Plein Air Drawing: Exploring the Environment

Yvette Deas, Instructor  
vdeas@alumni.stanford.edu

Course Objectives:
1. To understand the impact of mark-making through our bodies and our natural gesture.
2. To use “sighting” in combination with linear perspective to determine placement of objects in space.
3. To investigate multiple media in depicting the organic and inorganic world.
4. To use formal and conceptual analysis in the critique of artwork, as distinguished from the internalized critique which labels things as “good” or “bad.”

EVALUATION (for those taking the class for a letter grade or for credit)
The grades will be based on completion and quality of both in class and out of class assignments, individual progress, effort, and class participation/attendance. 25% Attendance; 25% Effort/Participation/Improvement; 25% In-class work; and 25% Outside projects.

ATTENDANCE
Attendance is crucial in this class. Each class builds upon the previous one. Students will be responsible for all information presented in class – information will not be repeated. More than one absence will affect the student’s grade in a negative manner. Please come to class on time; being late two times will count as one absence.
SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENTS
(Note: all outside assignments are due the following class. Outside assignments may be altered on an individual basis, based on previous experience.)

WEEK 1  GATHERING
HOMEWORK PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS!: Watch Rivers and Tides, a documentary about the artist Andy Goldsworthy. You can see it in its entirety on youtube, and it is also available through the library.

Materials required for first class: (see end of syllabus for specifications): Drawing board, sketchbook, big vine charcoal, matte/ utility knife, small sand pad, tape, charcoal pencils, kneaded eraser, white eraser, india or sumi ink, 2 cups, pen, viewfinder, newsprint pad (only bring 2 sheets, watercolor paper pad (bring 2 sheets), water bottle.

Introductions, syllabus and material overview, “drawing angels,” micro drawings, found composition drawings on campus.

Assignments: Make 1 “ugly drawing,” then find 5 “ugly” items and draw them in your sketchbook (any materials).

WEEK 2  ARCHITECTURE
Additional materials: graphite pencils, graphite stick, pencil sharpener, watercolor pencils, brushes, cups, water bottle. (Bring all other materials as well! – only 1 sheet watercolor paper.) Don’t forget your viewfinder!

Discussion of sketchbook assignment, basic color theory, Sighting, 1-Point and 2-Point linear perspective, atmospheric perspective, pencils grips, drawings on campus.

Assignments: Take a photo of a room in your home (cell phone photos are fine!), print it out in black and white, draw the orthogonals on top of the printed photo, using a ruler and graphite. Using that photo as a template, draw that room in charcoal on watercolor paper, 18” x 24”. Feel free to use your watercolor pencils!

WEEK 3  PEOPLE, PART 1: Stillness
Additional Materials: compressed charcoal, chamois.

MEET IN RODIN SCULPTURE GARDEN, NEXT TO CANTOR MUSEUM.

Gesture, Reductive drawing, light and shadow. Organize carpools next class.

Assignments: Draw your hands and feet, in any combination, using reductive techniques, 18” x 24”, on charcoal paper.

WEEK 4  THE OCEAN
Additional materials: flashlight, towel.
MEET AT SAN GREGORIO BEACH, bring all supplies. Gather in parking lot.

Drawings using both reductive and additive techniques. Multiple options at this beach: ocean, estuary, cliffs, driftwood structures, bridge. View from bluff for those who would prefer less walking.

WEEK 5 FULL CLASS CRITIQUE
Additional materials: none

Meet in classroom, bring all drawings. Don’t forget your sketchbook! Determine location of next class.

Assignments: none.

WEEK 6 PEOPLE, PART 2: Motion
Additional Materials: none. Do not bring drawing board.

Meet at bar or café. (My suggestion: Apple Jack’s in La Honda) “Carousel” portraits, gestures. Determine groups/car pools and locations of next class.

Assignments: Do a repeat of this class on your own (or with a friend). Go to a place you feel comfortable (café, library, bar, restaurant, museum, etc), and do 8-10 drawings in your sketchbook of people. PEN ONLY.

WEEK 7 MOOD: People, architecture and tone.
Additional materials: none. Do bring your drawing board!

Class will divide into 2-3 groups, meeting in different locations: San Jose Airport baggage claim, Freeway overpass (reductive suggested), Other Location (to be decided in previous class).

WEEK 8 FINAL CRITIQUE
Additional Materials: none.

Bring all drawings, including sketchbook.

MATERIALS
Drawing board (to fit 18” x 24” paper), Charcoal pencils (at least 2 each of: 2B, 4B, 6B), compressed charcoal, vine charcoal (big – the biggest you can find -- and small). Graphite pencils (2B, B, 6B), graphite stick. Kneaded eraser, white eraser. Chamois or old t-shirt, cut into one 6” piece. Small sand-pad, matte knife. Pencil sharpener. Watercolor pencils, 2 jars or plastic cups with lids, brushes of various sizes, synthetic. Painter’s tape, half-inch. Viewfinder: you can buy this or make it. If you make it, use something sturdy like cardboard (not paper!), and cut the opening to 1and 5/8” x 2” (use
matte knife for cutting). Spray fixative or hairspray (Aquanet recommended) – can keep at home.

Newsprint pad of paper 18” x 24”. Pad of **hot press (smooth – no tooth)** watercolor paper, 18” x 24”. Sketchbook: any that you prefer, that can comfortably fit in the bag you carry daily.

Portfolio to hold drawings, toolbox or other container for supplies.

**Art Supply Stores (Coupons and student discounts may be available for all, please ask):**
Accent Arts, 392 California Avenue, Palo Alto. (More expensive)
University Art, 267 Hamilton, Palo. (More expensive)
Dick Blick. locations in San Francisco and Oakland, On-line supplies.
Michael’s. Coupons available online.
Amazon
Utrecht. Stores and online.