

Community Education – Fall Quarter 2026

Course Title: Beginner Acrylics: Painting from Observation

Instructor: Margarita Marochkina

Email: mmarochkina@clark.edu



Course Details

- Mondays, 10/12 -11/30
- 6:00pm to 8:00pm
- Ann Pechanec Hall, room 112. Main Campus, Fort Vancouver Way.

Course Description

Explore the fundamentals of acrylic painting while learning to see and paint from direct observation. In this beginner-friendly class, students will work from still-life arrangements and everyday objects to develop skills in composition, color mixing, value, proportion, and brushwork. No previous painting experience is required.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the class, students will be able to:

- Identify and use basic acrylic painting materials, tools, and techniques.
- Observe and accurately translate basic shapes, proportions, and forms into a painting.
- Mix and apply color using an understanding of hue, value, temperature, and saturation.
- Use brushwork, layering, blending, and opaque/transparent applications to create visual interest.
- Develop light, shadow, and value relationships to create the illusion of form and depth.
- Complete a simple acrylic painting with greater confidence and an understanding of the painting process.

Course Schedule

Week 1 — Introduction to Acrylics & Painting from Observation

- Introduction to acrylic paints, brushes, palettes, and surfaces
- Paint handling, consistency, and basic brush techniques
- Understanding form, proportions, color mixing, and color shades.

Week 2 — Seeing Shape, Form & Proportion

- Breaking objects into basic geometric forms
- Measuring proportions and relationships
- Creating accurate outlines and underpaintings
- Painting from observation

Week 3 — Color Mixing Fundamentals

- Understanding the color wheel
- Mixing neutrals and avoiding muddy colors
- Exploring warm and cool colors
- Painting small subject/still life

Week 4 — Value, Light & Shadow

- Understanding light direction
- Identifying highlights, midtones, and shadows
- Creating form through value rather than outlines
- Using a limited palette to establish tonal relationships
- **Project:** Painting from observation

Week 5 — Composition & Creating Depth

- Principles of a successful still-life composition
- Cropping, focal point, balance, and visual hierarchy
- Overlapping objects and creating spatial depth
- Establishing background and foreground relationships
- **Project:** Painting from observation/ Small composed still life

Week 6 — Texture & Brushwork

- Exploring different brush types and marks
- Creating the appearance of wood, glass, metal, fabric, and organic surfaces
- Layering, dry brushing, glazing, and opaque application
- Choosing brushwork to describe different surfaces
- **Project:** Texture-focused observational painting

Week 7 — Developing a Finished Painting

- Planning a painting from initial sketch to final layers
- Establishing large shapes and values before details
- Color correction and refinement
- Developing edges, details, and focal areas

- Individual feedback and guided studio work
- **Project:** Begin final observational painting

Week 8 — Final Painting & Review

- Completing and refining the final painting
- Evaluating composition, color, value, and technique
- Making final adjustments and finishing details
- Group critique and discussion
- Reflection on individual progress and next steps
- **Final Project:** Completed acrylic painting from observation

Resources

Recommended references for further study:

- Art classes near you

Class Evaluation

- Class evaluations are sent by email.
- If you don't see it right away, check your **junk/spam folder**.
- Evaluations are **anonymous** and come directly from Clark College.
- If you don't receive one, contact:
 - Email: continuingeducation@clark.edu
 - Phone: 360-992-2939

Inclement Weather

- If the college closes due to weather, updates will appear at www.clark.edu
- Community Education may also cancel classes independently if travel is unsafe.
- If canceled, you will be notified by both phone and email.
- Please check that your contact information is correct on the class roster.

Looking for more Community Education courses? Visit: www.clark.edu/cce/