EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

VISUAL ARTS

School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Visual Art Art History

FA / VISA 3022E3.0 SECTION A
CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO NATURE
FALL 2020 / WINTER 2021

Last Modified Date: 07/24/2020

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Investigates how painters are exploring contemporary approaches to nature and landscape through such questions as: How is nature represented in the media? How is the urban/nature opposition beginning to break down? How can cities be ecologically friendly? These questions are discussed through: an historical survey of how artists of the past viewed and represented nature, a class visit to the McMichael Collection, and an examination of how contemporary painters are re-engaging with nature. Students explore these themes through three, studio projects. Students are encouraged to draw and paint from nature instead of using only photographic sources. The projects are evaluated by extensive individual and class critiques. Prerequisite: three credits from FA/VISA 202x 3.00 series of courses.

INSTRUCTOR(S)

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Section / Format / Term</th>
<th>Contact Email</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jones, Janet A</td>
<td>Sec. A / LAB / F</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jjones@yorku.ca">jjones@yorku.ca</a></td>
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SPECIAL FEATURES

This studio course investigates how artists are exploring contemporary approaches to nature and landscape through painting. Questions such as: What is our contemporary relationship to nature? How do we interact with nature? Are our current experiences with nature primarily mediated, i.e. viewed on our laptop or on our cell phone? What does it mean to ‘escape’ to nature? Why do we see nature as ‘paradise’? What is ‘utopia’ / ‘dystopia’? will be discussed in this course. We will begin this course with an historical survey of how artists of the past have viewed and represented nature: What is the sublime and how did painters depict the sublime through nature? How is nature represented as a force in opposition to ‘man’, to be tamed? How is nature gendered? are a few of the ideas to be considered. Now, painters are again beginning to look at nature for their sources of imagery. As a contemporary painter, how do you view nature?

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

Studio Projects:
Studio Project #1: Approaches to Nature
Introduction: There is a very vibrant tradition of landscape / nature painting, particularly in Canada. How have painters depicted the natural world? How does the time period and the society in which the painter is living, influence how the painter views the landscape, the style used, and the underlying message?

What is the sublime, the pastoral, the wild, the picturesque in landscape painting? What do these approaches to landscape painting mean?

You are expected to begin your work ‘plein air’. Working ‘plein air’ means working outside in nature making small preliminary paintings, as the Group of Seven and the Impressionists did. It means that if it is windy, for example, you will be experiencing the wind or if it is cold then you will be cold. How does the experiential nature of working in nature effect your painting?

Power Point Presentation #1: Approaches to Nature
(Available on the Course Moodle Site)

Please view and read over this Presentation before beginning Project. #1. Consider how the selected paintings and explanations relate to your own ideas and the project you are about to begin. What painting, artist or style do you relate to the most and why? This presentation will introduce the concepts of the sublime, the pastoral, utopia / dystopia, the picturesque, ‘man’ against nature and ‘plein air’ painting.

Studio Project:
‘Plein Air’ Study:
Choose an outdoor location which is easily reachable either by walking or by car– it might be a park, or as near-by as your backyard. It needs to be a place that you can stay for at least an hour or more, set-up your painting materials, put your small canvas on your lap or rest it on a board. Make sure you have a stool to sit comfortably. One of the keys to successful ‘plein air’ painting is to plan ahead, think about all of the painting supplies that you will need.

The following is a materials check-list:
- Stool and piece of light board to rest your painting pad or small canvas on while painting.
- small pre-stretched canvas 10” x12” approx. or canvas board or pad.
- roll of paper towels, bottle of water, jar for water, palette to mix paint, pencil, eraser.
- paint – a variety of basic acrylic or water colours.
- variety of small brushes

Remember: this is a sketch not a completed painting. You are trying to get the ‘feel’ of the scene, experience it – not reproduce every detail! This preliminary painted ‘sketch’ can be realistic, impressionistic, to quite abstract.

Final Painting:
Use your small “plein air’ sketch as your references but feel free to change, edit or add in your final painting. If your painting is realistic then your references are very important but more abstract interpretations depend on emotional / psychological interpretation. Remember the ‘feel’ of the place, your experience of ‘being there’. The final painting must be at least 24”x 30”, if you are making just one, or two that are approximately 12”x15” and can range in style from highly realistic to very abstract.

Materials:
Paint: acrylic, oil paint, gouache, water colours.
Drawing Materials in combination with paint: charcoal, pencil, coloured pencils, conte, oil sticks, oil pastels, are some of the more obvious. Anything that will make a mark… be creative!
Painting Support: Canvas, wood painting boards, plywood, cardboard, are some of the more obvious. If you wish to use another painting support please ask me first.
Evaluation: ‘Plein Air’ sketch, completed painting, and a short paragraph that includes: the title, size, materials used and a couple of sentences describing your working process and your work. 20%

Looking at Painting: Reflection on your Work:
Write (300 words- max. one page) describing how your painting relates to one of the themes or one of the artists that you viewed in Power Point Presentation #1: Approaches to Nature. Research on your chosen artist or theme is required. 10%
Total: 30%

Project #2:

‘Our Memories of Nature’

All of us have our memories of nature. These memories may be preserved in photos of close or far-away places or they may be abstract images that you can visualize only in your mind. For this Project, these images must include people: you and your family or you and your friends or may be taken by you of your friends and family. They might be at a cottage near-by or on a trip across the world. They are magical, idealized, utopian places that you remember for years. However, if you think more deeply about some of these experiences you may realize that as a ‘tourist’ your visit to a far-away place may be very artificial, a kind of ‘Las Vegas’, very removed from the reality of ordinary people’s lives in these places. Increasingly, we are being asked to examine what it is to be a tourist, to be privileged enough to travel where ever we like.

Power Point Presentation #2: “Our Memories of Nature”

Please view and read over this Presentation before beginning Project. #2. Consider how the paintings and explanations relate to your own ideas and the project you are about to begin. What painting, artist or style do you relate to the most and why?

Creative Process:

a. Two - five photos of your place of memory. These must be photos taken by you or someone you know and you must have experienced this place. The photos cannot be found on the internet or taken by a professional photographer. Write one paragraph describing what this place means to you. (max. 150 words)

OR

b. A sketch, painted or drawn on paper, of a place in nature that you remember and you can visualize in your mind. This sketch may be quite abstract but must evoke the ‘feeling’ of people in nature. Write one paragraph describing what this place means to you. (max. 150 words)

Materials:

Paint: acrylic, oil paint, gouache, water colours.
Drawing Materials in combination with paint: charcoal, pencil, coloured pencils, conte, oil sticks, oil pastels, are some of the more obvious. Anything that will make a mark… be creative!

Painting Support: Canvas, wood painting boards, plywood, cardboard, are some of the more obvious. If you wish to use another painting support please ask me first.

Final Painting:

The final painting can be of any size and can range in style from highly realistic to very abstract.

Evaluation:

Photographs or sketch, completed painting, and a short paragraph that includes: the title, size, materials used and a couple of sentences describing your working process and your work. 20%

Reflection on Your Painting by a Fellow Group Member:

The class has been divided into four groups. By now you should be communicating via Moodle, Instagram and email with your fellow group members.

Choose one member of your group and write about her / his work. Only one person can write about a work … so if the work has already been chosen you have to move on to another work & another person.

Before beginning your research, make sure that you communicate extensively with your fellow group member whose work you are writing about. This is important!!

Write max. 300 words-(1 page) describing how the painting by your fellow classmate relates to one of the themes or one of the artists that you viewed in Power Point Presentation #2: Memories of Nature. If you think that the painting by your class mate relates to more than one artist or theme please explain why. Additional research is recommended.

Remember this is not a crit. You are analyzing and describing the chosen painting and comparing it to a painting or paintings, or style /s of paintings viewed in the Power Point Presentation. You are not stating whether or not it is good.

Grade: 10%
Total Grade for Project #2: 30%

Project #3
‘What’s Your Nature? A Psychological Self-Portrait.’

We all personally identify with nature: as wise as an owl, as slow as a turtle, as sly as a fox, as brave as a lion, are all sayings that compare us to animals. Women, in sometimes very sexist ways, have long been compared to flowers or even butterflies. This project asks you to think about nature from a personal and psychological perspective. Think about surrealism, one image morphing into another, one image overlaid with one another, double exposures, and collaging very different images together, create a self-portrait that incorporates your image with nature in some way. What aspects of nature you incorporate – animals, insects, leaves, flowers, trees, rocks, sea shells should tell us about yourself.


Please view and read over this Presentation before beginning Project. #3. Consider how the paintings and explanations relate to your own ideas and the project you are about to begin. What painting & artist do you relate to the most and why?

Creative Process:
This project may be approached in an analogue or digital way or a combination of both.
Analogue: At least two small sketches done with drawing materials or paint of self-portraits that incorporate nature through overlaying images one on top of another, transparencies, morphing of images into one another or juxtaposition, one image beside on another.
Initial Sketches or Photos:
Combination: Two small collages of a drawn image of yourself that incorporate digital photographs of natural objects. And combines them in some way.
Digital: Two digital photographs of yourself that can be manipulated and digitally collaged with images of nature in photoshop.

See the images of paintings in the Power Point presentation for the range of styles possible.

Materials:
Paint: acrylic, oil paint, gouache, water colours.
Drawing Materials in combination with paint: charcoal, pencil, coloured pencils, conté, oil sticks, oil pastels, are some of the most obvious. Anything that will make a mark… be creative!
Painting Support: Canvas, wood painting boards, plywood, cardboard, are some of the more obvious. If you wish to use another painting support please ask me first.

Final Painting:
The final painting can be of any size and can range in style from highly realistic to very abstract.
Evaluation:
Photographs or sketch, completed painting, and a short paragraph that includes: the title, size, materials used and a couple of sentences describing your working process and your work. 20%
Reflection on Your Painting by a Fellow Group Member:
The class has been divided into four groups. By now you should be communicating via Moodle, Instagram and email with your fellow group members.
Choose another member of your group and write about her / his work. Only one person can write about a work … so if the work has already been chosen you have to move on to another work & another person.
Before beginning your research, make sure that you communicate extensively with your fellow group member whose work you are writing about. This is important!!
Write max. 300 words-(1 page) describing how the painting by your fellow classmate relates to one of the themes or one of the artists that you viewed in Power Point Presentation #2: Memories of Nature.
If you think that the painting by your class mate relates to more than one artist or theme please explain why. Additional research is recommended.

Remember this is not a crit. You are analyzing and describing the chosen painting and comparing it to a painting or paintings, or style /s of paintings viewed in the Power Point Presentation. You are not stating whether or not it is good.

Grade: 10%
Total Grade for Project #3: 30%

LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

The purpose of this course is to further students' painting abilities and their understanding both of contemporary painting and the conceptual ideas related to this theme, primarily through studio projects, and secondarily through discussion, critiques and presentations / viewing of works by artists who are examining this theme in their work.

Method of Delivery:
Because of the current COVID pandemic, this studio course will be taught on-line primarily using Moodle and Zoom and will be augmented through email and Instagram. As a teacher who loves ‘being with students’ and in a studio classroom, this is not my preferred way of teaching. However, I hope as a group we can make this into an engaging and very communal experience. I have attempted to make this course as personal and individual as possible. I want to get to know you and what you do. I have rejected Moodle forms of teaching that distance you from me and you from each other. However, to really accomplish this you have to be available for Zoom meeting, talk to each other and participate. This is a collaborative effort!

Studio Projects:
There are three major studio painting projects required for this course each with preliminary studies in the form of small paintings, sketches or photographs. These projects will be done at home – in your bedroom, kitchen, garage or basement- where ever you can find the space to set up a small studio. I realize that this will be easier for some students and very hard for others, but artists have always worked in difficult situations. I have made the projects flexible in size- if you can only work very small then do two or three small canvases. You will submit images of these projects, including the required preliminary work, accompanied by a brief (one paragraph) explanation of your project for grading.

Power Point Presentations:
‘Looking at Paintings’
Each of the three studio projects is accompanied by a very complete Power Point presentation. We will be going over each PP during a Zoom meeting. It is required that you view and study the Presentation before beginning the studio project. I have been very careful to make each presentation pertinent to the studio project that you will be doing. At the completion of each studio project, you will be asked to submit a 300 word (max-1 page) analysis of how your project or the project by one of your group members, relates to one of the themes, artists’ styles or one of the paintings shown in the presentation. If the painting relates to more than one theme, style, artist or painting, please tell me how and why? The ‘Looking at Paintings’ written assignments are to be submitted for grading one week after each studio project.

Course Communication:
I will be using the Course Announcements on Moodle very frequently. These announcements are on our Moodle site but go, as well, directly to your email. Make sure that you check your email often!

Course Participation:
Groups:
The class will be divided into four groups of approx. 6 students per group. I will divide the class and put you into one of the four groups. It is expected that you will get to know the members of your Group well. Please begin by exchanging email addresses.

Zoom Meetings:
Attend Zoom meetings. They are all scheduled during your class time:

Wednesday 2:30- 6:30. There will be two separate zoom meetings during most class times each of approximately 1½ hours long. The time of your zoom meeting will depend on which group you are in. I have divided the class into Groups so that you get to know each other better as each Group is obviously smaller than the entire class.

Media Galleries:

You will be expected to post images of your initial ‘sketches’, and final paintings on our Media Galleries on Moodle. Please take good photos of your paintings on your cell phones. Save as jpegs and post. There will be a separate Media Gallery for each of the three projects. Part of your participation grade is to help each other by commenting and critiquing each other’s work. If you are unsure of something in your painting, ASK the class? How much you participate in the Media Galleries is part of your participation grade.

Instagram:

Set-up an ‘Art’ Instagram account and start to follow one another in your Group. Post your paintings and sketches as your work progresses, comment on each other’s work!

Bibliography:

The following bibliography and on-line resources should be used for background research for your studio projects. Many more resources are available as links on the Course’s Moodle Site and in the Power Point Presentations.


On-Line Resources:

Two excellent online resources for contemporary Canadian Artists: www.ccca.ca/ Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art. www.canadianart.ca/discover/ Canadian Art Magazine Canadian Artists

GRADED ASSESSMENT

Evaluation Summary:
Project #1: 30%
Project #2: 30%
Project #3: 30%
Participation: 10%.
TOTAL: 100%

University Regulations and Grading:

Please Note:
The last day to drop this course without receiving a grade is November 6, 2020. Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles.

Grading, Assignment Submission, Lateness Penalties and Missed Tests

Grading: The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)

Students may take a limited number of courses for degree credit on an ungraded (pass/fail) basis. For full information on this option see Alternative Grading Option in the Faculty of Fine Arts section of the Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/calendars/2010-2011/faculty_rules/FA/grading.htm

Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Painting Studio Assignments are to be completed for the class critique date to be reviewed and graded by the Course Director.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents)
http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm

Please note that this information is subject to periodic update. For the most current information, please go to the CCAS webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents):
http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm

Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.

Moodle @ York University