

Natural History Illustration Syllabus

Course Goals

In this course students will become proficient in graphite, ink, and other illustration media, and acquire training in the essential skills needed to create accurate and informative natural history inspired illustrations. Students will be able to create illustrations and paintings using basic techniques of light and shadow, and proportion and perspective by studying organisms in the Norris Center for Natural History collections, as well as those living on and around campus.

Graded Assignments

The course grade will be assigned as follows:

25% - participation

25% - graded assignments

50% - final portfolio

Schedule

Class 1: Course objectives, syllabus, materials overview. Introduction to natural history illustration and examples of professional artists.

HW: Collect supplies. Research two natural history artists for whom natural history is a focus and write a few sentences about their work. Bring in published or printed examples, or be ready with a URL with which to share the work with the class.

Class 2: Introduction and tour of the Norris Center. Discuss natural history illustrators from HW. Material intro: Graphite. Students do 4 quick sketches of organisms and pick one to develop into an accurate line drawing.

HW: Style copy of a professional illustrator in graphite with an organism from the Norris Center.

Class 3: Study of light, shading and blending in graphite. Students draw a skull of their choosing in 3 views.

HW: Begin shaded skull study.

Class 4: Finish skull study.

HW: Quick study of 4 organisms in graphite (5 min sketch each). Students pick one to develop and complete as a shaded graphite drawing.

Class 5: Techniques and examples for creating texture in ink. Students begin one organism study in class of their choosing.

HW: Finish drawing.

Class 6: Labeling techniques. Using ink techniques from previous class, students draw three insects from different orders.

HW: Scan drawings and add labels on a computer.

Class 7: Composition - introduction and overview. Students choose three CA native insects to make a composition in graphite or ink.

HW: Composition study of three found objects in nature

Class 8: Colored pencils tips and techniques. Explore campus for field sketching in colored pencil.

HW: Catch up on projects.

Class 9: Midway portfolio review and critique. Colored pencil composition of butterfly wings.

HW: Complete butterfly study.

Class 10: How to use thumbnails in a composition - examples with botanical prints. Colored pencil field sketching of botanical images using thumbnails.

HW: Complete botanical print.

Class 11: Introduction to watercolor techniques. Students choose 1 organism and create a painting in the Norris Center (suggested botanical print).

HW: finish painting

Class 12: Watercolor demonstration of feathers. Students create feather composition.

HW: finish feather painting.

Class 13: Watercolor demonstration of clouds and trees. Field painting trip on campus.

HW: Research plant/pollinators and decide on an image to create for next class.

Class 14: Plant and pollinator composition in whichever medium you choose.

HW: Complete study.

Class 15: Microscopic images. Study of fungi and spores in whichever medium you choose.

HW: Complete assignment.

Class 16: Mixed organism composition of your choosing, in whichever medium you choose.

HW: Complete study.

Class 17: Create a unique organism made up from parts of other organisms and explain the functional morphology of your fantasy creature. Include thumbnails and labels.

HW: Choose an organism for the upcoming life cycle study

Class 18: Begin life cycle study in a medium of your choice.

HW: Lifecycle study.

Class 19: Complete lifecycle study.

HW: Catch up on all assignments, prepare portfolio.

Class 20: Critique of lifecycle study in class. Turn in final portfolio for review.