

Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program Art, Art History and Film Studies Department

July 2023

Update to comprehensive description of studio core curriculum in studio art by Prof. Muldowney with focus on the Intermediate Photography: Techniques and Formats course.

OVERVIEW:

The goal of the CORE studio art program is to provide students with a learning environment in which students will gain a greater understanding of the technical skills required to create works of art and increase knowledge of the aesthetic questions raised by works of art and to understand the historical contexts in which such works were created. In the Intermediate Photography: Techniques and Formats course specifically, students are introduced to formal elements of photography building off of what was learned in either photography 1 or introduction to digital photography, with more of an emphasis on mastery of darkroom and/or digital printing and technical prowess in your chosen path.

Students also learn about photography as an historical medium and tool of mass culture with a mix of readings, history lectures and research assignments. At the end of this one-semester course, students should be able to complete a self-directed project in the medium of photography and situate themselves within the medium through their research projects on contemporary and historical makers. Through rigorous critique, students will be able to engage meaningfully with art through creative work and articulate their understanding of art in oral and written expression.

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:

<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/undergraduate/core-curriculum/core-requirements.html>

Studio full time and part-time faculty strives to nurture creativity and innovation in our students, and to critically engage them in the practice of the arts through rigorous training anchored in experimentation and creative problem solving and connectivity across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

- 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?)

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

- Review of supplemental materials such as their contact sheets, sketchbooks and collage boards, lightroom catalogs and test prints.

- Presentation of weekly reading assignments: A group of 2-3 students will lead the discussion each week based on the assigned reading in addition to written responses.
- Participation in group critiques, both showing work and reviewing their peers is essential.

A distinct feature of teaching and assessment in the Studio Art Department is that every student in a Core studio class reviews all of their work with both the professor and peers on an ongoing basis throughout the semester.

At the end of the semester, students meet one-on-one with their faculty members and are asked to reflect on their skill development and experience of art-making during the semester. By reviewing and talking with the student about a completed body of work (for intermediate photography, this is the equivalent of 10-15 beautifully made prints), Instructors get a fuller insight into the student's growing sense of proficiency and skill in using materials and use of visual language.

Due to the varied nature of studio art classes, emphasis on making, improvement in technique and the language of critique are prioritized over unified acquisition of knowledge, and assessment beyond this are made within each medium's specific needs. It is indeed difficult for us, the studio art faculty, to develop a unified and meaningful questionnaire at the beginning that uses written or multiple-choice questions/answers without a practical background in art making at any level.

For the 2023 Assessment purposes, these are the objectives from ARTS2261 Intermediate Photography: Techniques and Formats

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will focus on understanding and mastering the aesthetic and technical relationships among light, and camera, and emphasizes the development of a personal photographic vision. The class will serve as a forum for demonstrating photographic processes and equipment, critiquing work, and examining the work of contemporary artists and traditional masters within the medium to develop a visual literacy. Students are expected to produce work in series and to present a final portfolio. This course requires additional work outside of class time.

Students are expected to situate themselves as artists working within photography through readings, written responses, presentations and the act of making as a personal expression of how they interpret themselves as makers. The core curriculum philosophy of Boston College states an invitation for “[students] into a conversation about questions that have long concerned reflective people and to enter into a dialogue of faith and reason in pursuit of truth. The Core provides information and perspective and encourages sound judgment and the beginning of wisdom.”

GRADING

Participation 25%

Assignments 40%

Annotated Artist Bibliography 15%

Final Project 20%

All assignments are expected to be complete and passed in on time. For each day the assignment is late, half of a letter grade will be deducted from the grade.

Letter grades are defined and published in the University Bulletin. Grades are based on regular attendance and participation in class, critique sessions, technical demonstrations, as well as the successful completion and presentation of a final portfolio with a personal written statement.

Assignments and projects will be evaluated for their success in four areas of considerations: composition, concept/subject, technical control, and presentation.

All assessments and grading criteria are available on the course's canvas page.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments for this course are designed to make students better photographers through technical training, theoretical readings and peer critiques. Students have absolute freedom of ideas in executing their photographic projects, but should retain the core values of Boston College as they approach the critique setting and engagement with other students of diverse backgrounds and thought.

Students will also perform a research project. The annotated bibliography assignment tasks students to research both historic and contemporary artists (those making work since 1980) that parallels their own work within the practices of these artists. These are not limited to photographers, as students are encouraged to bring in their interests from other disciplines and mediums, including writing and poetry, into this dialogue.

- 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 that is available on Canvas. The syllabus is also kept on file in the Art, Art History and Film Department office.

Department Website Information about the Arts Core can be obtained here:

<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/art/programs/studio-art/arts-core.html>

Individual courses also list specific learning objectives and outcomes on canvas.

- 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?)

At the end-of-semester meetings in fall 2022, students were given an opportunity to to answer the following questions about the course, both about the structure, the evolution of their work and the outcome of their research assignment:

- 1) You were tasked to do an ongoing research project throughout the semester that consisted of 10 annotated bibliography entries and a presentation. Was this helpful in your pursuits of your own work? Was starting the research so early in the semester beneficial or a hindrance?
- 2) How did the readings help or hinder your concept of what the medium of photography is?
- 3) How did the archival project help or hinder your ways of making?
- 4) Do you think you are a stronger artist at the end of this semester?

This oral questionnaire was very beneficial for updating the structure of how the research projects and ongoing critique schedule will be updated for the fall 2023 semester.

That said, this questionnaire is somewhat anecdotal in our judgment and provides only a very limited insight into the actual learning success of a student. In the studio faculty's opinion, the greatest evidence of whether positive learning outcomes have been achieved is the public display of artworks in the hallways during the semester and discussions between colleagues and students that arise in response to the displays. The overall achievement of the students at the end of the semester are displayed in the basement of Devlin Hall after a defense of the students final body of work.

- 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, the full-time faculty responsible for their correspondent area (painting, drawing, photography, etc.) collect and review the evidence from their full and part-time colleagues in their discipline. They make adjustments within their areas and if needed they discuss particular issues during studio area faculty meetings. Evidence of outcomes and overall development of the program is frequently discussed with the faculty of other areas (Art History and Film Studies) during full department meetings that occur frequently during the semester. Specific questions or issues are discussed between the area directors and the chair who at times also participates in area meetings.

- 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?)

Each fall at the end of this course, I re-evaluate how the critique structure and the research assignments coalesce and continually update their structures to be more streamlined. The end-of-semester feedback is essential to know what worked well for students and how to improve

their basis for knowledge of artists, and how to contextualize themselves within that history and form of making

This semester I will continue to have the research component start earlier, and we will finish and present our findings before Thanksgiving so that students have a better idea of each other's research going into the final. This was invaluable for our final portfolio critiques and made our students stronger presenters of their own work, grounded within the context of professional practitioners.

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

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 and update Core learning goals, most recently at the studio art faculty retreat in fall 2019. During a second retreat in the fall 2021, we discussed revisions to class schedule and Core, as well as, future faculty needs in the studio art area.