



Beginner Painting in Florence: Studio Course

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: FLOR 1501

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 60 + 15

Instructor: Onsite Faculty

Course Description

This studio course introduces students to the principles of painting and develops their skills in composition, observation, and the use of colour. The course will include sessions on technique, brushwork, colour theory and the use of different media. During the first half of the course assignments will concentrate on developing different skills and building techniques, using traditional and experimental approaches to painting. During the second half of the course students will use these skills to develop their own work.

Students will explore the history of art in Florence in the many galleries and museums and will use this knowledge to inform their own work. The course will cover the technical developments of the Renaissance, including the study of perspective, line, and form. Through guided instructional sessions, students will gradually cultivate their unique artistic styles and engage in individual research, which may involve integrating themes and techniques from both modern and contemporary art. This study will be the basis for developing painting skills through engaging with, and responding to, the works and artists they study.

The course will also have a focus on developing skills for self and peer criticism to discuss the development of the work. Students will create a final piece supported by an Artist's Statement, a research breakdown outlining the evolution of the project's concept and technical development.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and use different techniques in painting
- Read a three-dimensional image in its transposition onto paper/canvas
- Demonstrate understanding of the use of colour in painting
- Use critical thinking skills
- Use divergent thinking in every phase of the creative process
- Identify the main developments in the history of Florentine painting

Methodology

Through step-by-step guided classes, the teaching methodology adopted involves continuous discussion between the teacher and the students on the topics covered during the lessons. In the pursuit of creative and original pictorial and expressive solutions, students will be consistently encouraged to step outside their comfort zones. The focus of the course, therefore, will not simply be on learning various painting techniques, but will primarily aim at fostering a personal and artistic application of the techniques acquired.

Experiential Learning & Field Visits

This course is structured entirely around experiential learning, emphasizing hands-on activities to reinforce theoretical knowledge. Through practical field experiences, students will not only apply classroom concepts in real-world situations but also engage directly with professional artists from the contemporary Florentine scene. Additionally, scheduled visits to cultural sites will immerse students in the city's rich heritage, providing opportunities for educational growth and social interaction.

Field Visits:

- Uffizi Galleries
- Palazzo Pitti
- Visits to the studios of contemporary artists working in Florence
- Others to be confirmed

Course Prerequisites

None

Required Reading / Materials

A selection of the following readings will be made available electronically on AYP:

- Itten, Johannes and Faber Birren. *The Elements of Color*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co. 1970.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Theory of Colors*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1970.
- Smith, Ray. *The Artist's Handbook*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 1987.

- Doerner, Max. *The Materials of the Artist and Their Use in Painting*. Rev. ed., 1st Harvest, 1949.
- Hockney, David. *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2006.
- Aristides, Juliette. *Classical Painting Atelier: A Contemporary Guide to Traditional Studio Practice*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2008.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin Publisher, 2008.

Students will be responsible for purchasing a painting kit and materials (approximate cost: €150).

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Class Participation & Improvement	10%
Sketches	10%
In Class Assignments	25%
Artist's Statement	15%
Final Project	30%
Final Presentation	10%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

In this course, students engage in various painting projects. These projects will include preliminary sketches, color mixing exercises, and individual research. Throughout the course, students receive individual feedback to support their artistic development. Active and meaningful participation in class discussions and activities is essential. Contributions should stem from assigned readings, lectures, and visits, enriching discussions with thoughtful questions, new insights or respectful counterpoints.

Students will engage in in-class painting projects and homework assignments. These exercises, accompanied by structured demonstrations and lectures, will explore classical methods to grasp proportions and surface techniques. Before beginning each painting project, students will create a preliminary composition sketch. Individual critiques will be conducted regularly, providing personalized guidance and examples. Additionally, a group critique will be held during the Final Exams. For the Final Project, students will select a subject from designated specifications, actively participating in the process.

Completion of all required paintings by semester's end is expected, with evaluation during group critiques at the Final evaluations. Furthermore, students will be required to visit museums in Florence to deepen their understanding of masterworks.

Course Content

Week 1

Introduction to the course: health and safety in the studio, methods, materials, course syllabus.

Unit 1

- Class Project) Brushwork, demonstration of the use of brushwork.

Unit 2

- Class Project) Students will be assigned an in-class task using different brush techniques and will critique their work as a group.

Week 2

The History of Painting, Painting techniques through time

Unit 1

- Class Project) Monochromatic exercise and colour application, colour mixing and application. Focus on seeing values through observation (part.1).

Unit 2

- Class Project) Monochromatic exercise and colour application, colour mixing and application. Focus on seeing values through observation (part.2).

Readings assigned on colour theory for discussion in following class

Week 3

Colour Theory

Unit 1

- This class will look at colour theory, the colour wheel, contrast and harmony and the use of colour to convey drama and emotion.

Unit 2

- Class Project) Students will be assigned an inclass task using colour and will critique their work as a group

Week 4

Renaissance, The Beginning

Unit 1

- Class Project) Composition: This class will explore composition using examples to explain the development of composition in figurative art (part 1).

Unit 2

- Class Project) Composition: This class will explore composition using examples to explain the development of composition in figurative art (part 2).

Week 5

Renaissance, Development and Impact on Art History

Unit 1

- Class Project) Perspective: Students will learn the perspective technique and how to apply it in their projects (part 1).

Unit 2

- Class Project) Perspective: Students will learn the perspective technique and how to apply it in their projects (part 2).

Week 6

Florentine Art: Field Trip to Museum/Gallery TBC

Unit 1

- Class Project) Learning from the Masters. Students will have the opportunity to work inside a Florentine museum, taking ideas and inspiration from the artists who have made the history of Florence great.

Unit 2

- Class Project) From inspiration to personalization of a concept.

Week 7

Blurring the line, Between Figuration and Abstraction

Unit 1

- Class Project) This class will explore non-figurative & abstract painting and the use of mixed media in painting (part 1).

Unit 2

- Class Project) This class will explore non-figurative & abstract painting and the use of mixed media in painting (part 2).

Week 8

Classical, Modern & Contemporary Portrait

Unit 1

- Class Project) This class will provide an overview of the portrait and self-portrait. Students will paint a self-portrait using a media and style of their choice.

Unit 2

- Presentation of the Final Project. Students will present their plan for their Final Project including concept, materials and method.

Week 9

BREAK

Week 10

First Stages of Work on the Final Project

Unit 1

- Students will begin working on their final projects.

Unit 2

- Working on the Final Project
- In Class Assignments Due

Week 11

Unit 1

- Studio Visit. Students will have the opportunity to get to know and meet professional artists working in Florence (SACI Artist in Residence, if present).

Unit 2

- Working on the Final Project

Week 12

Unit 1

The Artist's Statement: introduction to the assignment

- Open dialogue on Art (analyzing the structure and usage of artist statements in professional practice)
- Working on the Final Project

Week 13

Unit 1

The Nature of Creativity and the Courage to Create

- Open dialogue on Art (the importance of divergent thinking in the creation of a work of art)
- Working on the Final Project

Week 14

Unit 1

The right way to present yourself as an artist

- Open dialogue on Art (how professional artists present themselves and their work)
- Working on the Final Project

Week 15

Unit 1

Final Presentation (**Final Project & Artist's Statement Due**)

- Students will display their projects as a group, choose locations for their works in a gallery space, and collaborate to create a group exhibition.
- Each student will present their projects and their artist's statement.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

Penalty for extra absences

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. **If you miss more than one class meeting for courses meeting once a week or two class meetings for courses meeting more than once a week without evidence of medical need, your final grade for the class will be dropped by a third of a letter grade for each extra absence** (check the Academic Handbook for the attendance policy in place at the Florence Program). When missing class, it is the student's responsibility to find out what information was given in class, including any announcements made.

Missed assignments: a valid doctor's certificate dated on the day of the absence is required to make up for any missed assignment (paper due, presentation due, project due, test, quiz, midterm, final, and all other graded activities). Failure to provide such evidence will automatically result in an "F"/"0" grade for the assignment. No exceptions allowed.

See the Academic Handbook for guidelines on providing a valid medical certificate.

Use of Electronic Devices in Class

All electronic devices, including cell phones and laptops, must be turned off during class time. Failure to comply with this policy will be factored into the participation grade for the course and may lead to disciplinary measures.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).