be termed the long jazz century, the Sprawl 20's. The curriculum in this field guides students in developing a firm grounding in the traditions and aesthetic motives of jazz music, viewed through the perspectives of music history and ethnomusicology as well as literary theory and cultural studies.

The program also explores in depth the development of jazz-oriented art works in the music's sister arts—literature, dance, painting, photography, and film. While a U.S. focus is highly appropriate, considering the many ways in which jazz is a definitive music of this nation, students also explore jazz's geographical history beyond these shorelines, including complex, ongoing interactions with Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia.

While there are some fields where the fit with jazz studies is very obvious—music, American studies, African-American studies, English, comparative literature, and history—students can major in any field whatsoever. Is there a jazz or improvisatory philosophy? What might be its relation to studies of aesthetics or American pragmatism? And what are jazz's implications for the student of law? How does one protect the intellectual property rights of an improvised jazz solo? What about business? What economic and political forces have shaped jazz? Who buys jazz? What is its audience? What is a jazz painting? A jazz novel? What is jazz poetry? What is jazz dance? What is a jazz film? What are the sources and meanings of art? What work does the music do for the whole community?

Along with problems of musical history, form, and definition, our courses explore jazz as a culture. Students not only study individual jazz artists but also explore the immeasurably variegated worlds through which such artists moved, and which they helped to shape. As cultural historians-in-training—focused on questions of nationality, race, sexuality, gender, economics, and politics—students explore the extraordinarily complicated terrains of the New Orleans of Bunk Johnson, for example, or the Baltimore of Billie Holiday (born in Philadelphia, reared in Baltimore).

They explore such artists' other geographical travels. What did their images, including mistaken conceptions of who they were, tell us about the cultures that mythologized them?

How did these jazz musicians influence not only musicians but other artists of their era and milieu: the poets and novelists, painters and sculptors, photographers and filmmakers, dancers and choreographers who regularly heard them play and often shared with them a sense of common project?

One thinks of Tito Puente, working with singers and dancers at the Palladium; Jackson Pollack dancing to the music as he spun drips of paints on canvasses placed on the studio floor; Langston Hughes writing detailed instructions to the musicians he hoped would accompany performance of his poetry; Romare Bearden's beautifully turned stage and costume designs for Alvin Ailey and Dianne McIntyre, whose improvisatory jazz dance workshop was called Sound in Motion; the drummer Jo Jones in an interview naming as key influences a series of tap dancers he admired; Stanley Crouch, stirring in his high-powered essays in a room where jazz drums stand at the center, the old dream-kit inspiration; Ralph Ellison, who kept in touch with his beginnings as a musician in Oklahoma City through hour-long conversations with his childhood friend, the singer Jimmy Rushing; Toni Morrison reading her magical prose to improvisations by Max Roach and the dancer Bill T. Jones; and the pianist Jason Moran playing at the Studio Museum in Harlem, where he introduced his group as including Beauford Delany, whose paintings hung on the wall near the bandstand—vigorous all and recall across the art forms.

Perhaps above all, the Special Concentration in Jazz Studies is designed to prepare students to be well-prepared and flexible improvisers in a universe of change and possibility.

Interdepartmental Committee on Jazz Studies

Ann Douglas (English and Comparative Literature)
 Brent Hayes Edwards (English and Comparative Literature)
 Kevin A. Fellezs (Music)
 Aaron Fox (Music)
 Farah Jasmine Griffin (English and Comparative Literature)
 George Lewis (Music)
 Robert G. O'Meally (English and Comparative Literature)
 Christopher Washburne (Music)

Adjunct Lecturers in Jazz Performance

Paul Bollenbeck
 Christine Correa
 Krin Gabbard
 David Gibson
 Brad Jones
 Victor Lin
 Ole Mathisen
 Tony Moreno
 Ugonna Okegwa
 Adriano Santos
 Don Sickler
 Leo Traversa
 Ben Waltzer

Special Concentration in Jazz Studies (For students who declared the concentration on or before the 2023-2024 academic year)

Starting in Fall '24, the Special Concentration in Jazz Studies is no longer available for students to declare. Students who declared the Special Concentration in Jazz Studies in Spring '24 or prior are allowed to complete this concentration.

The special concentration in jazz studies requires a total of seven courses (21 points minimum), distributed as follows:

Requirements for Non-Music Majors/Concentrators

MUSI UN1002	FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC
MUSI UN2016	JAZZ
MUSI UN3998	SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT STUDY
ENGL GU4612	JAZZ AND AMERICAN CULTURE

(3) interdisciplinary courses as approved by the director

Private music lessons (strongly recommended but not required)

MPP UN1541 CU Jazz Ensembles (strongly recommended but not required)

Requirements for Music Majors/Concentrators

MUSI UN2016	JAZZ
MUSI UN3998	SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT STUDY
MUSI GU4500	JAZZ TRANSCRIPTION # ANALYSIS
MUSI GU4505	JAZZ ARRANGING # COMPOSITION
ENGL GU4612	JAZZ AND AMERICAN CULTURE

(2) interdisciplinary courses as approved by the director

Private music lessons (strongly recommended but not required)

MPP UN1541 CU Jazz Ensembles (strongly recommended but not required)

JAZZ GU4900 Jazz and the Literary Imagination. 3 points.

(Lecture). This course will focus on the ways that jazz has been a source of inspiration for a variety of twentieth-century literatures, from the blues poetry of the Harlem Renaissance to contemporary fiction. We will consider in detail the ways that writers have discovered or intuited formal models and political implications in black music. Rather than simply assume that influence only travels in one direction, we will also take up some literary efforts (including autobiography, poetry, historiography, and criticism) by musicians themselves. What are the links between musical form and literary innovation? How can terms of musical analysis (improvisation, rhythm, syncopation, harmony) be applied to the medium of writing? How does music suggest modes of social interaction or political potential to be articulated in language? How does one evaluate the performance of a poem (in an oral recitation or musical setting) in relation to its text? Materials may include writings and recordings by Jacques Attali, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Louis Armstrong, Zora Neale Hurston, Sterling Brown, Kurt Schwitters, Ralph Ellison, Amiri Baraka, Ella Fitzgerald, William Melvin Kelley, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Gayl Jones, Michael Ondaatje, Ed Pavlic, Joseph Jarman, Nathaniel Mackey, and Harryette Mullen, among others. Requirements: weekly response papers, a 5-7 pg. midterm paper and a 9-12 pg. final paper.

JAZZ GU4920 Jazz and Cinema. 3 points.

Because the beginnings of jazz and film both date to the last years of the nineteenth century, the two art forms essentially grew up together.

The history of both is inseparable from the technological revolutions of the twentieth century, and at least in the United States, from histories of racial representation. We will explore the racial issues raised by American films along with how filmmakers represent gender, American humor, discourses of art and the popular, and the conventions of narrative. We will pay special attention to how all of this changes dramatically throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

After establishing what is most American about jazz and cinema, we will move on to documentary films as well as to films from Europe where many of the dominant American myths about jazz are both perpetuated and transformed. The goal of the course is to understand jazz as a music as well as a cultural practice that has been in constant flux during the last 120 years. The representation of the music and its practitioners in cinema is crucial to an understanding of the music at each of its many cultural moments.

Of Related Interest

African American Studies

AFAS UN3030	AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC
AFAS UN3930	TOPICS IN THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

Dance (Barnard)

DNCE BC1247 & DNCE BC1248	JAZZ DANCE I and JAZZ DANCE I
DNCE BC1445 & DNCE BC1446	TAP I and TAP I
DNCE BC2248 & DNCE BC2249	JAZZ DANCE II and JAZZ DANCE II
DNCE BC2447 & BC2447	TAP II and TAP II

English and Comparative Literature

ENGL GU4621	HARLEM RENAISSANCE
ENGL GU4612	JAZZ AND AMERICAN CULTURE

Music

MPP UN1541	COLUMBIA UNIV JAZZ ENSEMBL
MUSI UN2016	JAZZ
MUSI UN2020	SALSA, SOCA # REGGAE
MUSI GU4500	JAZZ TRANSCRIPTION # ANALYSIS
MUSI GU4505	JAZZ ARRANGING # COMPOSITION
MUSI GU4507	The New Thing: Jazz 1955-1980
MUSI GU4540	Histories of Post-1960's Jazz