Jazz Composition
MUS 401, 3 crs.

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Objective
The jazz musician’s core requirement is improvisation. Improvisation is spontaneous composition. The ability to compose helps the jazz musician with his or her core responsibility. Analysis of major works will help students understand the components of music at a higher, more useful level and benefit other areas of their musicianship. In the jazz world it is expected for participants to write much of their own material. Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Horace Silver, Bob Mintzer, and practically every other major jazz artist is known for their compositions. This course helps students prepare to contribute to the jazz arts in this way. Additionally, many jazz musicians work extensively in recording studios for television, sound tracks for staged musicals, commercials, movies, and many other endeavors. The ability to compose in this idiom helps students prepare for future employment either in education circles or professional performance.

Description
Various preparatory assignments must be completed including melody writing, the creation of chord progressions, application of melody to chords and chords to melody, transposition, orchestration, and analysis. Three major projects must be completed: a composition for jazz combo, a composition for big band, and an arrangement for combo and orchestra.

Prerequisites
Students must have completed Tonal Harmony 1 through 4 and Jazz improvisation 1 and 2.

Text
Wright, Rayburn. Inside the Score. Kendor.

Topics
Theory review
Style and analysis
Components of melody
Constructing chord progressions
Instrumentation and transposition
Writing for the small jazz ensemble
Writing for big band: rhythm section, woodwinds, brass
Writing for strings
Grading

Preparatory assignments  20%
Combo composition         20%
Big band composition     30%
Composition with strings  30%

Grade Percentages

A       =  93-100%  C       =  73-76%
A-      =  90-92    C-      =  70-72
B+      =  87-89    D+      =  67-69
B       =  83-86    D       =  63-66
B-      =  80-82    D-      =  60-62
C+      =  77-79    F       =  59

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is for the guidance of students only. It does not constitute a contract or an agreement of any sort between the instructor and the student. The instructor reserves the right to change any or all aspects of this course at any time for any reason.

In compliance with applicable disability law, qualified students with a disability may be entitled to “reasonable accommodation.” It is the student’s responsibility to disclose to the teacher any special need she/he may have before the end of the first week of class.