Yale University  
Spring 2003  

SEMINAR ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF EARLY JAZZ

INSTRUCTOR: Professor John Szwed

This seminar will undertake critical reading of the earliest commentaries on jazz (including the writings of musicians, literary critics, educators, the popular press, and artists (especially the Futurists, Surrealists, and Dadaists), and of the first attempts at jazz history. Discussion will include the dates and characteristics of the earliest jazz, the role of race in jazz commentary, and the place of jazz in twentieth century discourse. Recordings and films will supplement the readings.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Because this seminar will require participants to explore their own areas of interest in early jazz writing (see the enclosed reading list), no text book will be used, though everyone will read the articles and news clips reprinted in Karl Koenig’s Jazz in Print: 1856-1929 (Pendragon Press, 2002)

WEEKLY TOPICS

Week 1: What is Jazz? When and Where Does It Begin?

Week 2: Bibliography and Discography of Jazz

Week 3: Bibliography and Discography of Jazz (cont’d)

Week 4: The Early Literature On Jazz in the United States

Week 5: The Early Literature On Jazz in the United States (cont’d)

Week 6: The Early Literature On Jazz in Europe

Week 7: The Early Literature On Jazz in Europe (cont’d)

Week 8: The European Avant-Garde Discovers Jazz

Week 9: Race in Early Jazz Writing

Week 10: James Reese Europe, the Dixieland Jazz Band, and Paul Whiteman

Week 11: Dance and Jazz
Week 12: Swing

Week 13: Moldy Figs vs. Modernists

Week 14: Bebop

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