

University of Kansas
American Studies/English
Fall 2006

JAZZ NARRATIVE IN NOVEL & FILM

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Kevin Whitehead

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

How you'll be graded: On the basis of: a (probably take-home) final exam (34%); a 2000-word, documented research paper on a topic you select and I approve, due by beginning of class on 28 November (34%); a combined grade based on the quality of your participation in class, and the quality of your response papers (frequently assigned in class, and due via the class Blackboard site by noon the following Tuesday) on the books and films screened (33%). (Not turning in assignments, needless to say, will gravely affect that score.)

Graduate students are further required either to a) write an additional 2000-word paper or b) do a 30-40-minute classroom lecture/presentation, on a topic to be selected in consultation with the professor. For grad students other grade criteria shrink to 75%, paper/presentation counts for 25%.

Attendance policy: Attendance at every scheduled class is expected. However, to accommodate sick days, personal business, family emergencies, school trips, etc, you may miss TWO classes without penalty. A THIRD ABSENCE WILL COST YOU ONE FULL GRADE POINT (i.e., your A becomes a B, etc.). WITH FOUR ABSENCES—that's a quarter of all class meetings—YOU'LL AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE CLASS. Absence from the first class counts, even if you had not yet enrolled in the course.

HOWEVER, if you attend every session, and complete all assignments in good faith, your lowest grade in any category—exam, term paper, class participation—will become an A.

If you skip a class, you are still responsible for work assigned and material covered (or films screened) in your absence; kindly find out what you missed from another student.

It's a long class; we'll break for 10 or 15 minutes somewhere in the middle, or take two shorter breaks, or something. Please arrive on time, and do not leave the room while class is in session. Late arrival, early departure, unscheduled breaks and catnaps will influence your response/participation grade; repeated violations may be counted as an absence at my discretion.

Plagiarism warning: Stealing and passing off as your own someone else's ideas or words, or using information from another's work without crediting the source: that's plagiarism. Some specific examples include PASTING TOGETHER UNCREDITED INFORMATION FROM THE INTERNET or published sources, submitting an entire paper written by someone else, submitting a paper written for another class (and thus not original work), and copying another student's work (even with their permission). In order to avoid unintentional plagiarism and to represent your work honestly, you will need to be meticulous about giving credit to any and all sources, whether directly quoted (even a few words) or paraphrased.

The university avails itself of a sophisticated search engine to ferret out plagiarism; you may be asked to submit current or past papers electronically (via the Blackboard site) at any time during the semester, so **KEEP COMPUTER FILES OF ALL SUBMISSIONS UNTIL YOU RECEIVE A FINAL GRADE. FAILURE TO SUBMIT A PAPER ELECTRONICALLY WHEN REQUESTED TO DO SO WILL BE CONSIDERED AN ADMISSION OF PLAGIARISM.**

All incidents of plagiarism will be penalized (i.e., with an F for the assignment), reported, and kept on file in the American Studies Department and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

REQUIRED READING

Krin Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema*

Michael Ondaatje, *Coming Through Slaughter*

John Clellon Holmes, *The Horn*

Jack Fuller, *The Best of Jackson Payne*

Bill Moody, *Death of a Tenor Man*

Nathaniel Mackey, *Atet A.D.*

There may be additional reading assignments from time to time, posted at the class Blackboard site.

SUGGESTED READING AND RESOURCES

Useful resources:

IMDb.com: Internet movie database; complete credits, myriad links

David Meeker, *Jazz in the Movies: an alphabetical directory of films and TV shows to 1977*. It's maddeningly far from complete, and sparse with info, but it's especially useful for identifying jazz musicians on-screen.

Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, eds. *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: jazz history (and folklore) in the musicians' own words*.

(Auto)biographical info:

W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues*

Leslie Gourse, *Unforgettable: The Life and Mystique of Nat King Cole*

Daniel Mark Epstein, *Nat King Cole*

Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*

Martin Williams, "Buddy the King" in *Jazz Masters of New Orleans*

Otis Ferguson, "Young Man with a Horn," "Bix Beiderbecke's Music," "Notes on Bix Beiderbecke," "Young Man with a Horn Again" in *In the Spirit of Jazz: The Otis Ferguson Reader*

Frank Büchmann-Møller, *You Just Fight for Your Life: The Story of Lester Young*

Douglas Henry Daniels, *Lester Leaps In: The Life and Times of Lester "Pres" Young*

Robert Reisner, ed., *Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker*

Billie Holiday with William Dufty, *Lady Sings the Blues*

John Chilton, *Billie's Blues: The Billie Holiday Story*

Farah Jasmine Griffin, *If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday*

WEEKLY TOPICS

(Topics subject to change, embellishment, improvisation, etc.)

Week 1: Intro: excerpts and short subjects

Week 2:

Film: *St. Louis Blues* (Allen Reisner, 1958)
Read Gabbard, 1-63, 98-100, 239-255.
Start reading *Coming Through Slaughter...*

Week 3:

Film: *New Orleans* (dir. Arthur Lubin, 1947)
Finish (to discuss) *Coming Through Slaughter*.
Read Gabbard, 115-123, 204-223.

Week 4:

Film: *Blues in the Night* (Anatole Litvak, 1941)
Read Gabbard, 101-115.
Start reading *The Horn...*

Week 5:

Film: *Young Man with a Horn* (Michael Curtiz, 1950)
Read Gabbard, 64-75, 255-265
Keep reading *The Horn...*

Week 6:

Short film: *Jammin' the Blues* (Gjon Mili, 1944)
TERM PAPERS DISCUSSED.
Finish (to discuss): *The Horn*.

Week 7:

Film: *Round Midnight* (Bertrand Tavernier, 1986)
Read Gabbard, 94-95.
Start reading *The Best of Jackson Payne...*

Week 8:

Film: *Bird* (Clint Eastwood, 1988) 140m
Read Gabbard, 87-89.
Keep reading *The Best of Jackson Payne...*

Week 9:

Film: *Paris Blues* (Martin Ritt, 1961) 98m

Finish (to discuss) *The Best of Jackson Payne*.
Read Gabbard, 160-203, 223-230.

Week 10:

Film: *A Man Called Adam* (Leo Penn, 1966) 102m
Read Gabbard, 89-93, 230-238.
Start reading *Death of a Tenor Man...*

Week 11:

TERM PAPER TOPICS DUE.
Finish *Death of a Tenor Man*.

Week 12:

Film: *Lady Sings the Blues* (Sidney J. Furie, 1972) 144m
Read Gabbard, 95-98.

Week 13:

Film: *New York, New York* (Martin Scorsese, 1977)
Read Gabbard, 266-283.
Start reading *Atet A.D...*

Week 14:

Film: *Mo' Better Blues* (Spike Lee, 1990) 127
Read Gabbard, 145-159.
Keep reading *Atet A.D...*

Week 15:

TERM PAPERS DUE
Finish *Atet A.D.*

Week 16:

Film: *Space Is the Place* (John Coney, 1974) 63m

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