

PG 300 PHOTOGRAPHY: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION
IES Abroad Paris

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.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Master the essential digital camera functions for taking correctly exposed photographic images.
- Successfully undertake color and tonal corrections of photographs using the Adobe Photoshop software.
- Create photographs displaying a growing mastery of aesthetic qualities including composition, quality of light and contrast.
- 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.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

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 a digital SLR (Single Lens Reflex) or a mirrorless camera. Fully automatic, compact digital cameras (“point-and-shoot camera”) are not recommended. Smartphones are not a preferred form of camera but can serve as a supplemental or back-up camera. Students may be required to pay for digital printing of photos for the three main photo projects for the semester.

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 Participation – 15%
- Photo Exercises – 10%
- Quiz – 10%
- First Photo Project – 15%
- Second Photo Project – 15%
- Research Paper – 10%
- Final Series Photo Project – 25%

Course Participation: Active class participation and regular homework completion

Photo Exercises: shorter, technically oriented exercises to help students develop their technical skills with the camera

Quiz: Short answer and/or multiple-choice questions focusing on technical issues regarding the camera, its settings and use.

First Photo project: Investigation of the notion of “environment” in Paris (4-6 photos and digital contact sheets for 125-175 images)

Second Photo Project: Series of photographs concentrating on the “human presence” in all its variety (portraits, street photography, etc.) (6-8 photos and digital contact sheets for 150-200 images)

Research Paper: Written essay (1500 words) discussing/analysing two photographers working on similar subject matter and how their different style and approach leads to unique messages. Students will be given a list of compatible photographers to choose from.

Final Photo Project: Final student-designed, thematic photo project (12-15 final printed images and digital contact sheets for 200-300 images)

CONTENT:

The course is divided into three consecutive sections:

A. **Technical:** Weeks 1 –5 are devoted to an intensive survey of the technical concepts that constitute the fundamental bases of the photographic process. Additionally, students will be given an introduction to Adobe Photoshop for making basic color and tonal corrections to their photos.

A multiple-choice test covering this section will be given to students. Students will complete a photo project focusing on the “Environment of Paris” which will be presented during a group critique.

B. **Theoretical-analytical:** Weeks 6 - 8 are devoted to the critical analysis of some crucial theoretical debates around photography. The second photo project will have students turning their attention to photographing the “Human presence in Paris.” We’ll have a second group critique to discuss this project in class.

C. **Project-oriented:** Weeks 9 – 12 will be devoted to students working on a final photo project of their own design (students will present a proposal by week 8 on a specific topic/theme around which the final series will be focused which must be approved by the professor). This final series will ask students to develop a cohesive grouping of images which, presented together, will express a more powerful exploration of an idea than a single any single image can. Students should think about ideal means of presenting the final project (book form, wall hanging, etc.) The final written study paper will use our readings and discussions of photo images during the early part of the semester to help guide their analysis of two different photographers who investigate similar subject matter.

Session	Content	Assignments
<i>Sessions 1-2 (week 1)</i>	Course Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview, teaching methodology, bibliographical references, students’ personal presentation of own experiences and needs, course grading criteria, and professor’s expectations Art and Visual Representation	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The invention of perspective in the Renaissance • Painters using a camera obscura as “proto-photographers” and the evolution of automatic image-making technology • Review of slides of professional work related to Photo project #1 • Explanation / description of photo project #1 <p>Camera Equipment I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Films, digital sensors, and image format (jpeg vs. RAW) 	
Sessions 3-4 (week 2)	<p>Camera Equipment II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of Exposure Modes. • Lenses, focal length, and use of different lenses • Aperture, shutter speed, exposure controls, and sensitivity <p>Lighting: Color</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color temperature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick look at digital images submitted by students exploring various camera modes. • Discussion of chapter from Graham Clarke. • Look at and discuss related photo images. • Introduction to Adobe Photoshop <p>Shooting Field Trip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the local neighborhood and explore shooting with different apertures as well as exploring both P and A (or AV) modes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Graham Clarke, <i>The Photograph</i>, “How Do We Read a Photograph?” • Short written response (75-150 words on Clarke reading. • Students should write down all the camera settings they are using to take pictures, one by one. • Submit four photos, some taken during last class showing your ability to control wide angle and telephoto lenses, together with the switching between exposure positions: P, M, A, S.
Sessions 5-6 (week 3)	<p>More Adobe Photoshop</p> <p>Camera Equipment III</p> <p>Lighting, Color, and Contrast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise on Aperture settings and levels of illumination. Submit four photos in digital format. • Shoot photos for Project 1 (Environment).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color, tones, dynamic range, and contrast • Light: Natural and artificial • Knowledge and control of practical lighting conditions <p>Image Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition, framing, proportions, perspective, and image design skills <p>Shooting Field Trip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the local neighborhood (visit nearby Galerie Camera Obscura?) shooting with different shutter speeds while exploring the S (or TV) camera mode. 	
<i>Sessions 7-8 (week 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and review use of camera in M or manual mode. <p>Introduction to the Photo Essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eugene Smith's Country Doctor, and the art of storytelling using photos • How to find a story to tell • Examples of photographic stories and "collections" <p>Digital Workflow Digital workflow, image management, photographic processing software</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise on time of exposure settings. Submit four photos, including two photos taken at night and one taken with "panning" technique in digital format. • Shoot for Project 1 (Environment).
<i>Sessions 9-10 (week 5)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple-choice Exam • Discussion of Sontag reading <p>The Myth of Photographic Truth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The photograph as a document <p>Mass Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mass media and the public sphere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab time to work on preparing images for Critique next week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for multiple-choice test on photo technical questions. • Read from Susan Sontag's <i>On Photography</i>, "In Plato's Cave." • Write short 75-150 word response paper to Sontag chapter.
<i>Sessions 11-12 (week 6)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo Project #1 Group Critique 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish shooting for Project 1 (Environment).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Project #2 (Human Presence) • Looking at related professional images. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare digital contact sheets for Project #1 • Submit 4-6 photos and contact sheets for 125-175 images for photo project 1.
Sessions 13-14 (week 7)	<p>Final Project Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at professional samples for ideas of various thematic approaches. • Final project proposal to be turned in within 2 weeks <p>• Discussion of Final research paper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choices of photographers to compare • Expectations for analysis • Proposal to be turned in within 2 weeks <p>• In class writing / discussion: What is a portrait? What does it show/tell us? What is NOT a portrait?</p> <p>Shooting Field Trip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In nearby neighborhood (Parc Montsouris?), work on shooting some portrait-style images of classmates. <p>Reflex vs. smartphones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comparison of performances while doing similar jobs 	
Sessions 15-16 (week 8)	<p>Marais field trip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit one or two photo galleries • Street photography shooting experiences <p>• Discussion of Grundberg article</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Andy Grundberg, <i>Crisis of the Real</i>, Ch 1, pg 2-18 • Turn in Final Research paper topic choices
Sessions 17-18 (week 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group critique of photo project #2 (Human Presence) <p>Image Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Nachtwey, War Photographer, Documentary <p>Discussion of the ethics of taking photos of people in a war</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare digital contact sheets for Project #2 • Submit 6 to 8 photos and contact sheets for 150-200 digital images for Photo Project #2 (Human Presence) • Complete and turn in Final photo project proposal

	environment, as well as in normal situations	
Sessions 19-20 (week 10)	Shooting Field Trip (Location to be determined) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit one or two photo galleries • Free time for students to shoot photographs related to their final project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoot for final project • Work on Final research paper • Present 50-100 images in contact sheet form for final project.
Sessions 21-22 (week 11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn in final research paper • Advanced Photoshop techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converting images to black and white • Creating duotone images • Lab Time to work on last editing of photos for final critique. • Individual discussion with students looking at contact sheets for final project to help with image selection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete research paper for this week • Shoot for final project • Work on Final research paper • Present 100-200 images in contact form for final project
Session 23 (week 12)	Final photo project group critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make final preparations for final photo project. • Submit 10 to 15 photos and digital contact sheets for 200-300 images for Final project. • Be sure to complete short written “artist’s statement” related to project.

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Visit Galerie Camera Obscura (Bd. Raspail) (TBC)
- Marais photo gallery visits (TBC)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Course-pack (digital form) including all of the instructor’s presentations, required readings, and other study material. These materials will become available during the course, on a weekly basis
- Barrett, Terry. *Criticizing Photographs*, McGraw-Hill, 2005.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*, Hill & Wang Publ., 1981.
- Clarke, Graham. *The Photograph*, Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Grundberg, Andy. *Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography, 1974-1989*, 1990.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*, St. Martin’s Press, 2001.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Adair King, Julie. *Digital Photography For Dummies*. Hoboken, New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, 2020.
- 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.

- Evans, Jessica, Hall, Stuart (Eds). *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London, Thousand Oaks, New York: Sage Publications, 2001.
- Freeman, Michael. *The Photographer's Eye*, Oxford: Focal Press, 2007 - 2013.
- Frosh, Paul. *The Image Factory: Consumer Culture, Photography, and the Visual Content Industry*. Oxford, New York: Berg, 2003.
- Gross, Larry, Katz, John Stuart, Ruby, Jay (Eds). *Image ethics in the digital age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- 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.
- Langford, Michael, Fox, Anna, Sawdon Smith, Richard. *Basic Photography* - 10th Edition. Oxford: Focal Press, 2015.
- Levi Strauss, David. *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*. New York: Aperture, 2003.
- Messaris, Paul. *Visual Persuasion. The role of images in advertising*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Newton, Julianne. *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. Mahwah, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.
- 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.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Your academics are a priority, and regular class attendance class is mandatory, respectful, and essential to academic success. Being absent from class will prevent you from maximizing your learning and will negatively affect your participation grade.

If you must be absent, please email both your professor and the academic team as soon as possible (mfedon@iesabroad.org) and (emaines@iesabroad.org). Absences for medical reasons and/or emergencies will be considered excused, but justification will be required.

Please arrive on time for each class meeting. Arriving late for class is disruptive for faculty members and students alike and will prevent you from maximizing your learning. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late 3 times, it will count as an absence.

If you are absent during an exam, presentation, or other graded in-class assignment, you must provide justification for the absence, or you will receive an automatic F. In most cases, the justification will take the form of a *certificat médical* from a French doctor, which must be submitted within 24 hours of the absence.

It is understandable that students may occasionally be absent because they feel unwell physically or need to take a mental health day. For this reason, our attendance policy is lenient and allows each student to miss up to two class sessions without having it automatically affect the final grade in a course. Starting with the third unexcused absence, your final grade will be lowered by a third of a letter grade. For example:

Final grade: A-

- 1 unexcused absence: A-
- 2 unexcused absences: A-
- 3 unexcused absences: B+
- 4 unexcused absences: B
- And so on...

Lastly, an important reminder!

For any and all absences students are required to fill out the **ABSENCE FORM**, which can be found using the following link: <https://airtable.com/appwRSChoi8XeQUhz/shrkeAL2VXGdy1RH5>