



Course Syllabus | 2025-26

Instructor: Keith Johnson
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Slack Channel: jazz-ensemble-25-26
Google Classroom: fdcsu4vq
Class Schedule: M, T, TH, F: 8:30am – 9:15am
Wed: 8:30am – 9:05am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Honors Jazz Ensemble is an advanced performance-based course dedicated to the study of the American art form of jazz. The course emphasizes building jazz vocabulary, strengthening improvisational skills, mastery of music reading, fundamental music theory concepts, and refinement of individual skills toward the collegiate level through the performance of jazz standards and from new, diverse and contemporary artists. Limited instrumentation requires an audition for ensemble membership. Concurrent enrollment in Wind Ensemble is required.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate understanding of jazz concepts including style, theory, harmony, form, and history.
2. Apply knowledge of jazz theory and vocabulary through ensemble performance and improvisation.
3. Refine individual playing ability toward the collegiate level.
4. Listen to, analyze, describe, and evaluate music using specific criteria for quality and effectiveness.
5. Strengthen music reading skills.

CLASS STRUCTURE & EXPECTATIONS

Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is crucial for student learning and the success of the ensemble. It is expected that all students attend class daily, on time, prepared with all required materials. Absences must be communicated via email to the director at least 24 hours prior to rehearsal. This will allow the director to adjust rehearsal plans accordingly if your absence would negatively impact the rehearsal plan.

Rehearsal Protocol

Class time is a time to work collectively, not individually. Rehearsals are not to learn your part, they are to learn everyone else's part and therefore, the music. **Learning your part is your responsibility and a basic expectation**, therefore, all members will:

- Have their individual part prepared and ready to go at each class rehearsal.
- Bring ALL their materials for class (music, mutes, mallets, reeds, pencil, tuner, etc.)
- Warm up within the first two (2) minutes of class.
- Reserve talking during rehearsal for relevant discussion of the music being rehearsed.
- Refrain from bring food into the rehearsal space.
- Leave cell phones in designated holders (located at the front of the classroom).

A word on individual preparation: Once we have sight-read a piece, it is *your* responsibility to get your individual part down. We need to focus on the larger musical concepts in these works and not on individual intonation and technique issues. ***Mark where you will need to practice during the sight reading so that it will be taken care of by the following rehearsal.*** The director reserves the right to switch players onto solos or parts if they deem it necessary due to lack of preparation. If you encounter problems in learning your part, please schedule an appointment with the director.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Instruments

Students are encouraged to rent or buy an instrument for daily use. Students that do not own an instrument may check out an instrument from the ECHS instrument inventory. **There are not enough instruments to supply students with two instruments** (one for home use and one for school use).

Sheet Music, Folders & Pencils

Sheet music and folders are supplied and are on loan to students for the duration of the school year. Students should keep a pencil in their folders at all times. Folders must be stored away in the designated folder slot at all times unless the folder is taken home. Students should not leave folders in their lockers under any circumstances. Students are responsible for all loaned materials and must cover the cost of any lost or damaged items. Replacement folders are \$25 and replacement parts are \$5 each.

Saxophone Players

Sax players are responsible for buying their own reeds. The recommended brand is Vandoren, however Rico reeds are cheaper. You should also plan on investing in a jazz mouthpiece that is different than your Wind Ensemble mouthpiece. Meyer 5 or 6 is recommended for alto players and Ottolink 8 for tenor players. Doubling may be required of saxophone players in Jazz Ensemble. Instruments for doubling will be checked to students by the director. It is the responsibility of each student to bring all doubles to EVERY rehearsal.

Brass Players

All brass players are encouraged to purchase their own mouthpiece. Bach 3C for trumpet players and Bach 6.5 AL for trombone players. If you are a lead player, please see Keith about mouthpiece alternatives. All brass players should also own a bottle of valve oil and/or slide grease. Trombone players should own a small spray bottle to keep their slide lubricated. Brass players must bring all mutes and doubles (Flugelhorns) to ALL rehearsals.

Rhythm Section Players

Drummers should own their own pair of (jazz) drumsticks. Bass/guitar players are required to provide their own patch chords for EVERY rehearsal.

Lockers

Students will be checked out a locker in the instrument storage room. It is everyone's responsibility to put their instrument in their locker after every rehearsal. Instruments may NOT be left out in the band room under any circumstances. Lockers should be used for music class only.

PERFORMANCES

Honors Jazz Ensemble is a performance-based class. Application of material covered in class is demonstrated in performance. **All curricular performances are MANDATORY and are a part of the student's grade.** Performance dates will be given to students in a timely manner well in advance and are always available online. **Work conflicts, extra curricular sport and/or music activities or conflicts within your control, i.e. family vacations and/or trips, are not excused absences.** Missed performances due to illness are excused but require a doctor's note for verification. All other conflicts will be handled individually on their own merit and must be cleared with the Director PRIOR and WELL IN ADVANCE of the performance. Missed performances can affect a student's grade by up to two full letter grades. No make-up work can or will be assigned for missed performances.

CONCERT ATTIRE

Concert attire for performances is as follows:

- Option 1:** Black 2 button suit (slacks and suit jacket)
Black dress shirt + white tie
Black dress shoes + black socks (no athletic shoes)
- Option 2:** Black dress (below the knee; covering the shoulders) or black dress pants
Black dress shirt
Black dress shoes + black socks/hose

Unacceptable Performance Attire:

- Bare shoulders or midriff
- Sweaters
- T-shirts
- Spandex leggings
- Jeans or sweatpants
- Open toed shoes/sandals
- Athletic shoes

Each student is responsible for obtaining the listed performance attire. Students that are not dressed in proper attire for concerts will not be permitted to perform and will not receive credit for the performance.

HOMework, ASSIGNMENTS, PROJECTS, & EXAMS

All members of the Wind Ensemble are expected to participate and contribute in all rehearsals and performances as a part of the final grade. At the director's discretion, listening, writing, or recorded assignments maybe required and a part of your grade as listed below.

Performances (50 points each)

Curricular performances are considered class midterms and finals. These performances are listed below. Extra curricular performances will not be graded and are optional.

- 1) **Fall Jazz Concert** (Q2): Wednesday, November 19, 2025
- 2) **Folsom Jazz Festival** (Q3): Saturday, January 24, 2026
- 3) **CMEA Jazz Festival** (Q3): Friday, January 30, 2026
- 4) **Campana Jazz Festival** (Q3): Saturday, February 14, 2026
- 5) **Spring Jazz Concert** (Q4): Wednesday, April 22, 2026
- 6) **CA Jazz Championships** (Q4): April 23 through 25, 2026
- 7) **WCCUSD Jazz Festival** (Q4): Wednesday, April 29, 2026
- 8) **Swing Dance** (Q4): Saturday, May 16, 2026
- 9) **Yoshi's Concert** (Q4): Tuesday, June 9, 2026 (pending confirmation from venue)

Daily Practice

Students are required to practice for at least 30 minutes a day, Monday through Friday. It is expected that students practice instrument specific exercises and etudes (provided by the director and master teachers), individual parts for large and small ensemble projects, scales, and sight-reading. Below is a breakdown of how you should break up your practice time. Individual parts must be learned by the end of the fourth week of the concert cycle. **Students that do not have their parts learned will be required to submit weekly practice logs.**

SAMPLE PRACTICE SCHEDULE

- **Method Book/Handout Work** (10 minutes)
Technical exercises; articulations, slurs, finger dexterity, sticking, rudiments, range, etc. Pick one concept to work on (can be guided by your master teacher; ask questions!).
- **Repertoire** (10 minutes)
Repertoire can include your big band music, jazz etudes, jazz standards, or anything you're working on in small ensembles.
- **Scales** (5 minutes)
Each quarter we will be working on a set of scales. Each day work one or two scales to master them. Don't try to cram scale practice on the week of a test, it won't work!
- **Jazz Patterns** (5 minutes)
Patterns will be posted in Google Classroom.

Rehearsal Procedures (2 points daily)

Procedures are based on daily preparedness by having all materials ready when class begins and participating in the warm-up and contributing positively to the rehearsal by having individual parts learned.

Scale Pattern & Jazz Vocabulary (16 points)

Through these ongoing assessments, students will demonstrate mastery of scale patterns and jazz vocabulary through a combination of in class live performances and recorded assignments uploaded to Google Classroom. All scales and patterns will be performed by memory in class or recorded using an appropriate backing track and uploaded.

Transcription Projects (25 points each)

Learning jazz vocabulary is essential to developing skills as jazz musicians. In addition to active listening, transcribing and performing solos recorded by professional artists is a crucial skill in developing a jazz vocabulary. Students will have two (2) solo transcription projects over the course of the course.

Semester 1: All students will prepare and perform a transcription assigned by the instructor. Most of the transcribed solo will be provided for students with sections left intentionally blank for students to transcribe on their own. The form, chord progression, and related scales will be covered in class to provide students with the necessary resources to successfully complete this project. Students will perform the transcription in class for a grade using a performance rubric.

Semester 2: Students will choose their own transcription project by the third week of the semester. The solo must be approved by the teacher to ensure it is level-appropriate for each student. All of the same resources from the first project will be made available to students. At the beginning of the 4th quarter, students will submit a progress recording to ensure the project is moving along as necessary and, to allow the teacher the opportunity to offer support. The final week of class all students will perform a solo transcription as a part of their course final. Performance rubrics will be used for grading.

Recorded Assignments (10 points each)

Recorded assignments will be assigned based on the progress of the group and/or individuals. All recorded assignments will be recorded using a cell phone or computer and submitted via Google Classroom. All assignments will be graded using our performance rubric.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

Final grades will be based on the following weighted categories and percentages for each quarter/semester:

- **Rehearsal Procedures and Preparation:** 40%
- **Performances:** 40%
- **Projects, Assignments, and Exams:** 20%