

Art 347 - Illustration

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T/Th 1:30-2:00
Or by appointment

Illustration (ˈiluːstreɪʃən) – 1. An explanatory example. 2. Visual matter used to elucidate or ornament a text.

Art 347 will focus on two main aspects of illustration – concepts and techniques. To that end, we will explore a variety of materials and ideas, from pen & ink to watercolors; phobias to caricatures. While you may have a level of comfort with some of the materials we'll be using, other materials may not be as familiar. Over the course of the semester, I strongly encourage you to continue expanding the way you think about making art. Your concepts—the ideas behind your work—are just as important as your technical abilities. Without concept, craft is shallow. Without craft, concept is weakened. Finding that union—the marriage between the two—is crucial. It is your self-appointed job as artists to continually feed your craft and your conceptual thinking. Don't wait to be assigned things to do. Just do them. Doodle, write, draw digitally, journal, etc. Create. If you feel that your work is weak in a specific area, attack that area.

What's the difference between an illustrator and an artist? Is this the beginning of a joke? An artist and an illustrator walk into a bar?

There is no difference. That's the point.

You are using your abilities to conceive of an idea, combining that idea with your technical skills in order to get a point across. Simple, right? As in any art discipline, if you have the passion to make the work, nothing will get in your way. You may be temporarily stymied by an approach, but if failure isn't an option, you'll figure out a way to soldier on, slogging through the crap phase of your process. If you don't have the passion to make the work and you find yourself easily defeated by the process of creating it, then you'll come up with all sorts of excuses for your work. Forget the excuses. Don't waste time on them. Just make the work. Make a crap load of it if necessary, to get to the good stuff.

To be clear, I don't give a shit about style. Work on your work and your style will emerge. Force a style upon your work, and you'll no longer be making your own work. You'll be making work in someone else's style, while losing your own in the process. Leave so-called perfection at home or at the studio door. Look to create illustrations that get to the very heart of the matter of the work. The real trick is getting to that work without relying on stylistic gimmicks and distractions.

Some goals for this class:

- ❑ To give you a broad introduction to different aspects of illustration.
- ❑ To help you hone your conceptual and technical skills.
- ❑ To introduce you to the work of contemporary and historic illustrators.
- ❑ To convey the importance of research in your work.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of research. Research sometimes means hitting the internet or books to find source material or inspiration. But research also refers to the work you do for yourself. It means doing thumbnail sketches, roughs, comps; any of the preliminary work necessary to produce the best illustration you can create. One of Howard Pyle's students wrote about Pyle's desk, and how his drawers were filled with thousands of sketches. They were drawn on small 3"x4" pieces of memo pad paper and conveyed compositional and conceptual aspects of illustrations. Pyle told his student that he always made fifty sketches before every illustration that he drew or painted. If the first sketch looked like the right one, he always made 49 more, just to be sure. The finished work is important, but the preliminary research is the guts of the work. Creating roughs and thumbnail sketches should not be considered a chore that you're forced to do. They're an aspect of your visual thinking that you should embrace.

Speaking of research, here are some websites you might find useful:

Brandywine Museum: <http://www.brandywinemuseum.org>

Drawer: <http://www.drawer.com> - Website featuring blogs by well-known contemporary illustrators.

Illustration Art: <http://illustrationart.blogspot.com> David Apatoff's excellent illustration blog.

Theispot: <http://www.theispot.com> - Collection of illustrators' portfolios.

JVJ Publishing: <http://www.bpib.com> - An excellent resource for illustrators' biographies, by Jim Vadeboncoeur.

Posemaniacs: <http://www.posemaniacs.com> - A website featuring a variety of computer-generated figure poses.

Society of Illustrators: <http://www.societyillustrators.org>

Today's Inspiration Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/todaysinspiration> - A terrific resource.

Chris Beetles Gallery: <http://www.chrisbeetles.com> - Classic British illustration and cartoons

Assignments: You will have six illustration assignments over the course of semester, covering a variety of subject matters and media. Please submit your original work along with a photocopy of the assignment. In addition, you will present on the work of a contemporary or historical illustrator. The artist will be assigned to you. Please refer to the course schedule for specific dates.

1. **Word-Play** – A short introductory assignment which deals with the literal interpretation of common words and phrases. You will be assigned a computer and/or tech-related phrase or term. Illustrate your phrase or term in the most literal fashion you can devise. Composition and inventiveness is crucial. Dip pen and/or brush & India ink. 5"x7½". Vertical or horizontal format.

2. **Visual Metaphor** – Create an illustration based upon your assigned Op/Ed (Opinion/Editorial) writing. The illustration must incorporate the use of visual metaphor, rather than a literal interpretation. Credit to www.artsalive.ca for the following:

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech that compares one thing to another. A metaphor states that one thing *is* another thing, instead of saying that it's *like* something else. It does not use "like" or "as" to make the comparison.

Example: *The young man was a thundercloud entering the room, about to let loose a storm of protest.*

A **visual metaphor** uses an image rather than words to make the comparison.

Conceptualize the meaning of the author's intent through his or her words and imagery, creating your own imagery that speaks to that intent. India ink with possible black and white collage elements. 7"x5". Vertical format.

3. **Phobia** – Research and choose either a common or obscure phobia to illustrate. First come, first serve. The name of the phobia must be **fully integrated into the illustration as a major pictorial/compositional element**. In terms of concept, irony works best. Wet water color media (watercolor, gouache, acrylics, tempera, etc.). 10"x7". Vertical or horizontal format. **No ink allowed.**

4. **Cut Paper Illustration(s)** – You have three options to choose from for this assignment. All three options incorporate cut paper to create the illustration(s):

1. Create a cut paper illustration (or series of illustrations) derived from a classic children's book illustration. The original children's book illustration must be in some other media than cut paper/collage. The number of illustrations will depend upon the complexity of the original source material. For example, illustrations from Crockett Johnson's *Harold and the Purple Crayon* are much simpler than those from Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. These are to be done in full color, and must include text, either in the original illustration or in a scanned version of the image. At a minimum, the first letter of the text must be executed in cut paper. Flexible size and orientation.
2. Create a cut paper illustration (or series of illustrations) based upon your own children's book idea. This would be either a fragment of a story or stand-alone pieces that would be part of a larger series. Again, the number of pieces should be based upon the complexity of the imagery. Flexible size and orientation.
3. Create a cut paper propaganda poster based upon a contemporary issue of importance to you. The poster should convey a clear point of view, with **all** elements executed in cut paper. 30"x20" vertical.

Concept, composition, color and texture are key elements to consider. The types of paper that you choose to incorporate are also important considerations; i.e., a saturated screened color vs. construction paper. You may create your own *solid* colors, but nothing tonal. *No* software may be used to manipulate original source material, except for cropping.

5. **Caricature** – Create a caricature of a famous artist, writer, or musician, incorporating elements of the subject’s style/work into the illustration. Depending upon the period that your subject worked in, your source material will either be portraits of the artist, or clear, high resolution photographs. A subject can be used only once. First-come, first served. India ink and water color media (or watercolor only). Color pencil may be used **in addition to the other materials**. 8”x10”. Vertical format.
6. **Narrative or Short Story Illustrations** – You have two options to choose from for this assignment:
 1. Create a narrative illustration. The subject is up to you, but the illustration must incorporate various camera angles, compositions, and lighting techniques. There must also be a minimum of five narrative sequences in the work. Think about the different possibilities for such an illustration, which may include formats such as montage or graphic novel. The size will depend upon the chosen format. Open media.
 2. Create a minimum of three illustrations to accompany a short story of your choosing. The story must be vetted by me, before going forward with the assignment. Open media, but black and white with minimal color should be considered.

Please note that the assignment sizes listed above are equivalent to the published image. You may create works in proportion to the listed sizes. The sizes reflect the image area only. All illustrations must have at least a ½” margin around the live art area.

Extra Credit #1 – Create a bonus illustration (or set of illustrations) based upon an area of interest for you. The type of illustration should be cleared with me first, so that you’re not wasting your time. This extra credit option will count as one full assignment.

Presentations: Each of you will be assigned an illustrator to research and present a PowerPoint or Google presentation on. Approximately half the class will be presenting on illustrators from the past, while the other half will be presenting on contemporary illustrators. All presentations must include a minimum of 12 high quality images, supplemented with brief background information about the artist, your observations about his or her style, and the historical or contemporary context of the work. The words you use in your presentation must be your own. Please be judicious when it comes to the amount of text used in the actual presentation. Don’t use the software as a teleprompter, but use your notes. You must use a minimum of three sources for your information and can submit your sources to me either during class or by email. ***The grade for your presentation will have the same weight as an assignment grade.*** The emphasis of the presentations should be on the depth and organization of the information, and the quality of images. Check the class schedule for presentation dates. Please: no elaborate presentations with music, rainbow colors, fancy fade-outs, cut-ins, or animal noises. The fewer bells and whistles, the better.

Grading: Each of your assignments and presentations will be graded separately. Your assignments will carry equal grade weight, giving you an idea of your grade at any point during the course. You will ***almost always*** have the opportunity to re-work an illustration for a better grade. The only exception is if you were late in handing in your assignment originally. You will suffer grade loss with late work (half a grade for each class that the work is late), and you will not have the opportunity for resubmission with a late assignment. Please be warned that simply resubmitting work does not guarantee a better grade. You cannot make trivial changes to an illustration and expect to go from a “C” to an “A”. Many students receive the same grade that they received originally. Please note too, that my definition of a “C” is average. That means that you come to class, work only during class time, do enough to get by, take no or little risks in your work and barely participate in discussions/critiques. In terms of the artwork that you produce, I consider grades with the follow criteria:

- A = Excellent work that displays thoughtfulness, risk-taking, daring, craft, and challenge.

- B = Good work that displays some of the elements above, but to a lesser extent. Less challenging work in general.
- C = Average work, with little or no extra effort put in outside of class. Work that is okay, but does not venture into uncharted territory; always plays it safe.
- D = Weak work that displays little drive, effort and motivation.
- F = Work does not meet the criteria of the class. Poor attempts at quality and effort.

Other elements that factor into your final grade are:

- Critique and discussion participation
- Improvement in your work/risk taking
- Quality of Research
- Presentation
- Attendance

Plagiarism: Please refer to UWSP University Handbook, Chapter 5, Section 2, 14.03 Academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action.

Attendance: You are expected to attend class. After two unexcused absences, your final grade will drop by one half letter grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Please be prepared when you come to class. The course schedule gives you most of the pertinent information regarding what you'll need for the following class. If you cannot draw because you're unprepared, you'll be marked as absent. Similarly, if you haven't read the assigned readings when they're due, you'll be marked as absent. Two late arrivals (of more than 15 minutes) will equal one absence. I find that arriving late to critiques is especially discourteous and disruptive. I plan on using the first few minutes of each class for announcements, readings and demonstrations. If you can't make it on time for this part of the class on a regular basis, you should think about dropping the course. If necessary, I will discuss that option with you.

Please note: In my classes, family and mental health issues take priority over school. If you have extenuating circumstances (death in the family, serious illness or other physical/emotional trauma) that may impact your performance negatively, please contact me as soon as possible. Arrangements may be made for your specific situation.

Your **Lab Fees** are hard at work for you. You'll be receiving 24-count sets of watercolors, #4 Kolinsky red sable brushes, the best correction pen known to humankind, watercolor paper, and some vellum illustration paper.

Supplies: You should pick up watercolor mixing trays for the watercolors, as they'll be tube sets. Other supplies, such as India ink, dip pen nibs, pen holders, color paper, brushes, etc., will be on an as-needed basis.

Music: My preference is that folks listen to a communal music source but understand that musical tastes vary widely. MP3 players will be allowed in the class, unless they become problematic. I maintain dictatorial power when it comes to the communal music choices.

Cell Phones are not allowed, unless your phone is also your MP3 player. Please do not text while class is in session, except during breaks. If I see anyone texting during class, you'll be asked to leave and will be marked as absent. If you have an emergency situation, please let me know and accommodations may be made.

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 18, from 2:45 to 4:45. Final critique and submissions/resubmissions.

Week 1	Tues. 9/4	Course intro – syllabus. Introduce Word-Play assignment. Minimum of 10 rough idea/composition sketches due on Thursday 9/6.
	Thurs. 9/6	Roughs for Word-Play assignment are due. Workday.
Week 2	Tues. 9/11	Word-Play workday. Mukul Agarwala.
	Thurs. 9/13	Word-Play workday. Assignment is due on Tuesday 9/18.
Week 3	Tues. 9/18	Word-Play Critique. Introduce Opinion-Editorial Visual Metaphor assignment. Minimum of 10 rough, varied concept sketches due on Thursday 9/20.
	Thurs. 9/20	Opinion-Editorial Visual Metaphor workday. Concept roughs due.
Week 4	Tues. 9/25	Opinion-Editorial Visual Metaphor workday.
	Thurs. 9/27	Opinion-Editorial Visual Metaphor workday. Assignment is due on Tuesday 10/2.
Week 5	Tues. 10/2	Opinion-Editorial Visual Metaphor critique. Introduce Phobia assignment. Research and minimum of 10 rough idea sketches are due on Thursday 10/4.
	Thurs. 10/4	Phobia workday. Presentations: Wyeth, Pyle, Rackham, Potter.
Week 6	Tues. 10/9	Phobia workday.
	Thurs. 10/11	Phobia workday.
Week 7	Tues. 10/16	Phobia workday. Presentations: Nielsen, O'Neill, Held, Sickles.
	Thurs. 10/18	Phobia workday. Assignment is due on Tuesday 10/23.
Week 8	Tues. 10/23	Phobia critique. Introduce Cut Paper assignment. Research materials and supplies due on Thursday 10/25. Presentations: Gag, Hirschfeld, Fuchs, Coe.
	Thurs. 10/25	Cut Paper workday.
Week 9	Tues. 10/30	Cut Paper workday.
	Thurs. 11/1	Cut Paper workday.
Week 10	Tues. 11/6	Cut Paper workday. Presentations: Zwerger, Saunders, Rodriguez, Holland.
	Thurs. 11/8	Cut Paper workday. Assignment is due on Tuesday 11/13.
Week 11	Tues. 11/13	Cut Paper critique. Introduce Caricature assignment. Research materials due on Thursday 11/15.
	Thurs. 11/15	Caricature workday.
Week 12	Tues. 11/20	Caricature workday. Presentations: Brodskaya, Shimizu, Wendling, Burke.
	Thurs. 11/22	Caricature workday.
Week 13	Tues. 11/27	Caricature workday. Assignment is due on Thursday 11/29.
	Thurs. 11/29	Caricature critique. Introduce Narrative/Short Story assignments. Rough concept sketches due on Tuesday 12/4
Week 14	Tues. 12/4	Narrative/Short Story workday.
	Thurs. 12/6	Narrative/Short Story workday.
Week 15	Tues. 12/11	Narrative/Short Story workday.
	Thurs. 12/13	Narrative/Short Story workday. Assignment is due on Tuesday 12/18 (final exam).
Final Exam	Tues. 12/18	2:45-4:45. Final critique. Final day to submit extra credit assignments or resubmissions.