

Graduate Course Number: 7103

Course Title: Beginning Jazz Improvisation

Days/Times of Class Meetings: Asynchronous

Asynchronous Courses: Asynchronous courses are designed for music educators whose time zones or teaching schedules do not allow them to attend classes synchronously. Through the use of pre-recorded lectures, independent research and writing projects, online discussion forums, watching online videos, and taking quizzes, the workload expectations are equivalent to the rigor that would normally be offered in an on-site, 15-week semester class.

Number of Credits for the course: 3 graduate credits

Instructor with phone number, email address, and office hours: Michael Fein, 610-348-9180, mfein@vandercook.edu

“This Syllabus is a general outline of the course and is subject to change upon notification to the students during a regular class session.”

Student Engagement Statement: Students will be expected to read and view all course content for each weekly lesson. Students will complete 2-4 graded activities each week. These graded activities will include

Discussions/Listening (1-2 paragraph typed responses to a prompt), Workshops (guided hands on improvisation activities), and Assignments (more open-ended improvisation activities). Students should allot approximately 2-3 hours weekly to read/view the course content and 2-3 hours weekly to complete graded activities.

Course Description: This course is designed for music performers and educators who want to learn how to improvise and teach improvisation in the classroom. Through carefully selected jazz repertoire, participants will learn the basic mechanics of improvisation and the essential music theory elements needed to improvise and teach improvisation including modal improvisation, the blues, ii-V-I progressions, and simplifying chord progressions. Participants will practice and perform jazz improvisation concepts on the instrument of their choice. No previous experience with improvisation is required.

<u>Student Learning Outcomes</u>	<u>Outcomes Assessments</u>
----------------------------------	-----------------------------

<p>Students will be able to improvise over a blues progression using a variety of approaches (pentatonic scales, blues scale, chord tones, and mixolydian mode).</p> <p>Students will be able to apply dorian and mixolydian modes and the major scale to a variety of modal jazz repertoire and improvise using those modes. Students will be able to identify the chord tones of major 7th, dominant 7th, minor 7th, and diminished 7th chords and improvise using those chord tones. Students will be able to improvise over a ii-V-I progression in major and minor tonalities using the “bracket approach” to simplifying a progression.</p>	<p>Students will perform and record themselves improvising over a variety of blues songs. Students will perform and record themselves improvising over a variety of modal songs using modes. Students will perform and record themselves improvising over a variety of songs using chord tones. Students will perform and record themselves improvising over a ii-V-I (functional harmony) song.</p>
---	--

Program-Level Outcomes Addressed: Professionalism in Teaching - Candidates will participate in group and character-building activities by working alone and with others to explore personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to personal and professional growth. Students will demonstrate the ability to: Research best educational practices; Discern new uses for information from a variety of course work; Reflectively discuss their teaching and ways to enhance it, Excellence in Music- Candidates will explore more deeply the culturally and historically important aspects of music, musicians, and composers throughout the world and across time. Students will demonstrate the ability to: Recognize style traits of various composers, genres, and periods; Identify major and transitional composers in a variety of styles, genres, and periods; Learn or review and apply new techniques to perform in a style appropriate to genre, style, period, and culture, Strength in Character- Candidates will develop new approaches to the praxis of teaching by learning about, experiencing, and using best practice techniques as borne out

in proven traditional practices and those demonstrated as effective through current research. Students will demonstrate the ability to: Discuss a variety of educational approaches; Describe why particular educational approaches are chosen for use; Choose and apply new approaches to the teaching praxis.

Course Requirements and Assessment: The key to success is regular study/practice time and staying in communication with me if you have any problems or questions.

Grades will be based on the following:  
Discussions/Listening - 10 pts. each  
Workshops - 50 pts. each  
Quizzes - 50 pts. each (take multiple times as needed)  
Assignments - 100 pts. each

**\*\*Class chats are optional\*\***

Students will complete and submit class activities each week. The Exit Assessments will include the following unit assignments:

Blues Improvisation (week 3)

Modal Improvisation (week 5)

ii-V-I Improvisation (week 7)

Transcription Project (week 8)

Grading Breakdown: Grades will be based on the following:

Discussions/Listening - 10 pts. each

Workshops - 50 pts. each

Quizzes - 50 pts. each (take multiple times as needed)

Assignments - 100 pts. each

Instructional Materials: REQUIRED: Capability to create and submit audio or video recordings. I suggest a simple setup: smartphone, tablet, or computer with built-in microphone and/or camera.

REQUIRED: You should have at least 2 years of study on your primary instrument and be able to read treble and bass clef.

Course Bibliography: There are no required texts for this course.

OPTIONAL: Teaching Music Improvisation with Technology by Michael Fein (\$34.17).

Publisher: Oxford University Press. ISBN-10: 019062826X; ISBN-13: 978-0190628260

Course Calendar or Schedule: Pre-Assignment: Improvisation Overview

Discussion 1: Meet and Greet

Improvisation is composing in the moment.

Improvisation is limited by three main factors.

Improvisation is something everyone can do.

Improvisation is for every genre.

Improvisation Tools (scales, chord tones, melodic motifs)

Improvisation Practice Strategies

Repertoire Selection

Quiz 1: Improvisation Overview

Week 1: Major Pentatonic Scale Improvisation

Major Pentatonic Scale

Workshop: Major Pentatonic Patterns

Optional: iReal Pro

Assignment 1: Major Pentatonic Scale Improvisation

Week 2: Blues: Minor Pentatonic & Blues Scales and 4-bar phrase structure Basic Blues Form

Minor Pentatonic and Blues Scale Construction

Listening: "Bags Groove" by Milt Jackson (performed with Miles Davis) Workshop 1: Minor Pentatonic and Blues Scales in Bb and F

4-Bar Phrase Structure

Assignment 2: Blues Improvisation Using Minor Pentatonic and

## Blues Scales

Week 3: Blues: Chord Tones & Mixolydian Mode

Listening: "Watermelon Man" by Herbie Hancock

Construction of Dominant 7th Chords

Chord Tones of the Basic Blues Progression in F

Analysis of "Watermelon Man"

Workshop 3.1: "Watermelon Man" Chord Tones

Construction of Mixolydian Mode

Workshop 3.2: "Watermelon Man" Mixolydian Modes

Assignment 3: "Watermelon Man" Chord Tone and Mixolydian Mode Improvisation

Week 4: Dorian Mode and Minor 7th Chords

Listening: "Cantaloupe Island" by Herbie Hancock

Dorian Mode Construction

Analysis of "Cantaloupe Island" by Herbie Hancock

Workshop 4.1: "Cantaloupe Island" Dorian/Mixolydian Mode

Scales Construction of Minor 7th Chords

Workshop 4.2: "Cantaloupe Island" Chord Tones

Assignment 4: "Cantaloupe Island" Modal and Chord Tone Improvisation

Week 5: Mixing Modes in a Modal Jazz Tune

Listening 5: "Song for My Father" by Horace Silver

Analysis of "Song for My Father" by Horace Silver

"Song for My Father" Chord Tones 1-3-5-7

Workshop 5.1: "Song for My Father" Chord Tones 3-5-7-1

Workshop 5.2: "Song for My Father" Modes

Assignment 5: "Song for My Father" Modal and Chord Tone Improvisation

Week 6: Creating Walking Bass Lines

Listening: "Doxy" by Sonny Rollins

Analysis of "Doxy" by Sonny Rollins

Diminished 7th Families

Workshop 6.1: "Doxy" Chord Tones Exercise

Workshop 6.2: "Doxy" Walking Bass Line

Assignment 6: "Doxy" Chord Tone Improvisation

Week 7: Simplifying Chord Progressions

Listening: "I'll Remember April"

Major to Parallel Minor

Workshop 7.1: Major to Minor Improvisation in "I'll Remember April" Diatonic Chords from Major Scale

Diatonic Chords from Minor Scale

Analysis of "I'll Remember April"

Workshop 7.2: Scales for "I'll Remember April"

Assignment 7: "I'll Remember April" Improvisation

Week 8: Final Exam and Transcription Project

Final Exam: Modes and Chord Tones

Assignment 8: Solo Transcription Project

Attendance Policy: Asynchronous. No required meetings.

#### Candidate Conduct

*“An important part of VanderCook’s Conceptual Framework and Candidate Dispositions and Outcomes is the focus on professionalism and character. Specific descriptors include participation as well as attendance, flexibility in the face of changing circumstances and institutional needs, the commitment to continual personal development, self-reflection and growth, respect for the academic community and the individuals and resources of that community, and behavior, speech and dress that is appropriate and respectful in the educational environment. Failure to observe standards of professional behavior may result in referral to the Standards Committee and/or the appropriate dean. Consistent concerns in this area will have an impact on*

- **Cell Phone/Computer Policy:** Students will complete online class posts and assignments in a professional *successful completion of the program.”*  
manner with appropriate tone and language.

#### Health and Safety

VanderCook College of Music is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Basic information regarding the maintenance of health and safety within the contexts of practice, performance, teaching and listening is provided throughout the academic year. Health and safety information specific to this course will be addressed. It is the responsibility of each individual musician to take an active role in making informed decisions to help maintain their own health and safety

#### Academic Honesty

“Candidates are expected to maintain the highest standards of integrity in their academic work. Failure to do so will jeopardize a candidate’s success in the program. Examples of academic dishonesty include:

- Presenting another’s words, music, or concepts as your own by failing to acknowledge or properly cite the source.
- Communicating or receiving answers or information to/from another in a testing situation. ● Consulting notes or any other source of answers/information in a testing situation, unless the instructor authorizes such access.
- Making available or accessing tests or quizzes from current or previous classes unless explicitly authorized by the instructor.
- Bringing, by any means, answers or information into a testing situation except as explicitly authorized by the instructor.
- Collaborating or turning in jointly produced work on any test or assignment that is intended to reflect individual effort.”

#### Plagiarism

“Plagiarism means taking someone else’s words, ideas, data or work and presenting them as your own. This could mean an exact duplication of someone else’s work without proper citation

of the source, or it could mean you present it with only small changes and do not cite the source. Plagiarism can occur in art, music, literature, or technology –really in any area of intellectual work.

All work submitted should be properly credited to the original source of the information or idea whether the source is a book, Internet site, article, or any other medium. In written work, quotation marks or block indentations show direct quotations and the source must be cited. If information that is not common knowledge is paraphrased or summarized from a source, that source (including websites) must be cited. Failure to do so in academic assignments represents cheating and carries the appropriate penalties.

Copyright compliance is the goal of VanderCook College. Information to help with clarification of what constitutes fair use of copyrighted material, including photocopying, is on permanent reserve in the Ruppel Library.

No candidate should expect to receive a passing grade on any test or assignment that reflects dishonesty or academic irregularity. Cheating in any form may result in failure of the class and academic expulsion.”

#### Disability Statement

“If a student has a disability which might interfere with that student’s ability to function in this course it is the responsibility of that student to notify the instructor at the beginning of the course.”