

Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program

Art, Art History and Film Studies Department

Update to comprehensive description of studio core curriculum in studio art by Prof. Hartmut Austen with focus on ARTS 1102 Painting 1: Foundations courses

The goal of the CORE studio art program is to provide students with a learning environment that deepens their understanding of the technical skills needed to create artworks, enhances their awareness of the aesthetic questions art poses, and clarifies the historical contexts in which artworks are produced. In the Painting 1 Foundation courses, students build fundamental painting skills and confidence by exploring a variety of materials, tools, and techniques. They primarily work with acrylic paint on paper and canvas through assigned projects based on observation and imagination, along with more open-ended exercises that allow them to “play” with paint. This process helps them develop methods, skills, and confidence to realize and evaluate their visual ideas. Technical demonstrations, presentations, and exhibition visits complement both directed and individual explorations. Students come to understand that painting—like all creative practices—is a time-consuming process rather than a quick result. Upon completing the course, students engage meaningfully with art through creative work and can articulate their understanding of art both orally and in writing. Full-time and part-time studio faculty work to nurture creativity and innovation by engaging students in rigorous training anchored in experimentation and creative problem-solving. Therefore, assessments in studio art courses evaluate not only technical skill but also engagement, critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to practice reflective, self-driven learning. More information on Boston College Core requirements and courses can be obtained through this link (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/morrissey/undergraduate/core-curriculum/core-requirements.html>).

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes for the department’s Core courses been developed? What are they?**
(What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

Outcomes for all Core courses in the AAHF department—including the Boston College-stated Core objectives—are described in the introduction above. Additional learning outcomes are tailored to the varied disciplines and topics we offer. In studio art, for example, we include outcomes that emphasize the development, advancement, and reflection on ideas through an individualized creative process that prioritizes experimentation and rigorous practice, while also making connections to other fields of study. In Painting 1 courses, students are expected to be able to:

1. Create original work responding to project descriptions and presentation
2. Use critique and analysis to develop and refine works of art
3. Utilize appropriate materials, tools and techniques and good project management in the creation and presentation of all projects
4. Present evidence of self-directed work development through sketches, readings, collages and other appropriate means
5. Demonstrate personal, conceptual and creative growths

2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

The learning outcomes are published in the course syllabus for each course, which is available on Canvas. Hard copies of these syllabi are also maintained in the Art, Art History, and Film Department office.

3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the Core requirement?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes have been achieved more or less well?)

Core faculty in studio art courses conduct individual one-on-one reviews with students at midterm and during the final exam period, a method we have found most effective. In painting and drawing courses, we experimented with a short questionnaire—typically comprised of five or six questions—administered at the beginning and end of the semester. The questionnaire asked students about previous art-related courses, their preferred media, and requested a list of 3–5 modern and contemporary artists working primarily in their chosen medium. However, this approach proved ineffective due to the varied artistic backgrounds of the students enrolled in our beginning painting course. We also tried a reflective questionnaire distributed among our Core studio art faculty to capture a broader spectrum of responses on learning outcomes; yet the insights from these faculty responses were limited regarding each student's actual learning success. In our view, the strongest evidence of positive learning outcomes in the visual arts includes:

- The public display of artworks in the hallways during the semester and the ensuing discussions among colleagues and students.
- Final projects, along with sketchbook and portfolio reviews, which serve as summative assessments capturing each student's progression throughout the course.
- A writing assignment that involves a formal analysis of a work of art (a 3–5-page paper accompanied by a compositional sketch), allowing faculty to evaluate theoretical understanding and contextualization.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

At the end of the academic year, full-time faculty responsible for specific disciplines (painting, drawing, photography, etc.) collect and review evidence—both verbal and written—from their full-time and part-time colleagues. They discuss the feedback during formal meetings and implement changes as needed. Evidence regarding learning outcomes and overall program development is also discussed regularly in full department meetings with colleagues from Art History and Film Studies. Specific or confidential issues are addressed directly between the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) and the chair.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** (What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?)

Over the past few years, it became apparent that many students arrive in our Core studio classes with only a limited familiarity with contemporary artists and the issues of the 21st century—a situation attributed in part to generally minimal exposure to cultural life and formal art education in the U.S. K–12 system. While most students often display advanced verbal and written skills, their visual literacy and confidence in personal visual expression frequently appear timid and underdeveloped. For example, while beginning students can identify and distinguish an artwork by, say, Vincent van Gogh from one by Picasso, they often struggle to recall specific details about a particular work or to provide basic facts or context about the artists. Additionally, familiarity with art history movements and contemporary issues is generally limited. To increase students' knowledge of artists and the histories of ideas and practices, we made several changes, including:

- Highlighting contemporary artists and studio practices: Studio faculty now incorporate illustrated lectures, video clips, and exhibition visits that connect contemporary practices not only to the historical and classical modern art context but also to the broader cultural environment.
- Sharing personal insights: Faculty share more technical, conceptual, and career insights drawn from their own individual practices.
- Adopting a more dynamic course structure: Students are encouraged to engage in various ways, such as self-guided exhibition visits, chronicling their artistic journey through multimodal (analog and digital) approaches, delivering ad-hoc illustrated presentations and briefs, participating in peer critiques, and engaging in collaborative projects and discussions.

- 6) **Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

The most recent department self-study was completed in 2011. Since that time, full-time studio faculty have discussed and updated the Core learning goals during weekend retreats in Fall 2019, 2021, and 2023. These discussions have addressed revisions to class schedules as well as

current and future needs in the studio art area. Recently, the studio area was awarded a TAM grant of \$11,000 for Curriculum Development over a period of 1–2 years. Our aim is to assess and improve our curriculum—including our Core course offerings—and enhance the department's visibility through public programs. We are also exploring the unique role of our studio art program in developing students' soft skills, creative thinking, and experimental approaches. Key focal points include the integration of analog, digital, and AI-related tools in art production and ensuring that our courses meet evolving needs. We are committed to fostering interdisciplinary, open-ended inquiry and aligning our curriculum changes with university priorities.