

**San Jose State University**  
**Department of Art and Art History**  
**ART 14, Section 01: Color**

**Course and Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Léonie Guyer  
**Office Location:** Art 331 (note: office hours via Zoom this semester)  
**Email:** [Leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu](mailto:Leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu)  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3-5 pm and by appointment  
**Class Days/Time:** Mon. & Wed. 12:00–12:50pm  
**Classroom:** online

**Additional Information:**

- \* Email is generally the best method of contact outside office hours.
- \* Emergency: 911 Campus Escort: 42222
- \* Individuals with disabilities may contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC), Administrative Building 110, 408/ 924-6000, for a variety of formants such as Braille, large print, sign interpreters, assistive listening devices, audio tape and accommodations for physical accessibility.

For information about majors and minors in Art & Art History, for change of major/minor forms and a list of advisors: <http://www.sjsu.edu/art/> or the Art & Art History department office in ART 116, 408-924-4320, [art@sjsu.edu](mailto:art@sjsu.edu)

**Course Description**

Introduces the general theory and visual interaction of color through a series of lectures and selected studio problems. Students are expected to gain knowledge and develop skills in using color effectively as a visual expressive tool and in the handling of artist's materials and tools for rendering color.

**Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives**

This course is an introduction to the fundamental principles, methodologies and function of color. Students will learn to utilize the principles and aesthetic possibilities of color theory through practice. The ability to discern the major attributes of color — hue, value, saturation, temperature, etc. — and understand their interrelated function with regard to composition and content will be the main objective of the course.

Through practice, students will develop their skills in color mixing and painting techniques, while expanding their awareness of color's key role in visual experience. Color will be viewed from physical, artistic, psychological, semiotic, and cultural perspectives. An increasing fluency in color vocabulary, theory and application will further a student's ability to form fresh and effective approaches to the given

assignments.

The process of critique will allow students to deepen their understanding of their formal and conceptual choices, creative problems and resolutions.

**To successfully complete this course, students will:**

1. Attend all class sessions on time;
2. Be attentive to presentations;
3. Complete all studio assignments and submit on time;
4. Complete all assigned readings;
5. Pursue required and recommended research;
6. Participate fully in class critiques.

**Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Increase observational and perceptual skills of visual discrimination as applied to color
2. Analyze and study the color attributes of hue, value and intensity (chroma), and clearly articulate standard vocabulary and terminology
3. Build technical skill in the handling of water-based paint media and collage technique
4. Develop good craftsmanship and professional level presentation skills
5. Identify significant individuals in the history of color theory and the practice of art
6. Identify and apply the Seven Color Contrasts as described by Johannes Itten in "The Art of Color": Hue; Value; Saturation; Complementary; Temperature; Simultaneous; Extension (proportion)
7. Recognize and analyze the phenomena of simultaneous and successive contrast and solve problems of color relativity as described by Josef Albers in "The Interaction of Color"
8. Recognize traditional and contemporary theories regarding color harmony and discord, balance and unbalance
9. Distinguish, recognize and compare the theories and practices of additive (RGB), subtractive (paint), and partitive color mixing
10. Have an understanding of the physiology, psychology and semiotics of color perception
11. Recognize the ways in which color perception and usage are influenced by different cultures and belief systems
12. Practice and apply the use color to create the illusion of space, light and form, and be able to master the control of movement in a composition, recognize and apply the characteristics of transparency, opacity and color reflection

## Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

## Project Deadlines

Deadlines are listed in the Course Schedule and will be posted on Canvas throughout the semester. Students are responsible for knowing the deadlines and assignment requirements. Deadlines are well-documented – refer to assignment descriptions (in pdf form) on Canvas, or post your questions in the Q/A Forum. If you are having a problem with an assignment, I encourage you to discuss this with me as soon as possible. Any work not turned in on the due date is considered late and may be graded down.

**Special circumstances** will be taken into consideration (e.g. illness, court appearance, death of relative).

The instructor reserves the right to alter assignments and change project due dates with sufficient notice to the students.

## Classroom Protocol

Students are expected to be punctual for class and actively engaged during all class meetings. When class meetings are held on campus, cell phones or other devices that detract from full attention should be turned off or silenced, and ideally put away. When class meetings are conducted online, students are expected to give their full attention to the class and not divert their attention to other websites, devices, etc.

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and are responsible for keeping up with the material discussed. **IMPORTANT:** If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to find out what you have missed and how to catch up with the work (e.g. consult course Q/A Forum on Canvas; exchange contact information with a classmate and ask to look at their class notes; speak with me in class and/or during my office hours, etc.).

## Communication

To contact me, **use the message function located within Canvas** ([Guide on how to compose and send message in Canvas](#)[Links to an external site.](#)). You can also use my SJSU e-mail: [leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu](mailto:leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu). Either of these options will assure private communications. I will respond to emails within 48 hours during the week and 72 hours on weekends — unless I let you know that I will be away from Internet access.

Please note that most questions can be answered by checking the Syllabus and Assignment descriptions for information. If you need further information, post your questions in the Q/A Forum. If you can't find the answer through these sources then feel free to contact me.

Throughout the semester I will post announcements with tips, important information, etc. that will help

you be successful in the class. If I need a response from you, I will indicate "Please reply." Make sure to check Canvas Announcements each week and read all announcements!

## **Determination of Grades / Grading Policy**

Your grade will be based on my assessment of your effort, attention to learning, development of skills throughout the semester, resolution of your work, and participation in class.

Grading determined as follows:

### **10% Class Participation**

### **80% Studio Assignments**

### **10% Reading Assignment Comments**

**NOTE:** University policy F69-24 states that “Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to insure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading.”

I will assign letter grades; letters correspond to numerical values as follows:

A+ = 97-100, A = 93-96, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, F = below 60

## **Required Reading / Viewing**

Required reading / viewing for this course will be drawn from a variety of sources, including (but not limited to) critical and art historical essays, exhibition reviews, interviews, artists' writings, art publications and reliable internet sources (e.g. museum and gallery websites, et al.). In addition to assigned reading / viewing, optional materials will be available through the Canvas course website.

## **Other material requirements:**

Students will be required to procure their own materials to complete studio assignments.

## **Library Liaison**

**Gareth Scott** is the Library Liaison for the Art & Art History Department. He is available to help students with their research. Contact info:

email: [gareth.scott@sjsu.edu](mailto:gareth.scott@sjsu.edu)

phone: (408) 808-2094

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library

4th Floor Administration Offices

Also note, SJSU Research Guides in Art and Visual Culture are available here: [libguides.sjsu.edu/art](http://libguides.sjsu.edu/art).

## **Art & Art History Department Image Database**

For your art research, you may also use the SJSU Art History and Visual Culture VRL Image Database. This is an excellent resource which you can access here: [http://arth.sjsu.edu/image\\_db/index.php](http://arth.sjsu.edu/image_db/index.php).

username: arth

password: to be given in class

## **Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material**

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus: "Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material."

In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.

"Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent."

## **Department Advising**

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## **University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>"

## **How to Take Notes**

It is essential to take notes during class. Primarily, because you will get more out of class by taking notes because you will remember and retain more information. Secondly, taking notes trains you to observe and think more carefully about the information the instructor presents. Finally, the notes you take in class may provide helpful language to refer to when you need to write artist statements, proposals, grant applications, etc.

In addition to your class notes, your sketchbook is a good place to keep color notes in conjunction with

your drawings, paint studies, collage, etc.

- Don't worry that your notes may not be perfect. There is no way to know what information will be significant to you later. **A good guideline is if something perks your interest, make a note of it.** You can figure out what it means or doesn't mean later.
- The more you do it, the easier it becomes. Taking notes are essential in many art careers, and it is a good skill to have.
- Actually write your notes by hand – refrain from typing them on tablets or computers. Besides being distracting to others, actually writing your notes will mean that you remember them more coherently – and this will lead you to more developed thoughts and responses.
- If you take them seriously, your notes will start to reveal to you what you are paying the most attention to, what you are most interested in, what you are the most intrigued by – they may even start to reveal something about yourself. Reading someone else's notes, or just sitting there during lectures, group discussions and critiques, is no substitute for applying your own perceptions and thoughts. Becoming an active critical thinker is an important part of your artistic development.

## ART 14: Color, Fall 2020

In a flower, in a beetle, every line, every form, every color has arisen from a deep necessity.

—Sophie Taeuber-Arp

At the core of color lies a paradox. It is simultaneously one thing and several things—you can never see color by itself, it is always affected by other colors (...) Color relationships in painting depend on the interactive character of color; this is its essential nature.

—Bridget Riley

Black is the Queen of colors.

—Velazquez

## Course Schedule

**NOTE:** The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments at her discretion; schedule is subject to change with fair notice.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/20	<b>Introduction</b> to course: syllabus, materials, class structure, basic color vocabulary / terminology, etc. <b>Hue, Color Wheel</b> <b>Assignment:</b> Color Mixing: Twelve-step Color Wheel; Color Triangle (see assignment pdf in Canvas Modules for specific instructions) <b>Reading:</b> James Elkins, "How to Look at Color"; Bruce Fraser, "Color in Mind"

2	8/24	<p><b>Primary Color Triads</b> Additive and Subtractive Color In painting, the three primaries are Red, Yellow, Blue; in printing, Cyan, Magenta and Yellow. In light and physics, and in digital media, the primaries are Red, Green, Blue (RGB). <b>Assignment:</b> make a painting using only red, yellow, blue, black &amp; white — without mixing any of the colors — in a “free” composition, meaning you decide use of shapes, placement, etc. (see Assignment pdf).</p>
3	8/31	<p><b>Itten: 7 Color Contrasts:</b> hue; value; temperature (warm–cool); complements; simultaneous contrast (from Chevreuil); saturation (mixtures with gray); contrast by extension (from Goethe). Four Itten contrast studies will follow. <b>Contrast of Value</b> <b>Assignment:</b> use a single primary color, either red or blue, to make a 9-step scale of tints and shades (see Assignment pdf). <b>Reading:</b> excerpts from: Phillip Ball, <i>Bright Earth</i>; Victoria Finlay, <i>Color: A Natural History of the Palette</i></p>
4	9/09	<p><b>Mon. 9/07:</b> Labor Day holiday—no class meeting. <b>Wed. 9/09:</b> Class meets on Zoom. <b>Contrast of Complements</b> <b>Assignment:</b> use a pair of complementary colors to make a 9-step scale (see Assignment pdf). <b>Reading:</b> excerpts from Bridget Riley, <i>The Eye’s Mind</i></p>
5	9/14	<p><b>Complementary Color: Dynamic Opposites</b> Opposite on the color wheel, complementary relationships are fundamentally dynamic. Split-complementaries further expand and complicate complementary color interaction. By varying values and saturation, complementary contrasts become increasingly complex, powerfully and/or subtly inflected. <b>Assignment:</b> use split-complementaries and three basic geometric shapes to create a free composition (see Assignment pdf).</p>
6	9/21	<p><b>Contrast of Saturation</b> <b>Assignment:</b> use a single hue (primary or secondary) to make a 9-step scale of saturation / desaturation (see Assignment pdf). <b>Reading:</b> excerpts from David Batchelor, <i>The Luminous and the Grey</i>; Léonie Guyer, “Between a shop soiled smoke ring and a rock-hard gray” SFMOMA Open Space.</p>
7	9/28	<p><b>Contrast of Temperature</b> The term ‘analogous’ refers to an analogy, or similarity, between colors. Analogous colors are a group of three colors next to each other on the color wheel, such as blue-violet, blue, blue-green. Between analogous colors we find nuanced contrast of temperature. <b>Assignment:</b> using an object from your home as a subject, make a painting with 3 analogous colors (see Assignment pdf).</p>
8	10/05	<p><b>Color and Gradual Reveal</b> <b>Assignment:</b> observe a corner in your home where wall and ceiling meet —</p>

		preferably painted white or light tint; make a painting with the corner as subject, paying close attention to variations of hue, color temperature, value, etc.
9	10/12	<b>Mid-Term Critique:</b> <i>everyone is required to attend</i>
10	10/19	<b>Josef Albers: Relativity and Interaction of Color</b> Simultaneous Contrast, Successive Contrast (after image), et al. Josef Albers (1888–1976), German-born artist, theorist and educator, wrote that color “is almost never seen as it really is” and that “color deceives continually.” Albers states that color is experiential, best studied and understood through experimentation and observation. <b>Assignments:</b> 3 Albers color studies (see Assignment pdf) <b>Reading:</b> excerpts from Josef Albers: <i>Interaction of Color</i>
11	10/26	<b>Assignments:</b> continue Albers studies
12	11/02	<b>Color and Movement</b> <b>Assignments:</b> with a limited palette (no more than 3 hues), use color and shape to create movement throughout the picture plane (see Assignment pdf)
13	11/09	<b>Color, Edges and Space</b> Along with value, saturation, temperature, etc., the character of edges (e.g. hard, soft) interact with color to create space. <b>Assignment:</b> using basic geometric shapes, vary the character of the edges to evoke near and distant (deep) space (see Assignment pdf).
14	11/16	<b>Color in Nature</b> The infinite complexity and subtlety of color is revealed by close observation of nature, e.g., in a rock, shell, leaf, branch, the ground (earth), etc. <b>Assignment:</b> choose a 1 x 1 inch square area of nature (e.g., as above) to use as a source for an 8 x 8 in. square painting; in developing the composition, give your focused attention to the presence, character and interaction of colors within this small area. <b>Reading:</b> excerpt from Rainer Maria Rilke, <i>Letters on Cezanne</i>
15	11/23	<b>Color, Culture and Psyche   Semiotics and Expressions of Color</b> Ranging across cultures, various symbolic meanings are ascribed to color. We will consider specific cultural traditions regarding color symbolism; associative language re: color names; color’s expressive use in evoking emotional and psychological states. <b>Assignments:</b> Color and Language: Invented Names and Color Poems Taking inspiration from a text by James Ensor, create your own color names, color mixes, and language generated composition (see Assignment pdf).
16	11/30	<b>View:</b> “Sol LeWitt: Wall Drawings”
17	12/07	<b>FINAL CRIT:</b> <i>everyone is required to attend</i>
18	12/09	<b>FINAL CLASS / FINAL CRIT continued</b> <b>Wednesday, December 9, 9:45–12:00noon</b> (as listed on Final Exam Schedule)