

AMUS 1221 – Applied Music
Fall 2026
Midwestern State University

Course Information

Instructor: Alyssa Ham

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description: Individual instruction in jazz piano with emphasis on the development of performance skills, jazz repertoire, harmonic concepts, improvisation, comping techniques, chord voicings, lead sheet interpretation, and stylistic practices. Study will include selected works from the jazz repertoire and incorporate principles of jazz theory and aural skills. Instruction will be adapted to the student's level of proficiency and designed to promote continued development as a performing musician.

Course Objectives:

- Develop increased proficiency in jazz piano technique, including appropriate fingering, articulation, rhythmic accuracy, and coordination.
- Develop an understanding of fundamental jazz theory concepts, including chord construction, chord symbols, harmonic progressions, scales, and modes.
- Develop proficiency in reading and interpreting lead sheets and other forms of jazz notation.
- Apply appropriate chord voicings, comping patterns, and rhythmic styles within a variety of jazz contexts.
- Develop fundamental improvisational skills through the study and application of jazz vocabulary, melodic concepts, and harmonic structures.
- Expand familiarity with representative jazz repertoire and develop an understanding of the stylistic characteristics of various jazz traditions and genres.
- Strengthen aural skills through the recognition and application of melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and common jazz progressions
- Develop skills in score and repertoire analysis, including the identification of form, harmony, melody, rhythm, and stylistic elements.
- Demonstrate increased confidence, musicality, and independence in the preparation and performance of jazz piano repertoire.

Student Assessment

Students will be graded according to their lesson preparation and their development and improvement throughout the term.

Grading:

- A – Represents flawless attendance and mastery of all assigned materials from week to week. The student demonstrates the capacity to take additional assignments and progresses at an accelerated pace through the various levels of ability.
- B – Flawless attendance and mastery of most assigned materials from week to week. The student completes the assignments with occasional mistakes but does not demonstrate the capacity to go beyond the normal pace of assignments. Occasionally assignments must be repeated. Steady progress through the various ability levels is evident in all areas.
- C – Below average progress in moving through the materials. Assignments are frequently repeated because of the lack of mastery.
- D – Consistent poorly prepared lessons.
- F – Represents no effort or interest.

Attendance

You must attend each of the weekly scheduled lessons throughout the semester. Absences will be excused for the following reasons: Illness, death in the family, or an approved and school-sponsored trip. Any other reasons will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In order for any of these absences to be excused, I must be notified in advance. The final grade for this course will be reduced by one letter for each unexcused absence after the first.

Curriculum and Materials

The curriculum for this course will be determined collaboratively by the teacher and the student in order to address the specific goals of each individual student. There are no “textbooks” required for this course.

Other Information:

Disability and Accommodations

If a student (1) needs class accommodation(s) because of a documented disability, (2) has an emergency medical condition that may interfere with class performance, or (3) requires special handling in case the building must be evacuated, he/she is encouraged to contact the office of Disability Support Services in room 168 Clark Student Center (940) 397-4140 and make an appointment with the professor as soon as possible.

Student Conduct

Behavior that interferes with either the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to benefit from the instruction will result in the instructor removing the disruptive student(s) from the class, either temporarily or permanently (instructor drop), and assigning a final lower grade, up to and including an F. In addition, and depending on the nature of the behavior or conduct, the student(s) may be subject to further disciplinary actions as per MSU policies.

Privacy Statement

Federal privacy law prohibits the instructor from releasing information about students to certain parties outside of the university without the signed consent of the student. Thus, in almost all cases the professor will not discuss a students' academic progress or other matters with his/her parents. Please do not have them call. Regardless of these important legal considerations, the professors' general policy is to communicate with the students, not their parents, even when a student has signed a consent form. College students are adults and are expected to behave accordingly.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty including plagiarism and giving or receiving unauthorized assistance is prohibited. Plagiarism is (1) the use of source material of other persons (either published or unpublished, including the Internet) without following the accepted techniques of giving credit or (2) the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given. If a student in the class plagiarizes material, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. The Student Honor Creed developed and adopted by the MSU Student Government reinforces the discouragement of plagiarism and other unethical behaviors. The first statement of the creed reads, "As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else do so." Plagiarism is lying, cheating, and stealing.

Campus Carry

Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84th Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective August 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University's webpage at MSU Campus Carry Rules/Policies.