

PRINCIPLES OF COLOR

ART 4 Section 0816 | 3 units

Fall 2025

Monday + Wednesday | 9AM - 12PM

Room 130 | John M. Jacobs Hall | Petaluma Campus

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: 30 minutes after class Mondays and Wednesdays in Room 130 or by appointment

Course Description

ART 4: In this course, students will explore the theory and application of color in two dimensional, visual art. Through lectures, extensive hands-on color mixing exercises, studio projects, and critiques, students will develop both technical skills and an understanding of traditional and modern approaches to color, color relationships, optical perceptions of color, and its expressive possibilities.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. **Create a portfolio of work demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of color relationships**, using the color wheel to develop these relationships, integrating color theory with optical perceptions of color, and using color for expression in visual compositions.
2. **Analyze, evaluate and critique the use of color** in personal artwork and the work of peers both verbally and in writing using a specialized color vocabulary and a demonstrated understanding of the principles of color theory.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. **Develop and demonstrate perception and awareness of color relationships and principles**, such as value, chroma and hue, tinctorial strength, warm/cool, optical effects, atmospheric perspective and simultaneous contrast.
2. **Develop hand skills necessary** to effectively mix and apply acrylic paint and understand health and safety concerns of paint and pigments.
3. **Execute visually compelling compositions** that demonstrate an understanding of complex color relationships, optical phenomenon and spatial effects.
4. **Analyze the differences between traditional color wheels red, yellow and blue (RYB) and modern color wheels** cyan, magenta, and yellow (CMY), including their applications.
5. **Understand the relationship of subtractive/reflective color mixing and additive/light color mixing** and how this relates to the biological perception of color as Red, Green and Blue light.
6. **Adjust hue, chroma and value** using the principles of a traditional, artist double primary color wheel and understanding how to use this wheel to form complementary, analogous, split complementary, and triadic color combinations.
7. **Analyze historical and contemporary artists and designers' use of color** relationships, spatial dynamics, and optical effects.
8. **Learn and apply essential color terminology** to effectively articulate color decisions and evaluate outcomes in critiques and in written reflections.
9. **Develop the expertise to present work professionally in a portfolio format.**

Course Design

Daily Schedule:

For most weeks, this will be our daily workflow:

1. I will introduce a new project or concept through a class demonstration, presentation, or discussion at the start of class OR we will jump right into a project we are already working on.
2. You will complete research and visual studies for each project in your sketchbook and online through homework and exercises in Canvas.
3. Together we will work on major projects in class, helping each other to problem solve and learn new materials. You are expected to work on projects in class, during class time, in addition to outside of our scheduled meetings.
4. When a project is due, we will meet for a group critique. We will participate in various types of critiques throughout the semester: small groups, one-on-one reviews, self assessment, group presentations, etc.
5. Work will be submitted for grading at a Midterm and Final portfolio checkpoint.

PROJECTS are 85% of your final grade.

Projects will focus on understanding and utilizing color relationships for design and will advance our knowledge of the elements and principles of art and design. Each project will begin with visual research, play, and composition development through exercises completed inside and outside of class, followed by the creation of a completed color composition and finished with a critique. Through these exercises and projects, students will gain hands-on experience with color theory techniques and brains-on experience with two-dimensional problem-solving skills.

Each project has specific materials, criteria and/or objectives: please refer to individual project rubrics for details.

Grading criteria is based on both quality of effort and technical skill demonstrated. Projects will be graded on a point scale and the grading will be based on how well the specific guidelines of the assignment are followed in combination with completion of all criteria given. The grading rubric for each assignment will be shared at the start of each project.

UNIT 1: COLOR PROPERTIES + COLOR WHEEL

1. Color Naming / Color Perception
2. Value: Nine Step Value Scale, Tints, Tones, Shades
3. Monochromatic Composition
4. Standardized Colors and Color Progression: Secondary standards, Platonic primaries
5. Double Primary Color Wheel
6. Personal Color Wheel

UNIT 2: INTERACTION OF COLOR

7. Chromatic Blacks
8. Hue, Value, and Saturation: Admixing Complements
9. Color Schemes, Color Harmony
10. Chromatic and Prismatic compositions
11. Seasonal Grid
12. Transparency and Illusion

UNIT 3: COLOR IN OUR WORLD

13. Optical Mixing
14. Artist Analysis
15. Albers Color Interactions
16. Final Self Portrait

Projects may change throughout the semester, allowing time adjustments as needed.

Work Submission:

All project work will be evaluated in a midterm portfolio and a final portfolio. The list of projects to be submitted for review will be shared prior to the due date. Keep **all work** safe in a portfolio throughout the semester, photographing along the way. Critiques/reviews will be held at the end of each project prior to the midterm and final portfolio due dates. This will allow you to receive feedback and edit projects as needed prior to submitting.

PARTICIPATION is 15% of your final grade.

Grading criteria is assessed as a balance of participation, timeliness and work ethic. Time management and absence can affect your grade significantly.

Warm ups & exercises are short assignments conducted in class to help understand and explore a project technique. Your attendance is required to receive credit for these short in-class assignments.

Work hard. Be curious. Be persistent. Do extra work outside of class. Stay on task, focused and present. Ask questions to improve your technique and your understanding. Verbally contribute in a productive, consistent way to lectures, critiques and discussions. Stay focused and on task during studio portions of class. Do the timed group warm ups. Be prepared with drafts of work; read and follow instructions; participate in chats, discussions and quizzes.

Grading Scale:

A (100% - 90%), B (< 90% - 80%), C (< 80% - 70%), D (< 70% - 61%), F (< 61% - 0%)

A – Outstanding Work. This is free of technical errors, and shows excellent use of design skills and construction skills. In addition, the work shows an understanding of content as opposed simply to subject matter. Experimentation explores the potential of concept and form. This work goes above and beyond satisfying the requirements of the assignment.

B – Good Work. Generally it shows most of the qualities of “A” work, but there is some aspect of those qualities that shows less proficiency or understanding. It may be that the form is very well executed technically, but less developed visually or conceptually, or that the design is extremely creative but that there are a few minor flaws in execution.

C – Average Work. Generally this work is acceptable, showing a basic understanding of the techniques used, but showing some difficulty in controlling the medium. There may be problems with constructing, design, and composition. The form may seem second-hand, and show a lack of involvement in both idea and execution.

D – Below Average Work. The work may appear unfinished, or show serious problems with constructing, design, and craftsmanship. It does not show appropriate mastery of the materials or understanding of the level of competency required for the assignment.

F – Failing Work. The work is not turned in, or is performed at an unacceptable level in terms of both design and execution.

Documentation and Submission of Class Work:

All work will be submitted on Canvas as a **JPEG file**. It is imperative that you take exceptional pictures of your artwork. The evaluation of your work will be based on the quality of your photographic representation. Below are some guidelines:

1. **Orientation:** Make sure that the image shows the top edge “up.” If your image is sideways your composition may be off balance.
2. **Lighting:** Generally natural light is best (outdoors). Situations where light is evenly dispersed is best (e.g., overcast days or light from left and right sides of artwork). A single light source from one side will create a gradation of light. Avoid dark or bright areas that will “wash-out” an image or make it difficult to see (e.g., a dark closet or direct artificial light or sunlight). Don’t use a flash.
3. **Shadows:** Avoid shadows from yourself or other objects to cross your image.
4. **Glare:** Avoid “hot-spots” in your image where direct light is creating a white spot or bright area.
5. **Cropping:** Keep your work flat and crop to the image or paper when required. **No carpet, tabletops, beds, toes, etc. in the image.**

Late Work:

Assignments for this course should be completed on time so that we are all moving through the class together. In unexpected situations leading to late work, please contact me to discuss a plan for success **prior** to the assignment’s due date.

The best way to plan for the unexpected is to get an early start on each assignment and to use class time wisely. Missing a critique should be avoided at all costs. If you do not turn in work for a critique, your project grade will go down by 10% automatically.

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance and class participation is vital in a studio art course. You are expected to come to class on time and ready to work with all necessary supplies and materials. It is imperative that you attend class to receive all the information needed to successfully and safely complete the assignments.

Your presence will be counted not by taking roll but by your regular contributions to discussions and activities. You will be considered present if there is evidence of your participation in required course activities including, but not limited to, having your materials on hand ready to work each day, participating in a group critique, and working through the entire class period. You will be considered absent if there is no evidence of your participation in the activities of this course – in other words, stay present and don’t let your phone screen suck you in.

Each student is allowed 3 absences.

3 late arrivals/early departures = 1 absence

4 unexcused absences = 1 grade less (for example, A becomes B)

5 unexcused absences = 2 grades less (for example, A becomes C)

6 + unexcused absences = unconditional F for this course or at risk of being dropped from the course

If you are unable to attend class due to sickness or exposure to covid this will be considered an excused absence. Please send me an email and let me know prior to class meeting if you can.

Please note: Missing class on the day of a critique is the same as missing an exam. If you do not attend a critique, your project grade will go down by 10% automatically.

Healthy & Safety:

Safe studio practice requires attentiveness: do not try to work when you are too tired, distracted, or under other influences. You will be handling sharp objects, hazardous chemicals and equipment that can injure you if not used properly. Please read all signs, labels and ask questions if you are not sure! For health and safety reasons, do not consume food or drink near any work surface or designated clean areas.

Course Supplies

Students are required to purchase the Art 4 Supply Kit from Rileystreet Art Supply in Santa Rosa. Please purchase at Rileystreet – they give us a great deal! The kit costs \$143.00 (retail price before discounts \$305). Ask specifically for the kit put together for **Gonzalez, Art 4**. Rileystreet gives us a good price for the materials required for this class.

Required Supply Kit includes:

- **Liquitex Heavy Body Acrylic:**
 - Quinacridone Magenta 2oz
 - Mars Black 2oz
 - Phthalo Blue (green shade) 2oz
 - Ultramarine Blue (green shade) 2oz
 - Yellow Light Hansa 2oz
 - Cadmium Free Yellow Medium 2oz
 - Cadmium Free Red Medium 2oz
 - 2 large tubes of Titanium White 4.65oz

- Ratcheting knife
- General's Graphite Pencil 2H
- Staedtler Mars Eraser
- 4 OZ Sprayer Bottle
- 18" cork backed steel ruler
- Palette Knife #006
- Elmer's glue 4OZ
- Princeton Snap Long Handle Taklon #8 Bright
- Princeton Snap Long Handle Taklon #2 Round
- Princeton Snap Long Handle #4 Filbert
- Strathmore Bristol Vellum 14X17
- Strathmore Bristol Vellum 9x12
- Palette Paper 12X16
- Blue Painters Tape 1"
- Portfolio 20X26

Additional supplies to collect:

- Art bin or tool box to carry materials to class
- Double sided self-healing cutting mat (approx. 9 x 12 inches)
- Scissors
- Sketchbook
- Small containers with lids (like salsa containers)
- Water containers (large sized yogurt containers work well)
- Paper towel roll or rag

More materials may be needed as the semester progresses. You may run out of paint and need to purchase more paint throughout the semester. You can buy additional paint through Rileystreet, Michaels or SRJC bookstore.

Digital Supplies:

- Access to Canvas and Microsoft Office suite or Google Slides – In this class, material will be presented in person in our studio meetings. I will use Canvas to share presentations, assignment sheets, and grades. Assignments will be submitted both in person for critique as well as a photograph of the assignment turned into Canvas.
- Camera (phone camera works fine) to photograph your work and document progress drafts.
- If you need any help with technology, contact the Student Help Desk IT Support [here](#) or call (707) 521-6062.

If you have any financial trouble collecting any supplies, please let me know and I will work with you to brainstorm alternative materials as needed.

Class Conduct

Together we will create a respectful, productive and fun workspace for us each to learn, make mistakes, and grow. Self-talk and talk with each other should be supportive, curious, and helpful. Please treat our studio space and materials the way you would treat your own home (or maybe your favorite person's home). At the end of each work day, we will work together to clean up our space and leave it looking better than we found it.

Rings, beeps, songs or conversations that disrupt the class are not tolerated. Texting or listening to music during lectures will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Please keep your phone away during work days unless you are using it to actively visually research something or to photograph your projects.

We will listen to music together as we work. If you choose to listen to your own music during a workday, make sure you are able to hear your environment. I will come around regularly to check in and will expect you to remove your headphones during our conversation.

Recording lectures will be permitted but only if consent is given each lecture by the instructor. Photographing other students' work is never allowed without consent by the student/artist. Recording demos is never allowed without prior approval before each demo. Uploading videos of demos, lectures, critiques or discussions to ANY public forum is NEVER allowed.

As the instructor, I reserve the right to photograph all student work and use it for instructional and promotional purposes. I will always ask prior to photographing your work.

Communication:

Students are provided with an SRJC email account, and this email address, in addition to Canvas announcements, will be used for all communications.

My preferred gender pronouns are she/her/hers. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name and your preferred gender pronoun. Please advise me of this early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

You can address me as "Professor," "Professor Gonzalez" or "Sofia" – whichever feels most comfortable for you!

Office Hours: My office hours are times for conversation about the course and your work in it. I am here to answer questions, offer feedback, discuss a course concept, or just listen as you explore a line of reasoning. I can also direct you to resources to help you meet challenges you face outside of class.

Questions outside of office hours? I will respond to your message via Canvas or email within 24 hours, M-F. If you do not get a response after 24 hours, please resend.

Diversity Statement:

It is my goal to create an inclusive, safe space for each of us to explore, take risks, and express ourselves creatively. I would like our class to be a supportive learning environment that values and builds on the richly diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences of our group. Please help me develop this environment by honoring the diverse identities of your classmates, of the artists we will study, and of our local community.

Both in the visual research and in discussions, you will likely encounter cultures, ideas, and values that differ from your own. These are valuable opportunities to learn more about different perspectives and where they intersect with yours. We all see the world from a point of view informed by our experiences and backgrounds, and what we read and discuss can open new windows through which to understand both our course content and the world around us. You are encouraged to contribute your ideas about course content freely, but please remember to demonstrate respect for your classmates and instructor. We all have unconscious biases that stem from our experiences and recognizing and discussing them can lead to unexpected insights.

Conversely, disrespectful, or threatening responses tend to shut down conversation and insight, and so these kinds of comments will be promptly addressed by your instructor. Please join me in creating an inclusive and productive learning environment for us all.

Accommodations:

If you need disability related accommodations for this class please contact the Disabilities Resources Department (DRD) as soon as possible. (707)-527-4278 or disabilityinfo@santarosa.edu, to ensure such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Academic Honesty

You are here to learn and improve yourself as an artist. **I am only interested in seeing your original ideas and images**, that means that while we may be interested in exploring themes of pop culture, there will be no fan art in this class. We can have a discussion about how to reference pop imagery within the context of original art.

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. This includes the copying of other's work; although you will be looking at images and examples for inspiration, you are not allowed to directly copy an image or object and declare it your own. This includes copying or appropriating any existing characters or imagery. I will enforce the following statement on cheating and plagiarism.

THE PENALTY FOR CHEATING: ANY form of misrepresentation, lying, plagiarism, copying others' work, claiming work that is not entirely your own as your own without crediting others, use of any unauthorized aids during an examination—including other students' work, dishonesty on ANY assignment will minimally result in an "F" in the class.

Course Schedule

Subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Schedule changes will be announced via email, Canvas and in class.

Additional reading and homework assignments will be announced with the introduction of each project assignment. Local community art events and openings will be announced in class and via email throughout the semester.

Week	Warm Up/Lecture	Studio	Homework
8/18 Monday <i>First day of class</i>	Welcome Introduction to Art 4	Color Naming, Color Perception	Read through Syllabus Read "A short history of color theory" Collect supplies
8/20 Wednesday	<i>Lecture:</i> Value <i>Demo:</i> Intro to paint	Nine Step Value Scale	Finish Value Scale swatches
8/25 Monday	Demo: Finding your achromatic value scale steps, gluing	Nine Step Value Scale	Finish Value Scale
8/27 Wednesday	<i>Demo:</i> Tints, tones and shades	Tints, tones and shades	Finish painting tints, tones and shades for one hue
9/1 Monday	<i>Labor Day: No Class Meeting</i>		
9/3 Wednesday	Demo: Monochromatic painting	Monochromatic painting	Finish Monochromatic painting
9/8 Monday	Review monochromatic paintings	Standardized colors: Cad Yellow, Hansa Yellow, Cad Red	Finish Standard strips

Week	Warm Up/Lecture	Studio	Homework
	Standardized Colors		
9/10 Wednesday	Standardized Colors	Standardized colors: Quinacridone Magenta, Phthalo Blue, Ultramarine Blue	Finish Standard strips
9/15 Monday	Color Progression	Admixing between warm and cool primaries (Y + Y, B + B, R + R)(Platonic Primaries)	Finish platonic primaries
9/17 Wednesday	Color Progression	Admixing between warm and cool primaries (Y + Y, B + B, R + R)(Platonic Primaries)	Finish platonic primaries
9/22 Monday	Color Progression	Finding the Secondary Standards: Green	Finish Green
9/24 Wednesday	Color Progression	Secondary Standards: Orange	Finish Orange
9/29 Monday	Color Progression	Secondary Standards: Purple	Finish Purple
10/1 Wednesday	<i>Lecture:</i> Color wheel 6 Primary Color Wheel	Color Wheel start	Color wheelhouse exercise
10/6 Monday	6 Primary Color Wheel	Color Wheel	Finish Color Wheel
10/8 Wednesday	Personal Color Wheel	Personal Color Wheel	Finish Color Wheels
10/13 Monday	Whitescapes Exercise <i>Demo:</i> Chromatic Blacks	Warm and cool chromatic blacks with tinting	Finish Chromatic Blacks

Week	Warm Up/Lecture	Studio	Homework
10/15 Wednesday	Photographing your work for Portfolio	Finish Color wheel	Midterm Portfolio due end of day 10/19 Midterm survey
10/20 Monday	<i>Lecture:</i> Complementary Colors/Chroma	Admixing between complements	Finish complementary color progressions
10/22 Wednesday	Complementary Colors/Chroma	Admixing between complements	Finish complementary color progressions
10/27 Monday	<i>No Class Meeting</i>	Outside activity: Take Your Color Progression Ring for a Walk	Color Progression Walk Adobe Color Schemes HW
10/29 Wednesday	<i>Warm Up</i> Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions	Create design Choose 8 Prismatic Hues Begin Composition #1	
11/3 Monday	Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions	Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions Composition #1	Finish Prismatic, Composition #1
11/5 Wednesday	Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions	Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions Composition #2	Finish Chromatic, Composition #2
11/10 Monday	Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions	Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions Composition #3	Finish Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions (#1-#3)
11/12 Wednesday	Partner Critique: Prismatic & Chromatic	Finish Prismatic & Chromatic Compositions	Homework: Adobe Color Schemes

Week	Warm Up/Lecture	Studio	Homework
11/17 Monday	<i>Warm Up:</i> Color Matching Introduce Seasonal Memory Grid	Seasonal Memory Grid Brainstorm and color planning	
11/19 Wednesday	<i>Lecture:</i> Contrast, Color Psychology, Color & Memory Demo measuring and process	Seasonal Memory Grid	Finish Seasonal Memory Grid
11/24 Monday	Introduce Artist Analysis Share Seasonal Memory Grids	Visit library to choose book for Artist Analysis Artist Analysis	Work on Artist Analysis
11/26 Wednesday	<i>No Class Meeting</i>	Artist Analysis	Finish Artist Analysis
12/1 Monday	Share Artist Analysis <i>Lecture:</i> Interaction of Color and Optical mixing	Optical Mixing Project	
12/3 Wednesday	<i>Warm Up</i> Optical Mixing Project	Optical Mixing Project	Finish Optical Mixing Project
12/8 Monday	Transparency & Illusion	Transparency & Illusion Project	Finish Transparency & Illusion Project
12/10 Wednesday	<i>Lecture:</i> Albers Interaction of Color Intro Final Project Demo: Albers Exercises	Final Self Portrait project begin: 5 drafts with color and trace template	Prepare Final Portfolio Take home all work and materials

Week	Warm Up/Lecture	Studio	Homework
12/17 Wednesday	Final Exam Meeting Critique 7-9:45AM	Final Self Portrait project due for critique Studio Clean Up	Course reflection Final Portfolio due to Canvas