

Natural Pigments in the Modern World
2019

Fall



CRAIG NAGASAWA, "GOJIRA STIVOT SCHUSHI" 2014 HAND-GROUND MINERALS AND INK ON SILK AND JAPANESE PAPER 48"H X 78"W

Art 98 (1.0 units) - Friday 2-4pm, Kroeber 375

LEAD FACILITATOR: Yuanzhen (Jenna) Song
Nagasawa

DEPT. SPONSOR: Craig

Office: Kroeber 375 / Thursday, 4-5 pm

Class Size: Max. 20

Jenna8feet@berkeley.edu / (415) 250-2595

COURSE ABSTRACT

With the modern-day popularity of store-bought pigments/mediums, artists and audiences often overlook the production processes of abundant art materials in the market. The mass production of pigments from machines make us easily forget the scenes behind the manufactured goods. The everyday paint tube was only invented a few centuries ago, which means artists before then made or bought hand ground pigments from natural materials. These pigments were then put through a completely separate process to become a paint, a stick, a wash, and so on, to suit the artist's needs. This course will explore the various materials and techniques used in art history, and also calls attention to the issues of industrially made materials.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

Through this DeCal, we will be exploring natural pigments in our world by examining the history of art material processes, Berkeley's own palette of natural pigments, and making contrasts between the industrial, mechanized processes and handmade, humane methods. We will begin with the analysis of the environment and the ways in which we gather pigments

from it, as well as our inability to find the perfect pigments—leading up to the creation of synthetic pigments and their impact on the environment and artists.

We will then go closer to home by discussing California and its array of colors found through nature and the pigments it offers for mineral pigments and dyes. The unique history and landscape of California offer itself to be a rich history of discussion about indigenous uses and politics, such as the Gold Rush. Politics of pigments; however, are more than just in California. Worldwide there exists pollutant pigments, industrial runoff, and capitalistic ventures that create many issues that endanger the environment, people, and the existence of some pigments. Through this DeCal we will look closely at some of these cases and study the stronger connection between nature, man, and aesthetics.

GOALS

In this class, you will learn about how

- Pigments (including mineral pigments, natural pigments, natural dyes, locality of pigments, and synthesis pigments)

- Process (including pigment grinding, sieve process, medium incorporation, environmental health for artists)

- History (Politics of pigments, significance of colors, indigenous users, capitalization of color, environmental impacts, toxins in environments)

The goals for this class is to learn how to use natural and synthetic pigments while understanding their impact both environmentally and politically, getting a grasp of the long history of pigments since the dawn of mankind, as well as understand the past and current situation of pigment desirability and the problems created along with it.

REASONS

It's important to be aware of the materials we use and the kinds of processes it takes to develop them through industrial machinery and labor. Taking into consideration the history behind art pigments you can start to register the larger impacts of mass-produced art commodities have on the environment and hazards associated with it.

The production of paint on such a massive scale through machinery can lead to obvious air pollution due to the powered machines, and it does not stop there. There are many pollutants with synthetic paint processes and disposals, leading to problems with contaminating the environment all throughout the process. Along with that direct impact, the waste of materials often leads to waste products that are left unused.

We hope to introduce you to more natural pigment sources as a way to lessen your negative impact on the environment (and yourself) as an artist in a mass-produced ready-to-use art supply market. We are also here to open your thoughts to current situations regarding the price put on pigments and how that affects the market and its consumers—ultimately affecting the environment during extractions and productions.

EXPECTATIONS

This class emphasizes the hands-on experience and will require you to follow safety rules in relation to crushing rocks, sifting rocks, mixing mediums, and making art using the mediums you wish to explore. There are a total of two art critiques, and one presentation in this semester. In addition, you will be asked to choose a 500 words book summary that is due at the end of the semester, or a semester-long art project with a one-page proposal due by the fourth week. A 30 minute to an hour lecture is usually given at the beginning of most classes, followed by a demonstration and studio portion. Depending on your productivity during class, you may have to use outside time (during OH) in order to crush pigments, sift, or create mediums. OH are also a good time to go and experiment with methods using natural and/or synthetic pigments.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

Any form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism, or unlawful actions during the duration of the course will result in a non-passing grade. As students, you will take full responsibility for any assignments you submit and full claim if they will be found as thefts. In terms of the artworks you will produce, we understand that appropriation, pop-referencing, and recontextualization are some of many approaches to art that stem from mimicry, critique of a subject or otherwise; however, we hope you understand that such approaches require a purpose other than aesthetics alone or laziness. We hope that we will encounter nothing but the products of deeper thinking towards the topics of the class.

DSP ACCOMMODATIONS

This DeCal will require working with your hands through grinding pigments, sieving them, and applying them. The environment of the studios will expose the class to solvents, dust, etc. that will be handled through mask distribution, proper ventilation, and safety regulations; however, we will try to make accommodations for student cases regarding any potential issues. Let us know if you are in need of any disability-related assistance, allergy notifications, or other situations where you may need accommodation and we will seek to find solutions.

RECOMMENDED BOOKLIST

- *The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques* by Ralph Mayer
- *Color: A Natural History of the Palette* by Victoria Finlay
- *The Cave Painters* by Gregory Curtis
- *Industrial Inorganic Pigments* by Gunter Buxbaum
- *Artists' Pigments* by Robert L. Feller

(If you have other related books that you would like to read instead, please come talk to me)

MATERIAL LIST

Most of the materials will be provided in the class. However, you will need to get your own art-making tools, such as paint brushes, canvas, and other materials according to your necessity.

** a \$20 rag fee is required

GRADING

60% Attendance and Participation

You will be graded each class by grading of 10 points—five points based on attendance, and you will have two excuses without affecting your grade. Other five points are based on your participation through discussions, ask questions, and other activities.

20% Book Summary/ Semester-long Art Project (Research/Study)

You are required to choose one of these semester-long projects in order to pass the class. For the reading project, you can choose one from the booklist or any other book that relates to this class to read. A 500 words summary with citations is due at the end of the semester. The art project requires you to develop a long term art thesis with a specific topic with researches. You will turn in a one-page proposal in the fourth week of the class (Times New Roman, 12pt, double spaced), and a finished project at the end of the class. You will be experimenting and working with pigments during in-class studio times in addition to either project.

15% Art Critique

There will be two art critiques in the semester, and I will provide information on how to participate in a critique before the first critique. You will be asked to show your studies or finished projects in both critiques, as well as participating by sharing your experiences, asking questions, and commenting on other students' pieces.

5% Presentation

The presentation is a way to think together about issues that may arise from natural pigments or to look generally into one specific one. Each presentation will be 5-10 min long. Almost anything is okay! Here are some examples: The spy patrol of Burma for natural resources such as jade The history, usage, and facts of cinnabar The impact of car paint manufacturing plants on the environment The history of makeup pigments The acidification of the ocean leading to a decline in calcium carbonate And more!

COURSE OUTLINE

(**Subject to change)

First Week of School

No class

WEEK 1 (SEPTEMBER 6)**What is this DeCal about?**

This lecture is to let prospective students understand what they are signing up for and what they can expect throughout the semester. Understanding the expectations and plans for the course are crucial at the start of the course. Students will learn about all the potential equipment and materials used for the course in order to further show expectations.

HW: Find natural pigments

Decide which research project you would like to do

WEEK 2 (SEPTEMBER 13)**What is a pigment and how to create a pigment?**

Students should have any type of natural resource for their natural pigments. We will be demonstrating how to crush up and sort pigments into different sizes and how those sizes affect the optical illusions perception of color once the pigment is added into mediums.

In-class demonstration of grinding rocks, sifting

Open class time to work

HW: Find natural pigments in your backyard

Start reading/ write the proposal for the research project

WEEK 3 (SEPTEMBER 20)

(Art Project Proposal due)

Pigments, binders, solvents

Students will learn more about pigments and then learn the ways that pigment can be turned into a usable medium through binders and how it can be broken down by solvents.

In-class demonstration of making, egg tempera, acrylic, and hide glue paints

Open class time to work

HW: Find natural pigments on campus

Keep working on the semester long research/study project

WEEK 4 (SEPTEMBER 27)Deeper history of pigments—caveman to modern man

The use of pigments will be examined from the prehistoric cave paintings to the birth of the paint tube in 1840 to the politics of natural pigments for the 20th century. We will begin with cave paintings and go through historical uses of pigments from communities such as indigenous tribes in order to give a scope of how deep color has been bonded with mankind. Some explorations into pigments became have become dangerous—cadmium, uranium, lead, napples—however, more these dangers will be explained within the next lecture.

Open class time to work

HW: Continue working on your art projects or studies

Find natural pigments in your best friends back yard

Keep working on the research/study project

WEEK 5 (OCTOBER 4)Deeper history of pigments—modern man's problems

With advancements in sciences, synthetic pigments came out and often dominated the vibrancy and versatility of natural pigments; however, their manufacturing and disposal processes often harmed the environment and/or workers. The industrial revolution brought with it many factories and these factories led to a pigmented pollutants in natural resources. These cases highlighting the problems with modernizing pigments will be looked at.

Open class time to work

HW: Keep working on arts

Find natural pigments in downtown Berkeley

Keep working on the research/study project, individual conference next week

WEEK 6 (OCTOBER 11)Policies of pigments

Students will learn about instrumentalist approaches for obtaining pigments that could deplete resources for future generations. Carelessness for the environment will be reexamined; it is almost a continuation of modern man's problems with specific cases such as the Rust Belt pollution from abandoned mines. We will also be examining how the world is affected by pigments. This includes specific cases such as Myanmar's natural resource of jade transforming landscapes and drawing in people from different locations just to take that natural resource.

Individual check on the research/study project

Open class time to work

HW: Keep making arts

Find natural pigments by the beach

Keep working on the research/study project, and revise the project if necessary

WEEK 7 (OCTOBER 18)

An introduction on how to critique in the context of the class will be used to start the class.

Students will also be introduced to the individual/group pigment-related presentation project.

Open class time to work

HW: Introduction of presentation; think of ideas

Keep making arts (CRITIQUE NEXT WEEK)

prepare for the critique (including explain your project to the class)

WEEK 8 (OCTOBER 25)

CRITIQUE

HW: Groups for pigment-related presentation project should be made now and starting

Make more arts

Keep working on the research/study project

WEEK 9 (NOVEMBER 1)

Open class time to work

HW: Keep making more arts

Find natural pigments in the city

Keep working on the research/study project, you should be at least half way done at this point

WEEK 10 (NOVEMBER 8)

Pigments Out in the World

Students will learn about pigments in the natural world through nature, animals, and more.

Open class time to work

HW: Keep working on arts

Find natural pigments at West Berkeley

Work on the research/study project

WEEK 11 (NOVEMBER 15)

Natural pigment-related presentations

Open class time to work

HW: Keep working on arts

Find natural pigments in a unfamiliar place

Keep working on the research/study project

WEEK 12 (NOVEMBER 22)

Contemporary use of natural pigments

We will be looking at select contemporary paintings who use natural pigments within their work. Some case studies will be Craig Nagasawa, John Sabraw, Tanja Geis, Harvey Quaytman, and Peter Doig.

Open class time to work

HW: Keep working on art projects or studies

Find natural pigments in Botanical Garden (legally)

Keep working on the research/study project

Thanksgiving Week (NOVEMBER 29)

No Class - Have a Good Thanksgiving

HW: Keep working on arts

Find natural pigments in another city

Finish your research/study project

WEEK 13 (DECEMBER 6)

(Book Summary and Finished Art Project due)

Final Critique (including showing or sharing your project)