

OFFERING ONLINE CRAFT COURSES

BEST PRACTICES FOR SNOW FARM

SEPTEMBER 2020

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ARTIST SELECTION/INSTRUCTORS/CONTRACTS

Organizations that have already led online courses have recommended working with both instructors that are already part of our community as well as reaching out to new instructors that have a large social media presence.

Repeat instructors are already familiar with Snow Farm's processes and student body and have a sense of loyalty. Multiple organizations mentioned that they haven't run into issues of instructors leading workshops on their own, as they realize it's mutually beneficial to keep working together, as the organizations have a strong brand recognition and are a large source of income for the instructors.

Instructors with a large social media presence will garner new students who follow their posts/stories. Snow Farm can position this as a win-win, because they will also get students new to them who are part of the Snow Farm community. **Metalwerx** also noted that they reached out to instructors who had already hosted pre-recorded videos, as it showed they already had the expertise to lead online courses.

Similar to what Snow Farm already does, all organizations send instructors a student roster a week ahead of time, as well as a day ahead of time. Because many online offerings are available for sign-up until an hour before class time, instructors do need to receive rosters multiple times. The **92nd St Y** asks instructors to send a welcome email in addition to the general confirmation email they send. The instructor would share any additional information that the students need to know.

None of the organizations I spoke with had online-specific contracts. Rather, they made negotiations (tele) face to face or used their traditional contracts but removed any language relevant to studio space.

Multiple attendees/instructors noted that instructors need a TA with them so that the instructor can focus on teaching while the TA can respond real-time to any questions in the chat or technical difficulties that arise. **Paulette Werger**, who has led online courses with **Metalwerx**, noted that she would meet with her TA ahead of time, leaving students in the waiting room if they arrived early, to ensure camera angles worked, to go over the flow of the course, and to brainstorm likely questions.

Expectations of instructors before and during class time has included meeting with staff to get up to speed on tech equipment; pre-recording demonstrations; making a supply list; prepping for the course; leading demonstrations; answering questions during the course; and offering feedback/critique. **Paulette** said she has spent up to 40 hours of prep time for a course, which is a large undertaking, but she then has a format that she can share with others (photography/editing; slide shows; demos; handouts; websites; tools list, etc.)

Expectations of instructors outside of class time is varied. Most organizations noted that teaching online requires a lot more prep time than teaching in person and were cognizant of this, not asking for more of their instructors' time than necessary. Others had highlighted the ability for instructors to offer more one-on-one feedback/critique through online workshops, so outside class time feedback was expected.

For courses that met weekly and had multiple project assignments, instructors typically sent an email the day prior with information about the next day's project. However, an attendee expressed a desire that the instructor send the email at least a few days prior to give time to think about what they wanted to do and collect needed materials (eg magazine cutouts of landscapes if they were working on a landscape collage).

Pocosin Arts School of Fine Craft noted that they left it up to the instructor/their medium to determine how they engaged with their students, but that the more an instructor was willing to do (eg make a Facebook group; respond to email) the likelier they were to use them again. They are hoping to streamline their process soon to ask all instructors to lead their classes the same way.

Multiple organizations noted that not all of their tech set ups were required (for instance, not all **92nd St Y** instructors made use of the app Cluster – more on that in Equipment/Tech section), rather they presented the tools that were available, trained instructors on how to make the most out of each tool, and based on the nature of the instructor and course, let them determine how best to proceed. However, one instructor highlighted the importance of maintaining a level of quality in instruction and resources, which might be easier to do with a uniform teaching method including technology used.

No organizations had examples of non-compete clauses, but **Pam** at **Worcester Center for Crafts** remarked that a clause asking for instructors not to teach the same course for several months before/after makes sense, particularly because the instructor does not want to compete with *themselves*.

A sample generic non-compete agreement is at the end of this document, which can be altered as needed for Snow Farm's purposes to include recorded sessions and pre-prepared materials.

MARKETING

Local organizations have a bit more flexibility with marketing. For example, **Follow Your Art Community Studio** did a survey to see what people wanted and found a range, from small-in person classes, to online, to in-person only if outside.

Most organizations noted that their mailing lists were the most valuable asset they had in terms of sharing course information, as well as a reason that instructors were interested in continuing to teach with them – access to a database of students. Organizations also noted the importance of increasing social media presence, particularly to advertise to students across the country and even the world. Beyond no longer being limited by geography, students are now able make an investment in a course fee and supplies without the additional costs of transportation and lodging, creating new audiences for outreach.

Women's Studio Workshop noted that 53% of attendees learned about the course through their mailing list, with Instagram being the second highest source.

SCHEDULING

Almost all, if not all, organizations made use of modified schedules for their courses. Compared to 12-week sessions, for instance, organizations moved to multiple 4-week sessions. This enabled more students who were unsure of their schedules to sign up for courses.

Organizations tended to start small – hosting 2 – 4 courses per month, before they felt ready to expand and offer more courses per month.

Multiple organizations noted a difficulty in planning a fall schedule because schools have not yet determined what *their* schedules will be. With a student body that skews older, this may not have a large impact on Snow Farm’s scheduling.

Because geography is no longer a limitation, organizations have been giving consideration to when they schedule classes – not just for best day of the week, but thinking about time zones in addition to time of day.

Some organizations saw registration up to an hour before class start time (which was possible because their confirmation emails were pre-loaded). Because online courses don’t involve travel or booking needs, organizations such as **92nd St Y** saw late bookings, which caused them to sometimes cancel classes a week ahead of time for under-enrollment. This then led to disappointment from attendees who had planned on registering but hadn’t yet gotten around to it.

Paulette Werger, on the other hand, saw her classes fill up with waitlists the same day she posted about them.

Laurel Fulton from **Pocosin** noted that with a complex supply list, it’s important to have a deadline before the start date so students have time to purchase supplies and instructors are confident that students are prepared. Similarly, **Pam** at **Worcester Center for Crafts** noted that with a week-long course, rather than a course spread out over several weeks, it’s essential that students have their supplies well in advance.

If there is any concern about cancelling for low enrollment, it might be worth setting a registration deadline at least a week prior to the class starting, which will also enable the instructor to “meet” the students and get a sense of their backgrounds ahead of time and help with their planning.

Instructors, students, and organizations noted a maximum of two and a half to three hours for a Zoom course, particularly if the instructor is working without an assistant to manage the technology, and if they are teaching more than one online course (whether for the same organization or another one in addition). Especially because there is so much additional prep time beforehand, anything longer than three hours felt unmanageable for instructors/students. One instructor contemplated (though she has not yet implemented) a 10 – 12 and 2 – 4 schedule, offering four hours with a break between sessions, which still gives a feeling of an intensive day-long session.

MONEY

New Art Center in Newton did a pricing survey with the assistance of MBA students for their capstone project and found that students felt online classes should cost less but hybrid classes could be nearly the same as in-person.

The **92nd St Y** kept online courses the same price as in-person, but noted that they will be raising the cost for in-person courses when they return.

Women's Studio Workshop charged much less for online courses as they were shorter in duration and did not allow students access to the facilities. (Their schedule shifted from 9 am – 4pm, Monday – Friday, to 2-hours every other day for 2 weeks). **Pocosin** also charged less for courses since their instructor time was less and students were not able to make use of their facilities.

Metalwerx split the course fee 50/50 with instructors. **Concord Art** increased tuition for students and pay for instructors (with a larger than 50/50 split for courses with more than 8 students), particularly because instructors were more likely to draw students across the country through promotion on their Instagram accounts.

The Umbrella Community Arts Center also increased pay to instructors (as well as lowered prices for students) to compete in the marketplace, as well as to acknowledge that some of the instructors were learning a new skill set, thereby ensuring they were taking care of instructors who had taken an income hit in recent months. They noted that students want to come to The Umbrella because they want to work with respected instructors – so The Umbrella wants to keep them dedicated to the organization.

Pocosin reached out to existing funders to make use of their scholarship funding to transfer to Zoom scholarship funding.

STAFF NEEDS

The **92nd St Y** held trial Zoom calls with instructors to introduce them to the functionality of the platform, including how to welcome students, chat features, making use of slide shows, sharing a pre-recorded demo, etc. They also had a staff member on Zoom for the first fifteen minutes of the first (out of four) session to give the course a feeling of being part of the organization as well as to welcome students and check the roster against the participant list to call anyone not present.

Though time consuming, some organizations felt it important to meet regularly with instructors. **Metalwerx** stated that they meet with teachers every six weeks to brainstorm what could work, and so teachers can share tips and best practices with each other, safety info, etc. They have also gotten interest from instructors after attending meetings that previously hadn't expressed a desire to lead online courses.

At least two organizations – **Pocosin** and **Armory Art Center** – have a full-time staff person to manage online courses. They deal with all set up, train instructors, and act as TA/support during class time and to answer questions outside of class time. A staff member on-call for Zoom can also ensure that only those that have registered for the class are actually in attendance (eg that no one shared a link or received the link then dropped the course).

Pam at **Worcester Center for Crafts** noted that she wants to have her watermark on everything she does, and if an instructor hires their own TA, that's a step removed from her organization. Pam recommended hiring a work study or intern from one of the nearby colleges to take on a role that could likely be full-time.

PARTICIPANTS

Multiple organizations and instructors have suggested a cap of 12 - 15 students per course. This is especially true if feedback is expected on every student's work.

Of note, **Concord Art** pays their instructors more for courses with more than 8 students, and some organizations have courses with a cap up to 25.

Some organizations feel a more advanced course can have more students (they don't need as much hand-holding) while others think it's as important for them to have fewer students (they need more space for greater technical skill and more detailed questions).

One instructor noted that for more advanced courses, class sizes need to be smaller to allow for a sense of mastery, questions, and failures. Even for beginner courses, a smaller size is useful to keep students engaged and interest them in part II, III, etc of their craft.

REGISTRATION

All websites noted in multiple places that the course offered was online. 92nd St Y had an option to add a donation at the time of course purchase, noting that donations helped offset the cost of COVID related expenses.

At registration is the time to ask how students heard of the organization or course. If filming/taking pictures during Zoom, also have them sign a waiver at registration.

Most organizations had a pre-populated email set to send immediately upon purchase which included the Zoom link – this requires creating all Zoom meeting links ahead of time.

All courses included instructor's bios and photos. Some organizations included the maximum number of students in the course description.

EQUIPMENT/TECH

Most, if not all, students are familiar with Zoom at this point. However, having pre-recorded tutorials or step-by-step instructions for students to simply get them set up and logged in is helpful, particularly with a demographic that skews older.

Pocosin has a Q&A primarily for Zoom set up, but for all questions related to online courses (including cancellation, materials list, etc).

Women's Studio Workshop purchased two licensed Zoom accounts and **Armory Art Center** purchased several to have multiple courses running at the same time, or a course offered while hosting a board meeting at the same time.

Nearly all organizations, instructors, and attendees stated that instructors needed two cameras – a laptop for talking and an iPad or phone for close ups on their hands. Depending on the medium, some highlighted a need for a tripod, a more hi-tech camera, or lighting. For a smaller-scale operation like **Women's Studio Workshop**, they were able to provide the necessary equipment and have it returned in time for the next course. **Paulette** at **Metalwerx** made a large investment of her own for a camera and lighting.

92nd St Y makes use of Cluster as a companion to Zoom. It acts as a private version of social media. Students can post photos of their works in progress, and classmates and the instructor can leave comments. In this way they can share work as they progress outside of class time and have clearer images than simply holding up their work to their laptop cameras. Week by week images accumulate in the app, so everyone can see progress being made and get feedback from classmates as they were working on a piece, rather than only on the finished product.

Pam from **Worcester Center for Crafts** used Facebook for off-Zoom hours to create a sense of community and a private group for students to engage with each other. However, she noted that some students specifically did not sign up for a workshop because she made use of Facebook – they either did not have an account or did not want to use their account for a course.

SUPPLIES/SAFETY

Local organizations were able to offer curbside pickup/drop off of supplies. For example, **Mudflat** left clay for students to pick up and collected finished pieces to fire in their kilns.

Some organizations offered bundled kits to sell in addition to the registration fee.

Most organizations received a supply list from the instructor and shared with their students at the time of registration.

The Umbrella Center makes use of a pre-populated shopping cart at Blick. This way students can see what brands the instructor recommends, and purchase only what they need rather than an entire kit.

Worcester Center for Crafts reached out to local vendors to ask for discounts for students to purchase tools/equipment. It was beneficial for students – cheaper supplies; as well as the vendors – students were purchasing supplies they wouldn't need to for in-person classes that the studio is already equipped with.

Early on, instructors made an attempt to have supply lists consist of what students would likely have on-hand at home, as they were likely unable to go shopping. That seems to be less of a concern now.

Some organizations included any safety gear needed and/or clean up supplies in their supply list.

Worcester State University lawyers put together a contract for liability for **Worcester Center for Crafts** – to proceed at registration they must acknowledge that they've read and agreed to the forms. Their language covers for in studio as well as at home.

The Eliot School noted that their insurance agent suggested their teachers may not be covered by workers comp when they teach from home.

CONTENT

Attendees noted that it will be easiest for students that already have some familiarity with the medium to take part in an online course.

Some organizations have made use of the switch to online teaching to shift the content of their courses, focusing on design and theory or how to create your own studio instead of solely crafting instruction. Additionally, they have added one-off lectures, studio tours, evening art salons, or guest presentations in addition to traditional course offerings. Organizations with a diverse audience – such as **Armory Art** – found themselves navigating offerings that would appeal to multiple demographics.

Pam at **Worcester Center for Crafts** organized her classes differently than most organizations. WCC did not have a streamlined process for each of their departments, rather they each operated their classes differently. Pam led all of the Metalsmithing courses herself. She pre-recorded videos of lessons and shared them with students on a private Facebook page. Then the students had a few days to play with the skills and use the Zoom meetings for questions, sharing projects, and giving and receiving feedback. Although labor intensive upfront, this provided her a set of content she can offer to audiences later on in other facets.

The ceramics department at WCC on the other hand held their Zoom class and recorded it, allowing students to access it for a certain number of days/weeks afterwards.

ENGAGEMENT

Metalwerx noted that some students felt that they were receiving more attention via Zoom than an in-person class because they were able to ask questions more easily and were able to participate in “office hours” and receive individual feedback, compared to potentially being a quiet student in a class where other students took up more time and space.

Additionally, Zoom offers breakout rooms where instructors can offer feedback or critique during class.

Armory Art Center provides each instructor with an Armory email address and encourages engagement outside class time, emailing instructors with questions.

FOLLOW UP

Most organizations I spoke with recognized that they had attendees from faraway states and even foreign countries. However, only one organization was able to determine how they learned about the course. It seems worthwhile to ask during registration or in a follow up evaluation how anyone who is not already a Snow Farm community member learned of the course.

STEPS TO TAKE

Based on researching crafting organization's websites and conversations with instructors, administrators, and attendees, it seems like best practices for Snow Farm would be the following:

- Work with both repeat instructors and new instructors with a big social media following
- Host regular meetings with instructors – those that are already leading courses and potential new ones
- Tutor instructors on tech capabilities/potentially have them lead a sample class
- Focus on Instagram posts to reach broader audience
- Ask where students learned about Snow Farm
- Offer written or video tutorials for students on Zoom
- Use Cluster or another app for feedback/critique
- Have a TA for instructors to handle tech needs
- If the TA is not a Snow Farm staff member, have someone affiliated with Snow Farm welcome students at the beginning of a course
- Have instructors use 2 cameras
- Make use of a pre-populated shopping carts for supplies
- Pre-populate emails and Zoom links

SOURCES

92nd St Y – Emily Coyne (also instructor)
Arlington Center for the Arts – Tom Formicola
Armory Art Center – Tom Pearson
Concord Art – Kate James
The Eliot School – Abigail Norman
Follow Your Art Community Studio – Kris Rodolico
Metalwerx – Lindsay Minihan (also instructor)
Mudflat – Lynn Gervens
Munroe Center – Cristina Burwell
New Art Center – Emily O’Neil
Pocosin Arts School of Fine Craft – Laurel Fulton
Stonybrook Fine Arts – Anne Sasser
The Umbrella Community Arts Center – Jason Springer
Women’s Studio Workshop – Carlie Waganer
Worcester Center for Crafts – Pam Farren
Snow Farm Board Member – Joan Lewis
Snow Farm Board Member – Claudia Waite
Snow Farm Instructor – Alexandra Sheldon
Metalwerx Instructor – Paulette Werger
Snow Farm Student – Sarah Madison
Art Canvas – Tom McCobb
The Art Studio NY – website
The Ceramic School – website
Cluster – website
New Masters Academy – website
Zoom – website

Sample Non-Compete and Non-Solicitation Agreement

This is an Agreement between [NAME OF EMPLOYEE] (“You”) and [NAME OF COMPANY] (“Company”). The Agreement is effective on _____ (“Effective Date”).

In consideration of the employment opportunity provided by [NAME OF COMPANY], You, intending to be legally bound, agree to the following:

1. **Term of Agreement.** This Agreement is effective on the Effective Date, and shall remain in effect throughout the term of your employment with the Company and for a period of one year thereafter.¹
2. **Limitations of this Agreement.** This Agreement is *not* a contract of employment. Neither You nor the Company are obligated to any specific term of employment. This Agreement is limited to the subject matter of covenants not to compete or solicit as described in this Agreement.
3. **Covenant Not to Compete.** You agree that at no time during the term of your employment with the Company will you engage in any business activity which is competitive with the Company nor work for any company which competes with the Company.

For a period of one (1) year immediately following the termination of your employment, You will not, for yourself or on behalf of any other person or business enterprise, engage in any business activity which competes with the Company within _____ miles of the facility in which you were employed.^{2,3}

4. **Non-solicitation.** During the term of your employment, and for a period of one (1) year immediately thereafter, You agree not to solicit any employee or

¹ Covenants not to compete are not favored by courts, so they generally are interpreted very narrowly. They must be “reasonable” in terms of duration and the geographical area to which they apply. Sometimes the duration can be as long as two or three years, while the size of the territory can be quite small, e.g., a 25 mile radius, or quite large, e.g., anywhere in the world.

² Many companies market nationwide and even worldwide, so a narrow restriction may not be terribly helpful. If you seek to limit activity anywhere in the United States or anywhere in the world, you will probably need to make the restriction much narrower. You cannot, of course, deprive the employee of a way to earn a living in your industry.

³ An alternative clause is:

During the course of your employment, You agree not to work for or provide any services to any competitor of the Company. Neither shall you engage in any competitive activity with respect to the Company. Competitive activity includes, but is not limited to, forming or making plans to form a business entity to directly compete with any business of the Company. This provision does not prevent You from seeking or obtaining employment or other forms of business relationships with a competitor after termination of employment with the Company so long as such competitor was in existence prior to the termination of your relationship with the Company and You were in no way involved with the organization or formation of such competitor.

- independent contractor of the Company on behalf of any other business enterprise, nor shall you induce any employee or independent contractor associated with the Company to terminate or breach an employment, contractual or other relationship with the Company.
5. **Soliciting Customers After Termination of Agreement.** For a period of one (1) year following the termination of your employment and your relationship with the Company, You shall not, directly or indirectly, disclose to any person, firm or corporation the names or addresses of any of the customers or clients of the Company or any other information pertaining to them. Neither shall you call on, solicit, take away, or attempt to call on, solicit, or take away any customer of the Company on whom You have called or with whom You became acquainted during the term of your employment, as the direct or indirect result of your employment with the Company.
 6. **Injunctive Relief.** You hereby acknowledge (1) that the Company will suffer irreparable harm if You breach your obligations under this Agreement; and (2) that monetary damages will be inadequate to compensate the Company for such a breach. Therefore, if You breach any of such provisions, then the Company shall be entitled to injunctive relief, in addition to any other remedies at law or equity, to enforce such provisions.
 7. **Severable Provisions.** The provisions of this Agreement are severable, and if any one or more provisions may be determined to be illegal or otherwise unenforceable, in whole or in part, the remaining provisions and any partially unenforceable provisions to the extent enforceable shall nevertheless be binding and enforceable.
 8. **Modifications.** This Agreement may be modified only by a writing executed by both You and the Company.
 9. **Prior Understandings.** This Agreement contains the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter of this Agreement. The Agreement supersedes all prior understanding, agreements, or representations.
 10. **Waiver.** Any waiver of a default under this Agreement must be made in writing and shall not be a waiver of any other default concerning the same or any other provision of this Agreement. No delay or omission in the exercise of any right or remedy shall impair such right or remedy or be constructed as a waiver. A consent to or approval of any act shall not be deemed to waive or render unnecessary consent to or approval of any other or subsequent act.
 11. **Jurisdiction and Venue.** This Agreement is to be construed pursuant to the laws of the State of _____. You agree to submit to the jurisdiction and venue of any court of competent jurisdiction in _____ County, [STATE] without regard to conflict of laws provisions, for any claim arising out of this Agreement.

Date _____

[NAME OF COMPANY]

By _____

By your signature below you acknowledge that you have read and understand the foregoing Agreement, that you agree to comply with all of the terms of the Agreement, and that you have received a copy of the Agreement.

Date _____

Employee