Watercolor Painting U79 124 01  
Washington University in St. Louis  
University College of Arts & Sciences  
Andrew Erickson  
Fall 2017 Wednesday 6:00 - 8:30 pm  
ericksonandrew@wustl.edu  
Classroom: Lopata House 21  
(314) 324-1538

Course Syllabus

Office hours: By appointment before or after class.  
Email hours: Checked daily.

Watercolor is an ancient, universal, and sublime form of painting. Elusive to understand in handling, it can be “moody”, mercurial at times. The medium’s potential seems as endless as its mystery. Elemental, it deploys water and stone. Pure, it achieves its characteristic luminosity through harmonious integration of the paper’s surface. Exciting in and of itself, mastery of transparent watercolor painting is a “gateway” medium to the fundamental understanding of almost all other forms of painting media.

General Description: Students will learn transparent watercolor techniques and gain a unique understanding of the medium through a series of guided, progressive exercises and related paintings. Class works from various 2-D sources, singular objects and still-life. Traditional subjects: landscape, figure, “master” studies, in addition to personal imagination, may also be subjects. Focus is on mastery and application of basic techniques: pigments, mixing, washes, wet into wet, wet onto dry, dry brush, value, glazing, layering, resist and mixed media. Emphasis is placed on development of understanding based on personal/unique response to each assignment.

Goals & Objectives:

The two chief goals for this course are to introduce fundamental techniques of watercolor through a series of progressive, sequential, skill building exercises, and to establish a sensitivity to the medium through a strong basic understanding of materials. Ultimately, these objectives will be achieved by creating a series of paintings. Although imminently learnable, genuine understanding of this medium is a lifelong endeavor, and ideally, should extend well beyond study limited to one semester.

After completing this course, students will be able to improve:

1. The basic knowledge of watercolor materials.

2. Understanding & mastery of basic watercolor painting techniques.

3. Observational and crafting skills based on response (i.e. learning to “draw” with paint or
painting from life-drawing experiences)
4. Awareness of the art historical context of the medium.
5. Familiarity with the unique characteristics of watercolor.
6. Appreciation and application of the medium’s diversity & potential.
7. Development of personal expressive artistic direction.

**Method of Instruction:** Lecture, demonstration, group & individual critique, guided exercises, observation & discussion of quality work in books, slides of master work, student and working artist examples and presentations.

**Topics:**
1. Medium and materials
2. Techniques
3. Drawing is/as painting.
4. Elements of composition: line, shape, proportion/perspective and value.
5. Color theory
6. Traditional and contemporary watercolor, cross-cultural approaches.
7. Use of watercolor with other media.
8. Content (personal choices: coherent expressive use of ideas and imagery)

**Materials list:**

**Optional textbooks:**

**Paints**
Buy all the pigments below in small (5-12ml) tubes.

1. Cadmium Yellow Medium
2. Cadmium Lemon Yellow
3. Yellow Ochre
4. Cadmium Red
5. Alizarin Crimson
6. Burnt Umber
7. Ultramarine Blue
8. Thalo Blue
9. Cerulean Blue
10. Windsor Green  
11. Windsor Violet  
12. Burnt Sienna  
**Optional colors:**  
Cobalt Blue, Prussian Blue, Manganese Blue,  
Hooker’s Green, Sap Green, Cobalt Violet, Burnt Sienna, Ivory Black.

**5 brushes:**  
1. round #4  
2. round #8  
3. round #12  
4. 1/2” flat Grumbacher Aquarelle  
5. 1” flat Grumbacher Aquarelle

**Optional brushes:**  
(1) 1/2” - 2” flat natural bristle-(Japanese hake- about $5)  
or  
Inexpensive Chinese bamboo, animal hair

**Watercolor paper:** Arches Aquarelle (Watercolor), 140 pound, cold press surface, sheets of full size (22” X 30”), as needed.

**Small sketchbook:** Suitable watercolor paper sketchbook or small block (9” X 12”, or smaller. 90 or 140 lb. cold pressed), for watercolor sketching transparency test swatches, & note taking.

**Watercolor palette:** John Pike brand recommended, or comparable large (15 X10”) white mixing plate, tray or palette with built-in spaces for the various individual colors and a large area for mixing is acceptable.

**Other:**  
2 large clear plastic containers for water (no glass, please & should hold at least 2 cups)  
Soft white paper towels or tissues  
Pencils, (not mechanical - #2 is just fine)  
Permanent waterproof marker, black, fine tip.  
1 Mars Staedtler eraser (plastic)  
1 kneadable eraser  
Spray bottle  
Mounting board 23” X 31”, (light plywood or foam core)  
Scissors
X-acto knife
Drafting tape or blue painter’s tape
4 or more clips

Optional:
camera
natural sponge
hair dryer

*Note: Other materials may be required for assignments.

Warning: Don’t wear anything to class that you are unwilling to ruin. Please dress appropriately.

Class participation, Daily Work, Homework & Critique: Students are required to be productive and attentive during the whole class period. In most cases, assignments require work and research outside class time. For homework, prepare to set aside time outside class to complete projects, roughly 15 – 30 minutes daily, between class sessions. There will be several formal group and individual critiques during the semester and for finals week.

Critiques are mandatory and are essential to both developing analytical skills and cultivating the ability to coherently articulate visual and conceptual aspects of artwork. These communication skills are professionally relevant when presenting work to curators, gallery owners, designers, art directors and art critics. Participation means meaningful discussion and dialog regarding individual and classmates work.

Major Assignments: Descriptions* See “Course Content & Calendar”

Method of Evaluation:
Final grades are determined by the following factors:
50% Quality: Including the averages of 12 total graded projects (each evaluated to a maximum 100 points) that:
   a) Demonstrate understanding of concepts, satisfying objectives.
   b) Demonstrate developing skills in observation & response, craftsmanship & creativity.
50% Professionalism
   a) Progress: a discernible “arc of improvement” in painting skills over the course of the semester.
   b) Attitude: Accepting criticism, responsiveness to instructor’s suggestions, critique participation, overall preparedness, general work ethic and attendance.
**Grading:** The following are criteria for final grades:

A: Outstanding - Exceptionally high achievement in all activities. Excellent, consistent work submitted in a prompt, timely manner, meeting all required deadlines. Work (skill) of high quality, demonstrates understanding of assignments, craftsmanship, intellectual initiative and visual awareness. (100-98 = A+/ 97-94 = A / 93-90 = A-)

B: Superior - Exceptionally high achievement in most activities. Slightly less consistent work, demonstrates understanding of assignments. Quality of work (skill) and visual awareness above average. (89-88 = B+ / 87-84 = B / 83-80 = B-)

C: Meets acceptable expectations in most activities. Inconsistent to mediocre quality work(skill) and craftsmanship. Work showing minimal improvement or carelessness, demonstrates marginally satisfactory understanding or occasional misunderstanding of assignments. Achievement perfunctory (soulless, mechanical completion of projects, i.e. does work just to “get it over with”), exhibits minimal pride/ownership in work. (79-78 = C+/ 77-74 = C / 73-70 = C-)

D: Deficient quality; Passing, but below average. Failure to meet acceptable expectations. Does not demonstrate skill or visual awareness. Work consistently late or incomplete. Too many excuses, tardy, early departures or absences. (69-68 = D+ / 67-64 = D / 63-60 = D-)

F: Failure - Failure to meet minimum requirements and acceptable expectations for most criteria; Lack of skill, develops little or no visual awareness, demonstrates no interest in class. Work not submitted, consistently late, incomplete or doesn't exhibit effort. Would rather be elsewhere and usually is. Not passing. (59-0 = F)

**Credit/No Credit Option:** Students enrolled under this option are required to complete at least 70% of each assignment area to receive credit for the course. “Complete” in this case means to approach earnestly the assignments by engaging in the class discussions and executing assignments. Please notify me early in the semester if you are seeking this option.

**Attendance Policy:** Because of the progressive, sequential, skill building nature of this course, attendance is mandatory, required for the successful completion of this course. Students are allowed two unexcused absences before their final grade is lowered. A student’s grade may be dropped a letter grade for every absence after the second. Anyone who misses one half-hour of scheduled class time will be counted absent. Everyone is responsible for all topics, activities, and information covered during an absence or
tardiness. Final critiques are held December 13. Students missing this class will have a one letter grade deduction toward their final semester grade.

**Late arrivals:** Students arriving 10 minutes late are marked tardy. Two late arrivals will be recorded as one absence. Early departure is also equivalent to a tardy. Use of digital devices not related to class will also result as a tardy. Cell phone use should be restricted to emergencies or during designated breaks. If it becomes necessary to use your phone, please inform your instructor before you leave the room.

**Make-up & late work:** If the student chooses to make up a missed day of class to prevent their grade from being lowered, she/he is responsible for meeting with the teacher to discuss what make-up work must be done. This work, equals approximately 2 and a half hours of studio work per missed class, follows the curriculum closely, and must be turned in no later than one week from the missed meeting. All work turned in past a designated deadline will receive a one letter-grade deduction, progressively, for each week late.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are offenses for which serious sanctions will be taken, including ultimate failure of this course. Please refer to the student handbook for clarification

**Accommodations based upon sexual assault:** The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no contract order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center. Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to speak with the Title IX Coordinator directly, Ms. Kennedy can be reached at (314) 935-3118.
jw kennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting her office in the Women’s Building. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to Tamara King, Associate Dean for Students and Director of Student Conduct, or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency. You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-8761 or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall.

**Bias Reporting:** The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University’s Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu.

**Mental Health:** Mental Health Services’ professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. See: shs.wustl.edu/MentalHealth

**Course Content & Calendar:** *

**August**

**Class 1** (8/30) Introduction, review syllabus, terminology, class materials, and handouts. Getting started. Slide lecture. Setting up palettes, use, maintenance tips and overview of materials/media. “Getting acquainted with the medium” exercises.

**September**

**Class 2** (9/6) **Project #1: Color wheel and color chart.** Color mixing: secondary from primary. Hue & saturation.
**Class 3** (9/13) **Project #2: Observational studies painting unit.** Basic drawing with watercolor: brush movement and marks.
**Class 4** (9/20) Project #2, continued.
**Class 5** (9/27) **Project #3: Value and monochromatic composition (photo reference).** Preliminary exercises in handling value.

**October**

**Class 6** (10/4) **Project #4: A Movement of Grays** Value study (still-life).
**Class 7** (10/11) **Project #5: Washes, Project #6: Wet in wet.**
**Fall break: October 13-17**
**Class 8** (10/18) **Project #7: Texture.**
**Class 9** (10/25) **Project #8: Two day glaze** Layers and glazing.
November
Class 10 (11/1) Project #9: Within and without
Class 11 (11/8) Project #10: Linear and other beginnings
Class 12 (11/15) Project #11: Three zones of landscape

Thanksgiving Holiday, no classes November 22-26
Class 13 (11/29) Project #12: Watercolor master studies

December
Class 14 (12/6) Master studies, continued. Final in class workday project #12.
Class 15 (12/13) Final group critique: Watercolor master studies.

Exam Week “Culminating Experience” & Final Portfolio:
For final group critique students are required to exhibit their watercolor master studies, individual artist presentation, (assignment #12). This, along with all other assignments are required as a final portfolio submission for review

Instructor Availability: The instructor will be available to meet with students before or after class, or as needed; the student can make an appointment. Please feel free to call the instructor any time

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs. It is the student’s responsibility to keep abreast of such changes.