

# The History of Jazz

MUSC 2020 – F2006 – W 6-9 – Killam MacMechan

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Teaching Assistants: to be announced

## Introduction

The pre-history of jazz in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America exemplifies various complexities of ethnicity, society, and politics. It also brings about the development of new forms of instrumental performance practice and of important stylistic precursors—especially ragtime and the blues. Into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, group improvisation and rhythmic syncopation emerged as central components in the development of jazz as a distinct musical form. From 1917 into the early 1930s, the music had complicated connections to the recording and music publishing businesses, to Prohibition and the related “jazz age,” and to the emergence of virtuosic soloists. In the later 1930s and early 1940s, a number of swing bands perhaps best exemplified the central dichotomy of jazz as to whether the music should function mainly as a variant of “popular music” or as “America’s classical music.” Some later jazz, such as the jazz-rock fusion launched by Miles Davis in the late 1960s, tended towards an extension of jazz as a type of popular music. However, from the late-1940s through the early-1960s, performers such as Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman tended towards jazz as a more elitist art form. The nine, main units of the course follow the historical periods covered in Ken Burns’ ten-part documentary *Jazz* (2000-01, written by Geoffrey C. Ward). Although the series is heavily biased towards the period up to 1960, various student term papers and our last two class meetings (Nov. 22-29) will add various additional topics, including many from the 1960s to the present.

## Coursework

- **Readings** – outside of class, then the material will also be discussed in class
- **Video Excerpts** – in-class (from Ken Burns’ *Jazz*)—you are required to take notes!
- **Listening** – in class and/or outside of class (related to the readings and/or to the video excerpts)
- **Writing** – research towards an individual term paper on a specific topic (e.g., an artist/album/song)

## Textbook and Related Materials

- *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History* (1999), edited by Walser
- Listening Materials (provided on the WebCT course website)
- Supplemental Reading: *Jazz* by Tanner (a “jazz appreciation” textbook, on reserve in the library)
- Glossaries: <http://www.apassion4jazz.net/glossary.html> [http://www.jazzinamerica.org/l\\_glossary.asp](http://www.jazzinamerica.org/l_glossary.asp)

## Specific Assessment Requirements

- four in-class **Quizzes** (*not scheduled*) – three (e.g., best scores) counted at 5% each or **15% total**
- a concert or recording **Review Essay** of 3-4 pages – due Oct. 11 (topic on Sept. 27) – worth **10%** specific information about expectations and approaches will be provided on Sept. 20
- 60-minute **Midterm Test** – covering Units 1-6 (1800s-1939) – Oct. 25 – worth **20%**
- **Term Paper** of 7-8 pages – due on Nov. 29 (topic/outline due on Nov. 8) – worth **25%** must be on a topic not specifically covered in the course; expectations/feedback as course proceeds
- 90-minute **Final Exam** – mostly covering Units 7-11 (1940s-) – during exam period – worth **30%**

Late assignments will be accepted, but with a penalty of 10% per day and only with instructor approval.

## Schedule and Topics

Wks/Dates	Topics & Readings (related listening items are provided on the course website)
01 - W Se. 13	introductions, overview, requirements; three documentary segments, with related brief discussions Unit 1 (-1917): New Orleans, slavery, Creoles, minstrelsy, Civil War & aftermath, ragtime, blues; ramped-up segregation, Creoles disenfranchised, Bolden, Morton, Bechet; recording context; publishing, novelty & social dancing, Castles/Europe; Keppard, whites first record jazz in 1917
02 - W 20	Unit 2 (1917-24): WWI, racism, Prohibition, Oliver, Armstrong, Ellington, stride (Johnston, Smith), Chicago and Chicago style; symphonic jazz and Whiteman/Gershwin; Henderson/Hardin/Armstrong <i>Keeping Time</i> items (Units 1-2): 1, 4-7, 9-11 (the items in this book average about seven pages each)
03 - W 27	<b>Review Essay topic</b> due (concert or recording) Unit 3 (1924-29): jazz age, clubs, bands, radio; Armstrong, scat; Smith, blues; race records; whites, Beiderbecke, Goodman, Shaw; Bechet, Waters, Morton, Ellington, Armstrong Hot 5's & 7's <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 12-15, 55
04 - W Oc. 4	Unit 4 (1929-34): Great Depression, jazz age over, but jazz cont.; NYC, Armstrong, Webb, Waller, Tatum; sophisticated Ellington becomes best-known black bandleader; Goodman's sudden success <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 16, 18, 20-21
05 - W 11	<b>Review Essay</b> due Unit 5 (1935-37): Depression continues, popular jazz called "swing," Goodman, Dorsey, Lunceford, Miller, Shaw; Holiday emerges as prominent jazz singer; the beginning of integration in jazz; Webb <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 17, 23-24
06 - W 18	Unit 6 (1937-39): swing continues, but infused by sparse blues sound of Basie; Williams; Young w. Basie & Holiday; Carnegie Hall; Holiday w. Shaw, then Holiday solo; Webb/Fitzgerald; Hawkins <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 22, 28-29—plus review for Midterm Test
07 - W 25	<b>Midterm Test</b> (Units 1-6) related popular forms – R&B, blues crooning, elec. blues, country, western swing, rock 'n' roll, soul
08 - W No. 1	Unit 7 (1940-45): WWII, Miller/Shaw enlist & take swing overseas; segregation belies democracy; Ellington contributes music to war relief & collaborates w. Strayhorn; Parker & Gillespie start bebop <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 25-27, 35
09 - W 8	<b>Term Paper topic and one-page outline</b> due – on a topic not specifically covered in the course Unit 8: bebop; saxophonist Parker, genius, but parallel drug legacy; variants by Gillespie and Monk; jazz audience dwindling, but west coast cool jazz successful, incl. Brubeck; Davis's individualism <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 30-32, 37, 56a
10 - W 15	Unit 9: Armstrong and Ellington as guiding lights, despite new directions in bebop, etc. by Rollins, Vaughan, Blakey; trumpeter Davis is leading light, exploring various new things (sense of hipness); saxophonists Coltrane and Coleman push the boundaries of whether their music really is still jazz <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 36, 41, 47, 43, 59
11 - W 22	Unit 10: in the 1960s, jazz is considered to splinter into schools (old and new); little success in N.A.; Roach, Mingus, Schepp, etc.; Coltrane explores spirituality; Davis explores avant-garde then combines jazz & rock into "fusion;" in 1970s, Armstrong & Ellington both die, but new jazz stars emerge in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Gordon (returning from Europe), Marsalis, etc. <i>Keeping Time</i> items: 49, 51, 56b, 54
12 - W 29	<b>Term Paper</b> due Unit 11 (additional topics): Canadian, British & other non-U.S. jazz; pop-jazz; jazz in film & TV <i>Keeping Time</i> item 62—plus thematic summaries of term paper topics—plus review for Final Exam
Exam Period	<b>Final Exam</b> (largely covering Units 7-11)

## **Plagiarism and Academic Honesty**

All students in this class are to read and understand the policies on plagiarism and academic honesty referenced in the Policies and Student Resources sections of the <http://plagiarism.dal.ca> website. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations.

Dalhousie University subscribes to Turnitin.com, a computer-based service which checks for originality in submitted papers. Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence, which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even to the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. At Dalhousie there University Regulations which deal with plagiarism, and, prior to submitting any paper in a course, students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the online Dalhousie website. The Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer-readable format, and to submit any paper to a check such as that performed by Turnitin.com. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand. Copies of student papers checked by this process will be retained by Turnitin.com.

## **Information for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities should register as quickly as possible at Student Accessibility Services, if they want to receive academic accommodations. To do so, please phone 494-2836, email [disabilities@dal.ca](mailto:disabilities@dal.ca), or drop in at the Killam Library, G28.