

Sample Photography Syllabus



Roger Fenton's Photographic Van, 1855 (Crimean War)

Rationale & Objectives

Photography has existed for almost 200 years, it has chronicled both everyday life and crucial turning points in human history and continues to do so. It has been a tool of propaganda, contributed to the overthrow of governments, determined the success and failure of corporations and celebrities the world over, as well as being a source of fascination, testimony of culture and evidence of the sheer beauty, elusiveness and immensity of our world. During these courses you will transform from casual or passive consumers of these images to active producers of them.

Key elements of photography are composition, texture, color, line, space, voice and above all **LIGHT!** The objective of this course is to introduce you to (or build upon) the elements and concepts of fine art photography (black& white and/or colour). You need to become (or should already be) familiar with the terminology, concepts, tools and materials essential to studio work. We will master basic techniques as well as experiment and explore/expand upon them. Developing an understanding of visual imagery, visual culture and how to construct images which accurately convey your thoughts and understanding of the world in addition to the interpretation (and tolerance) and critical analysis of other's perspectives is paramount.

Course/Learner Goals

- Understand the basic principles of manual cameras, film processing and darkroom techniques
- Help create a constructive and collaborative environment for problem solving, self-evaluation, and individual growth
- Become a self-directed, supportive and contributing member of the class
- Acquire a solid footing in the fundamentals of traditional and contemporary photographic practice as well as explore the possibilities of new and emerging digital technologies
- Experiment, with different methods of capturing images, alternative forms of printing or disseminating your work
- Create an ongoing portfolio of work for critique in class as well as exposure online
- Research and analyze the photographs of the prominent and contemporary photographers of our time and in the past

- Research, debate and discuss the history and social impact of photography and the ethics of image representation
- Link photo with other trends in art and media and understand its educative capacity beyond the darkroom

Course Involvement & Expectations

The instructor's task is not as a mere dispenser of information or just to help you acquire or learn a conceptual and practical map of the domain of photography but rather to structure your learning experience so that you can incorporate new knowledge into your existing schemas and build upon them. I bring with me considerable experience and knowledge of the medium however this background is incomplete and is further built upon each semester by the individual experiences, questions and passions each of you bring to the classroom. I expect you to come prepared to create, think and question.

If this is your first experience with traditional photography then you may find this course particularly demanding as it not only requires technical mastery of various darkroom techniques but also strong conceptual and critical devotion and considerable research regarding each project's development and execution. Due to the technical nature of much of this class and certain safety concerns attendance is essential to succeeding in this course.

Materials List

The following materials are required by the second week of study:

- 35mm SLR Camera with full manual settings and light meter
- An all-purpose 50mm lens and/or 25-70mm zoom lens + standard daylight filter
- Kodak/Agfa/Ilford professional 35mm film(s), 100~400 ISO (consider buying a bulk roll +dispenser with a classmate)
- Photographic printing paper: 8x10 inch multigrade RC Paper (resin coated) Ilford or Kodak products are recommended.
- Plastic negative & print sleeves for storage of processed negatives & prints
- Can of compressed air for cleaning negatives and/or Anti-static Cloth for cleaning negatives (optional)
- Negative and camera lens dusting brush (optional)
- Tripod (optional)
- 3-ring binder for storing negatives and prints
- 100gb portable hard-drive for storage of any digital files

Course Evaluation

Segment	Description	Value
Assignment 1	Choice of pinhole project or alternative camera-less B&W process	15%
Assignment 2	Ongoing throughout the term this online portfolio will display both in-progress and final-products. It is also a site of reflection and individual interests related to the course.	20%
Assignment 3	Shoot, develop and print a contact sheet and a selection of 8x10" B&W images.	20%
Assignment 4	Group project. This will be a student initiated, student lead group project devised from the issues and themes raised during the semester. Student will also develop an appropriate rubric for assessment criteria	20%
Assignment 5	Major Photographic project: research, shoot and print a series or body of imagery relating to one or more of the course themes	25%

Tentative Schedule Overview

Schedule	Description of Activities*
	(*indicates assigned readings/materials for class discussion/demos)
Week 1	Introduction: Syllabus / Course Schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origins of photography: history • Assignment #1 overview • Photography resources overview • Tour of darkroom facilities
Week 2	Early photography: An <i>objective medium</i>* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme: Documentary and the ethics of public shooting (Dorothea Lange, Diane Arbus, Edward Stieglitz, Cartier-Bresson etc.) • Assignment #2 overview • ½ Lab day: Demos on paper processing
Week 3	Discussion: Identity* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods of representation: Edward Curtis, Imogene Cunningham, Edward Weston, Albert Kahn • SLR Camera: introduction to shooting and composition • Fieldwork: shooting on campus (if appropriate)
Week 4	Full Lab Class: come prepared* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film Processing: developing our test rolls • Historic moments and the contact sheet: The Soiling of Old Glory, Cartier-Bresson and the 'decided vs. decisive moment' • Printing contact sheets

Week 5	Assignment #2 presentation/critique: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #3 overview • Ansel Adams & the F64 group • ½ Lab: Darkroom Enlargements (come prepared)
Week 6	Truth & Photography: The history of image presentation & manipulation* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daguerre & Rejlander: timing and composites • Postwar and mass film photography • Photomontage, Photojournalism and modern day manipulations
Week 7	Working Class: Full Lab or field work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #4 overview • Discussion of any technical issues and upcoming work • Lab and/or field work for upcoming projects • Midterm reviews distributed (tentative grades to date)
Week 8	Assignment #3 Presentation and Critique* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Assignment #5 overview • Photography education: How does photography teach? • Discussion: The image in society
Week 9	Memory: The digital era and the future of photography* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the 'post photographic' era • Social media and the ubiquity of the image • The work of Foncuberta, Crewdson and Johansson
Week 10	Digital Photography: Connecting two worlds* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of digital photography • The basics of digital photography • Convergence Culture and analogue/digital alternative processes
BREAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal holiday/midterm break, enjoy!
Week 11	Assignment #4: Presentation of group projects and student research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique of group process and products • Discussion/suggestions for future assignments
Week 12	Final Lab Class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last day to complete work in class and address and technical issues
Week 13	Final presentation and critique of major projects

[The schedule may be modified by the instructor to facilitate student learning and university activities. Full details will be posted online and described further in class. Any changes will be discussed with students beforehand.]

Resources

Below is a brief list of resources to begin the semester with, further resources will be posted along with full assignment descriptions as the course progresses.

Photography Resources

- The Wonderful World of Albert Khan: <http://www.albertkahn.co.uk/index.html>
- The landscapes of Ansel Adams: <http://www.anseladams.com/>
- The work of Edward Weston and Family: <http://www.edward-weston.com/>
- Documentation and counter culture, Diane Arbus: <http://diane-arbus-photography.com/>
- The works of Robert Mapplethorpe: <http://www.mapplethorpe.org/portfolios/>
- The History of Photography: <https://youtu.be/me5ke7agyOw>
- Abstract and minimalist photo: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/aaron-siskind/2>
- Online resource for Art images: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection>
- Lens Culture: <https://www.lensculture.com/>
- Magnum: <http://www.magnumphotos.com/>

Technical Resources

- Basic Photography Tutorials, covering composition, SLRs, film and darkroom processes: <http://www.silverlight.co.uk/tutorials/toc.html>
- Forums/blogs and communities of online photographers: <http://photo.net/> , <http://luminous-landscape.com/forum/index.php?> , <http://www.photoblogs.org/> , <http://www.largeformatphotography.info/forum/>
- B&W Film Processing: [instructional video](#) , <http://photo.net/darkroom/>
- Darkroom Resources: <http://www.darkroomsource.net/> , [DMOZ](#)
- The decline of the darkroom: <http://theliteratelens.com/2012/02/17/magnum-and-the-dying-art-of-darkroom-printing/>
- Alternative techniques: <http://www.unblinkingeye.com/> , <http://www.collectorsguide.com> , [alternative photography.com](#) , [B&W Film Form AP](#)
- Alternative and interesting shooting processes: <http://www.russmorris.com/> , Hongkiat.com

Critique & Critical Thinking

- Green, G. (2006). *In Their Own Words: Critical Thinking in Artists' Diaries and Interviews*. *Art Education*, 59(4), 46-53.
- Duncum, P. (2008). *Thinking critically about critical thinking: towards a post-critical, dialogic pedagogy for popular visual culture*. *International Journal of Education through Art*, 4(3), 247-57.
- Dorn, Charles M. (1993). *Art as Intelligent Activity*. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 95(2), 1-8.

Photographic Critique

- *Fstoppers: How to Properly Critique a Photograph*. <https://fstoppers.com/critiques/how-properly-critique-photograph-82407>

- *AYP: HOW TO CRITIQUE PHOTOGRAPHS IN 3 KEY STEPS.*
<http://www.silberstudios.tv/blog/2014/10/how-to-critique-photographs-a-key-ayp-club-feature/>
- *Expert Photography: 10 Ways to Critique Your Photos to Improve Your Photography.*
<http://expertphotography.com/10-ways-to-critique-a-photo/>

Grading, Academic Integrity and Student Accommodations

Please refer to university and student guidelines for letter grading, lateness/absence, codes of conduct, academic integrity, accommodations for disability that may govern areas of your performance in this course. Links to these resources will be posted online.