Rationale
This experiential course will consider plants and gardens as a subject of art. Students will explore basic drawing techniques, botanical illustration, watercolor, and garden photography. The course will address the natural history and symbolic use of plants in fine art, and will consider the artist’s relationship with the garden. Students will critically reflect on course content in journals and explore the work of garden writers. During the studio portion of the course, students will have ample opportunity to paint, illustrate, photograph, and write about plants and gardens. By keeping a reflective journal, students will express their own thoughts about art and horticulture, and have the opportunity to write creatively. We will host several visiting artists and will visit the special collections of Mann Library to see illustrations in rare books.

Taking this course will also provide students with a unique chance to view science from a very different perspective. Creativity is the cornerstone of advancement in science. Exploring the relationship between art and science can foster an understanding of principles of design and presentation in living forms. Exploring the art of horticulture will help students view plant forms through a unique lens.

Students have the option of taking the course for two credits, or for three. In past courses, students have requested opportunities to gain proficiency in drawing skills. A
third credit option requires students to follow a series of exercises to enhance skills in drawing and illustrations; students will submit drawings and a portfolio/collection of their activity over the course of the semester.

**Who should take the course?**
Given that we define horticulture as both the “art and science of growing plants,” the course would provide horticulture and plant science majors with a context for the aesthetic aspects of the discipline. It would provide non-majors with the chance to explore an artistic perspective of horticulture in an interesting and engaging exploratory environment.

There are no prerequisites for this course. All studio and art-related activities and explorations will be at a beginner level. No formal art or horticulture experience is necessary for this course. It is expected that students will spend time outside of class sketching, painting, photographing, and writing about the plant world.

**Major Conceptual Areas for the Course**
Here are the overarching conceptual areas for Hort 201:
- Beauty: the aesthetics of plants and gardens, the intersection of art and horticulture
- Human well-being: the impact of the artistic side of horticulture on our emotional, psychological, and spiritual health
- Self-expression and discovery: uncovering and articulating your thoughts and reflections which emerge from topics and activities in the course.
- Nature and our relationship with it, as expressed and “worked out” in the garden.

**Course Objectives**
Upon completion of the course students will be able to:
- Discuss the diverse ways in which artists have a relationship with plants and gardens.
- Begin to be able to articulate a “personal aesthetic” of topics covered in the course, and describe what appeals to you.
- Recognize the “art of horticulture” in public and private spaces.
- Gain proficiency watercolor, drawing, photography, and/or writing.
- Critique elements of the art of horticulture covered in the class.

Hort 201 will also provide students with the opportunity to think broadly about questions such as:
- What do the changing images of horticulture in art tell us about our notions of beauty?
- What does horticulture in fine art tell us about the relationship of the garden and nature to the artist?
- Why have artists used plants and gardens as a medium for expressing themselves?
- What can we learn about horticulture from various art forms?
- How are plants used to convey emotion in fine art?
- What medium do I most enjoy?
Class Format
Class will meet from 1:25 – 4:25 on Tuesdays. Typically we will begin with a brief discussion or presentation and move to the studio portion of the class. There will be a field trip to the Johnson Museum, the Mann Library, and one or more outdoors to sketch, weather permitting. We will have several visiting artists.

Course Resources
Required text (also available on reserve in Mann Library):

In addition to readings in the required text, you will select one of the following five books and devote one journal article to a one to two page book review, providing a brief overview of the book, discussing the author’s main points, talking about the writing style, and whether or not the writing resonated with you. The book review will be due November 21.


Journals
Students are required to keep a journal, weekly, for the first 10 weeks of the course. Students will:
- Briefly summarize learnings.
- Extensively critically reflect on content and its application to you and your interests.
- Make connections and compare with other experiences.
- Email journals to ME14@cornell.edu, once each week, due by class time the following week. Paste your journal from Word directly into the email message. The subject line can contain the week (week 1, week 2, etc.).

Consistently late journals will jeopardize your grade.

Please note: I will ask your permission to share portions of your journal in presentation or publication settings. Your identity would remain anonymous, and in addition, entries used would be general examples that would not in any way reveal your identity.
Course Requirements
For two credits:
• Attendance and active participation.
• Completion of course readings and assignments.
• Weekly journal keeping.
• Creation of a final project of your choice, on a topic of interest. The final project can be a further exploration of a topic from class, or a work of art and horticulture that is not addressed in class. This could be, for example:
  * a music composition, sculpture, web feature, or other piece of original work
  * a series of watercolor, oil, or acrylic paintings or botanical illustrations
  * your analysis of the work of an artist
  * an essay, poetry collection, or other piece of garden writing
  * another medium through which plants are expressed in art.

Final project must be approved by instructor.

For an additional third credit:
Follow a set of exercises to build drawing skills. Submit a collection of all the drawings and sketches created through these exercises outside class over the semester.

Grading
25% Participation in class, discussion, assignments, and activities. Missing more than two classes will affect your final grade.
35% Journal keeping. Missing weeks of writing in your journals, or being late with them, will affect your grade.
40% Creation and presentation of final project.

Supplies Needed
• Inexpensive sketchbook (Strathmore 400 series, size 11 x 14 is ideal).
• Brushes: I would suggest three sizes, such as #4, #8, and #12. Please, no stiff bristled brushes. Look for large brushes with good, fine points.
• Tubes of watercolor paint. Reeves offers an inexpensive full set.
• Inexpensive palette or dinner plate.
• Several pencils.

As an alternative, I may offer the opportunity to use soft pastels; this would require a set of soft (not oil) pastels and a pad Bristol vellum paper. Please do not purchase supplies until after the first day of class.

Please bring along cameras to the three sessions devoted to photography. Sessions will be geared toward working with the type of equipment that you bring along. If you don’t have a camera, we will have several for groups to work with.

Note: please do not over-spend on supplies. You will be introduced to a range of media, and shouldn’t purchase extra supplies unless you need them for a final project. For
example, good quality watercolor paper block or loose paper may be desirable but isn’t necessary, unless you decide to pursue watercolor.

**Materials fee**
$30, checks payable to Cornell University, due by the third week of class.

**Some Important Deadlines at a Glance**
- You must decide whether you are taking the course for two or three credits during the first week of class.
- **Journals are to be submitted** each week by the time class begins, for a total of 10 journals. **All journals need to be completed and in by class time on November 14.**
- **The review of the book that you choose to read** is due at anytime during one of these weeks, and must be completed by **November 14.**
- **All assignments and portfolio for the third credit are due by November 21.**
- **Brief description of final projects are due October 3.**
- **Last day of class, final projects are due.** You will have 5 minutes to present the final project to the class.

On the last day of class on November 28, all your course requirements should be complete.

**The Course at a Glance**

**Week 1 (August 29):**
Introduction to the course: what is the “art of horticulture?”
Course expectations and goals.
Balancing breadth with depth.
How the course will be structured.
Why your perspective and opinion in evolving the course is so valuable.

Read for next week Chapters 1 – 3 in *Beautiful Botanicals*

**Suggested journal topic**
Think back to a favorite painting, drawing, or other work of art. What was it about that piece that spoke to you? What details do you remember about it?

**Week 2 (September 5):**
Introduction to various media used in botanical illustration.

Read for next week Chapters 4 and 5 in *Beautiful Botanicals*

**Suggested journal topic**
As a child, did you enjoy art? Do you still? How has your expression of art changed since your childhood, if at all? If it has changed, why do you think that might be?
**Week 3 (September 12):**
Introduce watercolor.
Basic principles of color and color mixing.
Create a color chart.
Brush care, types of watercolors used, papers.

Possibly this week, if time permits: Introduction to the techniques used in watercolor, such as mixing colors, even and graded washes, wet on wet, wet on dry, softening an edge.

Read for next week Chapter 6 in *Beautiful Botanicals*

**Suggested journal topic**
People often retreat to the garden for relaxation. Think of a time that a public garden space, personal garden, or other landscape had an impact on your personal well-being. What was the place, and what did it do for you?

**Week 4 (September 19):**
Watercolor, continued
Weather permitting, work outside.

Review topics of interest in *Beautiful Botanicals*

**Suggested journal topic**
Explore an area of the Cornell Plantations. Reflect on any garden, or any aspect of the garden, in your journal.

**Week 5 (September 26):**
Presentation on the contemporary artists’ relationship with nature and the garden.
Visiting artist: Dr. Franklin Spector, Chair of the Art Department, Cornell University
Discussion

Watercolor, continued

**Suggested journal topic**
Flowers give us much – scent, color, beauty, and taste. We use them to convey emotional responses to weddings, funerals, graduations, and births. Why flowers? Describe a flower or a bouquet that takes you back to an incident or to your past. Do zinnias remind you of the ones you stole from the neighbor’s yard when you were eight years old? Do yellow roses remind you of the ones you got from someone who stood you up? If you participated in “forced labor” in the family garden, is there a flower you can’t stand?

Alternatively:
Do you have a favorite poem, novel, piece of music? What would it look like as a painting?
**Week 6 (October 3):**
Garden photography begins
Guest: Dr. H. Chris Wien, Professor of Horticulture
Photography studio

Please bring along your camera, or borrow a friend’s that you would like to learn to use. We will have extra cameras at hand.

**Photography assignment**
You will be asked to complete a photography assignment; details will be provided in class. You will need to turn in your completed assignment by October 12 to the teaching assistant; details for submitting these assignments will be provided in class.

**Brief description of final projects are due today.**

**Suggested journal topic**
There are a lot of art- and garden-related resources available on the web. If you plug "art gardens" or a similar search phrase, into the search function on the Web, you’ll get a myriad of sites to choose from – hundreds of thousands. Peruse some of these sites, and find one or two that catch your attention. What are the sites? What are the elements that resonate with you? What did you learn from reading through them?

**Week 7 (October 17):**
Photography, continued.
Critique photo assignments.

**Suggested journal topic**
Turning to the garden is a universal remedy for stress. Is it because we want to revel in it, enjoy it, make peace with it, or perhaps conquer it? What is your experience of the garden? What are you experiencing through the camera lens?

**Week 8 (October 24):**
Photography, concluded.
Digital manipulation of images.
Meet in Mann Library Classroom/Microcenter

**Suggested journal topic:**
At this point, you should be actively working on your final project; one of the project requirements is evidence of work over the course of the semester. How is your final project coming together? Are you experiencing challenges? If so, what are they, and how are you overcoming them? How is the project evolving?

**Week 9 (October 31):**
Visit Johnson Museum. Meet in the foyer.
Viewing plants and gardens in art, and the natural history of horticulture as recorded in art, through a tour of the museum and study gallery.
Work with the “carts” in medieval and Asian galleries.
Some exploration on your own.

At this point in the semester, you should be making significant progress on your final project. If you’re at all concerned about the progress of your project, please contact the instructor for a brief conference, so we can discuss it.

**Suggested journal topic**
Many students find the creative process to be a tremendous stress relief. Reflecting back on the semester, has this been the case for you? Has drawing, painting, reflective writing, etc., provided an opportunity to engage in “self-expression and discovery” as the syllabus suggests? Conversely, has it been at all stressful? If so, how?

**Week 10 (November 7):**
The art and poetry of Chinese brush painting.
Visiting artist: Jim Hardesty, Chinese brush painter
Watercolor and brushwork studio, largely demonstration

**Suggested journal topic**
Use your journal to reflect on your final project, and the process you have followed to conceive of and create it. Have you encountered challenges? If so, how did you, or how do you anticipate, overcoming them?

**Week 11 (November 14):**
Paper quilling with Jennifer Beauboeuf.

All journals completed by this date.

**Week 12 (November 21):**
Visit the Mann Library to see botanical illustrations in rare books

Portfolios due today.

**Week 13 (November 28):**
Presentation of final projects by students.
Final projects are due, and will be presented in class today.