



Course Syllabus: Topics in Studio Art

Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts

Art 4543 and Art 4543

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, times vary
Summer II 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Jason Bly

Office hours: upon request

Office phone: text WhatsApp

Emergency:

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Course Description

This class offers a critical examination of the historical foundations of artistic disciplines in Western Europe, focusing on how those foundations have been challenged by contemporary visual culture from a global standpoint. Field trips and workshops at the National Gallery, Tate, Victoria & Albert Museum, and other major museums will examine a broad range of works that form a dialogue between the past and present, traditions in museums vs the contemporary art market, identity politics in art, and the impact of technology in the art world over the past century.

Fieldwork and studio work will be a daily practice of this course. Students will create one painting and a series of 10 small works in response that will be exhibited at MSU Texas in the Fall 2026.

Assignments

Sketchbook and Small Works, 10 x 7 inches each

average 4 a week / 14 minimum finished / 10 turned in for grade

Active work in your sketchbook is expected, both as a response to site visits, but also as a way to document experiences from your visit. Quantity, complexity, and quality of finish will all factor into your final grade. As an ongoing practice, it is expected to be sketching every day and often. Given the history and nature of painting, be open to new technical experiences and mimic artwork you see in both historical and contemporary venues vs working from life. Use unique formal strategies, explore color, layering, and mark making by setting specific goals for each.

Demos will be provided in person as well as through videos, but students are encouraged to find modes of exploration that extend beyond each to form a personal vision.

Approximately 4 finished pieces are due a week, though additional sketches are expected for material experiments, ideation, preparatory sketches, etc.

14 minimum / 10 graded.

Final Painting, 16 x 20 up to 20 x 30, media variable, due prior to August 21
Students will complete one medium to large format painting upon return from London. You may use any of the following mediums: watercolor, acrylic, oil, or mixed combinations. Be ambitious and work to your strengths. Some mediums we will have the opportunity to work with in London, while others are more available upon return. Subject matter, form (elements and principles), and other choices are up to you but should be well thought out through sketches and ideation. In terms of content and narrative, imagery should relate to your unique experience of study abroad and personal questions formed over the series of weeks.
Size, format, and projected finish will be discussed in person prior to beginning. Moderate size is 16 x 20 up to 20 x 30.

D2L Journal Entries and Reflections, weekly

Typed responses to our site visits will be required each week. Visit D2L to enter your recollections and answer questions according to the topics we encounter. Read the prompts and related articles for each. Instead of simply listing the events, delve deeper into your feelings and attitudes to the work, history, or activities. Each entry should be in your own words and no shorter than 150 words. It is recommended to take careful notes and photos to help remember topics.

Final Essay / Artist Statement: Friday, July 31

An essay about your time abroad is due on Friday, July 31. Major topics, connections, and observations will be explored in typed format on D2L. The writing will serve as a starting point for your Artist Statement that will be displayed with your work later in August.

London Group Show, due prior to August 21

Upon return, we will compile work and display in the Foyer and Pit Galleries early Fall 2026. Proper presentation is expected, so keep your sketches well preserved for drop off. Label backs of pieces with names and dates month/day/year.
Due: Final painting, 10 small works, one artist statement.

Work Ethic and Studio Environment

Personal motivation and discipline are keys to a student's success in this course. These qualities are demonstrated by actions - such as preparation for each day, involvement in activities, discussions, and reaching a strong level of finish according to project criteria. All work should be stored and transported in a manner that preserves it for display.

While we will not have a dedicated studio space, it is encouraged to find ways to work comfortably. There is available space in the dorms and surrounding spaces. Since all work will be small, working on site outside of the university is also allowed and encouraged, as is teaming up with other students to work together.

Grading

*Points allocated to each section and approximate number of assignments.
May be subject to change*

Course Requirements	Grade
Site Visits and Participation	20 %
Discussions and Journal Responses	15 %
Sketch Book / 10 finished for grade	30 %

Course Requirements	Grade
Final Painting (and research, sketches, etc)	25 %
Final Essay and Artist Statement	10 %
Total Points	100 %

Final Grade Summary

Grade	Points
A	90 - 100%
B	80 - 89%
C	70 - 79%
D	60 - 69%
F	59% or less

Since the Group Show will take place after final grades are required by MSUTexas, a placeholder grade will be submitted. This is not your final grade, as final grades will be determined upon the completion of all requirements. Your final outcome may be higher or lower than this estimated placeholder grade.

Late Work

Late work will be counted against, one letter grade for each class period after it is due. Example: An A grade is lowered to B after one period late, after two periods late the A is lowered to C.

Attendance

Students enrolled in the Juanita and Ralph Harvey School of Visual Arts must comply with the following department-wide Attendance, Absence, and Lateness Policy:

- Class attendance is essential and one of the most important components for the course. Students are required to attend all classes. All classes have the same attendance policy: one letter grade deduction for each day missed. Miss a second time and you will be sent home.
- Events and times will be different day-to-day. Check D2L, WhatsApp, and other portals to stay current with plans, times, locations, etc.
- Arrive early. If we are leaving at 8:30, meet at 8:20. We will not wait for you. Tardiness and behavior will affect your final grade.
- Students are required to remain in class for the entire class session. Students will earn an absence if they leave prior to the designated times for each day.

Dress Policy

On class days, you must dress appropriately for the venue. Some designated days you will need to dress in a professional manner: no shorts, holes in clothing, or improper designs.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individuals

to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

News announcements, assignments, slideshows, and other materials are posted on a weekly basis. Use your MSU login / password to view reminders, links, demos, and other events. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage.

AI Generated Text or Imagery

All artwork and text will be constructed without the use of AI unless otherwise stated. This is to maintain academic integratory as well as respecting a strong ethical foundation regarding unique works and original authorship in the arts.

Services for Students with Disabilities and Medical Concerns

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#), located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140.

For general medical concerns, class accommodation and appropriate paperwork can be provided upon request. MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) are available for all supplies in class to share with your doctor. Email or speak in person if wishing to discuss any needs.

Weather Closure and Event Cancellation Policy

In case of impending weather or related cases, check WhatsApp, D2L, and MSU Texas email for updates. Note that some instances may impact a full day closure while others may delay or close for only a portion of the day.

College Policies

Conduct Statement

Behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to benefit from the instruction will result in the instructor's removing the disruptive student(s) from the class, either temporarily or permanently (instructor drop), and receive a final lower grade, up to and including F. In addition, and depending on the nature of the behavior or conduct, the student(s) may be subject to further disciplinary actions as per MSU policies.

Alcohol, Smoking/Tobacco, and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Miscellaneous Class Notes

- Site visits are considered class time and should be treated as such.
- Food and drink are not allowed in several museums. Prepare to have a day bag to carry your supplies, food, and other necessities each day. It is possible that bags may need to be placed in storage upon arrival according to museum/gallery policy.
- Only use materials provided for sketching/painting small works. If you have additional materials you wish to use, email or speak in person first.
- Follow rules and etiquette for each site visit. As guests, we wish to leave a good impression. While most actions fall under the umbrella of common sense and showing respect, you may check first regarding museum policies on photography, recording, and other questions. Many museums will allow sketching but only in pencils, no wet media.
- In case of an accident involving physical injury, report immediately to the instructor or global studies faculty, or call police in an emergency.

Course Schedule

Dates and activities subject to change

Week	Date	Activities
Intro	July 2	Depart U.S.
Intro	July 3	Arrive London
Intro	July 4	Meetings and other events
Intro	July 5	St Paul's, London Eye, Market
Week 1	July 6	British Museum, Outernet
Week 1	July 7	Design Museum, Leighton House
Week 1	July 8	Courtauld Gallery, Somerset House, John Soane
Week 1	July 9	Moco London, Hyde Park
Week 1	July 10 - 12	No Class; Optional Trip: Sunderland and Newcastle
Week 2	July 13	Victoria and Albert Museum, Saatchi Gallery
Week 2	July 14	Tate Modern, Hayward Gallery
Week 2	July 15	Artist Studio Visit and Critique
Week 2	July 16 - 20	No Class - Mini-Break
Week 3	July 21	Spitalfield Market and Farm
Week 3	July 22	Kensington, Serpentine Gallery, Artist Studio Visit
Week 3	July 23	Young V&A, Viktor Wynd Museum of Curiosities
Week 3	July 24 - 26	No Class
Week 4	July 27	The Shard, Tower Bridge, nearby sites
Week 4	July 28	National Gallery, Portrait Gallery
Week 4	July 29	Royal Academy, The Brown Collection
Week 4	July 30	Tate Britain
Week 4	July 31	Final and Critique
Week 4	August 1	No Class
Week 4	August 2	No Class
Week 4	August 3	Return to US
Return	August 4 - 20	Work on Final Painting, Turn in Work, Statement
Return	August 21	Work Installed

Materials

Material Type	Items
Textbooks	none
Paper and Surfaces	watercolor sketchbook, 10 x 7 inches final painting, 16 x 20 minimum, variable surface
Dry Media	graphite pencils white pastel pencil (soft)
Wet Media	cotman watercolor set, 12 pan micron pens, sepia and black white acrylic posca pen final painting: your choice of watercolor, acrylic, or oil
Other Tools	pencil sharpener erasers, mechanical and kneaded
Transporting Work and Supplies	day bag with strap 11 x 8 boards
Electronic Devices	access to phone and laptop, others optional