

## **DIGITAL ART -- Syllabus**

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**Required Text:** A text is not required for the course, but I'll suggest references that may be useful throughout the course and beyond which you may, or may not, want to purchase.

### **Required/Optional Materials:**

- to transport, store, or archive your files and media, you should consider obtaining a portable USB keychain or jump drive (e.g. 256 Mb) or writeable CD's. By the way, if you have one, iPOD's or some other MP3 devices can be used as storage devices, too, via their FireWire or USB2 connections.

**Introduction & objectives:** I'm purposely calling this course digital art rather than computer art to reflect the fact that your digits (i.e. your fingers), not to mention your eyes and brain, are still the primary artistic tools you utilize to produce your art. The computer is an almost infinitely flexible tool with which you can render creative and aesthetically compelling artwork in many forms and in many ways, and we will explore avenues by which the computer can be used in your artistic pursuits. However, first must come the establishment of basic working skills in which all forms of art are grounded (color, composition, texture, form, line, space and perspective, etc). These working assets must be tightly linked to the creative potential you bring to the easel or monitor (creativity is the hardest principle to "teach"). When combined with the computer, exciting and powerful ways of representing your artistic ideas can be harnessed, and wonderful things can be achieved. But, remember, the computer is not a cure-all for poor traditional grounding in the artistic process. It really is nothing more than alternative forms of paper, tubes and cans of paint, brushes and pens. The key is in technique, finesse, ideation. What you do with these magic tools can be dull or devastating, glory or garbage. It's up to you.

Each one of us brings with us various artistic strengths and weaknesses -- you'll see mine and I'll see yours. The computer will probably not hide your liabilities, but can accentuate your assets in new ways. My objective for the course is to open-up ways to explore artistic creation using new tools and media and real-world working strategies, while keeping a firm grip on basic technical and aesthetic concepts that should be applied at all times to what you do. The two somewhat contradictory rules that apply are: "Go ahead, don't be afraid" and "Watch out, proceed with caution". Take risks and experiment as much as possible; nothing will explode -- just remember to save your files often.

**Attendance:** This is important, and part of showing commitment and a serious work attitude. As such, class attendance and participation can strongly influence your grade in the course, since it reflects your dedication and commitment to doing art. You will be expected to attend every class and arrive on time for each. You will be allowed a

maximum of 3 unexcused absences. Beyond that, your grade will be decreased the more you are absent. Being on time is equally important, since instructions start when class starts. Arriving late disrupts the class and disrupts me!! If you make a habit of being over 5 minutes late for class, your grade will suffer. You are responsible for finding out from fellow classmates what you missed and making sure you keep up with instructions and assignments.

**Grades:** Aside from attendance and class participation, your performance will be evaluated by your ability to successfully complete a series of assigned tasks on time (as if I were a real client expecting a completed image). Mini-projects will be assigned as we progress through the course material. You are expected to complete all assignments. I will treat you as a responsible, mature person and will expect you to meet your commitments in a professional manner.

**Course Outline:** This is a generalized scheme, and not necessarily in the order given. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- basic intro on computer-based art; overview of methods and strategies; modes and paths of input and output
- Macintosh OS basics and file handling; intro to software/hardware, monitor calibration, etc.
- styles, trends, modes, aesthetics: from primitive to postmodern; developing creative content
- elements and principles of design and typography basics • essentials on pixel-based and vector-based art: color, resolution, layout, formats, and output; working with rulers, grids, guides, layers, etc
- modes of getting art into the computer: scanning, digital cameras, and other art resources (e.g. web, stock art) for manipulation
- working with a comprehensive (Adobe Illustrator) vector-based drawing program; fills, strokes, bezier curves, points & paths, blends and gradients, transformations (e.g. rotations, scaling), layers, typography & object composition and layout; output formats.
- working with Adobe Photoshop, the most widely utilized digital painting (i.e. pixel-based) software program; from basic principles to more advanced methods, including:
  - resolution and input/output format considerations
  - using the tools (pencils, pens, brushes, gradients, etc)
  - selecting, moving, cloning, and compositing objects and type
  - principles of scanning; tonal range, color, contrast, gamma, levels, curves
  - manipulating and compositing text
  - color spaces, calibration, and color control; image editing and correcting
  - scaling, cropping, and transforming objects
  - layers, paths, and channels
- filtering, blending, opacity, masking, layer modes and effects, etc
- creating patterns, textures, custom brushes, backgrounds
  - output considerations and strategies; importance of PDF-based workflows; printed media and web-based media (intro to Adobe ImageReady)
- export/import and file interchange methods between programs as a creative workflow
- Web-based graphics and presentation: working strategies; formats, optimization,

compression, color; HTML basics; incorporating graphics and text into pages; using Adobe ImageReady to create image maps, optimized slices, functional rollovers and simple web animations

- The business of art: working with clients and service bureaus, copyright, ethics, portfolios, and presentation; real-world challenges and working strategies

**Possible projects include:**

- logo design incorporating fundamentals of design concepts (e.g. composition, balance, harmony, rhythm), typography and understanding objective and subjective use of color, symbology.
- still life and/or abstract composition done with vector art program; incorporates basic rules of perspective, proportion, light & shadow, volume.
- self-portrait: representational work created on computer from sketch, manipulated in Photoshop; based on rules of facial portraiture. Selection, painting and editing techniques
- Image correction/accuracy -- A sharp, tonally broad color-corrected and edited complex image imported via scanning.
- exercises in text manipulation with stylizing and highlighting effects
- manipulation of a given color image by converting to gray-scale, duotone, etc; colorizing a b/w image to highlight selective areas, etc
- Textile design; creating a patterned and textured swatch using both Photoshop and Illustrator, incorporating fundamentals and strategies for image collaging and compositing
- full page color print containing multiple serial transformations (a la Andy Warhol) using a variety of color, blend, filtering, etc techniques of one or two scanned and composite main images (e.g. self-portrait and abstract design)
- layout design for a computer graphical user interface (GUI) with title, navigation buttons/controls, labels, stylized background etc. Using ImageReady to enhance optimization and make navigation functional.
- functionally interactive webpage with text, links, images, rollovers, animated GIF

**CONTENT STANDARDS**

Six DCPS visual art content standards make up the core skills, concepts and knowledge for the Photography course:

1. Technique, Process, and Media
2. Structures and Functions
3. Subjects, Symbols and Ideas
4. History and Culture
5. Reflecting and Assessing
6. Making Connections

**Highly Recommended reference books for now and beyond:**

These books are small (no added flab and filler), readable, packed with useful real-world information, and relatively inexpensive compared to most of the garbage out there. I find them very useful for daily work in digital art. Note: These books are now available in recent editions for Adobe CS2 and soon CS3 software. Look for the best prices online

(e.g. Amazon, Barnes & Noble)

1. Adobe Illustrator; Visual Quickstart Guide; Weinmann & Lourekas; Peachpit Press  
Around \$20-25. Quite excellent for getting starting and advancing with Illustrator.  
Concise, affordable, and easy to understand and follow. Filled with useful techniques and tips and practical in scope. A valuable resource. Beginner through advanced-intermediate user.
2. Photoshop; Visual Quickstart Guide; Peachpit Press. Probably around \$20. Pretty good. Probably will get you started well, and covers most topics briefly but usefully. Highly recommended. Beginner through advanced-intermediate user
3. Adobe Photoshop Studio Techniques; Ben Willmore; Adobe Press. Around \$40-45. Well written and organized. Cuts through technical jargon and explains things in practical terms. Literally packed with useful techniques and tips. Indispensable if you plan to do serious production work with Photoshop. Beginner through advanced.
4. HTML and XHTML for the World Wide Web; Visual Quickstart Guide; Elizabeth Castro; Peachpit Press. Compact and packed with step-by-step methods for creating a variety of media for the Web. Good information on adapting and optimizing images, and excellent primer on HTML basics and beyond. A best-selling primer for all things Internet to get you going and definitely worth the inexpensive price. Beginner through intermediate.