

Course Syllabus

Jazz Combo

Michael Dessen, UC Irvine

MUS 176 (2 units), course code 04572, Fall 2020

Course meets: Fridays, 1pm-2:50pm (for meeting links click "Zoom" in the Canvas course menu)

My office hour: Thursdays, 1pm-2pm (Zoom meeting number will be sent to enrolled students) and by appointment (email me your available times)

Course summary

Welcome! This course is a music performance workshop focused on small group jazz. The two main goals are:

- To help you improve your skills as a creative improviser and performer
- To help you expand your understanding of jazz as a musical and cultural practice

In class, we will work on collective performance practice as much as possible (see Technology details below). Outside of class, you will focus mostly on learning the assigned repertoire on your instrument, and you will also complete brief listening/reading/viewing assignments and responses, to gain additional context on the music.

Geri Allen

This quarter, we will focus on the music of pianist, composer and educator [Geri Allen](https://geriallen.com/biography/)  (<https://geriallen.com/biography/>). Originally from Detroit, Allen was an internationally acclaimed, highly individual artist who produced a diverse body of work as a composer-bandleader and a collaborator/sideperson. She had a deep impact on countless musicians and listeners throughout a long, global career before dying at the age of sixty in 2017. We will work on some of Allen's compositions, and we will also do brief reading/viewing assignments to gain a broader understanding of her contributions. This will include attending part of an online symposium on her legacy that will take place in November, featuring presentations and panels by Angela Davis, Fred Moten, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Terri Lyne Carrington, Nicole Mitchell, George E. Lewis, Vijay Iyer and others.

Technology

This quarter, we will experiment with a hardware-software solution called "[Virtual Studio](https://www.jacktrip.org/studio.html) , (<https://www.jacktrip.org/studio.html>)," an implementation of the software JackTrip on Raspberry Pi

devices that simplifies the end user experience while still offering high quality sound and low latency. For fall quarter only, the Music Department will check out to you the devices and other required equipment (mic, mic stand/cable, headphones and ethernet cable), which you must return in finals week or sooner if requested. We will test the equipment early in the quarter, and if successful, we will use it for weekly rehearsals and to perform on the jazz program's December 9 online event. If the technology does not work well quickly enough, we will find other creative ways to work together on music this quarter.

Important dates

Weekly work and due dates will be communicated in class and submitted through Canvas [assignments \(https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/29714/assignments\)](https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/29714/assignments), but please note the following dates:

Thursday, November 5 (not during class time): This is the day of the Geri Allen symposium, for which you will need to attend at least 45 minutes of events sometime between 6:30am and 2:30pm pacific time. More details and a schedule of events will be posted in the related [assignment \(https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/29714/assignments/608440\)](https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/29714/assignments/608440).

Friday, Nov. 13 (class time): On this day we will have a special guest presentation by vocalist and composer-bandleader [Amirtha Kidambi](http://www.amirthakidambi.com/)  (<http://www.amirthakidambi.com/>), also open to other students to attend.

Friday, Nov. 27: No class meeting due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Wednesday, December 9 (not during class time): You are required to participate in this evening's event, which will feature work from combos and students in the jazz program.

Expectations and grading

Expected time commitment: For a 2 unit course, I expect you to spend a minimum of 4 hours per week on work outside of class. Most of that should be spent practicing the assigned repertoire and performance exercises. In weeks where there are listening/reading/response assignments, I expect them to take roughly an hour. If you are investing the time and are unable to keep up, please talk to me right away and I will help.

Grading criteria: Your grade will be determined based on the following criteria, weighted equally:

- Active participation in all classes and in the Dec. 9 event
- Completing weekly individual practice and learning the repertoire to the best of your ability
- Completing the reading/viewing/response assignments

How your grade is determined: I will not assign letter grades to any individual assignments, but I will communicate with you at any time that your work overall falls below what I consider to be a "B." By Friday of finals week, you must submit a one paragraph self-evaluation in which you explain the grade you believe you earned for your work in the course, based on the criteria above. I will assign your final course grade taking into account my own evaluation of your work alongside yours.

Attendance and late work: Response assignments must be submitted by the due date to be considered complete. Contact me as soon as possible if severe illness or a genuine emergency prevents you from attending class or submitting work on time. Our work in this course is highly collaborative so attendance is crucial. Missing 2 or more total classes or failing to complete 2 or more assignments on time for any reason is grounds for a course grade of C or lower. Within these policies, I will be as accommodating as possible, given the unprecedented nature of our current moment, but it is your responsibility to communicate any difficulties to me as early as possible. If you prefer to talk, simply send me a message saying this, and listing your available times.

Disability accommodations: If you have a disability that affects your performance in this course, you should document it through the [Disabilities Services](https://dsc.uci.edu/) [\(https://dsc.uci.edu/\)](https://dsc.uci.edu/) and have them contact me with a contract by the end of the first week of the quarter.

Collaboration, inclusivity and integrity

Many activities in this course are collaborative, but you must be always careful to *avoid representing another person's work as your own*. Any attempt to do so will be considered an academic integrity violation, and will be [reported \(https://aisc.uci.edu/students/academic-integrity/procedures.php\)](https://aisc.uci.edu/students/academic-integrity/procedures.php).

My intention is always to facilitate welcoming, inclusive and respectful environments for collective learning among diverse students, in the spirit of the [UC's system-wide policies on diversity](https://diversity.universityofcalifornia.edu/policies-guidelines/). [\(https://diversity.universityofcalifornia.edu/policies-guidelines/\)](https://diversity.universityofcalifornia.edu/policies-guidelines/) Those policies define diversity as "the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance" and "include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and geographic region, and more." I expect all of us to aspire to create a supportive environment, to communicate with one another in respectful, constructive ways, and to understand the presence of these diverse life experiences in our classroom as a strength and learning opportunity for everyone. By remaining in the course after reading this syllabus, you are affirming that you share these intentions.

Thank you for reading the entire syllabus. I look forward to working with you!

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