

# NCAL 406G: OUTDOOR LANDSCAPE PAINTING FOR OLDER ADULTS

## Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Winter 2026
Units:	0
Hours:	3 lecture, 3 laboratory per week (72 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Non-Degree-Applicable Non-Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Non-GE
Transferable:	None
Grade Type:	Non-Credit Course (Receives no Grade)
Repeatability:	Unlimited Repeatability

## Student Learning Outcomes

- Paint outdoor landscapes in one sitting using composition.
- Paint outdoor landscapes using atmospheric perspective.
- Use outdoor equipment specific for plein air painting.

## Description

This noncredit course is targeted towards older adults. This course introduces beginning artists to the core concepts and techniques of painting outdoor landscapes and nature subjects in the open air on location.

## Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Create outdoor landscape paintings that show evidence of a working knowledge of the physical properties of painting materials
2. Organize and apply the basic formal elements and principles of design in paintings
3. Model form from observation, using value, color, and light from observation
4. Apply the principles of perceptually and theoretically based color theory to painting projects
5. Examine and describe historical and contemporary developments, trends, materials, and approaches in outdoor plein-air landscape painting
6. Assess and critique paintings in group, individual, and written contexts, using relevant critique formats, concepts, and terminology
7. Safely handle and use plein air paint, supports, easels, materials, and equipment
8. Produce outdoor landscape paintings that creatively apply subjective matter that reflects personal and cultural differences

## Course Content

1. Materials and equipment
  - a. Solvent-free paint: water-mixable oil paint, slow-drying acrylic paint, soft oil pastels, gouache, watercolor paint, water-soluble graphite, brushes, water pens, water/containers
  - b. Drawing and painting supports: sketch pad, markers, pencils, small canvas boards/panels, gesso boards, aqua boards
  - c. Composition tools: viewfinders and photography
  - d. Pochade plein air boxes easel and tripods, portable easels, palettes, plein air umbrellas, portable chairs, hats, drying and transporting painting boxes
  - e. Set up on location
2. Selecting a landscape subject/location
  - a. Learning to see
  - b. Hills and mountains/landscape, beaches/beach town, parks, lakes/ponds, gardens, skies/sunsets/sunrises, forest, rocks, hiking trails, cityscapes, snow, trees
3. Designing the painting composition
  - a. Understanding abstraction: shapes, Notan limited value maps
  - b. Rule of thirds
  - c. Center of interest
  - d. Thumbnail sketches, sketchbooks, and composition theory
    - i. Edgar Payne compositions: pyramid, cross, radiating lines, diagonal lines, tunnel, silhouette, pattern, rectangle/L, suspended steelyard, three spots, group mass, points of interest
4. Color theory, pigments, palettes
  - a. Paint properties: chroma, color and value, hues
  - b. Atmospheric perspective: value and color
  - c. Setting up a plein air palette
  - d. Colorist and tonalist approaches
  - e. Zorn palette
  - f. Color harmonies: monochromatic, analogous, triadic, complementary, tonal
  - g. Advancing and receding colors
  - h. Color and unity
    - i. Cool and warm colors
5. Painting approaches
  - a. Alla prima: one-sitting painting
  - b. Brush language and impressionist painting styles
  - c. Painting at different times of the day
6. Art of plein air
  - a. History of outdoor landscape painting
  - b. Impressionism art
  - c. California plein air art
7. Plein air communities
  - a. Plein air societies and social media groups
  - b. Outdoor landscape painter demonstration
  - c. Contemporary plein air artist groups
  - d. Landscape painting workshops, exhibitions, and galleries
  - e. Plein air destinations

## Lab Content

1. Exploration of physical properties of opaque water-based painting materials

2. Organization and application of the basic formal elements and principles of design and composition in sketchbooks and in small painted landscape studies
3. Safety rules and procedures related to the handling of paint and easels outdoors
4. Evaluation and application of basic principles of color theory
5. Mixing paint on a plein air palettes
6. Painting landscapes from observation outdoors in limited time

## Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Portable easels, umbrellas, portable chairs, palettes, and drying boxes.
2. Students are responsible for their own transportation to landscape locations.
3. When taught via Foothill Global Access, ongoing access to a computer or smartphone with email address, internet access, and teleconferencing software/apps (e.g., Zoom).

## Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Portfolio review: each painting will be evaluated for technical ability, craftsmanship, and personal creative approaches  
 Written or oral critiques  
 Written or oral participation in lectures/demonstrations on outdoor landscape painting

## Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture presentation using the language of landscape painting  
 Discussion using the language of drawing and painting composition  
 Demonstration of using water-based oil paint, acrylic paint, gouache paint, brushes, supports, portable easels, techniques, and methods  
 Critique and group presentation of outdoor landscape painting projects followed by class discussion and evaluation

## Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Albala, Mitchell. Landscape Painting: Essential Concepts and Techniques for Plein Air and Studio Practice. 2022.

Johnson, Michael Chesley. Beautiful Landscape Painting Outdoors: Mastering Plein Air. 2022.

Zaforteza, José Payá. Landscape Painting and Composition: An Artist's Handbook (The Secrets of landscape Painting). 2021.

Steward, Iain. En Plein Air: Light & Color: Expert Techniques and Step-by-Step Projects for Capturing Mood and Atmosphere in Watercolor. 2021.

Macpherson, Kevin. Conversations with Nature: Oil Painting in the Tradition of Plein Air. 2019.

Albala, Mitchell. En Plein Air: Acrylic Expert Techniques and Simple Step by Step Projects for Creating Dynamic Landscapes in Open Air with Acrylics. 2018.

Johnson, Chesley Michael. Backpacker Painting: Outdoors with Oil & Pastel: Techniques for the Plein Air Painter. 2014.

Payne, Edgar. Composition of Outdoor Painting, 7th ed.. 2005.

Although some texts are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal texts in this area of study.

## Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

Research historical and contemporary plein air landscapes and write an essay or paper describing the artwork; make composition sketches from these great works of plein air paintings.

## Discipline(s)

Art