



AUF

*The American
University of Florence*

SYLLABUS

Rev. 8
April 2025
Academic Affairs

Format revised 2025
Syllabus reviewed in 2026

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: FOUNDATION PAINTING

COURSE CODE: FAPDFP120

3 semester credits

1. DESCRIPTION

This course introduces beginning students to the fundamental principles and techniques of painting with a focus on acrylic painting and on oil painting techniques through an in-depth exploration of the art form of still life. Students will learn how to portray a three-dimensional subject on a two-dimensional surface. Emphasis will be given to the theories of color, value, and composition. Practical demonstrations and guided practices will alternate with lectures providing students with the essential knowledge of the history of drawing and of the great masters from the past and from the present. Students will be encouraged to rethink the way they see and observe a subject, and to develop their own sense of creativity and artistic expression. During the course, students will be required to create a digital portfolio of their work.

2. OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Employ basic techniques for acrylic painting and introductory guidelines of oil painting gained through an extensive study of still life subjects
- Observe and transfer visual information on canvas grain using painting techniques in a skillful manner.
- Display an understanding of key painting principles such as surface quality, composition, proportion, value, and color theory.
- Expand their artistic knowledge through the study of practical and theoretical information provided by the instructor and through course readings.
- Expand their own technical and aesthetic vocabulary related to painting as a form of artistic expression.
- Develop critical skills in presenting the outcome of their work in oral (critique) and written form (paper).
- Organize a structured and effective portfolio of their own achievements.

3. REQUIREMENTS

There are no prerequisites for this course.

4. METHOD

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, projects, and interaction with the local community. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, integrate relevant academic sources, may include multimedia

references, propose creative problem-solving, and other appropriate forms of delivery as deemed appropriate to the course's purpose.

5. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES

TEXTBOOK (Copy available at the university library):

- Harrison, Hazel. *How to Paint and Draw: Drawing, Watercolour, Oil and Acrylic*, Hermes House, 2004.

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

LIBRARY

Course participants may access the campus library. Please consult the library site for resources such as collections, borrowing, scanning and wifi connection, and research: <https://www.auf-florence.org/Library/the-library/>

6. COURSE MATERIALS

- 1 Sketchbook (Tiger offers competitive prices)
- Between 4 and 5 large (70x100) sheet of oil painting paper (suggested brand Pittura by Fabriano "Tela" 400 g)
- Watercolor pencils (suggested brands: Acquacolor by Stabilo; 12 colors sufficient)
- 2 Drawing pencils: 2B, HB
- 1 White rubber eraser
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 10 to 12 tubes of acrylic and oil paint (TBD by instructor)
- 3/4 painting brushes
- 1 Palette of choice; wooden, plastic, metal, or paper (notice price may vary considerably according to material. The cheapest option is likely to be plastic, around 3 Euros (see online retailers such as Amazon.it))
- At least 1 canvas for final project (size to be confirmed by instructor: 35x50; 30x40; 20x30)
- 1 Masking tape
- 1 Small and 1 large glass containers with lids
- Old t-shirt or smock to protect clothing while painting

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS PROVIDED BY FUA TO USE IN CLASS

- 1 utility brush
- 2 plastic glasses for water
- 1 bar of brush soap
- 1 Willow charcoal
- 3-4 small rags or roll of paper towels
- 1 big glass jar with an airtight lid (a big jam jar would fit)
- 1 bottle of linseed oil
- 1 bottle of odorless (vegetable-based) oil as a thinner/solvent
- 1 Acrylic gesso
- Latex gloves
- Wet hand wipes

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
10% Participation and Assignments
20% Final Digital Portfolio and Critique
20% Midterm Assessment
20% Final Project and Critique
20% 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.auf-florence.org/standard_regulation

9. EXAMS / PROJECTS / ASSIGNMENTS

Midterm Assessment: The midterm assessment accounts for 20% of the final course grade. It consists of an online submission including definitions, short-answer and open-ended questions.

Final Exam: The final exam accounts for 20% of the final course grade. This is a written exam based on the readings done throughout the course, slides, techniques and materials used during the class time. Format: the exam is divided into three sections:

- Part I: 10 Multiple choice questions. Each correct answer is worth 2 points, for a total of 20 points.
- Part II: 10 short-answer questions. Each correct and complete answer (concise explanations, main ideas, key words, names, etc.) is worth 5 points, for a total 50 points.
- Part III: two essay questions; each correct and complete answer is worth 15 points (based on content, vocabulary, detail, etc.) for a total of 30 points.

The Final Exam is cumulative.

Final Digital Portfolio: The final digital portfolio accounts for 20% of the final course grade.

You must hand in a digital copy of your portfolio complete with photos of your works, measurements, techniques.

A weekly photographic documentation of your artworks (or steps towards the completion of the artworks) is crucial, so as to constantly check your improvements, and so as to have the documentation available for the final portfolio at end of the semester.

Please take care when shooting your works: you shoud create a pleasant setting for the shooting, curare the lighting aspects, enlarge important details, and photoshop the image if necessary for its legibility.

A handy format to make a digital portfolio is either PowerPoint or Keynote.

Youw will hand a final digital portfolio in pdf. The first page (or slide) has to have the following information:

- Name of the School
- Department of Fine Arts
- Code and exact tide of the course

- Name of the Professor (and head professor, as stated on the syllabus)
- Name of the Student
- Term and Academic Year

You will be evaluated on the progress of your work throughout the course.

Final Project and Critique: The Final Project counts for 20% of the final course grade. Your grade will be based on:

- 1- Final project: graphic, stylistic, and technical quality. 70 points,
- 2- A brief presentation of your final project you will give to the class. Students are expected to formulate their ideas verbally during their presentation, to respond to feedback in an engaged and receptive way, and to participate during the critiques of others. Evaluations will also respond to improvements in technical and formal ability and the student's effort and positive approach towards self-improvement through project work. 30 points

Assignments: This course requires at least 3 assignments as per the course outline in the syllabus. Further details are provided in the course portal.

10. COURSE OUTLINE

Lesson 1	
Meet	In class
Lecture	<p>Presentation of course and syllabus. Materials and tools. Painting today: What, Why, When.</p> <p>Techniques/Materials: graphite and colored pencils.</p> <p>Historical roots of still life painting. Painting today. Introduction to Composition: negative and positive space, proportions.</p>
Objectives	<p>Become familiar with painting tools and materials. Learn how to clean brushes and store materials properly. Learn how to create sketches and how to use your sketchbook.</p> <p>Learn to see value and simplify it into light, medium, dark.</p> <p>Become familiar with the concepts of positive and negative space, and proportions as they relate to artistic composition.</p>
Lab	<p>Getting to know materials (brushes, colors, paper, canvas). First approach to still life: The role of sketching and sketchbook. Why copying from a Master today?</p> <p>Many ways of “copying”</p> <p>Copy a Master’s still life.</p> <p>Test sheet: Copy a Master’s still life. Values: light, medium, dark.</p> <p>Technique/Materials: graphite, charcoal, and coloured pencils.</p>
Readings/ Assignments	<p>Read: Textbook, “Colour drawing materials,” pp. 8-19; “Coloured pencils,” pp. 28-31; “Paints, brushes and mediums,” pp. 138-139, “Papers,” pp. 202-203; “Sketching,” pp. 46-47.</p> <p>Read: Textbook, “Comparative Demonstration,” pp. 36-37 (section about coloured pencils); “Making Accurate Drawings,” pp. 38-39; “Drawing Shapes,” pp. 40-41; “Drawing Form,” pp. 42-43; “Drawing with Line,” pp. 44-45.</p> <p>Assignment #1 assigned, due by next class meet.</p>

Lesson 2	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Hatching and cross hatching. The role of texture in colored pencil painting.
Objectives	Discovering how to work all in one with color and texture.
Lab	Test sheet: copy a Master’s still life.

	Technique/Materials: graphite, charcoal, and colored pencils.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Textbook, "Coloured Pencils Demonstration," pp. 58-59; "Mixed-Media Demonstration," pp. 64-67.

Lesson 3	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Color Theory/1. Primary colors, secondary and tertiary colors. Warm vs Cool colors. Mixing paint. Introduction to acrylics and oil paint techniques.
Objectives	Understand the relationship between colors on the color wheel. Practice techniques for mixing paint. Learn how to create a sense of space and dimension using warm and cool colors.
Lab	Test sheet: Create a color wheel using limited palette. Test sheet: Copy a Master's still life. Technique/Materials: graphite, charcoal, colored pencils, acrylics, and oil paint
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Textbook, "About Oils and Acrylics," pp. 132-137; "Paint, Brushes & Mediums," pp. 138-139; "Palettes & Painting Surfaces," pp. 140-141; "Primary & Secondary Colors," pp. 142-143. Assignment #2 assigned, due by next class meet.

Lesson 4	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Color Theory/2. Complementary colors and color qualities. Neutralisation of colors. Bistres.
Objectives	Learn to neutralise the intensity of a color. Understand the difference between neutralising with black, with complementary color, with bistre.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Textbook, read again last week's readings; + "Colour Relationships," pp. 146-147; "Using a Restricted Palette," pp. 144-145; "Painting White," pp. 148-149; "Working All Prima," pp. 150-151. FINAL PROJECT OVERVIEW.

Lesson 5	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Basic Perspective for still life Students learn basic geometry of simple 1-point perspective for use when painting in still life, including using sighting techniques (taking angles & transferring them to painting) with brush or graphite handles. Chromatic perspective.
Objectives	Creating a 3d effect on a 2D picture space. Including multiple elements in a composition. Balancing elements such as shapes, light, and color value.
Lab	Complex Composition: Copy of a Master's still life. Technique/Materials: acrylic on paper/ oil paint on canvas.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Textbook, read again "Making Accurate Drawings," pp. 38-39; + "Focus: Buildings," pp. 60-63; "Comparative Demonstration," pp. 166-169. MIDTERM ASSESSMENT ASSIGNED, due prior to next class meet.

Lesson 6	
Meet	In class
Lecture	History of still life painting/1. Copying from a Master XX Century Master.
Objectives	Getting to know different styles of painting beneath academic painting.
Lab	Test sheet: Copy of a Master's still life.

	Technique/Materials: acrylic on paper/canvas.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Textbook, "Focus: Still Life," pp. 170-173; "Still Life Demonstration," pp. 174-175.

Lesson 7	
Meet	In class
Lecture	History of still life/2. Zooming in and copying from a Master. Texture and details.
Objectives	Learn different perspective on the same subject. Understand the role of personal choice in painting.
Lab	Test sheet: Copy a Master's still life focusing on small details, reflections, textures, highlight and shadows, etc.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: The instructor will provide extra readings on the topic. Assignment #3 assigned, due by next lesson.

Lesson 8	
Meet	In class
Lecture	How to set up your own still life and paint it. Still life in contemporary art.
Objectives	Improve the ability to finalize the arrangement of a still life to your own artistic abilities and preferences. Start being aware of your own personal choices and style.
Lab	Test sheet: live work: set your own still life and paint it. Technique: acrylic on paper/canvas. Individual critiques for final exhibition. Technique: acrylic on paper/canvas. NB Start working on the Final Exhibition concept.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: The instructor will provide extra readings on the topic.

Lesson 9	
Meet	In class
Lecture	How to set your digital portfolio. How to write a statement for your Final Project. Review of course topics.
Objectives	Learn how to communicate the content and style of your own art.
Lab	Working on the Final Project and at Final Portfolio. Technique: acrylic on paper/canvas.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: The instructor will provide extra readings on the topic. FINAL PROJECT DUE

Lesson 10	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Presentation of individual Final Project: critique and discussion a) Presentation of your Final Project. b) Presentation of your Portfolio in pdf.
Objectives	Master the basic methods and formal dynamics involved in making and evaluating a still life painting. Demonstrate fundamental critical skills when presenting the outcomes of their work in oral (critique) and written form (paper).
Lab	Hands-on individual review with the instructor: students will ensure that all assigned works are complete before the final exam.

Readings/ Assignments	Read: The instructor will provide extra readings on the topic. Final Project Presentation
----------------------------------	--

Lesson 11 Final Exam	
Meet	
Lecture	FINAL EXAM