

MUSC 1400-401
Jazz Style and History
COURSE SYLLABUS

Semester: Fall 2022
M 5:15 P.M. - 8:15 P.M.
LERN 210
Fulfills *Cultural Diversity in the U.S.*
1 C.U.

Instructor Contact Information
Amanda Scherbenske, PhD
Email: scherbea@sas.upenn.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

Description & Objectives

What does jazz mean? How does one experience (listening, dancing, singing, etc.) jazz? For over a century, jazz has facilitated identity, creative expression, and embodied pleasure. It has served politics ranging from American imperialism to Black freedom. It has instituted varied systems of value (male hegemony) and fueled varied political economies (sex work to neoliberal capitalism). Its changing uses – from popular entertainment to high art – and social worlds have informed and determined how and why the public listens to jazz.

This course explores the significance of jazz, tracing its myriad uses, meanings, and sounds through its history. We begin by establishing a vocabulary for listening to jazz and by considering its origin stories, including its African American roots. Throughout the course, we then develop these skills and ideas to consider how jazz shapes and is shaped by cultural, social, and political life. The course is organized by theme and proceeds roughly chronologically. Topics include writing history, migration, embodiment, musical genre, the freedom movement, and gender and masculinity. The goals of the course are to become literate in some music fundamentals of jazz (e.g. form, instrumentation, and technology); to hone analytical skills that attend to music and social life; and to consider the social and cultural meaning of jazz. Classes consist of lecture, viewing, listening and other modes of engagement, and student-led collaborative work.

Assessment¹

Participation-Preparation

ENGAGEMENT (includes WEEKLY WRITING)	30%
FACILITATING DISCUSSION	10%

Assignments:

POP MUSIC COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT	5%
LISTENING PARTY PRESENTATION	15%

Exams

EXAM I	20%
EXAM II	20%

Grades will be assigned as follows: A+ (97-99) A (93-100). A- (90-92). B+ (87-89). B (83-86). B- (80-82). C+ (77-79). C (73-76). C- (70-72). D (67-69). F (66.9 and below)

¹ See Assessment Expectations and Explanations, which is also available on Canvas.