

Introduction to Sculpture ART 109-01, Monday 1-4PM, KTSA-116

Professor: Amy Brener, abrener@hamilton.edu, <http://amybrener.com>, cell: 646-684-1076

Office hours: TUES/THURS 12:30-2PM, Studio hours: Fridays 9-11AM

Course Philosophy

There are no set rules for making art or teaching it, but there are responsibilities that are essential to both endeavors. The central task is to be intensely present: to pay attention to the minutiae of the world and all of its scraps and discards, as well as the larger, overarching currents that shape our time. We must practice zooming in and out, from micro to macro and back again, becoming filtration systems that breathe in external stimuli and exhale it as something transformed.

Sculpture is an expansive and open medium, housing infinite variations of methods and materials, but the occupation of space remains its defining quality. It has no pre-existing framework; it exists alongside us and is aligned with all other three-dimensional things in the world. To make sculpture is to work with real space and experience one's body in it. It is to analyze and deconstruct the structures that surround us, in order to put them back together in unexpected ways.

Course Description

This class will delve deeply into what it means to make sculpture in 2025, creating forms that occupy the viewer's space and reinterpret the materials of everyday life. The task of creating artworks that exist in three-dimensional space has special challenges and rewards. Intro to Sculpture will provide extensive opportunities for students to develop observational, conceptual and technical skills, in order to reach their desired outcomes. This course is broken down into three sections: BIO-GEO, Of the Body/For the Body and Space Invaders, each introducing different aspects of contemporary sculpture. Each section will consist of a final project as well as homework and in-class assignments geared toward developing conceptual and sculptural skills. Sculpture videos will be assigned for homework most weeks, followed by in-class discussions of them. Lectures will highlight the history of sculpture and current practices. The remainder of class time will be devoted to demonstrations, technical exercises, independent studio work and one-on-one conversations with the professor. Most weeks, students are expected to spend **at least 4** hours in the sculpture studio outside of class time. There is no such thing as being finished early when it comes to art. Keep working up until the deadline. If you feel you've reached a stopping point, push a little further.

Course Objectives (in no particular order):

- Expression*: to explore individual voices and interests through sculptural form
- Creativity*: to boldly venture into the unknown and find new forms to bring into the world. To develop a new kind of seeing, in which the materials of everyday life become sparks for new projects
- Communication*: to learn the language of sculpture and how to speak through it (and about it)
- Intellectual Curiosity and Flexibility*: to build awareness of historical precedents and conventions in sculpture, while questioning their relevance/dominance and championing unheard voices and new histories
- Disciplinary Practice*: to learn techniques such as woodworking, wire sculpting, mold-making and casting, carving and assemblage, becoming comfortable with a wide variety of tools. To develop a weekly studio practice and put in the hours needed to achieve goals
- Aesthetic Discernment*: to develop critical skills through the critique of student work and discussion of artwork viewed in lectures, video assignments and in-person viewing
- Ethical, Informed and Engaged Citizenship*: to foster a sense of community in the class and maintain a respectful and productive work environment

Course Schedule (subject to change according to class needs)

FOR WEEKLY HOMEWORK [SEE HERE](#)

PROJECT ONE: BIO-GEO

This section is an introduction to abstract sculpture and all of its formal and spatial concerns. We will study basic elements of sculpture such as scale, mass, balance, tension and symmetry.

In-class assignments will encourage students to experiment with a wide variety of abstract ideas, using materials such as wood, wire, cardboard, foam and fabric. The completed project will consist of a hybrid organic/geometric form using a wood armature as its starting point. It must be at least four feet tall and free-standing.

WEEK ONE: September 1st

Review of Syllabus, Student Introductions, [Sculpture Vocab Lesson #1](#), Clay Verb Exercises

Homework: Sculpture Studio Safety Seminar with John, Wire sculptures, Videos #1: Watch & Respond, Print out, read and sign [this form](#), bring to next class

WEEK TWO: September 8th

Videos #1 Discussion, Project #1 Intro, Tech Demo, Work on Project #1

Homework: Studio Hours, Videos #2: Watch & Respond

**9/13 Jamea Richmond-Edwards 2:30–3:30PM: Panel Discussion Black Box Theatre KTSA
4:00–6:00PM: Opening Reception, Wellin Museum of Art**

WEEK THREE: September 15th

Videos #2 Discussion, Tech Demo, Work on Project #1

Homework: Studio Hours, Videos #3: Watch & Respond

WEEK FOUR: September 22nd

Videos #3 Discussion, Tech Demo, Work on Project #1

Homework: Studio Hours (finish project 1)

WEEK FIVE: September 29th

Critique Day Project #1

Homework: Critique Summary #1, Writing Assignment #1

10/2 4:30PM Visiting Artist Lecture: Rodrigo Valenzuela

PROJECT 2: OF THE BODY/ FOR THE BODY

This project will combine elements taken from the body (through mold-making, casting, imprinting, carving, etc.) with objects that are designed for human use. Students will make alginate molds of body parts and cast them in plaster. Plaster casts will be combined and transformed using carving techniques. Students will also bring in objects designed for human use and will incorporate these into their final works through casting and assemblage. Experimentation is key, and students will be encouraged to try out a wide variety of materials to examine how different textures and appearances can impact the viewer's understanding of the work. The final project can consist of one sculpture or a series, and its display must be carefully considered.

WEEK SIX: October 6th

Intro to Project #2, Tech Demo, In-Class Assignments (hand casting)

Homework: Studio Hours, Collect Objects for Casting, Reading #1 response

10/6 4:30PM Wellin Visiting Artist Lecture: Jamea Richmond-Edwards

WEEK SEVEN: October 13th

Reading #1 Discussion, Tech Demo, Work on Project #2

Homework: Studio hours

WEEK EIGHT: October 20th

Tech Demo: mother molds, carving, Work on Project #2

Homework: Videos #4: Watch & Respond, Studio Hours

WEEK NINE: October 27th

Videos #4 Discussion, Tech Demo: surfaces, silicone and glue skins, Work on Project #2

Homework: Videos #5: Watch & Respond, Studio Hours

WEEK TEN: November 3rd

Videos #5 Discussion, Tech Demo: more surfaces, Work on Project #2

Homework: Studio Hours (finish project 2)

WEEK ELEVEN: November 10th

Critique Day Project #2

Homework: Critique Summary #2, Writing Assignment #2

PROJECT 3: SPACE INVADERS

This section will investigate how a sculpture can become larger than its physical dimensions, through placement, light, sound, video and performative elements. Students may use transformed components from previous two projects and will learn how to work with modular forms and collapsible materials that they can easily store. They will build site-specific installations in spaces inside or outside KTSA (must be within a one-minute walk).

WEEK TWELVE: November 17th

Intro to Project #3, Tech Demo, In-Class Assignments

11/19 4:30PM Visiting Artist Lecture: Jiha Moon

THANKSGIVING RECESS

WEEK THIRTEEN: December 1st

Videos #6 Discussion, Tech Demo, Work on Project #3

Homework: Studio Hours, Project #3 Sketching, Videos #7: Watch & Respond

WEEK FOURTEEN: December 8th

Videos #7 Discussion, Tech Demo, Work on Project #3

Homework: Studio Hours (finish project 3), Writing Assignment #3

WEEK FIFTEEN: Final Exam Date: Thursday, December 18th, 7-10PM

Critique Day Project #3

Homework: Critique Summary #3

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Projects: #1-3:

The final projects for each section of the class. Sculptural works that should demonstrate a cumulative understanding of all material covered and express each student's individual interests.

Studio Hours:

Each time Studio Hours are assigned, students are required to spend at least 4 hours in the studio outside of class time. These hours will impact the grade of Projects #1-3.

Tech Demos

Activities to help students learn about new methods and materials they will use in their projects.

Video Watching, Responding, Discussing: #1-7

Each week students will be assigned a video about sculpture to watch for homework. Students must watch the videos intently and write down their own personal responses and opinions (**add them to your google doc by midnight before class**). Min 150 words. No maximum. Most classes will begin with a discussion of the previously assigned video.

Reading Assignments:

Readings associated with the Projects. Students must read carefully and write a response (min 150 words) due midnight before class

Writing Assignments: #1-3:

Personal artist statements to supplement each project. Min 200 words.

Critique Summaries: #1-3

Written summary of students' experiences and take-aways from each critique, including conclusions reached about their own and other students' work. Min 200 words.

Please hand in all assignments via one Google Doc that you will maintain throughout the course. The doc should be titled ART109_S25_Firstname_Lastname and must be shared with me (via abrener@hamilton.edu). Assignments should be ordered newest to oldest and should each be titled (eg. Video Assignment #1, Artists Names)

GRADING In depth feedback from professor will be given within two weeks of each critiques

Project #1: 20% (also includes in-class assignments, studio hours, maintaining good working environment)

Project #2: 20%

Project #3: 20%

Video Assignments #1-7: 14%

Reading Assignment: 2%

Writing Assignments #1-3: 9%

Critique Summaries #1-3: 6%

Participation (Studio citizenry, discussion and critique contributions): 7%

Lecture attendance: 2% for mandatory one, 0.5% for bonus ones

Your overall evaluation for each Project will be determined by a variety of factors, as listed below:

- Experimentation and exploration of themes and materials
- Energy and time spent
- Development of unique voice and personal interests
- Conviction and boldness, pushing beyond comfort zone
- Overall conceptual and formal success of project in relation to student's goals
- Grasp of technical skills

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory for all classes unless student is ill and contagious. Student's grade will be impacted if professor is not contacted in advance of absence. Arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 15 minutes early without an excuse will also impact overall grade. Students are responsible for catching up on any missed work due to absences. If you might be contagious (not with covid or the flu), but feel well enough to attend class, I kindly ask that you wear a mask to protect those around you.

Communication

Students must check email daily for emails from professor and send prompt replies when directed. Homework assignments will be outlined in email and all written assignments should be submitted by google doc. Please address all emails to professor with **109** in subject heading. Feel free to text professor at 646-684-1076 if there are any urgent concerns.

Deadlines

Projects #1-3 MUST be finished by and presented on their critique days. See syllabus for other deadlines.

Critiques

All students must participate in class discussion and critiques. The degree and quality of participation will be reflected in grade.

Text and Materials

There is no required text for this course but there will be assigned readings and other resources that will be distributed via email.

Materials will be provided in kits (students must sign return agreement). In addition to these students should bring:

- Clothes you are willing to get dirty, or an apron
- Found objects to incorporate into projects (will explain)
- Materials dictated by ideas

A New Material Report form must accompany any new materials that are brought into the studio, material(s) should be discussed with the professor and the form should be returned to the Professor and Studio Arts Operation Manager - John Powell. His office is in the Woodshop, KTSA 118, jdpowell@hamilton.edu.

Class Time

- Come to class prepared with supplies and ready to work
- Be present and focus on your work during class time (your behavior is also considered part of your grade)
- No texting/calling/social media usage during class (cellphones may sometimes be used for research purposes, with permission from professor)
- Students may take one 10-minute break during class, after discussion, lecture and demonstration period is over.

Studio Citizenry

For our health and keeping the studio accessible, it is imperative for us all to do our part in keeping the studio clean. This includes shared table areas, tools, materials, and your personal shelf. Studio citizenry

is reflected in your grade for the course. Your grade will be lowered (after one warning) if you are not properly maintaining a clean work area, this applies to in and out of class time in the studio. Please put your phone away during the class with a silenced ringer unless it is being used for course support.

Statement Regarding KTSA Facilities

"Hamilton custodial staff is excluded from handling student projects, work and related materials. This means staff cannot clean up after students and it is the responsibility of students to clean up after themselves."

Studio Access

Students ENROLLED IN THE COURSE have varying degrees of access to KTSA 116, 116C, 117, and 118 from 8:00am-midnight during the semester and will require the buddy system.

Buddy System

Anyone working in the 3D studios is *required* to work with a "buddy" when the Professor, Studio Art Operations Manager, or Studio Monitor is not present. This is someone else in the class, Intro to Ceramics, What Artists Wear, Advanced 3D and Senior Project with whom you will be in constant contact through sight or sound.

Studio Safety

It is important to take safety very seriously in the studios. The proper use of tools and equipment will be demonstrated in the ***Sculpture Studio Safety Seminar***. Students must sign up for this on the first day of class. The *Studio Arts Operation Manager* conducts this seminar outside of class-time. **All students must complete this seminar in the first week of classes.** If you have any questions regarding the safe utilization of tools please do not hesitate to contact the Professor or John Powell. **Do not operate a tool if you are unsure of how to use it safely.** Open toed shoes are not permitted in the studio. Food is not permitted in the studio.

Each studio has an accompanying EH&S Handbook that students must read, the last page needs to be printed out, signed, and given to the professor on the second day of class. Please also visit [this link](#) to familiarize yourself with fire safety for KTSA. For other emergencies visit [this link](#).

All studio protocols must be strictly followed and works may not be left unattended in public areas. All studio protocols must be carefully followed including buddy and cleaning protocols. Failure to comply with studio guidelines may result in termination of access to that or all studios.

Academic Warnings

If you feel this class is not for you, you may drop without penalty before _____. The professor will speak with students individually if performance falls to a C+.

Academic Integrity

Creative dishonesty in an art class is when you use previous work or submit other people's work as your own. Don't do it. This class is an opportunity for you to create work that is meaningful to you. Students found cheating will be punished to the fullest extent of the College's rules.

AI

Powerful new artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT, Midjourney, etc.) have emerged recently that can circumvent the creative process. I am not entirely opposed to the use of such tools for visual brainstorming purposes (but never for written assignments). If you would like to use AI for any reason, you must seek written approval from me in advance and your use must be cited in any presentation of the

work. Failure to do so will be considered a violation of Hamilton's Honor Code (see Academic Integrity, above).

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. Hamilton College services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at [this link](#).

Disabilities

Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation(s) and would like to make a formal request for this course, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Assistant Dean for Accessibility Resources aharriso@hamilton.edu with appropriate documentation of your disability.

Library Support:

Start with [the Art and Art History Research Guide](#)

Contact Lynn Mayo lmayo@hamilton.edu for personalized assistance.

Consult with experts from [the Research & Design Studio](#) for guidance with academic research and digital media technologies. Research & Design Studio, 1st Floor Burke Library, askus@hamilton.edu or call 315-859-4735.