

**Music 104**  
**Jazz Transcription and Analysis**  
**Spring 2009**  
**University of California, San Diego**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-10:50**  
**Warren 2136**

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### **Course Description and Goals**

This course focuses on jazz transcription and analysis as indispensable tools for increasing one's ability to identify salient musical details by ear, broadening one's understanding of the nuances of jazz expression and interaction, and deepening one's creative engagement with the jazz tradition. In other words, we will investigate the WHAT, HOW, and WHY of jazz. As we seek to improve our listening and conceptual skills, we will also probe the limits of musical transcription and important cultural and aesthetic issues that necessarily accompany and underscore its practice.

### **Course Grading and Expectations**

#### **25% attendance and participation**

#### **25% in-class and take-home assignments**

- Students may be asked to redo aspects of these assignments and resubmit them if deemed appropriate by the professor.

#### **50% final project – including a written and oral component**

To some extent, course expectations will vary by necessity depending on the abilities and experience of each student. Ultimately I am looking for substantial improvement throughout the course and a level of engagement and work that will benefit everyone in the long run.

### **Course Schedule and Activities**

Since the activities are based in part on the experience, ability, and interest of the students, they will be announced as we go. Some topics we will cover include:

- Motivations and methods for transcribing and inherent limitations
- “Descriptive” vs. “Prescriptive” transcription
- Basic jazz theory
- Basic ear training – melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic dictation
  - <http://www.good-ear.com/servlet/EarTrainer>

- Analysis of:
  - Swing style solos (Louis Armstrong, Lester Young)
  - Bebop-style change playing (Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins, etc.)
  - Blues playing
  - I Got Rhythm Changes
  - Modal playing
  - Rhythm section interaction
  - Intervallic/Motivic improvising
  - Freer forms of improvisation – non-metered time; timbre as developmental device
- Alternate methods for representing/describing musical sound

### **Final Project Details:**

- A portfolio of transcriptions
  - Artists and exact solos to be transcribed will be decided in consult with your professor. You may wish to focus on a single artist and should choose someone whose work is approachable (i.e. do-able) and you think will most benefit your steady progress as a musician.
  - The size of the folio will depend on the length and complexity of the solos chosen by the student, but in most cases will contain approx. 4-5 complete solos.
- Write a short paper (2-4 pages) to accompany the transcription work that:
  - Presents a brief overview of the artist and their work
  - Shares general insight about the artist's creativity or musical approach that was gleaned from transcribing their work
  - Analyzes in some detail at least one transcription from the folio (or relates similarities and differences between several solos) and reflects on the following:
    - The Composition
      - style? form? interesting rhythmic or harmonic characteristics?
    - Musical Language
      - recurring motives or themes? particularly interesting patterns or vocabulary?
    - Musical Development
      - contour? moments of intensity or surprise?
    - Musical Interaction
      - call-and-response type interaction? more conceptual or long range interaction?
    - What makes it musically interesting?
- Present/Perform in class at least one solo from your portfolio
  - memorized if at all possible