

Syraya Horton

Teaching Portfolio

Teaching Philosophy

Visual art has the potential to communicate ideas, to reflect the human experience, and to present new ways of envisioning our world and the future. Whatever media a visual artist chooses to work with, the ideas and planning begin with drawing. My goal as a drawing teacher is to push students to develop a more sophisticated knowledge of drawing techniques and materials, to expose them to the work of other artists, to foster an environment of critical dialogue about their art to help them develop complexity in their work and successfully visualize their ideas, and to begin preparing them for a professional career in the arts through documentation of work produced as well as editing artist statements and CVs.

My figure drawing class will build on the basic drawing skills students have learned in a foundations course. At the start of the semester there will be assignments geared towards technical proficiency, getting more comfortable with materials and representation of the figure using a live model. Then I move on to assignments placing importance not only on execution and composition, but also content. Students are pushed to think about what role the figure has played and can play in visual art, and I fully support innovative ideas and experimentation with media. Each week I begin class with a short slide show of other artists' work to continue educating the students about the history of their craft and the contemporary atmosphere surrounding drawing. At the end of the semester I give an assignment for the student to propose and execute a small series of work in the vein of their interests. At the final critique each student is required to hand in a digital portfolio with professional documentation of all finished projects from the semester, along with an artist statement and CV. I encourage students to take their work seriously and will show them how to successfully document their work. As a group we will also workshop artist statements, and I give them examples of artist resumes so they can begin to prepare for the next step after college. Each assignment throughout the semester will be critiqued in a group setting, and each student is expected to be active and participate in every critique.

It is my desire as an instructor for this figure drawing class to push each student to develop control of media and techniques while strengthening their conceptual awareness. In my own time as an undergraduate working towards a BFA the most successful teaching strategies I encountered are the same ones I have adopted for this figure drawing course. The students will become more technically proficient through practice, they will round out their conceptual ideas through critical dialogue with myself and other students through individual meetings and group critiques, and they will begin preparing themselves for a career in the arts, whether that be applying to grad school, shows, residencies, or grants. Throughout the

semester their work will display an originality of interpretation while I encourage them towards a more complex way of finding solutions other than what is easy and immediate.

Though I am proposing a figure drawing course, I am also very interested in teaching courses about representation of the human figure in painting and possibly other media. Reflection of the human experience through creation of art can be an endlessly interesting exploration, and teaching students ways in which to express their ideas about this experience is a rewarding challenge for both myself and the students.

Proposed Course Descriptions

Figure Drawing: A Reflection of Human Experience



Figure drawing from live model, watercolor on paper

Fall semester: Tuesdays, 8am-1pm

This course is designed to increase fluency and confidence in drawing the figure and to reinforce an understanding of the basic elements of art while examining larger concepts and ideas behind human experience. This class focuses on the development of technical skill as well as the development of a personal visual statement using the human form as subject matter. The application of critical thinking skills are emphasized, along with exposure to art-historical

and contemporary artists through brief slide shows. We will work with a live figure model for the first half of the semester along with projects that are generated from figurative imagery that the students research. The final four weeks of the course are devoted to a student-proposed body of work which will be critiqued as a series during the final. Interpretive skills are stressed and alternative approaches to generating visual imagery are explored. A high degree of conceptual awareness of the art making process as well as a strong technical mastery of form and material will be expected of each student.

Class size: 20

Estimated cost of materials: \$300

Prerequisites: Basic Drawing

Open to all departments

Painting the Portrait: An Inquiry



Portrait, oil on panel

Spring semester: Thursdays, 8am-1pm

The painted portrait has a long and complicated history throughout time. This class focuses on how we as painters can make the portrait relevant, new, and fresh in the contemporary art world while keeping in mind the history and traditions that painting builds on. What can the painted portrait offer that photography cannot? How can we challenge the history and

significance of who gets to be represented in paintings? These are just a couple of questions that will be addressed in this class. Building on the knowledge of materials and technical skill learned in painting one, the focus of this class will be placed on the ideas surrounding portraiture and how the students can push the genre in interesting new ways. We will discuss both historical and contemporary artists' work through slide shows and have group critiques of completed works. Exploration of what a portrait can be (even if the resulting image is not figurative) is encouraged. We will also have critical dialogue about the relationship between photography and painting, the differences and similarities between these two mediums and their relationship to portraiture. Individual projects with concentrations in themes such as self-portrait, gender exploration, painting-from-life, etc will culminate in a series of three works that the student proposes.

Class size: 18

Estimated cost of materials: \$200

Prerequisites: Painting I and Figure Drawing

Open to all departments

Exploring Identity Through Figuration



Example of student work, mixed media

Winter session: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 8am-1pm

What is identity? How do we define ourselves in a world that is becoming ever more globalized and connected? This class will use figurative art making to explore the ways in which humans relate to each other through the way individuals identify themselves. Critiques and critical dialogue are essential to this course as we will be discussing and creating work around such issues as cultural appropriation, gender, assumptions based on appearance, ideas of community, group thinking, sexuality, and heritage, amongst others. Students are encouraged to explore different types of media in their quest to unpack these complicated topics surrounding identity. We will look at the work of various artists who address the topic of identity and discuss assigned readings to supplement the students' exploration. Weekly discussions and projects will give way to a student-directed series due at the end of the semester.

Class size: 15

Estimated cost of materials: varied according to student's needs

Prerequisites: Foundations courses

Open to all departments

Proposed Course Syllabus

Figure Drawing: A Reflection of Human Experience

Instructor: Syraya Horton

shorton@risd.edu

(512) 757-5034

Fall 2014: Tuesdays, 8am-1pm

Office Hours: Mondays, 1pm-3pm

Prerequisites: Basic Drawing

Requisite for Drawing and Painting Majors, open as elective with departmental permission

Estimated cost of materials: \$300

This course is designed to increase fluency and confidence in drawing the figure and to reinforce an understanding of the basic elements of art while examining larger concepts and ideas behind human experience. How can we, as artists, reflect contemporary life through figure drawing? This class focuses on the development of technical skill with a variety of drawing media as well as the development of a personal visual statement using the human form as subject matter. The application of critical thinking skills are emphasized, along with exposure to art-historical and contemporary artists and techniques. We will work with a live figure model along with projects that are generated from figurative imagery that the students research. Interpretive skills are stressed and alternative approaches to generating visual imagery are explored. A high degree of conceptual awareness of the art making process as well as a strong technical mastery of form and material will be expected of each student. At the final critique the student must also turn in a digital portfolio of their work from the semester, along with an artist statement and CV.

Course Aims

Representing the figure has been a significant form of human expression for thousands of years. Visual art relating to the human figure can critically examine the human experience, reflecting life with the potential of imagining a better future. This course aims:

- to build on the history of representation of the figure in art and
- to push students to refine their technical skills while critically thinking about the possibilities and implications of figurative art

Course Objectives

Overall Technical Improvement: I am looking for consistent effort and dedication to projects and the creation of quality work. I understand that levels of talent can differ from student to student, what I am looking for is the dedication and improvement of the individual.

Concepts: Students are expected to critically think about the content behind their finished work. What issues, if any, are being examined in the created image?

Class Participation: Critiques are held for each assignment and each student is expected to actively and thoughtfully participate in the discussions. Critiques are extremely important for developing dialogue around each student's work and ideas as they identify strengths and weaknesses in any given work. The critique formats in this class are group walk-around critiques of individual work, more formal individual critiques where one student at a time displays work on the front critique wall and one-on-one desk critiques with me. Students are also invited to schedule individual critiques with me as needed during office hours.

Sketchbook: Students are required to consistently work in their sketchbooks to explore ideas and practice the skill of drawing.

Digital Portfolio: Each student will learn how to professionally document their work and will turn in a CD with their photographed works along with an artist statement and CV.

Attendance: The student's grade will be docked a complete letter grade if the student has more than two excused absences. Attendance and commitment to the class is extremely important.

Breakdown of Grading System:

Overall Technical Improvement*	30%
Concepts*	30%
Class Participation	20%
Sketchbook	10%
Digital Portfolio	10%
Attendance	Drops a letter grade after two excused absences

*Each assignment when turned in will be graded based on technical execution and conceptual strength. One week after the assignment is turned in I will hand back the drawing with a grade and comments and students can choose to raise their grade, if they wish, by continuing to work on the assignment throughout the semester. All projects will be handed in again at the end of the semester during final critique. Assignment grades will be totaled and averaged with final grades based on the following scale:

- **A** Consistently outstanding, superior, and excellent work. Significant growth in skill development and ability to effectively assimilate presented concepts. Participates exceptionally in class critiques. Student must meet all grading criteria to a superior degree to receive an A.
- **B** Consistently above average work. Demonstrated improvement and growth in skill development and concept assimilation. Student must meet all grading criteria to an above average degree.
- **C** Consistently adequate in growth with average progress in skill development and concept assimilation. Meets minimum levels of grading criteria.
- **D** Below average, less than adequate improvement. Meets minimum levels of acceptance in some but not all grading criteria
- **F** Unsatisfactory, unacceptable, insufficient improvement. Does not meet minimum levels of acceptance in any grading criteria.

Schedule

Week One

Introduction to course, go over syllabus and format of class. Hand out sketchbooks. Self-portrait assignment.

Assignment: Self-portrait as another gender. Drawing must be done on paper no less than 19x25 inches. Students may use charcoal, graphite, conte, pastels, ink, watercolor, or mixed media.

Learning Outcome: Ability to see drawing as a tool for invention and immediate transformation using gender difference as a theme. This project gives the professor an idea of where each student is personally starting from in regards to technical skill and inventiveness.

Week Two

Briefly critique self-portraits at the beginning of class. Students put up last week's completed assignment on their drawing board and as a group we walk around and quickly critique each person's drawing. Drawing from skeletal still life in class using varied media. Hand out skeletal system/muscle system packets.

Assignment: Drawings of skeletal system and muscle system based on packet handed out in class.

Learning Outcome: Students better understand the proportion and structure of human anatomy.

Week Three

Turn in skeletal system/muscle system drawings. Drawing from live model in class. Start out in charcoal with gesture drawings, move on to extended poses. Concentration on getting the whole form in the timed drawings, emphasis on light, shadow, line quality and composition. Students will display a drawing from an extended pose at the end of class and as a group we will walk around and critique each drawing. Introduction of the format of class for the next four weeks (life drawing finished outside of class with varied sources) along with slides of examples of previous students' work.

Learning Outcome: Practice with technical execution of figure as well as emphasis on creating an interesting composition from life drawing.

Week Four

Warm-up gesture drawing exercise with charcoal. Set up model with still life elements. Draw with charcoal from model in class, then use the drawing with outside source imagery to make a new, interesting composition. Emphasis on building conceptual meaning with the assignment. How can the student make a life drawing more significant?

Assignment: Continue working on drawing which began in class, adding elements that are not necessarily observed from life.

Learning Outcome: Improvement in student's ability with representation of the figure and materials. Conceptual ideas behind figurative work are explored using a process of life drawing combined with student's individual interests and research.

Week Five

Walk-around critique of charcoal homework assignment and turn in. Warm-up gesture drawing exercise of figure model using ink. Set up model with still life elements, begin long drawing using ink and/or watercolor and continue working on drawing outside of class using new imagery to make the composition more than an observation from life.

Assignment: Continue and finish ink/watercolor drawing which began in class, adding elements to create an interesting and innovative image.

Week Six

In-class completion of mid-term evaluation for figure drawing course. Walk-around critique of ink/watercolor assignment. Warm-up gesture drawing exercise with mixed media: student's choice. Set up model with still life elements, begin long drawing using mixed media and continue to work on drawing outside of class adding new imagery.

Assignment: Continue and finish mixed media drawing which began in class, adding new elements to complete the composition.

Week Seven

Walk-around critique of mixed media assignment. Introduced mechanized figure assignment, students set up the still life around model keeping in mind the figure will be somehow represented as mechanical. Student uses their choice of media.

Students turn in sketchbook for ½ of sketchbook grade. Sketchbooks are returned to students at end of class.

Assignment: Continue and finish mechanized figure drawing.

Week Eight

Walk-around critique of mechanized figure assignment. Hand out information packets on writing artist statements and artist CVs. Introduce student proposed project, students need to begin thinking about what direction they want to go in with a series that is due on the day of the final. Class assignment: Partner blind drawing and self-portrait from memory diptych project. Emphasis on embracing the way these two exercises abstract the figure. After the exercise we will then go to the RISD museum as a class with our sketchbooks and look at the way the figure has been abstracted in the collected works.

Assignment: Continue working on and finish diptych project. Write artist statements and rough draft of CVs.

Learning Outcome: Students explore abstraction of the figure and what abstraction may or may not add to a drawing.

Week Nine

Walk-around critique diptych project and turn in. As a class, workshop artist statements by getting into small groups and reviewing each other's statements. Turn in CVs for me to go over and make edit suggestions. Introduce collaged figure drawing assignment. Students build figures from collaging body parts cut out of found sources to create a composition.

Assignment: Work on and finish collaged figure assignment.

Learning Outcome: Students learn a new process of creating a figurative drawing.

Week Ten

Walk-around critique of collaged figures project and turn in. Present students with information and resources on how to document artwork for digital portfolio. Meet with students individually to discuss proposed series.

Assignment: Begin working on series.

Learning Outcome: Students choose the processes learned during the semester that work best for their personal vision and create a body of work that is self-directed.

Week Eleven

Work on series in class. I meet with students for individual desk critiques of their in-progress work.

Week Twelve

Working critique of series, each student presents their in-progress work one at a time on the critique wall. Work on series in class.

Week Thirteen

Final critique of student proposed series project. This final critique will be individual, with each student presenting their body of work on the front critique wall and as a group we will critique each person's series. Digital portfolio due. Sketchbooks handed in along with all completed work for final grades.

Requirements for Assignments

- Each assignment turned into me must be completely covered with tracing paper (neatly cut to the size of the assignment) that is attached with low-tack painters tape at the top and bottom of the paper. This is to make sure no work gets smudged or damaged by any other work when transported. Technical grades will drop if work is not covered correctly when turned in.
- For each day that an assignment is submitted late the overall grade will drop a letter.
- If submitted on time, the student has the opportunity to continue working on each assignment if they are not happy with their grade. At the end of the semester ALL projects are physically due again, so each student has until the final critique to improve work if they so wish.

Freedom of Expression

Each student is strongly encouraged to participate in class. In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. These differences enhance the learning experience and create an atmosphere where students and instructors alike will be encouraged to consider and learn. On sensitive and volatile topics, students may sometimes disagree with not only each other, but also the instructor. It is expected that the faculty and students will respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions.

Etiquette Involving the Figure Model

Students will communicate with and treat the model as a professional hired by Rhode Island School of Design.

- Absolutely no cell phones are permitted to be used while the figure model is posing. If I see a cell phone even visible, I will eject you from my class.
- Avoid coming and going from the room while the model is disrobed. If you need to leave, be discreet. Always check with the instructor if you are uncertain.
- Draw while the model is posing.

- Allow the model some autonomy. It may not be comfortable for all models to carry on conversations with students.
- Do not lounge on the model stand. Allow that to be the model's space.
- There should be no discussion with the model while he/she is posing.
- Never comment or joke, *in any way*, about the model's physical attributes.

Health and Safety

- In general, the use of this classroom space and the required materials for this course are considered low risk when common sense is used.
- It is important that you read and understand product labels for any media before use, and you must comply with the RISD standards of materials as listed in the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). Products can be searched at this website:
<https://msdsmanagement.msdonline.com/ddabd23e-cc71-4825-8dd0-101d0aa6e8f2/ebinder/?nas=True>
- Wash hands thoroughly after the use of any media (especially before eating).
- Use of spray fixative for charcoal must be done outside or in a spray booth.
- Wipe down charcoal dust at easel and/or desk at the end of class.

Required Materials

- 1 newsprint pad, 24x36in
- 1 sketchbook (provided on first day of class)
- 5 sheets cotton fiber charcoal paper, 19x25in
- 10 sheets of 140lb student grade drawing paper, 22x30in, (Lenox 100 works well)
- 5-10 sheets of 140lb Arches Aquarelle cotton rag paper (hot or cold press), 22x30in
- 1 artist set of pencils for drawing (4H, 2H, H, HB, 2B, 4B, 6B, etc)
- 4 black charcoal pencils (2 soft, 2 extra soft)
- 1 Mars white magic pencil eraser
- 1 Tuff stuff retractable eraser
- 2 kneaded erasers
- 1 hand pencil sharpener
- 1 water soluble graphite crayon
- 1 exacto knife
- 2 to 4 sticks of Char-Kole compressed charcoal sticks
- 6 sticks willow vine charcoal (fine to jumbo sized)
- 1 small bottle of india ink
- 3 bottles of colored ink (any colors)
- 1 set of assorted pastels
- 1 art box/tackle box (make sure it's big enough to hold all supplies)

- 1 chamois blending cloth
- 2-4 clamps for clamping easel pad to board
- 1 portfolio, large enough to protect 22x30in work
- 1 can charcoal spray fix
- 1 roll of drafting tape (for taping borders)
- 1 roll of 24in tracing paper (white translucent)
- 1 24in ruler (cork backed)
- Palettes, cups, ice cube trays for mixing inks
- Palette knife
- 1 roll of watercolor paper stretching tape (brown packing tape)
- 1 sponge
- 1 set of individual tubes of watercolor paint
- An assortment of paintbrushes for ink and watercolor

*Supplies can be found at the RISD art supply store on N Main St, Jerry's Artarama on Imperial Place, and Utrecht Art Supplies on Wickendon Street. You can also find supplies online at Dick Blick, Utrecht, Jerry's Artarama, etc.

Class Assignment Example

Life-Drawing to Finished Composition

Students will begin a charcoal drawing in class from a live figure model, keeping in mind that after class they will continue working on the drawing over the next week. Students are encouraged to be imaginative and use whatever ideas and outside of class sources they need to create an interesting, innovative composition involving the figure. Students can discuss as a group how they want to position the figure model, along with any still life elements they want to add around the figure on the model stand. Emphasis is placed on both technical ability with charcoal and representation of the figure, and the student's ability to create a dynamic composition with interesting content.

Project Aims:

- Students will engage in a process that challenges the traditional practice of drawing from a live nude model.

- Concepts surrounding figurative art will be explored.
- Ideas about relevancy of figure drawing from life will be examined, resulting in visual imagery that pulls from both observation and conceptual ideas.

Project Outcomes: Practice with drawing that represents the human figure, along with outside of class research and drawing that completes the composition. Students will begin a drawing with observation from life and will think creatively, pulling from sources outside the observed figure to make an interesting and engaging finished piece.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Representation of the figure and use of material | 25% |
| • Evidence of outside research in final product | 25% |
| • Finished, presentable drawing
(no unfinished work, covered with tracing paper) | 25% |
| • Concept behind finished work/content of drawing | 25% |

Supplies needed for class: Newsprint pad, charcoal sticks, charcoal pencils, erasers, graphite pencils, sketchbook, and any other material they want to use to manipulate charcoal with, ie, chamois, cotton balls, smudge stick, etc. Supplies needed at home for completion of project are spray fixative, painters tape (to attach tracing paper), and tracing paper.

Structure of class this day:

1. This class project will begin with ten quick, one-minute gesture drawings in charcoal on newsprint to warm up the students and the figure model. While the figure model takes a break, the assignment will be given, letting the students know that they are about to begin a long charcoal drawing on nice charcoal paper (100% cotton fiber, acid free paper, the tooth and texture of the paper is up to the student) with a minimum size of 19x25 inches. The drawing is begun in class and finished outside of class, due the next week.
2. Students discuss with each other and the figure model how they want the pose to be set up, and what kind of still life elements they would like to add to the model stand around him or her. With the idea that there is freedom to place the figure in any sort of environment in the drawing, and to finish the drawing outside of class using any sources to create an interesting completed piece, the student is encouraged to be imaginative in how they make a finished figure drawing. Students may make as many sketches of the figure in class as they want, but

the graded project will be a finished drawing made in charcoal on the paper that is at least 19x25 inches.

3. While the students are drawing I will be going around the room and observing, helping individually with technical aspects of figure representation and material. I will also be engaging the student in conversation about how they are representing the figure and what kind of outside sources they are thinking about using over the weekend to complete the drawing.

4. For the next class each student must have a finished drawing for critique that has been sprayed with fixative and is covered with a layer of tracing paper taped on top for protection when they turn in the drawing.

Midterm Feedback Form

Figure Drawing

Fall 2014: Tuesdays, 8am-1pm

Instructor: Syraya Horton

Aims for this semester:

- Refinement of technical skills in representing the figure
- Familiarity and confidence in an array of drawing media
- Development of conceptual ideas dealing with the figure in drawing
- Student participation in critical dialogue about the art made for this class

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very unsuccessful and 5 being very successful, please rate these questions:

1. Does the instructor seem knowledgeable and capable of imparting the knowledge that you need as a student in figure drawing?

1 2 3 4 5

2. Has the instructor consistently explained technical concepts, and shown consistent willingness to explain technical problems which remain unclear to you or other students? Do you feel that the instructor has helped you gain control over the medium?

1 2 3 4 5

3. Have the critiques been helpful and inspiring? Do you feel that you've received constructive criticism? Have your conversations with the instructor helped you move toward cohesion of your concepts?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Has the instructor been flexible and willing to take time for students? Do you feel that your work, presence and opinion are important and valid to the instructor?

1 2 3 4 5

Free response questions:

What has been most useful thus far in the course?

What has been the least useful thus far in the course?

Which assignment has been your favorite so far and why?

What has been the most helpful or effective method of feedback for you?

Do you understand what the instructor is looking for in your work? Why or why not?

Please write any other suggestions or concerns about the course: