

PG 328 UNDERSTANDING PHOTOGRAPHY: DECODING THE STILL IMAGE

IES Abroad Barcelona

DESCRIPTION:

The aim of this course is to deconstruct the role of the still image in media and society and compare the relative photographic vernacular of the USA and Europe. Photographs surround us, and inspire us, and become our memories and our present. We exchange them, go see them in galleries, see them on the news, and in magazines. Photography transcends language and is universal in its ability to communicate. It defines our present situation, our history, and makes our experiences come alive. This course will look at the mechanics of making images, of how images are used in galleries, magazines, advertising, propaganda, and the ethics and dynamics of making and seeing. We will study the influence of the still image on popular culture, through fine art, fashion, reportage, and the movies. Students will make images and projects to deconstruct the theoretical process through practical experience, to present, and share their work. Students will gain further knowledge of the basics about shooting color and black and white images with traditional SLR and digital cameras.

The course is divided into four sections, with the three later sections providing practical and theoretical evaluations through project based continuous assessment.

Section One (lectures 1-7) deals with the camera, and technical themes such as reading the image, making better images with further understanding of the principles of photography, and digital photo manipulation.

Section Two (lectures 8-13) deals with the image in the fine art world. Students are expected to produce a photographic document and write a critique of a photographic work they have seen and studied.

Section Three (lectures 14-18) deals with the image as documentary, and the evolution of the photographic essay, photojournalism's challenge in the new media climate, and the ethics of documentary photography. Students will be required to produce a photographic essay with complimentary text about an issue or story in Barcelona.

Section Four (lectures 19-24) deals with the expanded world of photography: multi-media, film and the still image, and the relationship between words and pictures. A critique of a project, or installation, plus a multimedia project will be made by the students for this section.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

INSTRUCTOR:

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: Film developing, portfolio materials, course-related trips.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lecture
- Class discussion
- Case study analysis
- Articles
- Book analysis
- Individual and group exercises
- Videos
- Course-related trips

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Photo Project 1 - 5%
- Photo Project 2 - 15%

- Photo Project 3 - 15%
- Photo Project 4 - 20%
- Analysis Paper - 5%
- Tutoring A - 10%
- Tutoring B - 10%
- Tutoring C - 10%
- Class Participation - 10%, divided as:
 - Participation midterm - 5%
 - Participation final - 5%

Photo Projects 1 (5%), 2 (15%), 3 (15%), 4 (20%)

These photo projects are to be presented to the class and the tutor on the designated evaluation days. They are to be of subjects of your own choosing based on the module of the course. The first photo project is about the technical aspects of photography. The second project should be a work of documentary photography. The third photo project should treat the idea of making a fine art photographic work. The fourth project will be an experimental self-exploratory work in which students can implement notions from any of the course modules. Projects should typically consist of 10-12 pictures. Individual feedback from the tutor takes place in the scheduled critique sessions.

Analysis Paper (5%)

This 600-words paper consists in an analysis of photographs using the different technical elements of the main areas of the photographic language. Students will have to research some images and analyze them based on their compositional design, on the use of color theory or types of black-and-white, and on the ways a specific management of the light creates each image.

Tutoring A (10%), B (10%), C (10%)

These are creative sessions in which students will bring a concept and a detailed plan for each photo project (Photo Projects 2, 3, 4). During the tutoring sessions students will pitch their ideas to the professor (showing research and proposal), and they will receive constructive feedback about the best ways to finish their projects. Each one of these mandatory sessions will monitor the development of the corresponding photo project. By the end of each tutoring session students must submit a concept book or draft of their projects, including concept, personal statement, visual style, structure and layout. Students will be graded based on the clarity of their ideas, how they are defended and presented, and the recycling of the critical lexis regarding photography presented and developed during the course modules.

Class Participation (10%)

There will be a grade of 5% at the mid-term point of the semester, and another of 5% at the end of the semester that will reflect students' participation in the class.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Trace, critically analyze and explain the role of photography in history, and contemporary society, with reference to fine art, photojournalism and multimedia.
- Differentiate the US visual landscape and the relationship between the image and society in the USA to the European visual landscape and the relationship between the image and society in Western Europe.
- Critically evaluate images based on ethical criteria.
- Use their camera correctly, and with confidence, having produced three black and white or color photo projects that reveal their personal vision.
- Demonstrate their understanding of the meaning and use of the photographic image in society and the media.

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. For this reason, attendance is required for all IES Barcelona classes, including course-related excursions. If a student misses more than three classes in any course without justification, 3 percentage points will be deducted from the final grade for every additional absence. Seven unjustified absences in any course will result in a failing grade. Absences will only be justified, and assessed work, including exams, tests and presentations rescheduled, in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

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CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments/Required Readings
Session 1	Introduction Syllabus, the course and the defining concepts. General overview of course framework and bibliography.	Graham, P. (2009, July 7). <i>Photography is Easy. Photography is Difficult</i>. American Suburb X. https://americansuburbx.com/2009/07/theory-paul-graham-photography-is-easy.html
Session 2	Section One: Camera and Technique Vision. Camera. Color. Evolution of the theories of vision and how specific ways of looking have influenced our creation and perception of images. Historical evolution of the camera, from the camera obscura to the smartphone. Light, visible spectrum and color theory. Color systems. Color photography. Types of black-and-white.	- Jay, M. (1992). Scopic Regimes of Modernity. In S. Lash and J. Friedman (Eds.), <i>Modernity and Identity</i> (pp. 178-191). Blackwells. https://joaocamillopenna.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/jay-scopi-regimes-of-modernity.pdf - Langford, M. (2000). <i>Basic Photography</i> (7th ed., pp. 24-36). Focal Press. - Rudis, B. (2016). <i>Color Theory for Photographers</i> (pp. 8-54). www.f64academy.com
Session 3	Composition and Exposure We look at composition as the main tool for photographic creation. Framing and the rules of composition. Theories of design are presented and explained, with practical examples in understanding our personal preferences when it comes to making and analyzing composition. We look at the manual functions of the camera and how to make the most of your imaging devices. Focusing, light metering, and the exposure triangle.	- Langford, M. (2000). <i>Basic Photography</i> (7th ed., pp. 24-36). Focal Press. - Langford, M. (2000). <i>Basic Photography</i> (7th ed., pp. 128-148). Focal Press. - Barthes, R. (2000). <i>Camera Lucida</i> (pp. 22-28). Vintage Books. - Barthes, R. (2000). <i>Camera Lucida</i> (pp. 40-59). Vintage Books. - Barthes, R. (2000). <i>Camera Lucida</i> (pp. 94-97). Vintage Books.
Session 4	Photography Practice Photography practice that includes shooting and post-processing a mini assignment during the class hour. Bring cameras and computers to this class!!!	- Langford, M. (2000). <i>Basic Photography</i> (7th ed., pp. 24-36). Focal Press. - Langford, M. (2000). <i>Basic Photography</i> (7th ed., pp. 128-148). Focal Press. - Rudis, B. (2016). <i>Color Theory for Photographers</i> (pp. 4-54). f64Academy. https://genesasse.com/photo/pdfs/eBooks/ColorTheoryForPhotographers.pdf
Session 5	Critique 1 Class presentation of each student's Photo Project 1 (Technique). Critique and feedback from the professor. 10 photos + Analysis Paper (600 words)	Class critique and feedback.

Session 6	<i>Section Two: Documentary</i> Documentary Photography What is a document? What are the criteria that make a document successful? We look at the role of the documentary, its meaning and role in the evolution of the medium, and we define contemporary documentary photographic practice in terms of the New Objectivity movement in Europe, and the revisionist model of the USA.	• Bogre, M. (2017). <i>Documentary Photography Reconsidered</i> (pp. 15-28). Bloomsbury. • Bogre, M. (2017). <i>Documentary Photography Reconsidered</i> (pp. 62-70). Bloomsbury. • Solomon-Godeau, A. (1991). <i>Photography at the Dock</i> (pp. 169-183). University of Minnesota Press. • Sontag, S. (2019). <i>Regarding the Pain of Others</i> (pp. 91-99). Penguin Books.
Session 7	The Photo Essay Photographing stories in the traditional form of a photo essay requires an understanding of the visual vocabulary necessary to illustrate a series of events in sequence. This class deconstructs this visual vocabulary and analyses the challenges this traditional format faces in the emerging presentation technologies.	• Havlin, L. (2018, December 29). <i>W. Eugene Smith: Master of the Photo Essay</i>. Magnum Photos. https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/w-eugene-smith-master-of-the-photo-essay/ • Kobre, K. (2017). <i>Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach</i> (7th ed., pp. 271-315). Focal Press. • Kobre, K. (2017). <i>Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach</i> (7th ed., pp. 399-437). Focal Press.
Session 8	Tutoring Session A (documentary) Students will present to the professor their ideas for a documentary photography project and will bring all their materials (research and proposal) compiled on a first draft of the project. During the session students will incorporate the professor's feedback and transform the draft into a concept book that shows the development of the project.	• Q&A. Feedback.
Session 9	Gallery Visit 1 Group visit to one of the exhibitions held in Barcelona that revolves around the history of photography.	• Gallery & Exhibition: TBA
Session 10	Critique 2 Class presentation of each student's Photo Project 2 (Documentary). Critique and feedback from the professor. 10 photos + statement	• Class critique and feedback.
Session 11	<i>Section Three: Fine Art</i> Fine Art Photography Photography as art. What is art? Is photography art? Aesthetics, technique, concept. Evolution of artistic photography. Sub-genres, typologies and experiments. Contemporary fine art photography.	• Berger, J. (2013). <i>Understanding a Photograph</i> (21st ed., pp. 17-21). Penguin. • Cotton, C. (2020). <i>The Photograph as Contemporary Art</i> (4th ed., pp. 23-47). Thames & Hudson.

Session 12	The Portrait Is it possible to capture someone's essence in a photo? What makes a good portrait? What are the most common rules of portraiture. Portraits as memory, identity and art.	• Avedon, R. (2002). Borrowed Dogs. In <i>Richard Avedon's Portraits</i>. MOMA. • Goldin, N. (1986). <i>The Ballad of Sexual Dependency</i> (pp. 6-9). Aperture. • Goldin, N. (1986). <i>The Ballad of Sexual Dependency</i> (pp. 145-146). Aperture.
Session 13	Street Photography Art or documentation? The urban space as a metaphor of culture. Navigating the city and ways to conquer your fear to photograph strangers. Walking as an aesthetic practice.	• Cartier-Bresson, H. (1999) <i>The Mind's Eye: Writings on photography and photographers</i> (Chapter 1: The Decisive Moment). Aperture. https://pdfcoffee.com/cartier-bresson-henri-the-decisive-moment-1ipps1o-1pdf-pdf-free.html • Vermare, P. (2018). The Joy of Seeing: Magnum Street Photography. In <i>Magnum Photos – Theory & Practice</i>. Magnum Photos. https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/the-joy-of-seeing-magnum-street-photography/ • Webb, A. (2020). The Camera Itself is Merely a Tool. In <i>Magnum Photos – Theory & Practice</i>. Magnum Photos. https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/the-camera-itself-is-merely-a-tool/
Session 14	Guest Speaker 1 A professional photographer visits the class to talk about her career, the art of photography and her approach to portraiture.	• Information about the guest speaker will be given in advance, as well as access to her work online.
Session 15	Tutoring Session B (fine art) Students will present to the professor their ideas for a fine art photography project and will bring all their materials (research and proposal) compiled on a first draft of the project. During the session students will incorporate the professor's feedback and transform the draft into a concept book that shows the development of the project.	• Q&A. Feedback.
Session 16	Photography and the Landscape Revisionism or objectivism, two seemingly opposed starting points for taking landscape photographs, the former, pertaining to a world view as seen by a relatively new culture, the USA, and the later, from old world Europe. This class explores, compares the dynamic and morality behind the motives and implications of landscape photography. Landscape photography as a form of art and creation of critical discourses.	• Szarkowski, J. (2007). William Egglestone's Guide. In J. Szarkowski (Ed.), <i>Photographs by William Eggleston</i> (pp. 5-14). MoMA. • Berning Sawa, D. (2018, January 18). <i>Andreas Gursky on the photograph that changed everything. The Guardian</i>. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/18/andreas-gursky-each-photograph-is-a-world-of-its-own-best-photograph-salerno-harbour

Session 17	Critique 3 Class presentation of each student's Photo Project 3 (Fine Art). Critique and feedback from the professor. 10 photos + statement	• Class critique and feedback.
Session 18	Section Four: Photography Expanded Beyond Photography: Time, Words, Images Time, as a constant, or Time as relative - how does the passage of Time influence our reading of images, and understanding of the medium of photography? The combination of words and images, through the humble caption, to the more advanced styles of propaganda, provoke a challenge to the viewer, sometimes a contradiction, sometimes reinforcement. What are the limits of photography? How does it relate to other media? Moving images vs still images. Open formats and hybrid experiments.	• Khan, I. (2004). Traces. <i>Next Level Magazine</i> (Issue 6, Vol. 3, 41-45). • Brockmeier, E.K. (2020, February 17). A New Way of Thinking about Motion, Movement, and the Concept of Time. <i>Penn Today</i>. https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/new-way-thinking-about-motion-movement-eadweard-muybridge • Shah, H. (2018, December 13). How a 19th-Century Photographer Made the First 'GIF' of a Galloping Horse. <i>Smithsonian Magazine</i>. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-19th-century-photographer-first-gif-galloping-horse-180970990/ • Oedegaard, C. (2017, October 30). <i>Creative Use of Text in Fine Art Photography</i>. Academy of Art University. http://artulens.com/ph-692/2017/10/30/creative-use-of-text-in-fine-art-photography • Slemmons, R. (2009). Between language and perception. In <i>EXIT 16, Writing Pictures</i> (30-48). Olivares. • Hapkemeyer, A. (2001). Image and Word, Photo and Text. In A. Hapkemeyer and P. Weiermair (Eds.), <i>Photo Text Text Photo. The synthesis of Photography and text in Contemporary Art</i> (pp. 9-13). Stemmler.
Session 19	Guest Speaker 1 A professional photojournalist visits the class to talk about her work, how to make a living as an independent photographer and how she creates her award-winning projects.	• Information about the guest speaker will be given in advance, as well as access to her work online.
Session 20	Self-Portraits as Self-Exploration The self-portrait beyond the "selfie". Self-exploration and creativity. Memory and identity. Personal experience through experimental research. Sensory methodologies and visual storytelling. The autoethnography.	• Goldin, N. (1986). <i>The Ballad of Sexual Dependency</i> (pp. 6-9). Aperture. • Goldin, N. (1986). <i>The Ballad of Sexual Dependency</i> (pp. 145-146). Aperture. • BBC Arts (2019, June 25). <i>The original selfie queen: Cindy Sherman's candid camera</i>. BBC Arts. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3vxxMH4J6prkmzd99gJcBk1/the-original-selfie-queen-cindy-shermans-candid-camera

Session 21	Tutoring Session C (experimental) Students will present to the professor their ideas for an experimental photography project and will bring all their materials (research and proposal) compiled on a first draft of the project. During the session students will incorporate the professor's feedback and transform the draft into a concept book that shows the development of the project.	• Q&A. Feedback.
Session 22	Visual Studies: Images, Representation, and Meaning The camera has the power to represent people, showing the accepted or desirable subjects according to the Power/status quo. However, this raises ethical questions about the responsible representation of difference or "otherness" (like race, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability). Discussing the power of the camera as a social apparatus involves looking at theoretical ideas to do with the nature of power itself and with the significance of "the gaze".	• Sealy, M. (2019). <i>Decolonizing the Camera: Photography in Racial Time</i> (pp. 206-240). Lawrence & Wishart.
Session 23	Gallery Visit 2 Group visit to one of the exhibitions held in Barcelona that revolves around artistic or experimental photography.	• Gallery & Exhibition: TBA
Session 24	Critique 4 Class presentation of each student's Photo Project 4 (Experimental). Critique and feedback from the professor. 10 photos + statement	• Class critique and feedback.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Any digital camera with manual controls (DSLR or mirrorless) or a phone camera with at least 12 Mp.

REQUIRED READINGS

- Avedon, R. (2002). Borrowed Dogs. In *Richard Avedon's Portraits*. MOMA.
- Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida* (pp. 22-28). Vintage Books.
- Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida* (pp. 40-59). Vintage Books.
- Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida* (pp. 94-97). Vintage Books.
- BBC Arts (2019, June 25). *The original selfie queen: Cindy Sherman's candid camera*. BBC Arts.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3vxkMH4J6prkmzd99gJcBk1/the-original-selfie-queen-cindy-shermans-candid-camera>
- Berger, J. (2013). *Understanding a Photograph* (21st ed., pp. 17-21). Penguin.
- Berning Sawa, D. (2018, January 18). Andreas Gursky on the photograph that changed everything. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/18/andreas-gursky-each-photograph-is-a-world-of-its-own-best-photograph-salerno-harbour>
- Bogre, M. (2017). *Documentary Photography Reconsidered* (pp. 15-28). Bloomsbury.
- Bogre, M. (2017). *Documentary Photography Reconsidered* (pp. 62-70). Bloomsbury.

- Brockmeier, E.K. (2020, February 17). *A New Way of Thinking about Motion, Movement, and the Concept of Time*. Penn Today. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/new-way-thinking-about-motion-movement-eadweard-muybridge>
- Cartier-Bresson, H. (1999) *The Mind's Eye: Writings on photography and photographers* (Chapter 1: The Decisive Moment). Aperture. <https://pdfcoffee.com/cartier-bresson-henri-the-decisive-moment-1ipps1o-1pdf-pdf-free.html>
- Cotton, C. (2020). *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* (4th ed., pp. 23-47). Thames&Hudson.
- Solomon-Godeau, A. (1991). *Photography at the Dock* (pp. 169-183). University of Minnesota Press. <https://vdocuments.mx/solomon-god-eau-who-is-speaking-thus.html?page=1>
- Goldin, N. (1986). *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (pp. 6-9). Aperture.
- Goldin, N. (1986). *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (pp. 145-146). Aperture.
- Graham, P. (2009, July 7). *Photography is Easy. Photography is Difficult*. American Suburb X. <https://americansuburbx.com/2009/07/theory-paul-graham-photography-is-easy.html>
- Hapkemeyer, A. (2001). Image and Word, Photo and Text. In A. Hapkemeyer and P. Weiermair (Eds.), *Photo Text Text Photo. The synthesis of Photography and text in Contemporary Art* (pp. 9-13). Stemmler.
- Havlin, L. (2018, December 29). *W. Eugene Smith: Master of the Photo Essay*. Magnum Photos. <https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/w-eugene-smith-master-of-the-photo-essay/>
- Jay, M. (1992). Scopic Regimes of Modernity. In S. Lash and J. Friedman (Eds.), *Modernity and Identity* (pp. 178-191). Blackwells. <https://joacamillopenna.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/jay-scopi-regimes-of-modernity.pdf>
- Khan, I. (2004). Traces. *Next Level Magazine* (Issue 6, Vol. 3, 41-45).
- Kobré, K. (2017). *Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach* (7th ed., pp. 271-315). Focal Press.
- Kobré, K. (2017). *Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach* (7th ed., pp. 317-343). Focal Press.
- Kobré, K. (2017). *Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach* (7th ed., pp. 345-379). Focal Press.
- Kobré, K. (2017). *Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach* (7th ed., pp. 399-437). Focal Press.
- Langford, M. (2000). *Basic Photography* (7th ed., pp. 24-36). Focal Press.
- Langford, M. (2000). *Basic Photography* (7th ed., pp. 128-148). Focal Press.
- Oedegaard, C. (2017, October 30). *Creative Use of Text in Fine Art Photography*. Academy of Art University. <http://artulens.com/ph-692/2017/10/30/creative-use-of-text-in-fine-art-photography>
- Rudis, B. (2016). *Color Theory for Photographers* (pp. 4-54). f64Academy. <https://genesasse.com/photo/pdfs/eBooks/ColorTheoryForPhotographers.pdf>
- Sealy, M. (2019). *Decolonizing the Camera: Photography in Racial Time* (pp. 206-240). Lawrence & Wishart.
- Shah, H. (2018, December 13). *How a 19th-Century Photographer Made the First 'GIF' of a Galloping Horse*. Smithsonian Magazine. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-19th-century-photographer-first-gif-galloping-horse-180970990/>
- Slemmons, R. (2009). Between language and perception. In *EXIT 16, Writing Pictures* (30-48). Olivares.
- Sontag, S. (2019). *On Photography* (pp. 90-122). Penguin Books.
- Sontag, S. (2019). *Regarding the Pain of Others* (pp. 91-99). Penguin Books.
- Szarkowski, J. (2007). William Egglestone's Guide. In J. Szarkowski (Ed.), *Photographs by William Eggleston* (pp. 5-14). MoMA.
- Vermare, P. (2018). The Joy of Seeing: Magnum Street Photography. In *Magnum Photos – Theory & Practice*. Magnum Photos. <https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/the-joy-of-seeing-magnum-street-photography/>
- Webb, A. (2020). The Camera Itself is Merely a Tool. In *Magnum Photos – Theory & Practice*. Magnum Photos. <https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/the-camera-itself-is-merely-a-tool/>