

**Syllabus**  
**MUEN 3640: UVA Klezmer Ensemble**  
**Class number 19627**  
**Fall 2014**

**Prof.:** Joel Rubin  
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**Time and location:** Mondays and Wednesdays 7:30-9:30 pm, Old Cabell Hall Room 113

**Office:** 207 Old Cabell Hall, office hours Tues. 2:00-3:00 pm or by appointment

**Prerequisite:** Intermediate to advanced skill on an instrument or voice (admission by audition at first class, Weds., Aug. 27, 2014 or by appointment)

**Special events this semester:**

**Extra rehearsal Tues. Nov. 18**, 6:30-10 pm, Old Cabell room 113  
**Concert Thurs. Nov. 20**, 8 pm in Old Cabell (sound check: 6 pm)

**Description:**

Klezmer, originally the ritual and celebratory music of the Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern Europe, was brought to North America by immigrants around the turn of the last century. Since the 1970s, a dynamic revival of this tradition has been taking place in America and beyond. Klezmer's recent popularity has brought it far from its roots in medieval minstrelsy and Jewish ritual and into the sphere of mainstream culture. The traditional klezmer style presents the experienced instrumentalist with a range of technical challenges with its characteristic note bends, rubati, Baroque-style embellishments and other micro-improvisational techniques, opening up a world of expressive possibilities not available to them from either classical music or jazz. This music was passed on orally from generation to generation, and many of the ornaments which are so integral to the klezmer sound can only be approximated by Western staff notation – not to mention the patterns of improvised variation which are the cornerstone of the style. There will therefore be an emphasis on learning by ear as much as possible, but we will be using music in the form of lead sheets and other written instructional materials to supplement sound examples.

The class focuses on the study and performance of various traditions, including the klezmer traditions of New York between the two world wars, 19th and early 20th century Eastern Europe, as well as original contemporary compositions. Emphasis will be on learning by ear, improvisation within a modal context, and learning to develop a cohesive ensemble sound. Concentration, practice, and good attendance are required of each ensemble member.

**Requirements:**

Please note that fulfilling the basic requirements of the course will not result in an automatic "A." Attendance at all class meetings is required. Any absences should be explained (preferably in advance). Explanation does not necessarily mean that the absence has been excused, however. More than 3 unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. In addition, students who miss class are responsible for learning the material missed before the next class meeting.

Grades are calculated based on a combination of ability, hard work (practice, improvement), and group participation (including aspects such as showing initiative, contribution to the group and leadership skills). By mid-semester students will be offered an evaluation via e-mail of their work to date, including suggestions as to how they might improve their grade.

Students are expected to make every effort to participate in performances, as their schedules permit. You are also strongly encouraged to repeat the course so that you as an individual and the ensemble as a whole continue to develop. For this purpose, the course can be repeated several times for credit (up to 8 college credits in performance).

Students are strongly encouraged to bring a recording device to class to help with practice. All music is available on Collab, both in recorded and sheet music form.