Knitting Colorwork with Kristin Nicholas

Chapter 1 - Introduction
Overview
(light music) - Color makes some people really fearful, I'm a color junkie I live and breathe color. (light music) After this class you're going to feel much better about using color in your fabric art, in your knitting and your stitching. We're going to learn about analogous colors and complimentary colors. How to use dark and light shades. And use your own environment for your own inspiration to help you learn how to pick out fabrics and colors ^and work with them less fearfully. ^(light music)

Chapter 2 - Principles of Color
Color wheel
- This is a color wheel. I painted it myself. I like this one because it's simple. It shows you that there's 12 slices on the color wheel. I think of a color wheel as a rainbow in the round. We're going to look at it and we're going to see that this is red, red-orange, orange, yellow-orange, those four colors next to each other are called analogous colors. So as you move around the wheel, the colors that are next to each other are analogous. On this side of the wheel, which is the side with the reds and the yellows and the oranges, those are considered warm colors. On the other side of the wheel, which are purples, blues, and greens, those are considered cool colors. So, I think it's really fun to get involved with your stash to figure out what your colors are. So now let's set up my wheel with my yarn. Let's start out with a red and we're matching these up and they don't have to be perfect, they can be, you know, close because you're not going to have all these colors. Then we're going to use some orange, some yellow-orange, and then more yellow. We're going to use a green and then a little bit darker green. Teal, a royal blue, blue-violet, a purple, and then a reddish-purple. So once you get your color wheel made out of yarn or fabric set up, then let's look at it. If you are looking at the reds to the yellows and you're falling in love with how your fabrics, your yarns, your colors are working, that means that you like colors that are analogous to each other. Analogous means very similar in tone, okay? So if you're a person that likes colors opposite each other on the color wheel, which would be red and green, blue and gold, you're a person that likes complimentary color combinations. Those color combinations actually pop out more, they're a little bit more forward, they make the eyes bounce when those colors are mixed together. Let's play with that. Okay, here we have purple and yellow. And if we separate them and we look at them together, what do you think? Do you like it? Now, let's take the purple away and let's put this red-orange next to it. Do you like that? Those are analogous colors. So you can see it's a little bit more calming. Okay. One of my favorite combinations is teal and orange. And when I was in graduate school I went to school in Colorado and I can remember the first time I saw the mountains in Colorado down in the southwestern part of the state, there were these beautiful orange cliffs of red red red red rock against this incredible blue sky. That's when I realized that, man, it's amazing what's out there in the world. So, I like to use complimentary colors a lot. I'll use every one of these combinations, I'll use that in my work. So that's the reason that the color wheel is such a great tool. You can discover if you like complimentary colors or analogous colors. Okay, so let's look at the two sides of the wheel. So we've got these warm colors. When you look at the yellows, the reds, the golds, it makes you feel warm like a fire going in the fireplace. If you look at the other side of the wheel with the blues and the violets it makes you think about a beach, you know, just basking going swimming, and so those

two sides of the wheel are warm colors and cool colors. People generally like one or the other. There's not a lot of people that mix them all up but I know people that will just, and you might be one of them, all they do is knit blue sweaters. And they'll take every combination of blue and they'll put them all into one sweater. When i look at that, I think oh my goodness, they did all this work, they're wearing this blue sweater with incredible fair isle but it's boring because it's all on one side. So, what I would do to jazz that up and to make it look more stunning, I could keep it all on the cool side, but I would throw in just little bits of the gold, of the orange, doesn't have to be a lot, just a little bit. And you see how that's looking a little bit more interesting? So imagine it in your head, you've got a blue sweater with just little bits of yellow. So it's still going to read blue, you're still going to feel like you're in your happy blue shade, but you've got a little bit more of a pop. So this is all a matter of personal opinion, personal taste, but just come with me into my world, you'll see how I use it, and maybe you'll be able to expand your world too.

Color values and neutrals
- So now, you will understand how the color wheel works. Hopefully that's cleared up a lot of mystery for you. But that's not all there is to learn. Let's think about color value. We're going to whoosh away our color wheel, and we're gonna turn our paper over and it's gonna be white. And what color value is is the darkness and lightness of a tone, of a shade, of a color. Let's look at two knitted swatches. Here I've got two swatches knit out of a medium teal background, so it's a mid-tone. In it, I, on this swatch here, I've used the same shade, the same color value, in a blue color. Unless you look carefully, you can't see that there's a flower knit into this swatch, because these two colors, the teal and the blue, are of the same color value. So, they're reading equal in the swatch. This swatch here is knit in teal, all teal, but there's two different color values, lightness and darkness. We've got the medium teal, and for the flower, I used a darker teal. So the flower is actually reading here because we've used a lighter tone and a darker tone. So, if you're a person that likes all blues and wants to knit totally all in blue, you've gotta make sure that the color value, the difference in lightness and darkness, is different enough in order for your patterns to read. This one doesn't read, this one reads, because the color value, one is lighter, and one is very dark. So now, let's look at a store-bought color wheel. This color wheel is a wheel I bought at an artist supply store. You can buy these at craft stores, online, whatever. And it's probably what you think more of as a color wheel. Now, a lot of these dials get a little bit confusing, and I don't pay attention to them. That's why I showed you the simpler color wheel. If you flip this color wheel over, we're now looking at value. We're looking at blue, light blue, medium blue, and dark blue. So those are all color values. You might notice that there's some colors missing on the wheel. What about neutral colors? Are you a neutral person? Do you like black, white, brown, gray, taupes? They aren't on the color wheel. So, for me, I don't really use these colors a lot. I'll use them to bounce off of colors. I never, I will say this to you, I never use black or white, because I think when you combine them with colors, it makes the whole project look pretty flat. If you were to use a dark, dark, dark shade of, say, a maroon, a purple, or even a brown, and mix it with colors like these, it's gonna look a lot more interesting than when you mix it with black. Do you see the difference? The black looks very flat, but the brown makes the whole thing look richer, and that's because your eye is playing with the shades that are all here. Brown is made up of when you mix two complementary colors together, you get brown. Taupe isn't really a real color. It's a combination of combining white and brown together to get a lighter brown. And gray is when you combine black and white, and get a gray. Now, I'm not telling you to never use these colors, because you really might like how black looks flat against other colors, but I'm just

telling you that this is my color preference, to use dark, dark, dark, dark shades. Let me just show you what I mean. This is a really, really dark maroon. And let's lay it against the orange. This, to me, is a really, really pretty combination. It reminds me of fall. If I were to take this away and add the black, do you see how it looks flatter? Because your eye isn't jumping between the two colors, the black is reading flat. If you don't like that dark, dark maroon, you can use a different dark. You could use a dark brown. You could use a really dark teal. We're talking complimentary colors there. You could use a really dark forest green. So, all those dark shades, let's line them up. Teal, dark green, really dark maroon, really dark brown. They're all reading really, really dark, and so you can play with this with your work and substitute these really dark shades for where you, maybe intuitively, would just think, "Oh, I'll just use black." It just makes your project a lot richer and way more interesting.

Analogous colors
- Here is an example of analogous color combination in my knitting. So I've got gold and greens together. And here's an example of analogous colors in my home. I've got the gold and the green on my wall similar to the swatch. In my painting I've got my white shape which is made up of a whole bunch of different colors. We've got some off-whites, some creams, some grays, some blues. If you look deeper there is even some pinks and some purples and some teals. And the sheep is set against an analogous combination of greens, blue-greens, yellow-greens. So this whole corner of my room looks very analogous, but it's in real life. So we can translate things like this to knitting and vice versa. That's how you stretch your color boundaries. By taking one color application somewhere and adding it to your art.

Complementary colors
- Now we're in another corner of my world. This is a painting I did of a pig, a pink pig, named Pinky. I used pinks in two different color values, light pink and dark pink. And, he's outlined in dark brown. The pink pig, which is one of my favorite things that I ever did, is on a wall that's chartreuse, a complementary color combination. So, it's looking really bright and really fun. You can see this in my knitting by looking at this swatch. Here, I've got the background of the green, and the pink diamonds. So, that's how you can take this combination, and turn it into knitting. Now, let's look at another painting. When I started this painting, I began the chair, okay? The chair is an example of analogous color combination. Alright, but, I took my oranges and I bounced it off a complementary by putting green walls, and then some aqua and blue. So, that's how you work to introduce other combinations. So, you can combine analogous and complementary colors together.

Layering colors
- Complimentary color combinations, they're my favorite. Let's look at some swatches that I've knit. Here's a combination that's teal and orange, colors are popping. Now I've used in this, I've used two shades of blue or teal with some orange. So looks very similar to this one, but the teal is outlining the dark blue. So we're now using three colors in this swatch. Look what happens when we take, the same complimentary color combination, and we add extra colors. We can start layer some more colors onto it. We can change it from this, to this. So I've added a dark, it's a dark green, a pink, a gold, and a chartruese. So, started out as this, went to this. Now let's look at my room. I painted these walls, quite a few years ago. I used a washed background of an orange. And then you'll see the dominate color is teals and turquoise. So that's a complimentary color combination. Then for

fun, I added in some dark rose, some olive green, some dark brown, some yellows, some other greens, all kinds of colors. So the idea is to go beyond your color comfort zone and add richness and layering to your work, and have a lot of fun with it.

Chapter 3 - Color Inspiration
Real world color inspiration
- It's wintertime at our New England sheep farm. When I think of winter, I think of whites and grays, lots of dirt brown, but if you look really closely at the landscape, and the things that are in the landscape, you can find colors all around you. We've got beautiful blue sky. We've got our apple orchard that's shed all its leaves. So now the trees look gray, and they look kind of taupe kind of color. In the background, you see the green grass that's about to go dormant. There's our sheep, grazing. Those are our lambs. They're white, and they're brown. If you look up into the hill, you'll see some pine trees, and where the mountain comes down, you can see how it's a darker color pine versus the lighter sprucey kind of pine. If you really look hard, you could almost see like a lichen green on some of the apple trees where there's moss growing. We've got our white Great Pyrenees dog. And of course, I've got our black and white Border Collie, Kate. And we've got our green and orange Adirondack chairs, that mostly get used in the summer. It's a little cold now to be sitting out here. So, let's see how we can put a color combination from this scene right here. You're such a good girl.

Color confidence
- So let's see how we can turn this beautiful scene into a color combination that you can knit with, stitch with, sew with or quilt with. I've got all my little yarn eggs out here, my collection of colors. And when you separate your colors and roll them into smaller balls, then you know what you've got. It's like your inventory of colors and you can then combine them. It's a lot easier than having a hundred fifty gram balls sitting in your lap. So I'm going to start with the mossy green trees and then let's grab a little of the blue sky. Let's bring in some of the lichen that's on the apple trees. Where is that? That's right here. Okay. Now, let's bring in a taupe, like the apple trees are, the bark, okay. Let's bring in a oh, let me see. I'm going to bring in a brown and this is what the sheep look like, when they're black sheep and then their tips turn sort of an orangey color. Alright. Okay, so this is what we've got right now. Okay. Now we've got to pop it up a little bit. I'm going to take, put in darker brown because that's going to be a different dark. So right now, we've got our a green and a brown for the dark and we've got these which are acting, sort of tonally. And we've got a, in order to knit this or stitch with this, we've gotta pop it up just a tad bit. So let's grab this bright orange from the Adirondack chair. Okay. And one more color, let's do the green grass, there we go. Okay, so now I've got a whole handful of colors and I look at them and I see how they would work together. Now, I always grab my yarn and grab my needles and then I start swatching and that's where I know if the colors are going to work together. So if I had these two colors in a knit and wanted to combine them, these two colors are too close in value to work together. So I would have to split these up with a darker color. I've got different choices I could make. I could use this dark forest green. So here we've got an analogous combination. I could use this dark, brownish red. This is more in my taste level because the colors are starting to pop off each other. If I wanted it to be a little bit more subtle, I could use the brown, so that's really pretty subtle. So this is how I work. I pull ideas from my landscape, from my collections, but you have your own ideas, you have your own collection. You live in your own world in the city, in the country. So just start opening your eyes and

start observing. Once you start observing you're going to say, oh yeah, that works, that doesn't. Then, grab your needles, your sewing machine, your quilting fabrics and just start playing. Because they only way you really learn how to work with color is to work with it constantly. So get over your fears and your inhibitions. Start playing and just see where it all takes you.