

Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program : Studio Art in the Department of Art, Art History and Film Studies, Studio Art

- 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?)

Core studio art courses were discussed in length by full-time studio faculty during the most recent department self study that was completed in 2011. Since that time, a smaller group has continued to discuss Core learning goals. Although learning objectives vary and are specific to each class (painting, drawing, design, etc.), the following drawn from the syllabus of a Drawing 1 core class is presented as an example:

A description of the Arts Core taken from the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences Core Requirements document animates how the Core is taught in Studio Art:

The need to make, experience, and comprehend art has been one of the essential, defining human activities since history began. The arts are thus integral to human experience and expression, the development of critical interpretive skills, an understanding of creative processes, and the fostering of imagination and empathy. The critically engaged practice of the arts, arrived at through rigorous training, uniquely nurtures creativity and innovation.

Anchored in experimentation and creative problem-solving, the arts challenge students to make connections across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

In keeping with the goals of the Arts Core as described in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences description of Core classes,

students will acquire a greater understanding of the technical skills required to create works of art; students will gain knowledge of the aesthetic questions raised by works of art; and students will understand the historical contexts in which such works were created. As a result, students will be able to engage meaningfully with art through creative work and/or to articulate their understanding of art in oral and written expression.

Course Objectives in Drawing 1 Core:

The goal for each student is to acquire the basic technical drawing and conceptual skills required to create works of art, and to gain self- knowledge of themselves as creative agents. In addition, students will increase their sophistication in visual observation and appreciation of visual art as an essential, defining human activity and method of communication. Specifically, students are expected to:

- Develop familiarity with basic drawing terminology, tools, media and techniques.
- Develop the critical observational skills used for translating observed reality to 2 dimensions.
- Utilize basic principles for the articulation of space on a 2-D surface
- Develop the skills to research both historical innovations and contemporary approaches to image making through drawing
- Understand the cultural contexts in which art works are created.
- Develop the reflective ability and technical skills that enable a joining of conceptualization and expression.
- Develop the written, and verbal skills necessary for describing and evaluating works of art and, more broadly, all visual experience for themselves as individuals and in dialogue with a group
- Recognize and manipulate shapes, line, value, texture, and space to create dynamic compositions.
- Use drawing as a way of generating ideas and method for creative problem-solving

Specific Measurement Process: There are three primary areas for assessment of students in the drawing core. Students must demonstrate the ability to make:

1. Clear and insightful written reflections and verbal analysis of observed spaces and works of art.

- has the student developed the habit of drawn visual reflection?
- is the student able to develop insightful questions and observations as to the context, content and impact of what they are viewing?

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2. Clearly recognizable and finely recorded accurate observations in drawings

- -is the student able to do a measured drawing that maintains appropriate proportions?
- -does the student have a mastery of basic drawing practices (ability to identify and manipulate line, shape, value, composition, etc) and their ability to communicate?
- does the student understand how clear expression in drawing informs all aspects of art and design?

3. Fully realized drawings on a researched theme.

- has the student developed the habit of researching visual ideas and their authors and demonstrate a curiosity about artistic tradition?
- has the student cultivated the habit of divergent thinking in expanding the scope and range of ideas?

- -has the student cultivated the habit of revision and refinement of ideas and pay attention to issues of presentation?

Assessment Methods:

In all core studio art classes students are assessed on the above skills and habits of mind in the following manners:

Review of sketchbooks, observation of students drawing in class and their participation in group critiques, graded written assignments, presentation of final projects and and final portfolio reviews. *It is important to note that every student in a core studio class reviews all of their work from the class in a one-on-one meeting with the instructor during which students are asked to reflect on their skill development and experience of art-making during the semester.*

- 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?)

Course objectives, specific measurement processes, and assessment goals are part of each core class syllabus, which is handed out at the beginning of the semester. Most can be downloaded on e-syllabus, and are on file in the Fine Arts Department office.

A general description of the goals of the Art Core can be found on www.bc.edu/core.

Specific core learning outcomes in Studio Art are as of June 2018 not listed on the department website, but should be added this summer.

- 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?)

Professors Gallagher and Austen and Chong oversee Drawing, and Professor Alston Conley oversees Painting; each have developed a quiz that tests fundamental knowledge in each area. These quizzes are given during the first class and again during the last class of the semester. The answers from the beginning to the end can be compared to see what background knowledge is brought to the class and how much information is acquired and retained during the semester. That said, the quizzes on some level only reflect a student's ability to articulate certain drawing concepts, their command of terminology and their ability to recall important figures from art history, not their actual ability to draw, generate ideas or reflect on their experiences as creative makers. For this reason, perhaps the greatest evidence of whether positive learning outcomes have been achieved is the public display of artworks in the hallways during the semester. Many faculty mount class exhibitions of projects where the work of *all* of the students in a given core class is displayed and publically critiqued.

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?)

There are many different part-time and full-time faculty members teaching introductory core classes in Studio Art. Gallagher, Austen, Conley and Chong all teach core classes and each is responsible for end of the semester evaluations of the classes they teach and oversee. In addition, each faculty member teaching core assigns the same written project, a visual analysis of a work of art which they are responsible for evaluating. At the end of the academic year, the full-time drawing and painting faculty get together to discuss learning outcomes and make recommendations for curriculum changes. Next Fall (2018) we are planning on having a meeting—perhaps a retreat at Cohasset- of all faculty (full and part-time) to discuss our recommendations for best achieving our stated learning goals.

4) **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 has become apparent that most students bring a familiarity of *very few* artists or art movements to the core studio classes, and many students have not had a basic drawing or painting class since middle school. Consequently, many core studio classes are happening at what is essentially a remedial level to compensate for deficiencies in American secondary school education. This is complicated by the increasing number of international students we have from Asian countries who often have better foundational level technical drawing skills than their American counterparts, but little or no cultural familiarity with western art historical tradition—or contemporary artists in Asia. While most students usually know one or two Impressionists, basic familiarity with the artistic tradition of humanity is very limited. To increase student knowledge of artists and periods we have increased the emphasis given in the introductory slide lectures ; some teachers have begun to incorporate more material from Asia.

Attached at the end of this document is a review of the Assessment program of the Drawing 1 class by Michael Mulhern , which was written in 2016.

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

Self-Study and External Review completed in February 2011.

Observations and Responses from Assessing Core Drawing Classes

Submitted by Michael W. Mulhern, Spring 2016

1. Basic visual competence – that is the ability of an individual student to visualize (draw) and clearly explain the structure, arrangement and content of their drawings in clear terms is “severely limited” or “displays no knowledge” upon entering the class.

Response: *I have restructured this class almost every time I have taught it. The basic grounding is in drawing as observation as a metaphorical means to develop visual equivalents for our experiences in the world we inhabit. I have done this for 40 years without have quantitative information to back up my evaluation of teaching. Assessment has begun to given me the quantitative grounding. Visual competence is not something our students are neither taught nor tested on prior to coming to Boston College.*

2. The vast majority of students entering into the course have no competence in developing effective strategies in organizing and presenting visual information in order to communicate an idea, memory or concept. The approaches they do use frequently “mimic” pre-existing poorly conceived of ideas and are unable to ascertain whether their approach will generate information or simply illustrate a fixed literal idea.

Response: *As noted above the vast majority of students are neither taught nor tested on any form of visual expressive competence. Those who do have some training have limited knowledge as to explaining or developing strategies to effectively develop work that can generate ideas and not illustrate pre-existent concepts that are uncritically accepted as still workable.*

3. Foundational drawings concepts of the western tradition such as perspective and chiaroscuro may have limited expressive understanding (students may be able to draw using these approaches in a limited manner). Clear verbal explanations of these drawing principles are almost totally lacking.

Response: *The historical foundations of clear observational drawing are now central to this course. Formal Compositional approaches are integrated into each week. Sketchbook and the written assignments further re-enforce this approach.*

4. The vast majority of students see Art as solely a form of “personal” expression and not a visual form given specific structures or approaches used to communicate ideas, memories, or concepts. From their previous experience Art/Drawing should be rewarded with the highest grade no matter what the quality or ability of the work to communicate to another viewer.

Response: *This factor is by far the most difficult to overcome. Frequently it is not. Studio Art as an expressive form that reflects on us as witnesses, narrators and researchers using visual forms to communicate our insights, troubles with, and reflections on the worlds we experience, inhabit and imagine is an invitation not a necessity. If accepted in the 21st century, audience must be considered.*

5. Students generally believe upon entering the class that all problems have discreet answers that can be solved through one effort. They learn to develop persistence and begin to see drawing (as with all forms of expression – writing, music, etc.) as a serial process of finding (seeing/observing); refining and

reformulating (giving emphasis to a selection); questioning and constructing responses to the world they see and internally experience.

Response: *The approach to drawing students are introduced to in the class is drawing as process. This approach allows for the widest possible introduction to the basic traditions of drawing. The emphasis is on “know the rules so you can use or break them”. Expression or personal interpretation of the world filtered through one’s social and cultural grounding is current state of the discipline.*