

SYLLABUS

EXPERIMENTAL PHOTO, 3 UNITS

Loyola Marymount University, Spring 2011

BRIAN C. MOSS, Lecturer

Mon. / Wed. 10:00 am - 12:50 pm

CLASSROOMS: BURNS 152, 138

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THIS SYLLABUS IS MY CONTRACT WITH YOU. IT SPECIFIES OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO EACH OTHER. READ IT CAREFULLY. I WILL DO WHAT IS WRITTEN HERE!

Course Description

This is a 15 week special projects photography class composed of lectures, demonstrations, lab work, critiques and relevant field trips. The purposes of this class are to expand your aesthetic, conceptual and photographic horizons by using alternative processes and building diverse cameras of your own design. We will try to balance experimentation with production both in terms of images, cameras and techniques. All students are encouraged to pursue their own ideas in light of the many examples of homemade cameras and imagemaking that I will provide. Pursuant to existing student skill levels, opportunities will be available to produce images in black and white, color, digital and alternative processes. In grading, it is your effort that will be judged most, so it is your responsibility to impress upon me the extent of your efforts by any means necessary. This entails communication - which coincidentally, is the purpose of all art!

Course Objectives / Student Outcomes

1. Students will use and strengthen pre-existing basic photographic skills.
 - A. Determine proper exposure through use of hand-held meters and knowledge of film characteristics
 - B. Use and enhance film development capabilities
 - C. Recognize and control contrast, proper lights and darks in printing
 - D. Demonstrate and improve good print presentation and finishing skills
2. Students will construct and use home-made cameras through a variety of methods.
 - A. Learn to design and build home-made cameras and use them to create photographs
 - B. Understand and use the relationship between focal length and aperture size to produce interesting and well functioning cameras
 - C. Understand the scientific basis of photography regarding light and optics
 - D. Understand how the relationship between camera, film size and placement affects images
3. Students will gain an understanding of how home-made cameras can transform the aesthetic, technical and conceptual aspects of photography.
 - A. Create cameras to take advantage of specific situations in the world
 - B. Use infinite depth of field and longer than normal exposure time in an intelligent and effective manner
 - C. Learn how lack of framing capability affects imagemaking, including compositional skills, camera and subject placement, framing and cropping
 - D. Begin to predict what your camera 'sees'
 - E. Gain a further understanding of and realize personal aesthetic goals
4. Students will learn the basic technical aspects of alternative processes in photography.
 - A. Ability to identify various alternative processes

- B. Identify and properly use the techniques essential to alternative processes, including sizing, application of emulsion, exposure and development
 - C. Produce proper film and digital negatives for use in alternative processes
5. Students will review darkroom health and safety issues.
- A. Ability to identify all chemicals and their uses
 - B. Ability to use all equipment properly and safely
 - C. Learn basics of processing for hand-made emulsions
6. Students will understand and use content and the communicative capabilities of photography
- A. Understand the difference between subject and content or idea
 - B. Use images to communicate specific ideas
 - C. Recognize and discuss content in the photographs of others
 - D. Demonstrate an ability to consider theoretical and critical issues and relate this to their own work
 - E. Demonstrate an ability to verbally articulate ideas about images and art
7. Using slide lectures and assigned readings, we will examine the work of important artists and photographers—both historical and contemporary, and will be able to identify various artistic styles and consider their own work in connection with the work of others.
8. Given the collaborative nature of group critiques and working in a shared space, students will behave professionally at all times
- A. Attend all classes on time and prepared to work
 - B. Contribute intelligently to class discussions and critiques, ask questions
 - C. Treat lab and school equipment properly, clean up after yourself, respect others' work
 - D. Present well finished products and be prepared to explain them

Assignments

This class will be mainly self-directed. I expect each student to build a *minimum* of two cameras over the course of the semester and to present a FINAL Portfolio of at least ten finished images for our final critique in an acceptable presentation style (as agreed upon by myself in consultation with each student). As you should know by now, the more you shoot, the better you will get and your grade is likely to reflect this. We will have regular critiques and private meetings to gage progress and discuss our work. Students are expected to present the results of their camera experiments every 2-4 weeks. Take chances and have fun! You will learn the most from your mistakes as well as from more, rather than less work. *REMEMBER: you can always make another picture.* All assignments must be completed on time. Prints must be submitted in a large envelope with your name, the assignment number and the date you turn it in written clearly on the envelope (this is for the protection of your work). You may use the same envelope for the entire semester. Along with your prints, please include shooting and printing notes and an optional one paragraph description about your images.

Critiques

Critiques consist of publicly sharing and discussing your work and that of your classmates. They are the primary means by which we learn about photographs. Together we will judge each others work, and it is your responsibility to participate by speaking, writing and listening. This participation is mandatory and will be encouraged and recorded as part of your grade. Critiques are how we

understand what our photographs are communicating (or not). I will explain my expectations for you during our critiques, and the various appropriate ways to respond to, and assess images. Critiques are meant to inform you about your work, not to attack or hurt people. Criticism should be directed at the photographs, not at individuals, *and* should never be taken personally! Public speaking is an important skill in many careers, and **everyone will practice public speech in this class!**

Attendance, Effort & Participation

Attendance during critiques and class discussions is critical. Participation in critiques and class discussions is a must and makes up a significant part of your grade. Be prepared to put in an average of one 3-4 hour lab session outside of class each week. This may include shooting and developing images, printing, or building and testing cameras. The more time you spend in the lab, the better your work will become. **This is a studio art class and it is your responsibility to be here.** When lab time is scheduled, you should be working in the lab, building or testing your camera *and I will keep track of this.* As home-made cameras may have *extremely long exposure times*, it is expected that outside of the initial camera testing phase, you will not be shooting during class lab time. **More than three unexcused absences from class may lower your final grade by one letter, and so on for each additional absence.** Excused absences are only for documented illness or family emergency. Four tardies (more than 5 minutes late for class or from break, leaving early unexcused or coming to class unprepared to work) equal one un-excused absence. Any late or incomplete assignments or writings, excessive absence or tardiness, or shoddy work will guarantee a poor grade. Originality, creativity and independence are important in creative practice. Creativity in problem solving, thoroughness and good craftsmanship are highly valued and will be rewarded! Attendance on field trips is mandatory, though I am quite flexible in terms of scheduling. Writings and discussions will derive from our field trips. If you miss class, call someone and e-mail me to find out what you missed! Always refer to the schedule if you are confused. Disruptive behavior which is persistent or significantly interferes with classroom activities may be subject to disciplinary action. A student may be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs if their behavior constitutes a violation of the conduct code. The add/drop period ends at 5 pm Friday, January 14 and March 18 is the last day to withdraw from this class.

Grading

Each assignment will be graded A thru F. Percentages of three categories will be used to determine these grades: **Aesthetics** (creativity and originality, composition, framing, subject placement, use of blur, light and shadow), **Content** (clarity of concept and originality of problem-solving, following instructions), and **Technique** (construction, printing and presentation). These criteria and specific expectations for each assignment will be explained at the time of the assignment. For every class an assignment is late your grade will decrease by 1/2 letter. Missing a critique will lower your grade for that project by 1/2 letter. Your two-day Final Critique is equivalent to a final exam and may not be missed (under penalty of failure) except for documented illness or family emergency. **Late Final Projects will not be accepted!** To earn specific grades your work must show the following:

A, A- = 3.5 or higher / **excellent work**: student explored, researched, experimented, participated, improved, was fully involved in the class and with all aspects of his/her work and produced outstanding work

B+, B, B- = 2.5 - 3.49 / **good work**: exceeds assignment and demonstrates improvement and growth, and good participation in class, but lacks full involvement and inspiration

C+, C, C- = 1.5 - 2.49 / **satisfactory work**: fulfills course requirements with some effort and average participation in class, but with some problems in aesthetics, resolution of and/or

understanding of ideas, or satisfactory manipulation of the material

D = .5 - 1.49 / **barely satisfactory work**: incomplete or poorly executed assignments and little participation in class

F = < .5 / **unsatisfactory work**: missing, incomplete, or unacceptable execution of assignments and unacceptably low level or no participation in class

Final grades will be	67 % photo assignments
computed as follows:	12 % presentation/artist's statement
	21 % attendance, participation, effort & progress*

* **Measurement/Assessment**

Intangibles also play a part in grades for studio art. While attendance and participation are easy to keep track of, effort is specifically measured by monitoring the following factors, many of which also impact your grade for specific assignments:

- conduct during scheduled lab time / critique / discussions
- punctuality in turning in assignments
- meeting interim goals (film processed and shared with professor, quantity of film / prints, one on one meetings to gauge progress, e-mailed questions on assigned readings and field trips)
- good craftsmanship versus sloppiness
- ideas / creativity (did you settle for the first thing that came into your head, or did you give it some thought and develop your ideas?)

ACADEMIC HONESTY

From the LMU Undergraduate Bulletin, "LMU expects high standards of honesty and integrity from all members of its community." This precludes all acts of cheating, plagiarism, forgery, etc.

Materials & Lab

Obviously, you don't need a camera! You will have to provide some of the raw materials for building your cameras, others will come out of your lab fees, including gaffer's tape, black spray paint and tools. Depending on the type of camera you choose to build, a tripod and cable release may be useful. Other important items for the darkroom include a pencil & Sharpie pen, scissors, scrap paper, loupe, towel &/or apron, chemical resistant gloves, anti-static cloth and canned air. You will certainly have to provide film for your cameras, though what type is up to you and for at least the first camera you build we will use photo paper for negatives. Prints can be made several ways depending on your interests, but we will certainly use RC and Fiber based B+W photo paper. While the class is open to working with any and all available photographic methods and materials, you must have a **demonstrated** ability to use whatever method you choose (in other words, you should already be proficient in digital or color printing if you want to use these methods. There is not sufficient time to teach the basics of color and/or digital photography *in addition* to how to build and use your own cameras and various alternative processing techniques). I hope to teach and provide materials for some alternative black and white processes including cyanotypes and van dyke browns, depending on lab fees and availability of materials, as well as darkroom accomodation.

LAB FEES: since textbook materials are not used in this course, the course materials required will be paid from lab fees of \$135 amount, to cover supplies that can be purchased by the University at a cost savings to students. The fee is billed directly to your student account and is good for one semester only. You have 24 hour lab access through key-cards issued by Tom Tolhurst (310-338-

7051 / thomas.tolhurst@lmu.edu) who also manages the darkrooms. Please report all darkroom / equipment related problems to him immediately. Darkroom rules must be obeyed at all times.

***** WORKING IN THE LAB IS A PRIVILEGE THAT WILL BE REVOKED IF WARRANTED! *****

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Students with special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office (Daum Hall Room 224, 310-338-4535) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <http://www.lmu.edu/dss> for additional information.

Readings, Texts, Writing & Tests

There will be no tests. Many websites devoted to alternative cameras and photographic techniques exist. We will visit several of them and I will show lots of work by experimental photographers. At some point in the semester you are responsible for a twelve minute audio/visual presentation to the class on the work of an artist whom you consider to be “experimental.” These presentations will be made under my consultation and supervision and include a 600-1000 word paper to be turned in along with a digital copy of your presentation (if possible). On May 6th you will submit an artist’s statement (approximately 300-500 words) about your final project. Readings will be assigned if there are any relevant field trips to photography exhibitions that we might visit. All readings will be handouts, there is no required text. However, I would highly recommend the following as useful resources:

- The Hole Thing: A Manual of Pinhole Photography* by Jim Shull, ISBN 0-87100-047-4, Morgan and Morgan, 1974 (mostly used)
- Pinhole Photography: Rediscovering a Historic Technique* by Eric Renner, Focal Press, 2004
- Jo Babcock: The Invented Camera* by Jo Babcock, Freedom Voices, San Francisco, 2005
- A Non-Silver Manual* (Cyanotype, Brownprint, Palladium & Gum Bichromate with instructions for making light-resists including pinhole photography) by Sarah Van Keuren, Self-published, 2004

PHOTO Assignments	(67% of your grade)	DATE: GIVEN	DUE
A.1- 1st CAMERA (4 prints, <i>minimum</i>)		1/19	1/26 NEGATIVES
(15% of your photo grade)			2/14 CRITIQUE
A.2- TRADE CAMERAS (3 prints, <i>minimum</i>)		1/31	2/14 CRITIQUE
(10% of your photo grade)			
A.3- 2nd PROJECT: Alt. Proc. or Pin. (5 prints, <i>minimum</i>)		2/16	2/23 + 3/9 MEETINGS
(25% of your photo grade)			3/21 CRITIQUE
A.4- FINAL PROJECT (10 prints, <i>minimum</i>)		3/21	3/30 MEETINGS
(50% of your photo grade)			4/11 PRELIM. CRIT.
			4/25 - 27 FINAL CRITS.

SCHEDULE (continued)**WK.1**

- 1/10 Course introduction: syllabus and supplies, equipment.
SLIDE / LECTURE: Home-made cameras
DEMO: loading film (paper), hand held light meters, exposure, development
NEXT CLASS: bring old work to share and potential camera bodies
READING: lab procedures and safety

- 1/12 Student presentation of prior work
LECTURE: What 'f/stop' really means...
DEMO: the basics of hand-made camera construction
LAB: camera construction and testing

WK.2

1/17 **NO CLASS - MLK Holiday**

- 1/19 LAB: more camera construction and testing
A.1- 1st Camera. DUE 2/14 (negs to print for 1/26)

WK.3

- 1/24 DEMO: contact printing on fiber paper from paper negatives
LAB: printing

- 1/26 Lab Time: ****pinhole photography exposures generally take a long time and after a reasonable period (1 week) of building, testing and understanding how your cameras expose film, I expect you to use lab time mostly for printing, not to make negatives*

WK.4

- 1/31 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS / Lab Time
A.2- TRADE cameras and teach your partner, DUE 2/14

- 2/2 Lab Time

WK.5

- 2/7 Lab Time

- 2/9 Lab Time

WK.6

- 2/14 **CRITIQUE: A.1 & A.2**

- 2/16 SLIDE LECTURE: COLOR / DIGITAL / ALT. PROCESSES
DEMO: Alternative Processes
A.3- 2nd Project DUE 3/21

WK.7

- 2/21 LECTURE / DEMO: advanced camera concepts
LAB: construction and testing

SCHEDULE (continued)**WK.7**

2/23 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS / Lab Time

2/28-3-4: SPRING BREAK**WK. 8**

3/7 Lab Time

3/9 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS / Lab Time

WK. 9

3/14 VISITING ARTIST: TBA / Lab Time
SLIDE LECTURE: ALT. INSTALLATION & MOUNTING

3/16 Lab Time

WK.10

3/21 **CRITIQUE: A.3**

A.4- Final Project, DUE 4/25 & 27, (interim CRIT: min. 7 work prints 4/11, Artist's Statement DUE 5/6)

3/23 Lab Time

WK.11

3/28 Student Presentations
Lab Time

3/30 Student Presentations
INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS / Lab Time

WK.12

4/4 Student Presentations
Lab Time

4/6 Student Presentations
Lab Time

WK.13

4/11 **CRITIQUE: A.4 work prints (minimum 7)**

4/13 Lab Time & FINAL PROJECT PROGRESS MEETINGS
READING: Artist's Statements

WK.14

4/18 Lab Time & FINAL PROJECT PROGRESS and PORTFOLIO REVIEW MEETINGS

4/20 *NO CLASSES: Easter*

WK.15

4/25 **FINAL CRITIQUE A.4, Day 1**

4/27 **FINAL CRITIQUE A.4, Day 2**

WK.16

FINALS WEEK (No Final Exam)

5/6 Final Project PRESENTATIONS and **ARTIST'S STATEMENT DUE**