

HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

We are virtually surrounded by the products of photographic technologies today. Outside the home, it is impossible to escape photographic images. Current uses of photography include personal, artistic, business, entertainment, medical, scientific, security, and educational. There are probably more. How did this situation occur? To understand this, we have to know not only the photographers and their work, but the artistic, philosophical and political conditions of the world that engendered the growth of this medium, as well as the technological advances that made it possible. It is my intention to teach a history of photography from the perspective of usage and intent. While the various categories may flow and mutate, studying the subject from this point of view is based on an effort to understand the subjective uses of mechanical reproduction and the basic paradox of photography: the (un)easy relationship between representation and reality.

COURSE OBJECTIVES and STUDENT OUTCOMES

1. Become familiar with the basic technical, aesthetic and usage based history of photography.
2. Demonstrate an ability to discuss and write critically about the technical and aesthetic aspects, and various uses of photographs.
3. Gain an understanding of and appreciation for the goals of various photographic usages. Demonstrate an ability to judge the success or failure of individual photographs according to these goals.
4. Understand and explain the use of the various communicative capabilities of photography.
5. Employ critical thinking where images are concerned, especially about photography's role in contemporary culture and throughout its history.
6. Behave professionally at all times, including attending all classes on time and prepared to work, contributing intelligently to class discussions and asking questions.

ASSIGNMENTS, TESTS AND GRADING

Several short response writings will be assigned based on readings and field trips. These should be about two pages in length. Every week a reading is assigned there will be time after the slide lecture for a group discussion. Students will be responsible for assisting me in leading this discussion. Your research paper must be double-spaced in 12 point font, 4-5 pages in length and use more than three reference materials. No hand-written assignments will be accepted. For your topic you must compare and contrast at least two photographs, photographers, uses of photography or movements in photo history. In art history classes you are expected to synthesize information. This means take in the data and come up with your own meaning and conclusions by putting it all together and adding it to what you already know and believe. I am not interested in having information simply regurgitated. Exams will consist of essay questions and slide identification regarding practitioners, movements, uses, ideas and contributions to photographic history. All these assignments will be graded A thru F. Quality, effort, and concept will all be considered when determining these grades. For every class an assignment is late its grade will decrease by 1 full letter. Grading criteria will be specifically explained at the time of each assignment.

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Final grades will be computed as follows:

15 % photo writings

10 % group discussion leading
20 % research paper
40 % tests
15 % attendance, effort, participation

READINGS

Our primary text is *A World History of Photography* by Naomi Rosenblum (New York: Abbeville Press, 1997), but other assigned readings will come from a variety of sources including:

Criticizing Photographs: An Introduction to Understanding Images. Terry Barrett. Mayfield Publishing Co, Mountain View, California: 1990.

Camera Lucida. Roland Barthes. McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., Toronto: 1980.

Ways of Seeing. John Berger. Viking, 1972.

The Contest of Meaning. edited by Richard Bolton. MIT Press, Cambridge: 1989.

Thinking Photography. edited by Victor Burgin. MacMillan, London: 1982.

Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West. edited by May Castlebury. Whitney Museum and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York: 1996.

Photography and Art: Interactions Since 1946. Kathleen M. Gauss and Andy Grundberg. Abbeville Press, New York: 1987.

The Golden Age of British Photography, 1839-1900. edited by Aperture, Mark Haworth-Booth. 1984.

Secure the Shadow: Death and Photography in America. Jay Ruby. MIT Press, Cambridge: 1995.

The Camera I. Robert Sobieszek and Deborah Irmis. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Los Angeles: LACMA and New York: 1994.

Photography at the Dock. Abigail Solomon-Godeau. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997

On Photography. Susan Sontag. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York: 1977.

Photography: A Critical Introduction. edited by Liz Wells. Routledge, London: 1998.

ATTENDANCE, EFFORT AND PARTICIPATION

More than two unexcused absences from class will lower your grade by one letter, and so on for more absences. Excused absences are only for documented health problems. Four tardies (more than 5 minutes late for class or from break, leaving early unexcused or coming to class unprepared to work) equal one unexcused absence. I am interested in participation! Participation in class discussions is a must because a significant portion of your grade will be based on effort and participation. All assignments must be completed on time. Any late or incomplete assignments, excessive unexcused absence or lateness, or shoddy work will result in decreased grades. It is generally good practice to let me know in advance if you cannot come to class. If you do miss class, you should e-mail me and/or call someone to find out what you missed! Always refer back to the schedule if you are confused.

FIELD TRIPS

Depending on what exhibitions are scheduled, there will be at least one and possibly two field trips, either to a museum or to galleries, or both. Attendance on field trips is mandatory, as well as important. Writings and discussions will derive from these trips. Seeing actual photographs is always preferable to viewing slide reproductions.

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SCHEDULE

Week 1. Intro: Pre-photography & the photographic urge: Camera Obscura, Perspective, Lens', Early Experiments, Inventions and Techniques, Reality and Representation

Week 2. The Artistic Impulse: Cross-Pollination between Painting & Photography, Academies, Amateurs & Art History

Week 3. The Travel Impulse: The Grand Tour, European Empires & Colonialism, Exoticism, Orientalism, Classification & the Other

Week 4. The Scientific Impulse: Collections, Criminology, Physiognomy, Psychiatry, Motion Studies & Film

Week 5. The Commercial Impulse: Stereographs, Cartes de Visites, Halftones, Reportage & Early Newspapers/Magazines, Illustrations, Education, Pornography, Advertising

Week 6. The Personal Impulse: Family Photos & Class, Portraits, Death Photography, Event Documents, Kodak

Week 7. Urban Problems: Poverty and Slums, Paris Commune, Haussmann, Atget, Social Justice & Control
Research-Paper Topics Due

Week 8. Midterm

Week 9. Field Trip: TBA

Week 10. Transition: Pictorialism, Photo Secession, Precisionists, Modernism

Week 11. Art & Life: Experimentation & Abstraction, Montage & Surrealism, Constructivists & Bauhaus

Week 12. Socialists in the US and the USSR: WPA, Photojournalism, 35mm

Week 13. 20th C. Mass-Media: Photojournalism, Perfect Moment, Advertising (& Art)
Research-Papers Due

Week 14. Straight and Manipulated photography: 1950 - 1980, Conceptual Art Photography

Week 15. Post-Modernism: 1980 - Contemporary Photography

Week 16: Final Exam