

## DEGREE PROGRAMS

### MFA IN FINE ARTS

#### Our Mission

The MFA program provides an artistic learning environment where artists of different backgrounds, ages, experiences, and approaches to creative practice can flourish together. Our courses, events, studios, labs, galleries, and social spaces are welcoming places where everyone in our community can develop as artists and as engaged participants in society. The program encourages emerging artists to think critically and challenge existing modes of expression.

#### Degree Requirements

All programs' curricula are developed in response to Program Learning Outcomes, which signify what students learn within a degree program or emphasis area. All program learning outcomes respond to overarching Institutional Learning Outcomes. View the MFA in Fine Arts program learning outcomes [here](#) or request information.

#### Course Descriptions

##### AHCS 560 - ST: Modernism to Conceptualism (3.00)

This course examines the development of Modernism as a discourse in the visual arts, from its development in the 1840s to challenges of its key assumptions in the 1960s. Attendance at Visiting Artists Lecture Series (VALS) is required as part of this course. The primary intention of this course is to provide a critical survey of work and discourses that have contributed to the development of Modernism as a specific aesthetic and discursive tradition. Our attention will focus on the development of visual art, and a trajectory of practices traceable from traditions of European painting and sculpture to challenges leveled at that tradition, most identified with artists working in the United States after World War II. Understanding the importance and context of these practices will require that we simultaneously explore other developments significant throughout this period including social environment, political and economic currents, technological change and related fields of practice. It is a period characterized by extraordinary change, gross inequities, and the formation of conventions on which a contemporary view of art as an aesthetic discipline are based. We will attempt to actively engage these concepts with the goal of developing a view of Modernism in direct dialog with the question of the role of art and artists in this period and in contemporary society.

##### GRAD 740 - Graduate Critique I (3.00)

In this two-year course sequence, all graduate students, regardless of media, individually present work to their peers and faculty for an in-depth discussion about the work's material, theoretical, and cultural positioning. The course provides time and space to collectively examine how an artist's work is perceived as a public statement and how one's work exists in the world. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

##### GRAD 700 - Graduate Studio I (3.00)

Graduate Studio is a 6-hour course structured around dedicated studio time and one-on-one studio visits between students and faculty members. This two-year course sequence focuses on each individual student's practice, specifically directed toward an interrogation of the aesthetic, conceptual, and technical issues arising out of their work. It will culminate in the end-of-semester review during which the student and a review committee will discuss and evaluate the development of the student's practice as observed over the course of the semester. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

##### AHCS 650 - Art, Theory, Practice I (3.00)

In this seminar we will develop an understanding of the material, social, and political implications of aesthetic form. Form is understood as an organizing principle that is anchored within material reality and which affects this reality in turn. The essays we will read engage in questions of humanity, power relations, representation, and aesthetics from a variety of perspectives and discursive fields. We will use these texts as a starting point to discuss how cultural producers and theorists have responded to the representational politics of the present. Alongside, we will consider art practices within the larger cultural and socio-political environment. The goal will be the development of individual, subjective voices within a collective, collaborative, and relational process.

##### GRAD 630 - Collaborative Projects (3.00)

Collaborative Projects is a seminar/studio class. Students form collaborative relationships to produce and exhibit collaborative projects - installations, performances, sound works, events, happenings, etc. that culminate in the Mid-Residency Exhibition. Collaborative projects will activate traditional and non-traditional exhibition spaces throughout the Otis campus in the spirit of an international art biennial. Students will publicly present, document, and archive their work. Students acquire experiential and theoretical knowledge pertaining to collaborative art production, curation, pedagogy, diplomacy, consensus-building marketing, and community leadership.

##### AHCS 561 - ST: 60's to the Present (3.00)

The historical development of the discourse of Modernism established a narrative that proved very influential. However, the terms of that narrative came under question from a diverse range of artists and voices. This course looks at Contemporary Art as a varied field arising out of challenges to historical "modern art" in the late 1960s and developing a range of practices that continue to challenge our understanding of art and its relation to society today. Attendance at Visiting Artists Lecture Series (VALS) is required as part of this course.

##### GRAD 740 - Graduate Critique II (3.00)

In this two-year course sequence, all graduate students, regardless of media, individually present work to their peers and faculty for an in-depth discussion about the work's material, theoretical, and cultural positioning. The course provides time and space to collectively examine how an artist's work is perceived as a public statement and how one's work exists in the world. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

##### GRAD 700 - Graduate Studio II (3.00)

Graduate Studio is a 6-hour course structured around dedicated studio time and one-on-one studio visits between students and faculty members. This two-year course sequence focuses on each individual student's practice, specifically directed toward an interrogation of the aesthetic, conceptual, and technical issues arising out of their work. It will culminate in the end-of-semester review during which the student and a review committee will discuss and evaluate the development of the student's practice as observed over the course of the semester. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

##### AHCS 651 - Art, Theory, Practice II (3.00)

This two-semester, cross-disciplinary seminar examines both the creation of contemporary art and the ideas and theories that shape it. Through a selection of essays, we will explore the material, social, and cultural connotations of aesthetic form. We will consider form as an organizing principle that is rooted in material reality while simultaneously influencing that reality. Discussions will focus on how works of art can prompt encounters that challenge our established modes of perception and understanding, fostering curiosity and encouraging shifts in perspective.

**ELEC 599 - Graduate Studio Elective (3.00)**

Graduate level studio elective course. See department for specific courses.

**GRAD 740 - Graduate Critique III (3.00)**

In this two-year course sequence, all graduate students, regardless of media, individually present work to their peers and faculty for an in-depth discussion about the work's material, theoretical, and cultural positioning. The course provides time and space to collectively examine how an artist's work is perceived as a public statement and how one's work exists in the world. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

**GRAD 700 - Graduate Studio III (3.00)**

Graduate Studio is a 6-hour course structured around dedicated studio time and one-on-one studio visits between students and faculty members. This two-year course sequence focuses on each individual student's practice, specifically directed toward an interrogation of the aesthetic, conceptual, and technical issues arising out of their work. It will culminate in the end-of-semester review during which the student and a review committee will discuss and evaluate the development of the student's practice as observed over the course of the semester. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

**GRAD 776 - Professional Practice (3.00)**

We will be analyzing the definition of PROFESSIONAL and PRACTICE, singularly and in tandem and how they apply to real life situations. In relationship to determining how "one presents oneself" we will access and research grants, residencies, jobs, etc. Applications, contacts, and experience will be both analyzed and explored. In addition basic artist survival skills and sustainability issues will be discussed in depth. As this is a seminar; discussion and presentation in conjunction with outside support, will form the basis of this course. Student interests and concerns will be addressed. Attendance at Visiting Artists Lecture Series (VALS) is required as part of this course.

**LIBS 774 - Thesis I (3.00)**

In this course, students will develop a written thesis about their work and practice. Students will acquire critical writing skills that will prepare them for the literary demands of an artist.

**ELEC 599 - Graduate Studio Elective (3.00)**

Graduate level studio elective course. See department for specific courses.

**GRAD 740 - Graduate Critique IV (3.00)**

In this two-year course sequence, all graduate students, regardless of media, individually present work to their peers and faculty for an in-depth discussion about the work's material, theoretical, and cultural positioning. The course provides time and space to collectively examine how an artist's work is perceived as a public statement and how one's work exists in the world. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

**GRAD 700 - Graduate Studio IV (3.00)**

Graduate Studio is a 6-hour course structured around dedicated studio time and one-on-one studio visits between students and faculty members. This two-year course sequence focuses on each individual student's practice, specifically directed toward an interrogation of the aesthetic, conceptual, and technical issues arising out of their work. It will culminate in the end-of-semester review during which the student and a review committee will discuss and evaluate the development of the student's practice as observed over the course of the semester. Prerequisite: The four course sequence must be taken successively and may not be taken concurrently.

**GRAD 777 - Exhibition Preparation (3.00)**

The goal of this course is to seek out both group and individual needs to attain one's goals as they relate to the presentation and production of an individual Thesis Show. In addition, issues that deal with and about art post-graduation will also be addressed. What it means to be an artist will be challenged and articulated for each individual. Attendance at Visiting Artists Lecture Series (VALS) is required as part of this course.

**ELEC 599 - Graduate Studio Elective (3.00)**

Graduate level studio elective course. See department for specific courses.

**ELEC 599 - Graduate Studio Elective (3.00)**

Graduate level studio elective course. See department for specific courses.

## Electives

| Course Title                    | Course Number | Credits |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Intro to Experimental Drawing   | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Adv. Sem: All About Love        | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| SCNG: Experimental Film         | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Photography II                  | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Lighting Studio I               | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Phot Genres: Steal This Class   | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Phot Genres: Personal Histories | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Painting II                     | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Painting Genres: Art as Res     | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Painting Genres: Storytelling   | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Sculpture/New Genres II         | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |
| Ceramics                        | GRAD 550      | 3.00    |

|                                |          |      |
|--------------------------------|----------|------|
| Adv Tec: Into the Fold: Fabric | GRAD 550 | 3.00 |
| Advanced Ceramics              | GRAD 550 | 3.00 |
| Fine Arts Internship           | GRAD 550 | 3.00 |
| Performance, cakewalk          | GRAD 650 | 3.00 |
| Installation Art Practices     | GRAD 654 | 3.00 |

## Elective Descriptions

### GRAD 550 - Intro to Experimental Drawing (3.00)

This course explores drawing as a way of thinking rather than as a specific medium. Assignment prompts such as Materiality, Plans and Diagrams, Physical Action and Gesture encourage problem solving across all mediums. In addition, we will explore traditional drawing with technical demonstrations in charcoal, color pencil, sumi ink and brushes watercolor paint, gouache, on supports such as hot press and cold press watercolor papers, architects' drafting mylar, rice papers and more.

### GRAD 550 - Adv. Sem: All About Love (3.00)

Given our current, increasingly polarized, socio-political landscape, a course "All About Love" seems timely and a promising starting point to foster connection across differences. "Love conquers all," as the saying goes. If this were true, why do we often find ourselves troubled by love? What is love? We use this word ubiquitously but what do we mean when we say we love something or someone? And more importantly, what can love do? In this advanced seminar course, we will delve into a curio-critical engagement with love as a foundational concept, a material-discursive practice, an analytic, and a drive. Love names a feeling, a desire, a relationship with someone or something, but it can also be a way of analyzing the world, because love, ultimately, tells us about power—and what matters most to us. Beginning with the family—where we learn how to give and receive love—we will journey with/in various forms of love from self-love to friendships and romance to love of community, place, life, and our love of art. We will learn alongside theorists in somatics, performance studies, feminist studies, queer and trans studies, and Indigenous and Black studies to guide our foray into the inter-personal, political, performative, and transformative aspects of love as they shape our relationships to one another and to our creative practices. This seminar will include readings, in-depth discussions on the readings and selected artists, and student projects all about love.

### GRAD 550 - SCNG: Experimental Film (3.00)

In this introductory filmmaking class, we will consider expansive ways to think about personal, non-narrative, and independent film practices through investigations of the moving image's essential components: light, movement, and time. We will examine examples from around the world and throughout cinema history to explore what constitutes "experimental" film and how this form challenges conventional cinematic language. Particular attention will be given to artists and filmmakers historically excluded from the dominant canon, especially women, queer artists, and filmmakers of color, whose work expands and complicates the boundaries of experimental practice. Drawing inspiration from class discussions, assigned readings, and weekly creative exercises, students will create two short films one using analog Super 8 film and one using digital technologies. Emphasis will be placed on hands-on experimentation, in-camera editing, sound-image relationships, and alternative approaches to structure, rhythm, and visual expression. Students will be encouraged to challenge typical cinematic conventions and engage deeply with both material, form and process. Alongside production, students will practice skills in critical viewing, analysis, and constructive critique to support a collaborative learning environment supporting vulnerability, openness, and individual expression. This course is designed to nurture personal vision while situating experimental filmmaking within the evolving landscape of contemporary visual culture and aesthetics.

### GRAD 550 - Photography II (3.00)

This is an intermediate course within the Photography program that aims to build upon technical knowledge and conceptual structuring acquired in Photo 1. Students will spend time working with image capture and output processes, refining technical and communication methods, and making decisions to achieve their desired aesthetic and conceptual frameworks. Experimentation with new processes is expected as is the development of artistic and critical reasoning.

### GRAD 550 - Lighting Studio I (3.00)

This course introduces students to basic studio skills in lighting and electronic flash applications, including 4x5 and medium formats, tungsten and strobe lighting, and in-depth exploration of genres such as photo illustration, still life and portraiture. Students develop a critical understanding of how imagery functions within a commercial context and the relationship between fine art and commercial work. Shooting assignments include still life, portraiture, and photo illustration projects. This course is required for Photography emphasis. Prerequisite: Photo I or equivalent

### GRAD 550 - Phot Genres: Steal This Class (3.00)

What is appropriation, and what are its rules? Who is permitted to borrow from whom? At what point does imitation become theft, and reuse into ripping-off? Is the "taking" of a photograph ever not an apprehension of something else? Is there even such a thing as an original? In this class, we will search out society's rules in order to break them. Students will investigate the long legacies of appropriation, citation, parody, and pastiche within photography and fine art, and find new frontiers of possibility. We will embezzle each other, ourselves, and our favorite photographic forebears. We will consider how context and gesture have the unique power to "move us to tears." Students will be expected to produce and share presentations on relevant artists, generate their own work in response to thematic assignments, and contribute to group discussions.

### GRAD 550 - Phot Genres: Personal Histories (3.00)

This course will explore ideas of personal histories and narratives through portrait photography. We'll develop lighting techniques and other technical methodologies to address the portrait as a way of creating new understandings of the self. Readings and experiments will expand ideas around portraiture. The work will culminate in an exhibition at the Fulcrum Press Gallery

### GRAD 550 - Painting II (3.00)

Painting 2 is the second core class devoted to painting. Each person who teaches it will have a slightly different approach but in general the class will provide students with an intermediate level painting experience. Equipped with the skills and knowledge of painting 1, students in Painting 2 will further develop their command of the technical and conceptual knowledge of western painting. They will develop a group of works specific to the requirements of the class and they will increase their confidence and their production. Perhaps devoted to critical concepts of interpretation or to material exploration or both, painting 2 will provide a dynamic and open, inclusive environment in which students will feel supported as they explore their own ideas and the rich landscape of contemporary painting.

### **GRAD 550 - Painting Genres: Art as Res (3.00)**

Starting from the position that each student is an artist with their own interests and experiences, this studio elective will focus on developing the connection between research and painting methodologies. We will deep dive into our own research, data collection, and content formation through physical acts of walking, mapping, reading (both image and text) and experimentation. We will look at the various ways in which we can carry out research to gather knowledge, generate images, and build upon our practices to create unique and complex paintings. The course ARTIST AS RESEARCHER will explore translations of concepts into paintings, and the fluency of those messages as they are created and understood. The course will include field work, several group site visits, independent trips, alongside studio work. Students will be exposed to different research methodologies and explore the many roles of the artist –from reporter to interpreter, anthropologist, historian, activist, medium, prophet, etc. Students will create a series of paintings from their research conducted during the course. As artists, they will consider experimental thinking outside of the studio, and what can happen outside of a painting

### **GRAD 550 - Painting Genres: Storytelling (3.00)**

This interdisciplinary course explores storytelling through images, objects and other media. Content may be, but is certainly not limited to, identities, cultural affinities, formative experiences, personal histories, personal fictions, history, and other interests. While the emphasis of this course is studio practice and developing technique, critiques will be complemented by discussions on history painting, cultural hybridity, post colonial discourse, and storytelling. We will read and discuss short texts by various novelists, theorists, poets, as well as looking at works by artists engaged in making work about complex narratives.

### **GRAD 550 - Sculpture/New Genres II (3.00)**

Sculpture New Genres 2 is an intermediate studio course that expands on concepts and skills in 3- dimensional and time based media developed in SCNG I. This class will consist of a series of both short and long term prompts, lectures, readings, critiques and demos aimed at providing a wide range of cultural concepts, contexts and techniques to consider when developing works and situating them within time and space. New skills will include advanced techniques of construction in wood, metal, clay, fabric, video, further mold making, some plastics, and new computer technologies.

### **GRAD 550 - Ceramics (3.00)**

This sculpture elective will teach fundamental skills of working with clay. You will learn the foundational skills of wheel throwing and hand building: centering and forming shapes on the wheel, wedging, pinching, coiling, soft and hard slab construction, building and assembling in parts, using a banding wheel, and various ways to manipulate the surface of the clay, such as carving, stamping, printing, drawing, painting, and glazing. You will learn how kilns work and various ways to fire the clay, with an introduction to how different glazes and clays react to different firing techniques. Exposure to the historical use and international variety of techniques in ceramics will be integrated into the contemporary context. This is an introductory course; no experience is necessary.

### **GRAD 550 - Adv Tec: Into the Fold: Fabric (3.00)**

Historically and pre-historically fabric(s) have been used as protection, coded language, resistance, structure, identity, style, communication, play, community building, camouflage, and more. Through skill building in context, students will grow confident in their ability to engage techniques, be supported to expand upon them, to develop a way of working within their own practice(s). This course will include hand and machine sewing, pattern-making based in but going beyond methodologies of garment construction, felting, weaving, dying, hand, machine and digital embellishment/adornment (embroidery, beading, couching), three dimensional "soft sculpture" and stretching/draping on an armature. Knitting, knot-work, macramé and crochet subject to interest. This course will move towards an interdisciplinary integration of digital and analog media. Maximizing the facilities, labs and equipment at Otis, students will grow comfortable using Adobe Creative Cloud software (Photoshop and Illustrator) and understand how these are set up to work with vector based output machines, for "fabric-informed" projects. Working with fabric as a pliable structure, surface and conceptual framework, we explore its construction, historical and cultural contexts (including with/by the more-than-human) to develop and expand upon skills to make projects possible within fields of sculpture, installation (including video, sound, multi-sensory work), performance, painting and drawing.

### **GRAD 550 - Advanced Ceramics (3.00)**

This advanced ceramics elective is ideal for student artists seeking to deepen their relationship to the clay studio. Together, we will explore (and aim to understand) clay's most distinctive quality -- its mystical plasticity -- with a sequence of sculptural provocations meant to expand our portfolio of technical skills. Simultaneously, we will consider ceramics as a position within the larger sphere of contemporary art, thinking and working through the possibilities available in installation, performance, collaboration with emerging technologies, and perhaps even the humble vessel. Get ready to probe the limits of this sticky, gooey, muddy, dirty, impressionable Stuff.

### **GRAD 550 - Fine Arts Internship (3.00)**

This blended course allows students to do an internship under the guidance of faculty and gain experience in the creative and business practices in contemporary art. We will meet on campus in the first five weeks of the course. Students will learn to seek internships, create a compelling application, interview, and work effectively in organizations. The course will be asynchronous for the next nine weeks as students intern at small businesses, start-ups, non-profit art organizations, and artist studios. In the final week, students and faculty will meet to discuss what students have learned from their internship experience and how to average that experience in their developing careers.

### **GRAD 650 - Performance, cakewalk (3.00)**

In this course we will examine how Black artists have used their bodies to recontextualize themselves in explosive and radical ways throughout American history. I will be explicitly referencing Adrian Piper's "funk lessons" we will learn to cakewalk. (yes you will have to move/dance in this class. I assure you it will be painless and enlightening like yoga, except fun;) Furthermore we will be comparing and contrasting Black dance and movement of the past and present. From the plantation to soultrain to the ballroom, Aida to Adrian.

### **GRAD 654 - Installation Art Practices (3.00)**

In this seminar/studio hybrid students will learn how to expand their creative vision from a singular object to an entire environment while producing two installation projects in a safe, supportive, workshop environment. Students will learn about the history of installation art practices past and present, and become familiar with artists that have made significant contributions to the field. Students will learn skills, strategies and techniques for transforming space, place and environment into immersive sensory and narrative experiences that fully engage audiences emotionally, physically, spiritually and conceptually. Essential skills developed in this class include: conceptualizing, designing and configuring installation spaces and environments; producing 3D models for installation proposals with maps for wiring sound and projection, and placement of other media and materials within the environment; producing sound and video and configuring material for immersive experiences; synchronizing multiple channels of video, sound and light; spatializing sound; and managing technologies and cables within installation spaces and environments.