



PG 300 PHOTOGRAPHY: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

IES Abroad Nice

DESCRIPTION: The two main purposes of this course are:

- 1) To introduce you to the basic techniques that help you to master the fundamental rules of “making,” not just simply “taking,” photographs.
- 2) To offer a general idea of the conceptual issues concerning the reading of photographs, and images, in general. This encompasses how photographs are taken, what their different forms and meanings can be, why they occupy such a key role in our society, who controls their circulation, where their main centers of production are located and when this overwhelming global process originated.

Since theory informs practice, the proposed conscientious engagement with questions about photographic meaning helps students develop not only a better critical understanding of the images they are wrapped up in the environment they live in, but also a deeper sense of the hidden agendas underlying the pictures they learn to both interpret and construct.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

INSTRUCTOR: Eleonora Strano

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COSTS:

Students must supply their own digital camera (10 Megapixels or more) with manual controls, and a zoom lens, with a strong preference for either a digital SLR (Single Lens Reflex) or a mirrorless camera. Fully automatic, compact digital cameras (“point-and-shoot cameras”) are not recommended. Smartphones are not an accepted form of camera for this class.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures and discussions, presentations and video tutorials, critical analysis of required readings, experiments with photographic and lighting equipment, field study visits, student presentations of photographic projects, group discussions

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course Engagement – 10%
- Practical Assignments – 20%
- Midterm Exam – 30% (20% First Photo Project + 10% accompanying analytical essay)
- Final Exam – 35% (20% Second Photo Project + 15% accompanying analytical essay)

Course Engagement

Active class participation in discussions is expected, with students contributing thoughtful insights based on their experiences and the course material

Practical Assignments

Hands-on photography exercises that enable students to apply technical skills learned in class and reflections that require them to make connections between course-related trips and concepts learned in class

Midterm Exam

Photo project #1 (10-15 photos) plus an accompanying analytical essay : the project will require students to demonstrate their

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understanding of the technique and theory behind light, color, and composition controls

Final Exam

Photo project #2: A documentary, art project (20-30 photos), with accompanying analytical essay that articulates the aesthetic and communicative choices guiding the project

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Use their cameras effortlessly and appropriately, including the proper functions for taking correctly exposed photographic images
- Identify some of the major currents of fine art photography beginning in the early 20th century through to the early 21st century
- Analyse and decrypt the meaning of photographic images
- Critically evaluate and discuss the role of photography and images in contemporary society, the arts and the media
- Create photographs displaying a growing mastery of aesthetic qualities including composition, quality of light and contrast

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

As a member of our class community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. Any exams, tests, presentations, or other work missed due to student absences can only be rescheduled in cases of documented medical or family emergencies. If a student misses more than two classes in any course half a letter grade will be deducted from the final grade for every additional absence. Seven absences in any course will result in a failing grade.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Any work submitted for academic credit may be subject to review by a textual similarity detection service for the detection of plagiarism and AI usage.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
Session 1	Course Introduction & Basics of Visual Representation • Overview of the course, teaching methodology, grading criteria, and discussion of students' experiences with photography • Introduction to Art and Visual Representation: Invention of perspective, camera obscura, and the evolution of image-making technology • In-class activity: Take and submit photos of a classmate	
Session 2	Camera Equipment I: Basic Functions & Lenses • Introduction to camera equipment: films, digital sensors, image formats, and lenses	• Practical exercise: Submit 6 photos showing control of wide-angle and telephoto lenses, horizontality/verticality of building images

Session 3	Camera Equipment II: Aperture, Shutter Speed, and Exposure Detailed exploration of aperture, shutter speed, and exposure controls	Practical exercise: Submit 9 photos focusing on manual control and lens focal length
Session 4	Lighting: Color & Contrast - Understanding color, lighting, and contrast in photography - Exploration of natural and artificial light	Practical exercise: Submit 8 photos demonstrating control of color temperature and illumination
Session 5	Composition & Image Design - Explore composition, framing, and perspective in photography - Field trip to Centre de la Photographie de Mougins - Issei Suda - Fushikaden	Practical exercise: Submit 8 pictures demonstrating image design elements and write a reflection on techniques used
Session 6	Photo Essay & Digital Workflow - Introduction to the photo essay: learning storytelling through photos (e.g., Eugene Smith's "Country Doctor"). - Explore digital workflow and image management - Field trip to Musée de la photographie de Nice - Laurent Ballesta & Manon Lanjouère	Practical exercise: Submit 8 photos where composition plays a major role
Session 7	Midterm Exam & Class Presentations - Midterm exam - choose an artist between the 3 artists we've seen during the field trips and argument why his/her work speaks to you - Presentations of Photo Project #1 and class discussion	
Session 8	The Myth of Photographic Truth Discussion of the photograph as a document and the myth of objectivity in photography	Practical exercise: written reflection on the midterm photo project
Session 9	Portrait Photography - Techniques for making more interesting portraits, including visual obstacle - Visiting a professional photo studio at Le 109	Practical exercise: Submit 5 portraits using creative obstacles

Session 10	Breaking the Rules of Perspective & Second Photo Project - Explore how artists from Picasso to David Hockney broke traditional rules of perspective - In-class activity: Shoot and submit portraits, editing them for quality and storytelling - Visit to Villa Arson - Begin work on Second Photo Project	Practical exercise: Submit 3 photos comparing DSLR/mirrorless vs. smartphone photography
Session 11	Introduction to photojournalism Present iconic photojournalistic images (e.g., Dorothea Lange's <i>Migrant Mother</i>, Nick Ut's <i>Napalm Girl</i>). Discuss the historical and emotional impact of these images.	Students are tasked with creating a 5 to 10-photo series that tells a story about a specific event or moment in their surroundings (e.g., life at school, a local market, a community activity, or an environmental issue).
Session 12	Introduction to creative documentary This lesson introduces students to Creative Documentary Photography, which pushes the boundaries of traditional documentary styles. It blends truthful storytelling with creative techniques to explore subjective narratives, emotions, and alternative perspectives. Rather than adhering strictly to the traditional role of documentary as objective reportage, creative documentary allows photographers to use artistic elements to shape and interpret the story.	Students are tasked with creating a 5 to 10 -photo series that tells a creative documentary story based on a real subject (e.g., a friend, a local place, or a personal memory)

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Visit to a local photographic exhibition in Centre de la Photographie de Mougins - Issei Suda - Fushikaden
- Visit to Villa Arson, a local Art school, and meeting with the Photography teacher and his students
- Visiting a professional photo studio at Le 109
- Visit to an exhibition at Musée de la Photographie de Nice

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Adair King, Julie. *Digital Photography For Dummies*. Hoboken, New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, 2020.
- Freeman, Michael. *The Photographer's Eye*, Oxford: Focal Press, 2007 - 2013.
- Gross, Larry, Katz, John Stuart, Ruby, Jay (Eds). *Image ethics in the digital age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- Langford, Michael, Fox, Anna, Sawdon Smith, Richard. *Basic Photography* - 10th Edition. Oxford: Focal Press, 2015.
- Messaris, Paul. *Visual Persuasion. The role of images in advertising*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the pain of others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.
- Sturken, Marita, Cartwright, Lisa. *Practices of looking*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Wells, Liz (ed). *Photography. A critical introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Adams, Ansel. *The Camera*. New York, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2005 [1980].
- Azoulay, Ariella. *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*. New York: Verso, 2019
- Berger, John. *Ways of seeing*. London, New York: Penguin Books, 2008 [1972].
- Bolton, Richard (Ed). *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

- Frosh, Paul. *The Image Factory: Consumer Culture, Photography, and the Visual Content Industry*. Oxford, New York: Berg, 2003.
- Clarke, Graham. *The Photograph*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Evans, Jessica, Hall, Stuart (Eds). *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London, Thousand Oaks, New York: Sage Publications, 2001.
- Guerrero, Natasha S. *Beyond Representation: Photography and the Politics of Seeing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021
- Halpern Wenger, Debora, Potter, Debora. *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2008.
- Kemp, Martin. *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1992.
- McFadden, Syreeta. *Dark Noise: Photography and the New Black Imaginary*. New York: Beacon Press, 2020
- Mendoza, Elle and Gonzales, Carmen. *Bodies in Frame: Queer Latinx Photography Today*. Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 2023
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011
- Mohaiemen, Naeem. *Collective Memory in Fragments: Postcolonial Photography and the Diasporic Gaze*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021
- Newton, Julianne. *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. Mahwah, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.
- Sandler, Anne, and Flanagan, Emily (Eds.). *Photography in an Intersectional World: Identity, Power, and Representation*. London: Bloomsbury, 2022

FILMOGRAPHY:

<https://www.youtube.com/@TatianaHopper/videos>
<https://www.youtube.com/@nowness>

- Christian Frei, Nachtwey James, *War Photographer*
- Cheryl Dunye: *The Watermelon Woman* (1996)
- Deana Lawson: *The Body Politic* (2020)
- LaToya Ruby Frazier: *The Notion of Family* (2014)
- John Maloof, Charlie Siskel, *Finding Vivian Meier* (2015)
- Nan Goldin: *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* (2022)
- Sophia Nahli Allison: *A Love Song for Latasha* (2019)
- Zanele Muholi: *Difficult love* (2010) & *We Live in Silence* (2017)

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY:

Eleonora Strano is a franco-italian visual artist based in France.

For more than 10 years she has been working on themes linked to isolation and/or invisibility. Whether it is geographical, cultural, environmental, social, political or visual. Her images are imprinted by nostalgia, memory and time.

Her work has been presented in June 2011 at le BAL in Paris, in a collective show "Se dérober" in Musée de la Photographie de Mougins and at Photo Vogue Festival in Milan in 2019 and 2020.



In 2019, her work has been exhibited at Espace de l'Art Concret in Mouans-Sartoux, as part of «Des marches, démarches» curated by FRAC PACA and has been part of Jeune Création in Romainville, Circulation(s) in Paris and the 37th edition of Festival international de mode, de photographie et d'accessoires de mode in Hyères.

She has been nominated as one of the 31 women photographers to watch for in 2019 according to the British Journal of Photography, one of the 250 photographers of 2020 by the PHMuseum and has been listed as one of the 150 European emerging photographers of 2021 by GUP Magazine.

Eleonora Strano is a member of Eyes on Talents, Hans Lucas, Women Photograph, Blink and works in the south of France.

In parallel to her work with the medias as a photojournalist, she develops artistic projects among which is a photographic commission launched by Université Nice Côte d'Azur, Villa Arson, and Académie 5 about biocontrol. She is currently working on her next project about shipwrecks, memory and Anthropocene in Saint-Pierre et Miquelon for which she was the recipient of the BnF grant *Radioscopie de la France*.