Course History, Philosophy and General Methods

HISTORY

This Course Portfolio focuses on my drawing unit- one of the four components in the Visual Literacy curriculum. (These units are Perceptual Drawing, Speculative Drawing, Color and Composition & Analysis. They make up the studio component of UNL’s interdisciplinary drawing and design foundation program.) While taken by students in differing sequences, each unit can serve as an introduction to studio art and design that will be built upon by the other units. The units are designed to complement one another and to reinforce basic skills and awareness of issues in art and design. Although the Visual Literacy program has been in place since fall 1998, the current units have only been taught in this form since fall 2001.

This Course Portfolio represents the current iteration of my course and reflects the evolution of my course since 2001 and the changes I have made as a result of my involvement with the Peer Review of Teaching program. I completed a Benchmark Portfolio for the course in 2002 and Inquiry Portfolios in 2003 and 2005. Participating in Peer Review of Teaching has helped me to write better curricula and more fairly evaluate student learning. The reflective writing process required for PRoT was so useful it inspired me to assign it to my students as well. The reflective writings seem to keep them more intellectually engaged in work that can sometimes be quite technical. They also seem to help students understand that they ARE making progress even if their drawings aren’t the best ones on the wall. In an 8-week course, it is difficult for students to step back and understand what they have learned. Their reflective writing practice complements their intense drawing and making practice and promotes a more complete understanding of their work and progress.

PHILOSOPHY

Teaching a beginning level perceptual drawing course gives me the opportunity to teach much more than just draughtsmanship. It provides a forum for introducing new ways of seeing, thinking and expressing that are essential in the development of an artist or designer.

Since true drawing from observation is more reliant on seeing and perception than on manual dexterity with tools, I begin by helping my students to use their eyes in a new way. In her influential book, Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, Betty Edwards describes the “right brain shift” as a tool for learning to perceive a subject for drawing. When a student of drawing employs the right brain rather than the left, he or she moves away from naming and analysis into the non-verbal and the intuitive realm. In other words, when students stop drawing what they think they know they start drawing what they really see.

This different way of using the eyes is not only essential in perceptual drawing, it is useful in gaining a more complete awareness of the visual world. The process of perceptual drawing teaches one to observe, distinguish and relate skills that can be expanded beyond the studio. This right-brained way of seeing coupled with a left-brain analysis of form and meaning lead to “Visual Literacy.”

METHODS

The title of our program, “Visual Literacy,” suggests that we teach students to “read what they see.” However, I believe that a real fluency in this area includes verbal articulation and critical thinking—skills complimentary to the visual components of our course. These skills converge in my classroom during critiques and discussions of both student projects and historical and contemporary visual artifacts where students incorporate new art and design terms into their vocabulary. Active participation is required in my courses because I believe that each student brings unique experiences and perspectives that, when shared, can be useful and even inspiring to others. Skills in description, interpretation and evaluation\(^3\) are developed, tested and honed in a supportive atmosphere.

Skills in drawing from observation are cultivated in a series of exercises that focus on the perception of edges, spaces, relationships, light and shadow which, when integrated, lead to perception of “the whole.” These perceptions are what Betty Edwards identifies as the basic skills of drawing.\(^4\) These exercises, while focused on the eyes, also allow students to experiment with a variety of media and to learn the value of patience and persistence.

Throughout the unit students are required to keep a sketchbook. I encourage students to take visual notes during slide lectures in their sketchbooks to help them process and retain the images and information. Visual note taking as well as drawing from observation outside of class can accelerate a student’s progress in drawing. Certain drawing assignments incorporate a sketchbook component, but students are free to put anything into it whether it relates to class or not. They are encouraged to keep Outside Research images in their sketchbook and required to use it for reflective writing assignments. Students who seize this opportunity to weave their sketchbook into other aspects of their life are likely to maintain a sketchbook long after my course is over.

I want to teach students to value the process as well as the products in their drawing explorations. Especially in the beginning, the product is secondary to, or simply a by-product of, an active but sometimes elusive process. In the end, if they understand the process, they will always be able to make more drawings. While a portfolio is important, it is the process of seeing and application of visual literacy that will be called upon in all of a student’s later pursuits in art and design.

Along with skills in seeing and manual dexterity, students need skills in speaking and critical thinking. I want my students to learn to speak thoughtfully and confidently using constructive criticism. I want them to feel comfortable with the class so they will develop the confidence to speak in future situations in or outside of the university. I not only want my students to make a habit of asking questions— to themselves and others, but also to LISTEN for the answers or to ponder the unanswerable. I hope to teach them what art educator Charles Garoian calls “critical citizenship”— to take an active role in the world. A classroom that encourages dialogue, collaboration and inclusion teaches students that each of them has something to offer. They leave knowing that they can learn from their peers as well as their Professor.

\(^3\) This tripartite critique method comes from Terry Barrett’s book *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*, (Mayfield, 1994)

\(^4\) Edwards, XVIII
Specific Teaching Methods (with student comments)

Below is a more specific description of what I do each day in the Perceptual Drawing class organized with headings indicating each assignment or exercise and student comments taken from their reflective writing. In the interest of space, I have tried not to repeat most of the information that is in the assignment handouts. That information is essential to this section so please use them together. Items in bold refer to another document in this portfolio.

**GENERAL OUTLINE**

General outline for a 2 hour and 50 minute class period:
- Take roll/check homework
- Announcements
- Outside research discussion (once a week)
- Critique of homework
- 10-20 minute break
- Introduction of new exercise, sometimes with images
- Practice drawing
- Assign homework

**OUTSIDE RESEARCH**

As outlined in the [Outside Research handout](#), the homework is discussed each week at the beginning of class. On each due date, students first discuss their research with a nearby student. We then discuss several of their images as a class.

“The Outside Research has increased my awareness of visual problem solving and understanding of concepts from studio. The exposure to the different artists and types of art has helped me to hone my visual literacy. Just looking at art books or magazines helps me to see and understand the concepts from that week. I always spend way more time on Outside Research than I plan. I enjoy looking at art and finding tons of work that fits in with the concepts we are studying. It is amazing to realize that artists really do use the concepts from studio in their work. Even after Outside Research is done, I often see things in magazines or outside and I actually think about how the concepts apply to everyday things.” –Bekah Marty

“I think that outside research is one of the most interesting parts of this class. When we are able to share what we have found for a particular subject we are able to share how we all individually think about each subject. I think being able to share these ideas allows all to then look at our own pictures again and think about them in a new way. I think this is also a way for us to all stay in touch with the outside world…” –Kestrel Lemen

“I think that a lot of my improvement in this section has not just been a result of completing my projects, but also in completing the outside research. Many of our outside research topics are ones that I have to begin by actually researching the topic to learn what it is I am looking for before I can actually look for the images. This has made my assignments twice as important to my improvement. It creates a greater understanding of every assignment we receive… Another result I have noticed from doing the outside research is that I will observe these ideas everyday. I can see a billboard along the street, a painting in a book, a graphic design on the internet or an advertisement in a magazine and notice the use of positive and negative space or contour and cross-contour lines. The fact that I observe these things everyday now makes the outside research a continuing assignment for me. I don’t hand in the assignment one day and never think about it again, I am constantly reviewing the past research I have done.” –Lisa Herman
CRITIQUES
Critiques occur almost every day in my course and follow a similar format. I lead the critique but expect participation from all of the students. First I ask for comments from their written reflections about the homework and then students provide critique questions to get a general discussion going about what they might have discovered or what may still be giving them trouble. Then students are asked to define the criteria for the assignment. Sometimes each student is responsible for analyzing another student’s drawing so each drawing is discussed and each student contributes to the discussion. Other times critiques are more “free-style” where any student can volunteer to identify drawings on the wall that are the best examples and why. For each drawing students are expected to use vocabulary terms from the handouts in their analysis and in their suggestions for improvement. Critiques emphasize the process orientation of the course so all work is considered to be “in progress” and therefore subject to suggestions for improvement and revision. Students are encouraged to revise or re-do their work before it is submitted for grading.

“In discussions and critiques I enjoy getting a chance to step back from my work, compare it to my peers’ and then ask questions. ‘What elements in mine are strong? What is better in others’ [work]? Is there something I have overlooked…? What can I do to make mine… stand out?’ I offer the most insightful comments and questions I can in search of my own clarification and understanding…” -Andrea Koerner

“I love how critiques are so open for discussion and that my peers can give me input about my project and I am also able to give my input on theirs. Sometimes a peer can have a completely different view on a project than I did and it is so important for me to hear their perspective…” –Lisa Herman

“Critiques have enhanced my way of ‘seeing.’ The critiques are thorough and touch on what is good and not so good, which provides clarity to the different concepts. It is productive to have these critiques, as I am always curious about how fellow students are progressing. I find it reassuring that fellow students are struggling with the same things that I am. I believe that I learn much from my peers.” –Michaela Young

“It took time for me to add my two cents into a critique at first because I was afraid to hurt feelings, but with reassurance that I was critiquing the work and not the artist, I found my voice. I feel that is very important to hear what my peers and my professor have to say about my work. My peers are helpful in that they are going through the same things I am and might have some suggestions that they have found to be helpful to them throughout the process. I like hearing what my professors have to say about my work because they are the ones grading it and know what they are looking for. I also like the idea that we have time after critique to go back and make corrections… because [critiques] are only helpful if you can do something with the suggestions you just received.” –Hannah Bryant

GRADING
Although students may make as many as 50 drawings, only 6 are collected for grading in portfolios. Students are provided with a Portfolio Grade Sheet that includes a grading rubric for each exercise. They can use this rubric to help choose their best work for the portfolios. The Portfolio #1 (collected in week 5) includes Negative Space, Contour and Cross-Contour studies. Portfolio #2 (collected in week 7) includes Organizational Line/Sighting, Value and the Self-Portrait Pre-test and Post-test. The large final drawings are graded while on the wall for critique. For each drawing, a numerical score and written feedback is given on a Grade Sheet usually within a week of submission. This explicit explanation of how grades are calculated results in very few students returning to ask about or challenge their grades.
INTRODUCTION/DRAWING PRE-TEST
I begin the rotation by reading the Drawing Overview (included in the handouts.) This document frames my expectations for the students and sets the tone of the class. I let them know that they are in the right place if they want to learn and that no prior experience is required. They only need an open mind, a sense of discovery and a will to work in order to learn to draw. I point out that I cannot really teach them to draw, they have to do that themselves. I am here to set up an environment in which learning can take place and to provide a structure for testing methods of seeing and drawing. I provide a series of exercises that build on each other and culminate in a final project in which students can incorporate the techniques they have learned. Every student who puts forth effort with an open mind makes great progress in learning to draw from observation. They can feel great satisfaction in a fairly short amount of time following the methods used in my class. Students are assigned to spend three hours on a life size (head and shoulders) self-portrait from observation in a mirror. They may use any media on the Required Materials and Tools list but are instructed to do their best work focusing on accuracy and what they might already know about design. They are not allowed to refer to photographs for any drawings in the Perceptual Drawing unit.

CRITIQUE OF DRAWING PRE-TEST
Next we read an excerpt from “The Zen of Seeing” by Frederick Franck that emphasizes the eyes over the hands in the drawing process and points out that many of us look at things but that few of us ever really see. I ask students to reflect in writing on their feelings about drawing and to remember the last time they really put effort into drawing prior to the self-portrait pre-test. They are also asked to reflect on the reading and quality of their drawing and what they would like to improve. Many of them have a lot of anxiety about their perceived lack of drawing ability and have spent more time erasing than drawing for the homework assignment. We discuss the reflections and they are told that from now on they will be responsible for writing a reflection as the last part of their homework for each class. (They are also responsible for preparing one question for the following critique.) In the critique of the Drawing Pre-Tests, we discuss general observations and make specific comments on the quality of Accuracy, Composition and Light/Value in their drawings. They are told that they will make another self-portrait in about 7 weeks that will be compared to this one for an “improvement” grade.

“The most important thing I learned is that seeing is everything. If you can see well, you can draw…” –student Laura Moore

“After the amount of drawing and time I spent on things I am constantly looking at things around me. I used to think that I did a lot of this before but now I feel like I never did.” – student Catherine Nekolite

“I feel that I have progressed immensely in this drawing section in the last five weeks. Before coming into Visual Literacy, anytime I had to draw, I was afraid. I could always draft but never draw. Now, if there is something I need to draw, I can be confident in myself instead of scared.” – student Andrew Bradley

“When we began this unit you asked us to think about drawing and how it relates to our lives. I wrote a page on my feeling on drawing. “The action of drawing when applied to myself becomes the most frightening experience of failure in my life. Drawing has always been something I felt I was incapable of doing or unsuccessful when I did try.” My views on drawing have changed tremendously. I have learned how to look at things and although I can’t always make them identical on my paper, I have learned how to make them seem real. I have gotten past my can’t do it phase and entered into if I keep trying it will only get better. Instead of looking at my work and seeing how bad it is, I find myself pointing out the good parts and seeing them as a starting point for improvement.” –student Anna Dietrich
Specific Teaching Methods (with student comments)

NEGATIVE SPACE- COORDINATES WITH “FIGURE/GROUND, POSITIVE/NEGATIVE” OUTSIDE RESEARCH
Next we move on to Positive Shape and Negative Space. I show images that point out various compositional strategies to achieve unity, emphasis and balance and encourage students to take visual notes in their sketchbooks. With the Negative Space handout I introduce the concept of a viewfinder and I mandate its use in most upcoming drawing exercises. Students make at least 3 viewfinders of varying proportions out of index cards. They keep these with their drawing materials. Keeping in mind the compositional strategies from the lecture, students use a viewfinder to create a composition from a still-life of chairs, skeletons and plants based on positive shape and negative space. They will be revealing the positive shape of the composition by filling in the negative space with black ink or charcoal. This “backwards” way of drawing where they look at the spaces in between teaches them to see shapes rather than objects they can identify. What students think they know about an object often gets in their way of seeing the true shape or form of that object which prevents them from representing it convincingly on paper. Students must compose and draw carefully in this technique because they work directly in ink on 18x24 drawing paper. This teaches them to think about composition first when drawing.

“It is amazing to me how much I use negative space when I am drawing. Often I will clearly see that before I see the object.” —student Catherine Nekolite

“Composition is kind of a new term for me. In High School, the teacher would just tell us to draw something on a paper, with no frame. Now, it’s hard for me to draw WITHOUT making or having a frame.” —student Liz Riggleman

“Each of my projects taught me about composition. Through each category, I had to plan ahead for what I was about to draw. I used my viewfinders to locate an object to draw that had good value, dimension, and would create [a good] composition.” —student Abby Woodring

CONTOUR- COORDINATES WITH “LINE/EDGE” OUTSIDE RESEARCH
With the Contour handout we discuss the right brain shift and its effect on drawing. I sometimes teach them a yoga breathing technique called “ujai” or “complete breath” if they are having trouble getting in the right frame of mind for drawing. This technique can help them to relax and focus- two essential elements of learning to draw. Once they are relaxed we begin to draw using the blind contour technique. This technique, where they move their eyes and hand at the same pace without looking at their paper, teaches them to see and follow the lines that make up the form of their subject. It teaches them to make decisive lines that describe edges and in turn reveal form. We do not use erasers in the first several exercises. This simultaneously teaches them to take responsibility for their marks and to learn from their mistakes. Listening to music without words seems to add to the relaxed but focused atmosphere. When students are drawing in contour, especially blind contour, I do not talk to them as they draw. Any type of interruption can break their focus and switch their brains back into verbal mode. We pin up the work after a few drawing sessions of 20 – 30 minutes and discuss the results. It is obvious in the drawings which students are focused and which aren’t. They learn that this concentration cannot be faked. We practice this technique in class where they draw each other or their hands. For homework, they warm up with blind contour drawings and then move into sighted contour drawings of shoes, backpacks and purses on 18x24 drawing paper. They experiment by drawing with their non-dominant hands and with various media including marker, pencil and conte crayon. We discuss composition, consideration of drawing format, line weight and accuracy as they prepare for homework.
Specific Teaching Methods (with student comments)

“My first contour drawing was difficult because I didn’t know how to see and draw at the same time, but the more I did it the better I got. As soon as I figured out how to draw contour it was easier to do the other assignments.” – student Angie Armstrong

“The breathing technique also helped me to relax and “make the switch” from left to right brain. I use that breathing all of the time now. It is a great feeling.” – student Andrew Bradley

“Though it seemed impossible at the time, by far the most poignant exercise... was blind contour. I was forced to focus entirely on the object and had to learn to trust that I could draw exactly what my eyes were seeing. In my drawings following this exercise I find that I look more at the object than at my paper, allowing me to create a more accurate and detailed drawing of the subject.” – Jenika Johnson

CROSS-CONTOUR - COORDINATES WITH “CROSS-CONTOUR/VOLUME” OUTSIDE RESEARCH

With the Cross-Contour handout, I introduce the concept of using lines to “wrap” the “skin” of an object. Students expand their understanding of line following edges into line describing a surface. Careful choice of line direction when drawing can accentuate the volume of an object. We first draw pears at a small scale in sketchbooks as an introduction. With such a simple, but voluminous form students figure out right away how to use lines to imply volume. They take that experience and their viewfinders over to Morrill Hall. On 18x24 drawing paper they draw taxidermy animals or other volumetric subjects, looking through viewfinders, testing out various media such as ball-point pen, felt-tip pen and pencil. We pin the homework up in the next class and discuss it in terms of composition, illusion of volume and line direction, weight and frequency. We also look for evidence of careful seeing and observation rather than drawing from memory.

“Doing the cross-contour I learned a lot. I have always had a hard time making things look real but after understanding the idea of wrapping the object, especially in specific directions, the more my drawings looked like you could touch [the objects] in them.” – student Angie Armstrong

“...The cross-contour exercises have had a positive influence on my drawing. I now look for these lines in my drawing subjects and am able to record them on my paper to push believable and volumetric forms in my drawings.” – Jenika Johnson

ORGANIZATIONAL (REGULATING) LINE - COORDINATES WITH “REGULATING LINE” OUTSIDE RESEARCH

In this method the drawer extends the lines of the objects in a drawing to create a framework. These lines allow the drawer to relate objects in the foreground to background shapes. They also can be used to check placement, proportion and size of objects in a composition. This method also does not incorporate erasing. The drawer is led to the “correct” lines through a series of “finding” lines. After discussing the Organizational Line handout, we use ebony or harder pencils on white paper to draw a pile of chairs on a model stand. All the straight lines are good for this drawing method. Students sit on a drawing horse to draw.

“I believe I had a breakthrough in my drawing technique with the Organizational Line drawings... The idea of corrections being good was also a release. Normally, drawings with extra lines or mistakes would be considered sloppy or bad.” - student Wade Goodenberger

“The Organizational Line method was probably the one that influenced my drawing the most. I think that this process really helped me to draw more accurately. I am learning how to use lines that are extended to relate to other objects and their lines. Instead of drawing what I think I’m seeing, I draw the relationships of objects to one another.” – student Lisa Satter
Specific Teaching Methods (with student comments)

**SIGHTING TECHNIQUES**
After a day with just Organizational Line, we add sighting techniques. Sighting is indispensable in drawing from observation for checking accuracy. The combination of Sighting and Organizational Line really gives students a tangible method for creating accurate, believable representation of 3D objects on paper. After going over the Sighting handout, we work in the classroom drawing chairs and drawing horses on a model stand in pencil on white paper. Students sit on a drawing horse to draw. These methods prove very satisfying to students because they can see and correct their mistakes. We still don’t use erasers because, again, the “wrong” lines can help reveal the “right” ones. In this method, I can actually come around and check their drawings for accuracy. This is a rare moment in an art or design class where there can be a “right” answer. For both Organizational Line and Sighting we listen to music with no words. We typically draw for two hours at a time so students can really make progress on a drawing. (A complex drawing in this method can take a beginner 2-4 hours.)

“When I first started using Organizational Lines with Sighting I don’t think I used the lines to my benefit in correcting possible errors. As I continued using it I can honestly say I feel improvement with every drawing. I don’t think I ever really focused on the preciseness of the lines before using these techniques together. I now correct much of my lines and feel the more recent of the drawings I’ve done using this are much more accurate.” – student Emily Adams

“...What also helped me was to learn from my mistakes. By not erasing and just drawing over it, you can see in the end how far off you were. It’s interesting to see the process you went through to get to your final drawing by leaving the mistakes there.” – student Brittany Stohl

“I think that as we moved onto Organizational Line and Sighting it really helped me to be able to make connections with other objects in comparison to their size and distance, which then related to the other things we had done. With each drawing my search for accuracy increased.” – student Breanna Gabehart

**VALUE**
- COORDINATES WITH “LIGHT/VALUE” OUTSIDE RESEARCH
After going over the Value handout, sometimes we work in class making value scales in sketchbooks. They are challenged to make each step in the scale even so there are no great leaps between values. They learn that they can create the same value in felt-tip pen, inkwash, charcoal and pencil, but that each media requires a different technique. If most students already have experience with value scales, we work on a 2-value map of a “while” still life with strong directional lighting. Using only two values (black charcoal and white newsprint,) students have to decide whether each value is closer to white or to black and fill in each shape accordingly. For homework, they make 3 2-value maps of their face in a mirror with different strong directional lighting in charcoal on newsprint. Next we move on to three values. In class, on gray paper, students use organizational line and sighting techniques to draw cardboard boxes with strong directional lighting. The light value planes are drawn with white pastel, the dark value planes are drawn with charcoal and the middle value planes are the gray of the paper. For homework, they draw a garment and a piece of furniture in a five-value map using black and white conte and gray paper. Finally they produce a full value range drapery study in charcoal and white pastel on brown paper in class. For homework, they revisit the garment and furniture idea for a full value range drawing. We also investigate subtractive drawing techniques by covering sheets of newsprint with charcoal and “drawing” with erasers. (This is the first time students really use erasers in the class.) We first practice by drawing outdoors, if weather permits, looking at how light describes form. Students realize through practice that if they draw the light, the form will be revealed automatically. They also draw outdoors at night and self-portraits with strong directional lighting. Both of these subjects lend themselves well to this
technique. Each day we pin up the drawings and discuss their progress in this area. The content of drawings is finally discussed in the Value unit as students are required to incorporate “narrative potential” in their drawings. This adds another dimension to critiques and helps students understand how they can create a drawing that is both accurate and “about” something.

“Another project I found very beneficial was the value scales. I had to decide how much shading each square would need to create the best value scale… This project taught me about the many values you can get out of each media I was working with. I didn’t realize there were that many options until I did this project and was forced to figure out so many shades. I found it easier to complete the Value projects after completing the value scales.” – student Abby Woodring

“I really enjoyed the assignments dealing with value. As I look through my portfolio I notice that many of my drawings have a great emphasis on value. When the value maps moved to a wider range of values it became more difficult to distinguish the variations of light and dark. When we did the subtractive study, it helped me to focus on the light first versus the dark then move in between the two, meeting at a middle value.” – student Breanna Gabehart

“The different techniques complimented each other… For instance, in the full value range drawing, I used almost all the techniques. I used a viewfinder (which generally helped in all my assignments) to find placement and direction of the line. Contour drawing helped me to find the lines and the way they flowed on the page. Using Cross-Contour I was able to create volume in the subject… This is just one example where one technique was enhanced by other techniques.” – student Beth Lenzen

SELF-PORTRAIT POST-TEST
Students are assigned (as homework) to create their best life-size self-portrait in any media from class to compare to their first self-portrait. This is a very satisfying critique as we hang the before and after drawings up side-by-side to see the progress everyone has made. Only rarely does a student not show progress in comparing their two drawings. It is common to see progress in the three areas of focus in the unit: accuracy, value and composition.

“I think that my recent self-portrait is a lot more accurate than my first. Many things were wrong with my first, whereas the new one really looks a lot like me. The composition in itself is also very intriguing compared to the first. The first had no frame and wasn’t anything interesting to look at. The new one has ‘narrative potential’ and a frame that sets it off…” student Rosey Masek

“From my first self-portrait to the last, I think the improvement is phenomenal. Looking back, my first self portrait is not a bad drawing but it has a lot of errors that I can point out that I didn’t see before. In the final drawing I also released myself from the captivity of drawing with only lines. My first one was in pen and the entire thing is outlines…while my final drawing focuses on the actual volume and shape of the face rather than outlining it. Not only have I improved in technique, but the composition and accuracy is a lot better too. My first drawing was just a straight-on mug shot while the latter has narrative potential and intentionality in the placement of the border and my face on the page. By using sighting, the accuracy and proportions greatly improved too.” – Tom Blobaum

“For my first self-portrait I tried hard to get small details correct but I didn’t even get other more important things correct like line weight and proportion. My second self-portrait is hard to compare because it is in a different medium but I do notice a few differences. I don’t have precise edges and details but it looks more like me because it is proportional and because I used a stronger light source and drew the light more accurately.” Student Mark Restani

“Based on the range of thought that went into my first self-portrait and the thought that went into the more recent one, it is obvious that I’m more visually literate. I gave a lot of thought to the composition, transition of values, lighting and the use of the page. Drawing another self-portrait actually made me wish I’d concentrated more on the first and considered those concepts. Since the first, I’ve bettered my ability to use those ideas without thinking as much.” Student Christopher Pearson
Specific Teaching Methods (with student comments)

**Final Drawing (Self-Portrait in Time)** - Coordinates with "Time" Outside Research

In this cumulative assignment, students are encouraged to use what they have learned in the previous exercises but also to stretch themselves by working larger and with more content. After we go over the [Self-Portrait in Time handout](#) we visit the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery on campus and discuss the concept of time as it relates to work on exhibit and to the lecture I have given about the Body and Time in art and design. Students begin preparing for this assignment with sketches about a week before they actually start drawing on the 29x40 Rives BFK paper. They spend about a week drawing on the big paper using easels or pinning it to the walls in the classroom or at home.

No student reflections on the final drawings were collected.

Final drawings in progress in the drawing studio
Student Work Examples

NEGATIVE SPACE
Student Work Examples

CONTOUR
Student Work Examples

CROSS-CONTOUR
Student Work Examples

ORGANIZATIONAL LINE/SIGHTING
Student Work Examples

VALUE

TWO-VALUE MAP

THREE-VALUE MAP

FIVE-VALUE MAP
Student Work Examples

**CONTINUOUS TONE DRAWING**

![Continuous Tone Drawing Examples](images)

**SUBTRACTIVE DRAWING**

![Subtractive Drawing Examples](images)
Student Work Examples

**SELF-PORTRAIT PRE-TEST/POST-TEST**
Student Work Examples

SELF-PORTRAIT IN TIME
Overview
This rotation serves as an introduction to perceptual drawing and design, and therefore has no formal course prerequisites. However, an open mind, willingness to work hard and a sense of discovery are required for students to succeed in drawing as well as the rest of the Visual Literacy program. This unit incorporates a series of carefully sequenced perceptual drawing exercises that will help you to improve your drawing ability by learning to "see" and think in new ways. Think of this rotation as an organic, cumulative learning/drawing/seeing workshop. We will use the body as a point of departure; it is our subject matter, our content and our tool for making marks.

Drawing has been the most basic of all art and design skills from prehistoric times to the present. It is essential to all art and design disciplines: painting, sculpture, printmaking, fine crafts, architecture, interior design, industrial design, fashion design, and even for the performing arts such as theater and dance. (Betti, Claudia and Teel Sale. Drawing: A Contemporary Approach. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1997) 3.)

Drawing is the most democratic of all art forms; it is a common denominator for people worldwide. Drawings are valued not only for their accessibility but also for their intimacy and their use in working through ideas. This is called visual thinking, and along with much practice at making and looking at drawings comes the more evolved stage of visual literacy. (Betti and Sale, 4.)

The process of drawing develops a heightened awareness of the visual world, an awareness that is both subjective (knowing how you feel about things) and objective (understanding how things actually operate.) It provides a new format for stating what you already know about the world and a system for learning and understanding what you don’t. Drawing teaches you to observe, distinguish and relate. (Betti and Sale, 29-30.)

Point, Line, Space, Time
The mark that records the movement of the drawer’s implement, a two-dimensional movement in space, is the most basic feature of drawing. In addition to this spatial notation, drawings evoke a time response- the time required to make the movement that creates the mark. Time is also involved in seeing and scanning objects in space. Movement and time are two of the most essential features in making and looking at a drawing. (Betti and Sale, 31.)

Seeing versus naming…
You will learn to switch from the everyday verbal/symbolic mode of looking into the visual mode of seeing not things you know but visual relationships among shapes, forms, light, shadow, etc. To borrow the title of artist Robert Irwin’s biography by Lawrence Weschler, you will understand how “Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees.”

Drawing as a process
Although much attention is paid to final “products,” you will learn to honor your drawing process as well as the drawing itself. A drawing can reveal visual traces of the drawing and/or thought process. Drawings are organic and must be allowed to grow and change. The process of a drawing can be as valuable or more valuable than the final product.

Sketchbooks
Keeping a sketchbook can accelerate your progress in drawing. It can be used for practicing observational drawing outside the studio or for recording notes on ideas or visual observations in written form. It can function like a scrapbook or diary or a combination of all of the above. It is the best place to work out ideas visually because it is always at hand, but only if you make the commitment to carry it around with you. Sketchbook assignments will include visual research, compositional exercises as well as a written “reflection” of each new drawing process.

Studio
Since progress in drawing requires a great deal of focus, several rules must be observed in the classroom. Students must arrive on time to each class and stay until the end of the class period unless dismissed early by the instructor. (Late arrivals and early departures are a distraction unfair to impose on students already engaged in work.) Students must bring the required materials for each day. Leaving class to purchase materials is not without consequence. It will be counted as a late arrival. The use of headphones is not permitted during class but students may use them while doing homework. All cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be turned off or used in “silent” mode during class. Class time will be used for introducing new exercises and critiquing work but mostly for drawing. In order to make the most of this opportunity, students must be well-rested and ready to work. You may store drawing boards, pads and materials in the classroom, but they must be kept in an orderly fashion so each student will
be able to find their things quickly and easily. Please follow posted directions for storing your materials in the classroom. Always leave the studio clean for other students to work.

**Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory and class time cannot be made up. IF YOU ARE ABSENT, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU MISSED FROM ANOTHER CLASS MEMBER AND FOR MAKING UP THE WORK. Each absence after the first will lower a student’s final rotation grade by 1%. Each late arrival or early departure will count as 1/2 an absence. (There is no penalty for one absence.) Therefore, an “A+” can only be achieved with perfect attendance.

Attendance will be taken only on Mondays and Wednesdays. These days will be used for critiques and introduction and practice of new drawing exercises in the studio. Fridays will be used for assigned independent library or other outside research as well as independent revision of portfolio work. On MOST Fridays during class hours, your professor or Graduate Teaching Assistant will be “on call” if you have questions or need help. (See contact info. below.)

**Homework**

Daily homework assignments are due at the beginning of the class. If homework is not finished when attendance is taken at the beginning of class or if a student is absent, no credit will be given for that assignment. You should plan on spending at least 10 hours a week outside of class on drawing, writing and research assignments. Not spending the required time and effort on homework will poorly affect your progress in drawing as well as your grade. (You will earn 20% of your grade by just DOING all the homework in a thoughtful and focused manner.)

**Critiques/reviews/pin-ups**

Each Monday and Wednesday during the unit students will pin up work for class discussions. Some of these will be quick, others quite long and in-depth. It is imperative that all students participate in these events with thoughtful, constructive criticism for their peers. Each student has unique experiences and perceptions that, when shared, can be useful to others. Class participation will be part of your final grade. (Since participation is expected, points will be deducted for non-participation.)

**Grading**

Final grades will be a combination of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>homework</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written reflections</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>portfolios of drawings</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>final drawing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation will be based on completion (homework) as well as quality (drawings and reflections) of work. Students are encouraged to re-do their homework after critique and before portfolio submission.

If you have any questions outside of class, contact me:

- **office phone/voicemail:** 472-5920
- **e-mail:** dfritz2@unl.edu
- **office/studio:** 209 Richards

Office hours: Wednesdays 11:30 – 12:30 (be there at 11:30 if you don’t have a scheduled appointment)

**Unit Objectives:**

To develop and utilize a design/drawing vocabulary
To understand the difference between the modes of naming and seeing
To develop strategies for evaluating your work and the work of others
To investigate work by artists and designers
To develop and implement compositional strategies for design and drawing
To utilize a viewfinder as a compositional aid
To competently represent 3D objects and spaces on paper from observation
To develop a disciplined and reflective drawing and writing practice
To learn and apply a variety of techniques for seeing and drawing
To explore a variety of drawing materials
Drawing and design terms

Abstraction an alteration of forms, derived from observation or experience, in such a way as to present essential rather than particular qualities.

Additive a process of building up.

Atmospheric perspective a means for achieving the illusion of three dimensional space in a flat pictorial work; It is based on the fact that as objects recede into the distance their clarity of definition and surface contrast diminish appreciably.

Blind contour a contour drawing made without ever looking at the drawing surface, but concentrating completely on the subject being drawn.

Composition the putting together of parts or elements to make a whole (or the result of this process)

Contour line a line that delineates both the outside edge and the edges of planes or interior optical edges of an object.

Contrast the use of opposing elements values, colors, forms or lines in proximity to produce an intensified effect.

Cross contour Lines that appear to go around a depicted object's surface, thereby emphasizing its volume.

Elements of design formal ingredients designers use to create a work including form/shape, space, line, texture, light, color/value.

Figure/ground the relationship between the positive shape (figure) and the negative space (ground).

Foreshortening a technique for producing the illusion of an object's extension into space by contracting its form.

Form In the broadest sense, the total structure of a work of art (the relations of the elements of art and the distinctive character of the work).

Geometric a shape created by mathematical laws and measurements such as a square, circle or triangle.

Gesture In drawing, the spontaneous representation of the dominant physical and expressive attitudes of an object of space.

Line a mark made by an implement as it is drawn across a surface.

Mass the weight or density of an object.
Drawing and design terms continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative space</td>
<td>the space surrounding a positive shape of form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>related to growth in nature or representative of that process; often used to describe objects or images that have curves or irregular shapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational line</td>
<td>(Also called Intuitive Gesture;) The line that provides the structure and basic organization of a drawing; (Organizational lines can be extended to help determine the accuracy of relationships in a drawing from observation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>a line that delineates only the outside edges of an object.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planar analysis</td>
<td>a structural description of a form in which its complex curves are generalized into major planar zones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plane</td>
<td>the two-dimensional surface of a shape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of view</td>
<td>the subjective evaluation of relative significance; perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive shape</td>
<td>the shape of an object in a drawing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of design</td>
<td>the means by which designs are organized into a unified arrangement or composition including balance, repetition, variety, rhythm, emphasis, economy and proportion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion</td>
<td>the relationship in scale between one element and another or between a whole and one of its parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape</td>
<td>a visually perceived area created either by an enclosing line or by color and value changes defining the outer edges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sighting</td>
<td>the visual measurements of objects and the spaces between objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtractive</td>
<td>a process of taking away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>the surface quality of objects that appeals to the tactile sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>a measure of relative lightness or darkness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewfinder</td>
<td>a “window” used for framing or cropping to create a composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual texture</td>
<td>a two-dimensional illusion suggestive of a tactile quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume</td>
<td>the bulk, size or dimensions of an object (the three-dimensional space it occupies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Required materials and tools:

- 9"x12" (approx.) spiral bound sketchbook with hard cover
- folder for handouts and visual research
- black felt tip pens (2-headed Sharpies are good)
- black ball-point pen
- ebony pencils
- sumi ink
- bamboo brushes (2 different sizes)
- 18 x 24 white drawing pad (NOT sketch paper)
- 18 x 24 newsprint pad
- Canson steel gray paper (2 sheets)
- compressed charcoal (one box of Alphacolor brand)
- Alphacolor white pastel sticks (NOT oil pastel)
- white conté crayon
- black conté crayon
- kneaded eraser
- white plastic eraser
- art gum eraser
- pencil sharpener
- spray fixative (always use in the spray booth in room 111)
- 2 sheets of 3/16 or 1/8 inch foamcore (32 x 40 inches)
- drawing board
- glue stick
- box/container for supplies
- mirror (if you don’t do your homework in the studio)
- clip lamp (if you don’t do your homework in the studio)
- 1 sheet of 29” x 41” white Rives BFK paper
- TEXT: *Drawing: A Creative Process* by Francis Ching, available from Nebraska Union Bookstore

**note:** you may leave your paper, drawing board, portfolio and spray fixative in the classroom if you do not need them for homework. (Label EVERYTHING with your name as soon as you buy it.) Plan to carry your sketchbook and drawing tools around with you everywhere for this unit. Bring them to class each day. Other materials may be required for certain assignments.
Outside Research

Each week you will be assigned to conduct outside visual research that parallels your drawing explorations and will help to hone your visual literacy. *This research will benefit you the most if you do it before you begin your homework on the same subject.* This active learning process can help you to see and understand that the concepts from studio are used by artists and designers for visual problem solving nearly everywhere you look. The resulting increased awareness and understanding is part of what is meant by the term “visual literacy.” (This term goes well beyond being the title of your program, indeed it is something you will utilize throughout your career and life.) This work will *usually* be assigned on Wednesdays and due on Mondays. (Fridays are reserved for you to visit the library or look for relevant conditions out in the world.) Each week’s visual research will include:

- THREE photocopied or printed examples of the assigned visual topic
  - These images can be:
    - Photocopies from books, magazines or other printed matter
    - Actual examples of printed matter (e.g. an exhibition announcement)
    - Printouts from internet images (a maximum of ONE from the internet each week)
    - Prints of digital photographs you have taken
- A written account of the image’s source, author, etc. and how it fits into the current week’s topic.
  This must be attached to the image.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive/Negative, Figure/Ground</td>
<td>Monday 3/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line/Edge</td>
<td>WEDNESDAY 3/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-contour/Volume</td>
<td>Monday 3/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating Line</td>
<td>Monday 4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value/Light</td>
<td>Monday 4/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Monday 4/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outside research will be presented and discussed on the due date each week. If given your thoughtful attention, this activity should complement your drawing explorations and increase your awareness of art and design. You will be asked to comment on it for your graded portfolio reflection. Keep your visual research all in one place (either in your sketchbook or in your folder.) If you feel that you already have a good understanding of the topic in relation to what is due for homework, take this opportunity to EXPAND your understanding of the topic in new and unexpected ways.
We do a lot of looking: we look through lenses, telescopes, television tubes... Our looking is perfected every day- but we see less and less. Never has it been more urgent to speak of SEEING.

Ever more gadgets, from cameras to computers, from art books to videotapes, conspire to take over our thinking, our feeling, our experiencing, our seeing. Onlookers, we are, spectators... "Subjects" we are, that look at "objects. Quickly we stick labels on all that is, labels that stick once and for all. By these labels we recognize everything but no longer SEE anything. We know the labels on all the bottles but never taste the wine.

Millions of people, unseeing, joyless, bluster through life in their half-sleep hitting, kicking and killing what they have barely perceived. They have never learned to SEE, or that they have forgotten that man has eyes to SEE to experience.

Looking and seeing both start with sense perception, but there the similarity ends. When I "look" at the world and label its phenomena, I make immediate choices, instant appraisals- I like or dislike, I accept or reject, what I look at according to its usefulness to the "me."... This me that I imagine myself to be and that I try to impose on others.

The purpose of "looking" is to survive, to cope, to manipulate, to discern what is useful, agreeable or threatening to the me, what enhances or diminishes the me. This we are trained to do from our first day.

When, on the other hand, I SEE- suddenly I am all eyes. I forget this me, I am liberated from it and dive into the reality of what confronts me, become part of it, participate in it.

It is in order to really SEE, to see ever deeper, ever more intensely, hence to be fully aware and alive, that I draw what the Chinese call “the ten thousand things” around me. Drawing is a discipline by which I constantly rediscover the world.

SEEING/DRAWING as a technique of contemplation is, I believe, a way particularly suited to that “Western Temperment” which may be no more than a habitually overstimulated nervous system, an “overloaded switchboard.” It is the discipline through which I extricate myself from the habitual, the mechanical, the predigested and acquisitive automatisms of our society. I stand face to face with a hill, a bird, a human face- with my self, in unwavering attention.

An example...Everyone thinks he knows what a lettuce looks like. But start to draw one and you realize the anomaly of having lived with lettuces all your life but never having seen one, never having seen the semi-translucent leaves curling in their own lettuce way, never having noticed what makes a lettuce a lettuce rather than a curly kale. I am not suggesting that you draw each nerve, each vein of each leaf, but that you feel them being there. What applies to lettuces applies to the “ten thousand things” all around us.
Positive shape and negative space

In drawing, as in other visual endeavors, astute perception of positive and negative is essential. (It is the second topic in Betty Edwards’ list of fundamental perceptions.) In order to understand the relationship of positive shape and negative space, sometimes called figure/ground, the key is that you cannot have one without the other. More importantly, the negative space or ground is not what is left over after the positive shape is articulated, rather it defines the positive shape. The two are interdependent and work equally to create a composition.

Perception of positive shape and negative space depends on a frame, either explicit or implied, to delineate their relationship. A hand-held viewfinder can serve as a portable frame that will help you isolate figure/ground relationships and create compositions.

Focusing in on un-nameable shapes allows us to forget what we think we know and just draw what we see—relationships of black and white shapes. The benefits of this method are two fold: It allows us to first practice the analytical process of composing and second to engage in the intuitive state of seeing and drawing.

Refer to pp.57-63 and 70-77 in Drawing: A Creative Process by Francis Ching

Guidelines for negative space drawing:

• Make a few viewfinders out of index cards or other rigid material. The windows can be any proportion, but think carefully about how you will use each type of frame, including the horizontal or vertical orientation.
• Look through several viewfinders at different areas of your subject.
• Employ compositional/framing strategies to organize the shapes before you begin to draw.
• Devise a system for keeping your viewfinder in the same place each time you look through it.
• Draw the interior frame of your viewfinder on your drawing paper paying special attention to proportion.
• Using sumi ink and a bamboo brush, draw the negative spaces between the positive shapes in your composition. (Your finished drawing will look like a negative silhouette with the positive shapes left white.)

Questions for evaluating a negative space drawing:

• Is the figure/ground relationship clear?
• Can you tell that the drawer was looking for negative space?
• Are the shapes carefully and intentionally drawn?
• Is the composition strong?
• Are the black areas opaque and the white areas clean?

Subjects for negative space drawing:

• Chairs
• Plants

Visual Literacy student work- negative space study in sumi ink (implied frame, left; explicit frame, above)
Contour

According to Betty Edwards, author of *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, we must begin to understand the process of drawing by developing our abilities in the perception of

- Edges
- Spaces
- Relationships
- Light and shadow
- The whole (gestalt)

“Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain” refers to an intuitive approach where concentration leads to a state of focus or “flow.” In this “right brain shift” we move away from the left brain tendency to name, categorize and speak and into a state of being that allows for great progress in learning to “see.”

Drawing is as much, if not more, reliant upon our eyes and our perception as it is on our hands and our dexterity with tools. Learning to see is the highest hurdle. After crossing that threshold, the rest of the body will quickly catch up to the eyes and the brain.

Contour drawing exercises are extremely useful in introducing and facilitating the right brain shift necessary to truly see. They require the drawer to slow down and focus, to forget about everything but the line. Through contour drawing we will hone our perception of edges.

A contour line is a single, clean decisive line which defines an edge. It is different from an outline which delineates only the outside edge of an object. A contour line is more spatially descriptive than an outline; it can define an interior complexity of planes and shapes. Outline is flat. Contour is plastic; it is capable of emphasizing the three-dimensional appearance of a form.

Imagine an outline drawing of a pencil. This outline is only one line that encloses the simple long rectangular shape with a point on one end. By contrast, a contour drawing of a pencil would include the outline as well as the “in lines”- those edges that occur where planes shift or values contrast.

Refer to pp. 35-38 and 42-47 in *Drawing: A Creative Process* by Francis Ching

![Visual Literacy student work- blind contour](image1)

![Visual Literacy student work- sighted contour](image2)

Over
Guidelines for BLIND contour drawing:

- Get comfortable
- Position your paper and your subject matter so it is difficult to see both at once
- Look at your subject until you are convinced that your pen is attached to the point upon which your eyes are fastened
- Look only at the subject, not at your drawing paper
- Move your eyes slowly along the contours of the subject and move your drawing tool in tandem with your eyes
- Be guided more by the sense of touch than by the sense of sight
- Draw anything your pen can rest on and be guided along (Including planar shifts and value contrasts)
- Follow the contours in slow motion, speeding up will destroy your focus
- Hold your drawing tool loosely (not the same way you hold a pen to write)
- Follow lines throughout your subject without picking up your drawing tool
- Do not erase
- Consider varying your pressure to make darker or thicker lines in some areas and lighter or thinner lines in others to convey the subject more clearly

Guidelines for SIGHTED contour drawing:

- Get comfortable
- Compose your drawing and include a frame
- Look at your subject until you are convinced that your pen is attached to the point upon which your eyes are fastened
- Move your eyes slowly along the contours of the subject and move your drawing tool in tandem with your eyes
- Be guided more by the sense of touch than by the sense of sight
- Draw anything your pencil can rest on and be guided along (Including planar shifts and value contrasts)
- Follow the contours in slow motion, speeding up will destroy your focus
- Hold your drawing tool loosely (not the same way you hold a pen to write)
- Vary your pressure to make darker or thicker lines in some areas and lighter or thinner lines in others to convey the subject more clearly or to establish a hierarchy of line importance or distance to the viewer
- Consider reiterating some lines to emphasize the hierarchy described above
- Do not erase

Questions for evaluating a contour drawing:

- Do the lines describe the outline AND the interior contours of the subject?
- Are the lines carefully and intentionally drawn (no sketching)?
- Is the three-dimensionality of the subject communicated by the lines?
- Are there any erasures (evidence of cheating)?
- Are the contours of the subject FULLY investigated?
- Was line weight considered?
- Is the drawing made ONLY of lines (no “shading” or filling in)?

Subjects for contour drawing:

- Classmates
- Your dominant or non-dominant hand
- Your feet
- Shoes
- Backpacks

1 Adapted from The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain by Betty Edwards and The Natural Way to Draw by Kimon Nicolaides
Cross-contour

A cross-contour drawing of a subject incorporates lines that seem to move along an object's surface. These lines emphasize the volumetric aspects of the object. A cross-contour drawing can begin the same way a blind contour drawing does, but the end result will be quite different.

Guidelines for cross-contour drawing:

- Begin by looking carefully at your subject.
- Imagine touching it with your drawing tool.
- Instead of staying only on the contour lines, expand your exploration to include the entire surface of the subject.
- Draw lines that “wrap” around the “skin” of the object, emphasizing its volume.
- Cross-contour drawings can be made quickly or slowly, expressively or methodically- try a variety of approaches.
- Carefully consider the direction of your lines- one direction will enhance the description of the form while the other will flatten or elongate it
- Consider how line weight and frequency can increase the illusion of volume

Evaluation questions for cross-contour drawing:

- Is the volume of the subject clear in the drawing?
- Do the contour lines follow the surface of the object in a logical way that enhances the form?
- Are the lines intentionally drawn?
- Is there evidence of careful observation or is drawer relying on memories of that subject?
- Have line weight and frequency been used to increase the illusion of volume?

Subjects for cross-contour drawing:

- Your non-dominant hand
- Your feet
- Your shoes
- Tree branches
- Taxidermy animals in Morrill Hall
- Fruit and vegetables

To better visualize the spatial turns and shifts that occur along the surfaces of an object, imagine cutting a series of equally spaced, parallel planes through the form. Then draw the series of profiles which result from the cuts. (from Design Drawing by Francis Ching, p.22)

Cross-contour drawings by Francis Ching (left) and a Visual Literacy student (right)
Intuitive Gesture/Organizational Line

The Intuitive Gesture/Organizational Line method can provide a framework for a drawing similar to an armature used by a sculptor. Organizational lines take measure; they extend into space. They are not confined by the edges of objects and they cut through forms. Organizational lines (also called “regulating lines”) relate background shapes to objects and organize the composition. They take measurement of height, width and depth of forms and spaces. Organizational lines are grouped and stated multiple times. This method does not incorporate an eraser. The lines record the search for accuracy and leave traces of your process. These lines also create a sense of volume, weight and depth in your drawing, so resist the temptation to erase.¹ (Refer to pp. 52-55 in Drawing: A Creative Process and handout pp. 30-44 in Drawing from Observation by Brian Curtis.)

Guidelines for Intuitive Gesture/Organizational Line drawing²:

- Use a viewfinder to create a composition.
- Draw a frame on your paper to match the proportions in your viewfinder.
- Begin by looking for important horizontal and vertical lines in your composition.
- Draw these lines lightly, but extend them beyond the objects they represent.
- Establish heights and widths of all objects and background shapes in the composition.
- Using the extended lines, check relationships between objects and spaces and the frame.
- Make corrections right over the searching lines.
- Work on the entire drawing at once. Do not “finish” one area and then move to another.
- Finally, darken the accurate lines of the objects.

Questions for evaluating an organizational line drawing:

- Is the search for accuracy evident in the drawing?
- Are there any erasures?
- Do the lines begin to imply volume, weight and depth?
- Are the lines stated multiple times?

Subjects for organizational line drawing:

- chairs
- boxes
- interiors
- still life

² Betti and Sale, 56.
Sighting/Intuitive Perspective

Sighting techniques are indispensable in drawing from observation for checking the accuracy of your marks. Sighting allows you to check vertical, horizontal and diagonal measurements as well as plumb and level. Sighting can also be used to make comparative measurements within a drawing. (Refer to pp.66-69 in *Drawing: A Creative Process* by Francis Ching and handout pp. 61-70 in *Drawing from Observation* by Brian Curtis.)

In sighting, you use your pencil as a measuring tool by holding it out in front of you at arm’s length. The most important thing to remember is to be consistent in your technique.

Guidelines for drawing using sighting techniques:

• When you use sighting techniques, you will be drawing “sight size.” The size of the subject of your drawing on the paper is determined by the distance between you and the subject. Consider this when choosing where to sit/stand and when selecting a piece of paper and drawing format.
• Lock your elbow so that the pencil is always the same distance away from your eye.
• Always close the same eye when taking the measurement to decrease your depth perception and avoid the parallax problem of shifting viewpoints.
• Align the pencil point with your line of vision and take the measurement with your thumb along the pencil. Make a mark of the same length on your drawing. All early marks should be light in value.
• Check and double-check all your lines using sighting.
• Darken the accurate lines.
• Try using sighting in combination with Intuitive Gesture/Organizational Line drawing.
• Work on the entire drawing at once, correcting as you go. Don’t “finish” an area and then move to another.
• When measuring angles, hold your pencil on a plane parallel to your drawing board. Tilt it like the hands on the face of a clock to find the angle.

Questions for evaluating a drawing that was made using sighting techniques:

• Does the drawing indicate a search for accuracy?
• Was the drawer using observation rather than memory?
• Was “sight size” considered for composition and drawing format?

Subjects for drawings using sighting techniques:

• chairs
• boxes
• interiors
• landscape

Visual Literacy student “Sighting/Intuitive Perspective” drawing
Sighting

for horizontal measurements

for vertical measurements

sight along pencil point

arm extended

thumb takes measurement

elbow locked
Value

Value is a measure of relative lightness or darkness. It is determined by both the local/natural color and value of the object as well as the degree and intensity of light that strikes it. It is important when drawing from observation in black and white media not to confuse local color with value. Both the red of an apple and the green of a leaf can have the same value. Squinting can help you determine the value of an object as distinct from its local color.

Value contrasts are one of the most important elements in composition. They stand out more than line, shape, texture, etc. Squinting while looking through your viewfinder to isolate a composition may also be useful.

In order to understand the power of value in drawing, it is helpful to make value scales in several media to practice rendering the full range of values. A value scale is a black to white gradient or series of steps. On one end is the white of the paper and on the other end is pure opaque black. A value scale can be made using one pencil or a series of pencils of varying softness. You can also use ink and water with a brush, felt-tip and ball-point pens or charcoal. When using drawing tools with small points, it is a good idea to create value with marks like hatching or dots rather than trying to cover the surface of the paper like you would with a brush.

Refer to pp. 80-83 in Drawing: A Creative Process by Francis Ching)

Guidelines for a value map drawing:

• Use a viewfinder to create a composition. Squint if you are having trouble distinguishing values.
• Draw your frame on the paper with the same proportions as your viewfinder.
• Determine the number of values you will use in your drawing. (Start with two- the white if your paper and the black of your media. For your next drawing try three- black, white and middle gray. Later, try 5 and finally work up to a full range/continuous tone.)
• Look carefully at your subject and group the infinite range of tones into value shapes. You can find the shapes using contour lines or planar analysis to enclose the shapes before choosing the value. Draw each shape with a single value. Ask yourself if the shape is closer to white or black, dark gray or light gray, etc.
• Remember that a value map is a simplification of a complex form and that some of the shapes may bleed together if their values are the same. The shapes are less likely to bleed together if you use several values.  
• Do not blend or smudge your marks.
Questions for evaluating a value map drawing:

- Are the shapes a single value from edge to edge?
- Are there any blended or smudged areas?
- Is the number of values clear in the drawing?
- Is the composition strong?
- Is there a distinction made between value and local color?

Subjects for value map drawing:

- boxes
- self-portrait with strong directional lighting
- drapery, fabric, sheets or clothing

Subtractive value

Sometimes it is useful, when working with value, to take the opposite approach. The standard method of drawing is to make dark marks on white paper. This is an additive process. In subtractive value drawing, you begin with a dark ground and “draw” with your eraser. This method produces luminous, evocative drawings.

Guidelines for subtractive value drawing:

- Use a viewfinder to determine a composition. Look for areas of both light and shadow.
- Draw your frame on the paper with the same proportions as your viewfinder.
- Within the frame, cover your paper with a dark, even value using the side of your charcoal stick (newsprint is good for this)
- Experiment with a variety of erasers to make light marks in the highlight areas.
- If you remove too much dark with the eraser, add more charcoal.
- Squint at your drawing to see if the values match what you see in the viewfinder.

Questions for evaluating subtractive value drawing:

- Is the composition strong?
- Is there a complete range of values?
- Are the areas of light and shadow carefully observed?

Subjects for subtractive value drawing:

- Skeleton
- Plants
- Night scenes
- Self-portrait with strong directional lighting
“Self-Portrait in Time”

Using a 29” x 40” sheet of white Rives BFK paper, create a self-portrait that communicates some aspect of time. Although you must draw from observation, your self-portrait need not be literal. For example, you may choose to portray yourself symbolically through objects, spaces, etc.

You must use an entire sheet of 29” x 40” white Rives BFK paper, but you may tear it up and reassemble it into a different proportion to suit your idea. For example, a panoramic format or even separate frames may help to convey your ideas about time.

This is the largest drawing you will make for this unit. It will take a minimum of 10 hours just to fill the paper. Plan to spend at least that much time to bring it to the best resolution possible. Consider using charcoal and white pastel OR charcoal and eraser to make the most of your time drawing. (Graphite is not a suggested material because of the increased time it takes to cover the paper and because of its reflective qualities.)

Evaluation questions for a “Self-Portrait in Time”:

Is my drawing well composed? Has every part of the paper been considered?
Is my drawing accurate and well-observed?
Have I pushed the media and used the best techniques for them?
Does my drawing convey ideas about time?
Does my drawing tell the viewer something about me?
Does my drawing have a full value range?
Have I considered using strong directional lighting?
PORTFOLIO GRADE SHEET #1
DUE DATE:                  NAME:

Do NOT turn in your portfolio until you have completed this checklist!

My name and section number are on the outside of the portfolio.
My name and section number are on the back of each drawing.
The drawings are in the portfolio in the order listed on this sheet.
My typed reflection is inside the portfolio.
My name and section number are on this grade sheet.
This sheet will be in my portfolio.

Choose one drawing from each category that best satisfies the assignment. Consider the evaluation questions from the assignment sheets when choosing your best drawings. The “other” category will only be used to indicate something not listed that is positive. (It will only raise your grade.)

GRADING SCALE

absent  Unacceptable  poor  Average  good  excellent  Wow!
F        F          D          C          B          A        A+

1. REFLECTION
Reflect on the following questions in a 1 page single-spaced typed document. Add relevant comments from your sketchbook.

"How has your 'seeing' improved?" (consider exercises, readings, critiques, discussions, etc.)
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

"How has your outside research increased your 'visual literacy'?"
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

"How have you contributed to class discussions and critiques?"
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Use of vocabulary terms
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your typed work is generally free of spelling and grammatical errors
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Other:
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Additional comments: Divided by 2
(5 points possible)

2. POSITIVE SHAPE/NEGATIVE SPACE
Craft
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Clear figure/ground relationship
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Composition
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Other:
0 5 6 7 8 9 10

Additional comments:
### 3. CONTOUR

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AVERAGE

Additional comments:

### 4. CROSS-CONTOUR

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AVERAGE

Additional comments:

TOTAL POINTS: 35 = % PORTFOLIO GRADE:
PORTFOLIO GRADE SHEET #2

DUE DATE: NAME:
SECTION #:

Do NOT turn in your portfolio until you have completed this checklist!

- My name and section number are on the outside of the portfolio.
- My name and section number are on the back of each drawing.
- The drawings are in the portfolio in the order listed on this sheet.
- My typed reflection is inside the portfolio.
- My name and section number are on this grade sheet.
- This sheet will be in my portfolio.

Choose one drawing from each category that best satisfies the assignment. Consider the evaluation questions from the assignment sheets when choosing your best drawings. The “other” category will only be used to indicate something not listed that is positive. (It will only raise your grade.)

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1. REFLECTION

Reflect on the following questions in a 1 page single-spaced typed document. Add relevant comments from your sketchbook.

| "What has improved from your first self portrait to the last self-portrait?" | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| "What were the most useful exercises for improving your perceptual drawing ability?" | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| "How has your continued outside research increased your ‘visual literacy’?" | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Use of vocabulary terms | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
Your typed work is generally free of spelling and grammatical errors | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
Other: | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Additional comments: Divided by 2 (5 points possible)

2. ORGANIZATIONAL LINE/SIGHTING

| "Searching lines/process" | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Corrections/Observation | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Composition/consideration of “sight size” | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Other: | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Additional comments:
3. VALUE

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Additional comments:

4. IMPROVEMENT FROM 1ST WEEK TO 7TH WEEK SELF-PORTRAIT DRAWING

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Additional comments:

TOTAL POINTS: /35 = % PORTFOLIO GRADE:
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**TOTAL:**

**%**

**DAYS ABSENT**

**LATE ARRIVALS/EARLY DEPARTURES**

**LACK OF ATTENDANCE % DEDUCTION**

**LACK OF PARTICIPATION DEDUCTION**

**ROTATION GRADE:**

**%**