

FA114 Beginning Painting

Seminar Leader: Katy Kirbach
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Course Times: Tuesdays 09:30-12:45
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This foundational painting course provides a comprehensive exploration of painting materials, techniques, and key concepts. The curriculum covers a range of subjects, including color theory, master copy techniques, still life, portraiture, abstraction, and the integration of photography into the painting process. Students will work with water-based paints, mastering canvas stretching, surface preparation, and application methods encompassing both traditional and experimental approaches. Practical demonstrations will teach the nuances of various paints, guiding students in color mixing, hue, value, and the dynamic interplay of warm and cool temperatures. The curriculum includes construction of compositions, perspectival space, surface texture, and the optical effects of shadow and light. Engaging assignments encourage students to develop a sense of their own work. Readings, discussions, and slide presentations explore themes in art history and contemporary painting, offering a broad perspective on artistic evolution. The course gives attention to group and individual guidance and the limited class size ensures ample studio space and extended interaction with the professor. Evaluations and group critiques occur at midterm and term-end, culminating in an "Open Studios" exhibition showcasing student artworks. This course emphasizes studio work and demands a substantial time commitment outside of class sessions.

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Turn off phones during class time.
- Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff outside of class time.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails from their professors in a timely manner.
- Inform their professors at the beginning of the semester if photos of student's identity, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and / or any personal belongings before the end of the semester. Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Donating unrequested artworks and / or art materials is not permitted and will still be considered student property, expected to be removed by your inspection deadline. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to

adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

- Attendance of all classes is expected.
- More than one unexcused absence will significantly lower the final grade for the course.
- Tardiness after 10 minutes will be considered an absence.

- Students are expected to attend all off-campus classes punctually, from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, the Professor must be informed in advance.
- The full BCB attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.
- For the health of the BCB community all students and instructors should refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Please feel welcome to contact the instructor with questions about this any time.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

Students receive mid-term feedback and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work.

Students are assessed on their willingness to experiment, their contributions exchanging feedback during critiques, and their ability to work effectively throughout the semester. Grading will reflect the ambition, time-investment, and overall quality of the finished artworks. This assessment will also include the student's ability to adequately manage their time for working and clean-up of materials and spaces used at BCB.

70% Work (meaning all artworks made for class, presented for critiques, and assignments) 30% Attendance, participation in discussions, and professionalism

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class session. Detailed information about assignments and projects will be given in class. Assignments and the dates described in this syllabus are subject to change by the instructor. Students will be notified of any changes to the syllabus in class and via email. Students must regularly check their Bard email accounts. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the instructor during office hours to discuss assignments and seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

IMPORTANT– Please be aware that basic art materials will be provided, though some materials may need to be purchased directly by each student at their own expense, depending on individual project goals.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). The Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students may make an appointment to discuss assignments and feedback during instructors 'office hours.

Students receive end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Schedule

The Spring semester runs from Monday, January 26 and runs until Friday, May 15, with the Spring break planned from Monday, March 30, - Sunday, April 5, 2026.

- Normal course sessions end on Friday, May 8.
- Completion week is from Monday, May 11 through Friday, May 15.
- Make-up classes and final exams can take place in completion week.
- Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

[BCB Spring Semester 2026 Course Search Page](#)

Please ensure that your course schedule takes account of federal holidays, which may be found listed here:

[Academic Calendars at Bard College Berlin](#)

Classes missed due to federal holidays will not be rescheduled. Classes missed due to conferences or due to illness (of the professor) are rescheduled.

Week 1 January 27	Overview of course expectations, studio space, and materials. Responsible studio etiquette, safe handling / disposal of materials. <u>Assignment:</u> Read chapter one in <i>Ways of Seeing</i> by John Berger, followed by the introduction to <i>The Story of Art Without Men</i> by Katy Hessel. Write a half-page reflection on the points of interest. Bring painting surfaces for the next session.
Week 2 February 3	Group discussion on the assigned essays. Introduction to Josef Albers <i>Interaction of Color</i> . Color grid exercise and introduction to master copy assignment. <u>Assignment:</u> Complete the color grid, research two different master copies and read Amy Sillman's <i>On Color</i> .
Week 3 February 10	Selection of master copy images and start painting. <u>Assignment:</u> complete second master copy and bring in three objects to create a still life for the next session.
Week 4 February 17	Critique of master copy paintings. Introduction to still life painting focusing on composition, light, shadow, and form. Make one painting in class. Viewing: Art21 video on Aliza Nisenbaum. <u>Assignment:</u> Complete three still life paintings that focus on different angles, details, and style.
Week 5 February 24	Canvas stretching demo. Critique of still life paintings. Introduction to portrait painting with slideshow of historical and contemporary artists. <u>Assignment:</u> Complete first self-portrait, and finish gessoing canvas to use next week.

Week 6 March 3	Critique of first self-portraits. Viewing: Chantal Joffe: We Paint Where We Are, Louisiana Channel. Begin second self-portrait from mirror, choosing a different angle and style of painting. <u>Assignment:</u> Finish second self-portrait. Bring a photographic image to the next class.
Week 7 March 10	Midterm assessment of work and progress so far, with individual meetings. Make paintings from a photo. <u>Assignment:</u> read excerpt from <i>For the Future of Painting</i> by Jan Verwoert, as well as the essays by Mary Heilmann and David Reed. All three essays were written for the exhibition <i>Two by Two: Mary Heilmann and David Reed</i> , Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2015. Research both artists.
Week 8 March 17	Paul Klee, Hilma af Klint and Wassily Kandinsky: introduction to abstraction. Using an image, text, or sound as a starting point, begin a series of abstract paintings. Focus on rhythm, color, and composition. <u>Assignment:</u> generate as many ideas for new paintings as possible - make a list, a diagram, or sketches. Refer back to the examples given in class.
Week 9 March 24	Continue abstract paintings. Viewing: 10 Artists on Abstract Art, Louisiana Channel. <u>Assignment:</u> finish any works in progress, and write a proposal for the final project.
March 31	Spring Break (March 30 - April 5)
Week 10 April 7	Overview of possibilities for Final Projects. Individual meetings to discuss project proposals and ideas. Begin working on Final Projects. <u>Assignment:</u> read Sol LeWitt's letter to Eva Hesse. Work on final project.
Week 11 April 14	Continue final project and get individual critiques. <u>Assignment:</u> work on final project.
Week 12 April 21	Continue final project and get individual critiques. <u>Assignment:</u> finish final project.
Week 13 April 28	Prepare and install artworks for the Open Studio.
Week 14 May 5	Final group critique and discussion of installed work.
May 8	Open Studios: Class exhibition showcasing student work (date & time subject to change)

Policy on the use of facilities:

1. The Factory (Eichenstrasse 43) and Monopol (Provinzstr 40-44) at BCB offer space and facilities to BCB art students. Chip access is from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, including the weekends during the semester. The buildings cannot be used outside these hours.
2. Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.
3. Students agree only to use the designated class spaces or communal workshops. Respecting the building and its facilities is crucial, as they are shared resources that need to be preserved for the benefit of all.
4. For your safety and the safety of others, smoking and drinking alcohol are strictly prohibited anywhere inside the building.
5. Unauthorized events and/or parties are not permitted. Projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) are not permitted inside the building.
6. Spray painting and handling any hazardous (chemical or combustible) material is not permitted inside the building.
7. All work surfaces (indoor and outdoor) must be adequately protected with the workshop's drop cloth before spray painting or working with plaster.
8. During completion week, any space used by a student must be emptied, with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be adequately disposed of. Final grades may be affected or withheld if any item remains by the inspection deadline.
9. When leaving the building, students must ensure all lights are turned off, all electrical items must be unplugged, and doors must be closed.
10. Contact the Studio art manager directly with any questions: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Emergency phone numbers:

Police (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 110 Fire (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Ambulance and Paramedics (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112 Out-of-Hours Medical Care (calling from a German landline or cellphone) : 116 117