



Format revised 2025

Syllabus revised 2025

Florence University of the Arts (FUA) is an academic institution for study abroad in Florence, Italy. FUA collaborates with The American University of Florence (AUF), an international university offering US-style undergraduate and graduate degrees, in a cooperation to offer study abroad programs with a diverse breadth and depth of academic curriculum.

FUA study abroad programs may include AUF offerings, which are US-aligned in terms of higher education standards as per the university's institutional structure. Common courses offered by FUA and AUF have been jointly selected by both institutions as eligible for mutual recognition and delivery. As such, equal academic standards, credibility, and outcomes are vetted by the Academic Offices of the institutions for all courses and syllabi offered in the study abroad program.

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND DRAWING
COURSE TITLE: PAINTING EN PLEIN AIR
COURSE CODE: FAPDPA225
3 semester credits

1. DESCRIPTION

3 Semester Credits. In this foundational open-air painting course, students will explore and familiarize with the pleasures and challenges of painting outdoors. The students will acquire skills in the techniques of Plein Air painting with watercolor pencils and develop critical skills to evaluate paintings executed in this style. This course will also provide students with a look at the various materials and products for outdoor painting using wet techniques. Students will be introduced to the history and tradition of this genre; the “conceptual” in landscape painting will be emphasized with a specific focus on the Italian context. Sessions will be held at different outdoor venues in and around Florence.

The classroom approach of this course is based on experiencing the city of Florence as the academic space for learning and engagement. Classes are not held in a traditional, frontal-style setting; each lesson is carefully mapped for curricular content and featured locations: lectures, observations, exercises, analysis, and reflections on presented topics are held in relevant sites that are accounted for in the academic planning, syllabus, and related course material. Coursework and submissions will be regularly assessed on the MyFUA platform through daily assignments in addition to exams, papers, and projects. Learning through the on-site classroom approach fosters a deeper understanding of the cultural environment of Florence and how it is related to the subject of study represented by the course, and allows the overall experience to contribute to the students' academic and personal enrichment.

2. OBJECTIVES

The aim of this course is to provide students with the foundations of outdoor painting, enhancing their capacity to engage with different styles and techniques.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Display understanding and appreciation of basic color, value, and spatial relationships as they apply to outdoor painting.
- Understand and employ techniques, tools, and materials available to the artist for successful outdoor painting.
- Apply foundation drawing skills to support the development of their artwork.
- Expand awareness of the life and work of many different artists, with a particular focus on Italian ‘Macchiaioli’.
- Broaden their painting vocabulary.

3. REQUIREMENTS

There are no prerequisites for this course.

4. METHOD

This course consists of lectures, discussions, and site visits within the local community. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, academic texts and studies, and experiential and/or field learning activities where applicable. As described in point 1, lessons are not held in traditional classroom settings but are based on the city of Florence as the academic space for learning and engagement. Please review the course description for the structural approach and method of coursework.

5. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES

TEXTBOOK (Copy available at the university library):

C. Evans, *Quick & Clever Watercolour Pencils*, D&C, 2006.

The textbook is mandatory for course participation and completion. Where applicable additional materials may be provided by the instructor.

FURTHER READINGS

F. Scheinberger, *Urban Watercolor Sketching: A Guide to Drawing, Painting, and Storytelling in Color*, Watson-Guptill, 2011.

J. Davidson, *How to Paint with Watercolor Pencils*, Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018.

LIBRARY

Course participants may access the campus library. Please consult the posted schedules for official opening times. Texts may be consulted on-site, and scanning/internet services available.

6. COURSE MATERIALS

Students must purchase the following materials for personal use (any materials that a student already has must be approved by the instructor).

Prices may vary according to sellers. For most competitive options, we recommend the following sellers: Salvini: Via degli Alfani 111r. This store is specialized in providing materials for FUA, therefore you will automatically receive a 15% discount on your purchases. You may also want to check Rigacci: Via dei Servi; Zecchi in Via dello Studio 19r and online retailers such as Amazon.it.

- 1 drawing pencil 2B
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 1 kneaded eraser
- Fine liner (sepia pigment) # 0,5
- 1 water brush (medium size)
- 1 sketchbook for wet techniques (at least 200 gr/mq: e.g. Fabriano: small cm.14,8 x 21, or medium cm. 21 x 29,7)
- 1 set artist-quality watercolor pencils, 24 pieces (e.g. Stabilo Aquacolor, Derwent Watercolour Pencils, Staedtler Karat Aquarell, Faber-Castell Albrecht Dürer)
- Paper towel/tissue paper

During the first class the professor will provide additional information on the materials list. Please purchase the materials by the second class.

7. COURSE FEES

Course fees cover course-related field learning activities, visits, and support the instructor's teaching methodologies. Book costs are not included in the course fee. If this course requires a fee, the exact amount is communicated prior to enrollment.

8. GRADING AND EVALUATION & ATTENDANCE

10% Attendance

20% Participation & Assignments

15% Midterm Assessment

30% Final Project (Digital Book)

25% Final Exam

The above grade breakdown percentages reflect the grading scale standards in the “Grading and Evaluation System” section of the catalog.

Attendance

Class participation is mandatory. Based on the hours defined in the Academic Catalog’s attendance policy, students may miss up to 2 class encounters delivered as lecture hours. A third absence constitutes a course failure.

Please note that absence hours may vary according to the learning methodology, as per the academic catalog policy on credit hours:

https://catalog.fua.it/standard_regulation

9. EXAMS / PROJECTS / ASSIGNMENTS

The **Midterm Assessment** accounts for 15% of the final course grade. This requires students to complete an en plein air painting. This assignment serves as a direct verification of the students' ability to produce work that reflects their understanding of techniques. Further details will be shared on MyFUA.

The **Final Project** accounts for 30% of the course grade. This project is a Digital Book showing your practices, processes and achievements during the course, and will be evaluated according to how accurate the above criteria are reported. The Digital Book must comprehend your statements, goals and achievements, as well as the procedures and the issues to reach the outcomes. It should include photos of your works, measurements, techniques, and short written statements.

Weekly photographic documentation of your artworks is essential (or steps towards the completion of the artworks), in order to constantly check your improvements, and to have the documentation available for the digital book at the end of the semester.

Please take care when photographing the artwork and in-process progress: create a pleasant setting for the shooting, curate the lighting aspects, enlarge important details, and Photoshop the image if necessary for its legibility.

The **Final Exam** accounts for 25% of the final course grade. The exam will be uploaded and submitted on MyFUA. It will entail short-answer questions and practical exercises. The Final Exam is cumulative.

10. COURSE OUTLINE

Lesson 1	
Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus, course presentation and materials. • Outdoor painting: history of the genre and contemporary approaches. • Explore mark making and washes in watercolor pencils.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover the meanings, aims, and ways of painting en plein air for artists. • Be aware of the objectives and methods of the course. • Understand the tradition of painting en plein air within the history of painting.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via Tripoli – Via delle Casine – Cappella di Santa Maria della Neve – Le Murate (painting spot): here, focus on the various premises within the space, including the café (rain spot), the courtyard, the old prison structure, and the art lab.
Readings/Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read from textbook: pp. 4s. (Introduction); 6-11 (Materials); 12s. (Technique: laying a foundation, making a wash) • Practice laying foundations and making washes following the tutorial included in your textbook.

Lesson 2	
Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basics of sketching en plein air: essential marks, shapes, forms. • Learn how to reduce sketching time.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover what to look for, learn to see and how to select when sketching on the go. • Make sense of the basics of the discipline and improve time management.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ponte alle Grazie – Lungarno Serristori – Tower Piazza Poggi (rain spot) – Terzo Giardino – Terrazza Marasco (painting spot).
Readings/Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read from textbook, pp. 14s. (Adding dry to wet; Adding wet marks), 20 (sketching tips): practice along the proposed tutorials. • Practice painting monochrome following textbook's pp. 30-33 (Monochrome).

Lesson 3

Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basics of painting en plein air: monochrome painting. Be able to translate a sequence of colors into a monochromatic scale. Exploit light and shadow to achieve the illusion of 3D.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to incorporate three-dimensionality in monochrome painting.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lungarno Generale Diaz – Ponte Vecchio – Borgo San Jacopo – Via del Presto di San Martino - Santo Spirito (painting spot; canopy of Via Mazzetta is the rain spot).
Readings/ Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read from textbook, pp. 16 (Blending on paper); p. 17 (Blending on a brush); p. 18s. (Combining wet and dry) Practice along the proposed tutorials. Extra readings on color mixing (color wheel, primary, secondary, neutral colors, etc.) will be provided by the instructor.

Lesson 4	
Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Painting with a limited palette; color wheel, color mixing.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn the language of colors; master mixing secondary and tertiary colors; apply theoretical knowledge into practice intentionally.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lungarno Torrigiani – Piazza di S. Maria Soprarno – Via de' Guicciardini - Piazza Pitti (painting spot; loggia of Palazzo Pitti is the rain spot).
Readings/ Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read from textbook, p. 34s: practice painting by redoing project #2 p. 34, and project p. 35. Practice painting by redoing the proposed “Tuscan village” project (just page 69). Practice mixing greys. <p>FINAL PROJECT OVERVIEW.</p>

Lesson 5	
Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Florentine palette: how to build it up. Different consistencies and colors.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of the interplay of architecture colors with the color of skies and water.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lungarno Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici – Lungarno degli Acciaiuoli – Ponte Santa Trinita – Lungarno Soderini – Piazza di Cestello (painting spot; canopy is rain spot) – Pescaia di Santa Rosa (painting spot).
Readings/ Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read from textbook p. 78-81. Practice painting by redoing the “Church” project in the textbook’s pages assigned above. Extra readings on linear perspective will be provided by the instructor. <p>MIDTERM ASSESSMENT ASSIGNED, due prior to next class meet.</p>

Lesson 6

Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linear perspective. • 1 and 2 viewpoints. • Midterm Exam Study Guide.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to trust what you see and render it on the 2D picture space; understand variations in perspectives in a cityscape.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via dei Pepi – Via dei Pilastri – Via degli Alfani – Via dei Fibbiai – Piazza Santissima Annunziata (painting spot; rain spot).
Readings/Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read from textbook, p. 99. • Practice painting by redoing project #2 p. 99. • Extra readings on how to feel the character of the city of Florence will be provided by the instructor.

Lesson 7	
Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geometry in the cityscape. • Mixing techniques according to needs.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to put at work what you have studied thus far. • Familiarize with selecting focuses based on your preferences.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lungarno Torrigiani – Via di Santo Spirito – Via Pisana – Via dell’Anconella – Old Gasometer (painting spot; canopies are rain spot).
Readings/Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: choose to a non-central Florentine building and produce a painting.

Lesson 8	
Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting in Florentine streets: people and objects. • How to cope with external confusion.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to deal with painting when immersed in the hustling and bustling. • Be able to concentrate, reduce time further, and finalize a paint on the go. • Be able to feature human presence in a cityscape; learn how to reduce human figures to believable silhouettes; be able to capture their movement.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via dei Neri – Via del Parione – Piazza Carlo Goldoni – Borgo Ognissanti – Piazza Ognissanti (painting spot; Church or canopies can be used as rain spots).
Readings/Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: produce a painting in a trafficked street of Florence.

Lesson 11

Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenery in the cityscape: the relationship between architecture and contained vegetation.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire skills in assessing the relationship between nature and architecture in a cityscape. Control diverse brushwork to render nature and architecture within the same painting.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via dei Benci – Via dell’Ulivo – Via dei Pepi – Via Farini – Piazza D’Azeglio (painting spot; canopies all around the gardens are rain spots).
Readings/ Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice mixing and shading diverse greens. Textbook, pp. 46–49: practice painting by redoing “Autumn Leaves” project. Textbook, pp. 36-39: practice painting by redoing “Woodland and Fields” project. <p>FINAL PROJECT DUE.</p>

Lesson 12	
Meet	FUA Corso Tintori, Main Hall
Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to paint in a garden and how to paint gardens. Analyze diverse greens and textures.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel at ease when painting in a natural environment; understand how to find your focus. Be able to render diverse types of greens and textures; have a sense of how nature moves while looking still.
Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ponte alle Grazie – Via di San Niccolò – Viale Poggi – Piazzale Michelangelo (painting spot; rain spot under the stairs on the right) – Giardino delle Rose (painting spot).
Readings/ Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercises on how to tackle details will be provided by the instructor. Select a green detail of choice in Florence and paint it en plein air.

Lesson 11 Final Exam	
Meet	MyFUA
Lecture	FINAL EXAM