

Classical Drawing Technique

Fridays 2pm or 3pm

Instructor: Nicholas Thorp

nickthorp@nickthorp.com

I. Rationale:

Historically, art students focused on perfecting the traditional techniques by imitating great artists of the past and learning how to convey objects in a visually beautiful way before moving onto artistic expression. Many art classes today only cover individual expression to the neglect of technique. In this class, Mr. Thorp will bring his experience apprenticing under two of the foremost portrait and figurative painters in the country to pass on to students the methods of western artists that were nearly lost in the 20th century. Students will be challenged to refine their drawing skills and learn discipline from self-evaluation and receiving constructive criticism. They will be doing a survey of the Bague Drawing Course, a rigorous 19th century series of progressively more challenging drawings to copy made to teach beginning students how to draw precisely. All of the most rigorous ateliers in the world follow this exact same drawing curriculum (e.g., Grand Central Atelier, Florence Academy). Students of all abilities and interests are encouraged to join.

II. Course Aims and Outcomes:

A. Aims:

Students will improve their drawing ability by traditional exercises and a focus on technique as a precondition to expression.

B. Specific Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Draw confident, clean lines
- Take a complex subject and simplify it in a block-in
- Divide a drawing into basic light and dark shapes
- Convey form of an object by controlling the edges of shadow shapes

III. Format and Procedures:

Class time will be split between an instructor demonstration of technique and critique/discussion of work. Students will draw along and if necessary, completing their work in their own time after class. Photos of their work will need to be submitted the night before the next class.

This class is based on imitating previous artists' drawings to better understand how to match them in their skill. This is the proven method used for centuries to train countless Old Masters.

The series of drawings we will be imitating comes from the Bague Drawing Course, created by Charles Bague and Jean-Léon Gérôme in the 19th century. The series of drawings is mostly of classical marble sculptures. More information is included under course requirements.

IV. My Assumptions

Some may feel vulnerable showing their work to class or receiving critiques. Students therefore are expected to be respectful to their classmates, offering input that is specific and productive. Students will be joining with a variety of skill levels, so our task is for each to improve from where they are. Those showing their work should similarly be open to criticism and receive it maturely, considering its relevance and accuracy.

Additionally, students are expected to follow video-class etiquette such as keeping cameras on and sound muted unless speaking in turn.

V. Course Requirements:

1. Prerequisites: Students can be at any skill level from beginning to advanced.
2. Class attendance and participation policy: Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in discussions, asking questions and seeking clarification on topics that they don't understand.
3. Course readings: We will be using drawings from the Bague Drawing Course. Purchasing this book is not necessary as it is often very expensive. However, as it's an old book, I can provide high quality PDFs preferably to be printed but at least be pulled up on a screen for reference while drawing.
4. Supplies: an HB drawing pencil, pencil sharpener, drawing paper, rubber eraser (mechanical erasers are recommended for their precision), kneaded eraser.

VI. Expectations for Parents

- Set aside a calm, quiet, distraction-free space for your child(ren) to work every day.
- Ensure virtual learning equipment is available and charged.
- Establish routines and expectations and a basic schedule for completing classwork.
- Help students 'own' their learning.
- Check LearnDash LMS for communications from teachers and help students print off resources that are provided.
- Stay abreast of teacher feedback in the form of grades or other messages.
- Proctor tests, quizzes, or other assessments as scheduled by the teacher. Parents ensure academic integrity because they are on the "live" side of the screen.
- Communicate with teachers regularly via email or LearnDash LMS regarding any questions or issues that arise.
- If your child is having trouble completing work, email teachers to schedule a time for an online meeting.

VII. Grading Procedures

Grades will be weighted on the following scale:

- 4 – Exceeds expectations
- 3 – Meets expectations
- 2 – Below expectations
- 1 – Significantly below expectations

The following categories will be weighed in evaluating students:

- Discussion participation (with an emphasis of quality over quantity)
- Personal improvement
- Completion of assignments

VIII. Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. One great way to assess what you know is to teach the idea to a peer! You may also work together on problem sets and give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from your peers. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in any form (e.g., email, Word doc, Box file, Google sheet, or a hard copy). Assignments that have been previously submitted in another course may not be submitted for this course.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.