

Patterns in Nature: Structure, Function and (Artistic) Expression

QUARTERS Spring
STANDING Freshman & Sophomore
CREDITS 16

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Credit Equivalencies: 4 - Natural History of the Pacific Northwest, 4 - Introduction to Biology 8 - Introductory 3D Art and Metalsmithing



Both art and science require close observation of the natural world and critical thinking about what you see. People have been making these close observations and analyses of the world around them, including animals, plants, and ecology, throughout human history. It has not been until relatively recently in our history that we have divided these activities into two separate disciplines. Many of these observations of the natural world have focused on patterns at a variety of different scales from the scales of fish and feathers of birds to whole landscapes.

In the fine metalsmithing studio, students will develop basic techniques alongside advanced skills in construction and joining and explore mixed media in the context of metalsmithing. Discussions will address how design and material choices reflect the artwork's narrative. The program work will include significant time in the studio to develop 3-D art skills and students' aesthetic sense and skills in peer critique.

In this program we will examine the natural history of patterns, looking at display coloration, camouflage, repeating structures like fish and reptile scales, structural patterns in plants and animals and the mosaics of habitats in landscapes. We will emphasize close observation and critical and creative thinking around interpreting what we observe. Students will learn about the natural history of the region with an emphasis on understanding the underlying factors that influence the patterns we see.

Students are expected to spend time in the field refining their observation and art skills. In reading the work of artists and scientists who focus on the Pacific Northwest, we will look for commonalities and differences in their approaches. We will critique both works of art and works of natural history for their creative and scientific content. Classwork will include interdisciplinary work that demonstrates that students have learned information and skills in both art and natural history and projects will be shared in an end-of-quarter exhibition.

The goal of this program is to provide students with the opportunity to develop a good foundation in art and natural history and to practice interdisciplinary thinking with regard to these fields. You do not need to have any prior experience in art or biology to be successful in this program. Note that the art element in this program will have significant overlap with the Winter Quarter program “Shaped by the Sea, Shaped by the Hand.” Thus, students should plan to take either the winter or the spring program. It may be possible to take both programs with permission from the arts faculty.