

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY- Department of Music & Theatre
MUS 344 Music Theory IV: Improvisation Syllabus
Spring, 2024

MWF 8:50am-9:40am or MWF 2:15pm-3:05pm

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Van Dusen

Office: MH 053 Office hours F 12-1pm

Email: svdusen@iastate.edu

Course Description

Improvisation on existing materials in a variety of styles.

Course Objectives

This course begins January 17th and ends February 23rd. You must be registered in order to receive credit. This portion of the course works in conjunction with an arranging & orchestration component, serving as the final semester of underclassmen theory. This class is ideally offered in a face-to-face format but, considering the fluid situation of everchanging health protocol, it may be taught in a hybrid fashion. Office hours will be made by appointment, and may happen either in-person or virtually. Over the span of this course, several musical aspects will be introduced, reviewed, discussed, and explored. In-class exercises will be presented to and then expected from each student. Bring your primary instrument each time, and be prepared to perform with it. A piano will be provided. You will be required to record performances in class with your own preferred method and submit homework via email, using mp3 & pdf formats exclusively. Materials will be available on Canvas. Use Canvas for all homework submissions.

Learning Outcomes

The objective of this course is to introduce all musicians to the world of improvisation, a skill that sharpens music theory, demands technical proficiency, encourages creative thought, improves music performance, and offers insight into music education. It is not limited nor taught with preference to a particular musical genre.

Required Texts and Tools

Primary Instrument

Recording tool (phones/tablets/laptops are acceptable)

Articles provided on Canvas

Schedule and Assignments

All assignments will be submitted on Canvas unless otherwise directed. Late assignments will be accepted on a case-by-case basis.

1	1/17/24	W	
2	1/19/24	F	NO CLASS Homework 1 Due
3	1/22/24	M	
4	1/24/24	W	Homework 2 Due
5	1/26/24	F	
6	1/29/24	M	Homework 3 Due

7	1/31/24	W	
8	2/2/24	F	Homework 4 Due
9	2/5/24	M	
10	2/7/24	W	Homework 5 Due
11	2/9/24	F	
12	2/12/24	M	Homework 6 Due
13	2/14/24	W	
14	2/16/24	F	Homework 7 Due
15	2/19/24	M	
16	2/21/24	W	
17	2/23/24	F	Final Project Due

Recordings

Several of the homework assignments will involve recording your improvisations and submitting them on Canvas as mp3s. Smart phones, tablets, and laptops all have acceptable built in software for recording. The ISU library system has laptops available for loan as needed <https://www.lib.iastate.edu/spaces-computers/computers/laptop-checkout>

Evaluation and Grading

Grading considerations include attendance, perceived effort, and performance on the assignments. Daily participation points will be given and constitute a significant amount of the grade for this portion of the course. There are no makeups for these points. Attendance is strongly encouraged. Absences will be noted. Excused absences work in accordance with ISU policies, and must include email/text notification **prior** to class. Be sure to present appropriate documentation for excused absences. Two unexcused absences will equal the lowering of your grade by one letter. Late work will be accepted until the expiration of the announced final date/time of submission. Your grade in this portion of the class will be calculated along with the following portion of the course, and you will receive a composite final grade.

- **Attendance and Class Participation 30%**
- **Community 10%**
- **Homework 35%**
- **Final Project 25%**

Grading Policy

A = 90%-100%
 B = 80%-89%
 C = 70%-79%
 D = 60%-69%
 F = 0-59%

Land Acknowledgement

Iowa State University aspires to be the best land-grant university at creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where diverse individuals can succeed and thrive. As a land-grant institution, we are committed to the caretaking of this land and acknowledge those

who have previously taken care of the land on which we gather. Before this site became Iowa State University, it was the ancestral lands and territory of the Baxoje (bah-kho-dzhe), or Ioway Nation. The United States obtained the land from the Meskwaki and Sauk nations in the Treaty of 1842. We wish to recognize our obligations to this land and to the people who took care of it, as well as to the 17,000 Native people who live in Iowa today.

Free Expression

Iowa State University supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of [freedom of speech](#) and the principle of [academic freedom](#) in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.

Accessibility

Iowa State University is committed to advancing equity, access, and inclusion for students with disabilities. Promoting these values entails providing reasonable accommodations where barriers exist to students' full participation in higher education. Students in need of accommodations or who experience accessibility-related barriers to learning should work with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to identify resources and support available to them. Staff at SAS collaborate with students and campus partners to coordinate accommodations and to further the academic excellence of students with disabilities. Information about SAS is available online at www.sas.dso.iastate.edu, by email at accessibility@iastate.edu, or by phone at 515-294-7220.

Academic Dishonesty

The class will follow Iowa State University's policy on academic misconduct ([5.1 in the Student Code of Conduct](#)). Students are responsible for adhering to university policy and the expectations in the course syllabus and on coursework and exams, and for following directions given by faculty, instructors, and Testing Center regulations related to coursework, assessments, and exams. Anyone suspected of academic misconduct will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct in the Dean of Students Office](#). Information about academic integrity and the value of completing academic work honestly can be found in the [Iowa State University Academic Integrity Tutorial](#).

Discrimination and Harassment

Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Veteran. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to Office of Equal Opportunity, 3410 Beardshear Hall, 515 Morrill Road, Ames, Iowa 50011, Tel. 515-294-7612, Hotline 515-294-1222, email eooffice@iastate.edu

Mental Health and Well-Being

Iowa State University is committed to proactively facilitating all students' well-being. Resources are available on the [ISU Student Health and Wellness website](#) (<https://www.cyclonehealth.iastate.edu>).

Religious Accommodation Information

Iowa State University welcomes diversity of religious beliefs and practices, recognizing the contributions differing experiences and viewpoints can bring to the community. There may be times when an academic or work requirement conflicts with religious observances and practices. If that happens, students and employees may request reasonable accommodation for religious practices. In all cases, you must put your request in writing. The instructor or supervisor will review the situation in an effort to provide a reasonable accommodation when possible to do so without fundamentally altering a course or creating an undue burden for the instructor, supervisor, or department. For students, you should first discuss the conflict and your requested accommodation with your professor at the earliest possible time. You or your instructor may also seek assistance from the [Dean of Students Office](#) at 515-294-1020 or the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#) at 515-294-7612.

Prep Week

This class follows the Iowa State University Prep Week policy as noted in section 10.6.4 of the [Faculty Handbook](#).

If you are experiencing, or have experienced, a problem with any of the above statements, email academicissues@iastate.edu