



PG 300 PHOTOGRAPHY: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

IES Abroad Milan

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.

You will also discover how to combine your images with words and sounds to create your own multimedia “audio-slideshow.”

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, with a strong preference for a digital SLR (Single Lens Reflex). Fully automatic, compact digital cameras (“point-and-shoot camera”) are not recommended. Smartphones are not an accepted form of camera.

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 – 20%
- Midterm Exam – 20%
- Intermediate Exam – 20%
- Final Exam – 20%
- Research Paper – 10%

Course Participation

Active class participation and regular homework completion

Midterm Exam

Photo project #1 (15-20 photos) and Multiple-choice test: understanding technique and the theory behind light, color, and composition controls

Intermediate Exam

Photo project #2: A documentary or an art project (15-20 photos)



Final Exam

Photo project #3: Multi-media project (20-30 photos)

Research Paper

Written essay (1500 words) regarding contemporary, critical issues on photography

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Regular class attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend classes each day, including course-related excursions. IES Abroad Milano allows a maximum of two excused absences per semester. Each further absence will automatically result in a penalty of two points off (2/100) on the final grade. Seven absences per course (including the two excused absences) will result in a failing grade for that course. Furthermore, absence on the date of scheduled tests, presentations, or quizzes does not entitle you to recover/reschedule such tests. Failure to attend your midterm and/or final exam will result in an F grade on that paper/exam. It is your responsibility to manage your absences during the term. If you are sick, you will need to apply your absence to the two excused absences allowed for the term. If you use up your two excused absences for personal travel and then are sick at the end of the semester, those sick days will not be excused. Please plan wisely!

CONTENT:

The course is divided into three consecutive sections:

- A) Technical: Weeks 1 – 6 are devoted to an intensive survey of the technical concepts that constitute the fundamental bases of the photographic process. A multiple-choice test covering this section will be given to students. Students will need to carry out a photo project that will be presented to the class, and discussed jointly.
- B) Theoretical-analytical: Weeks 7 – 9 are devoted to the critical analysis of some crucial theoretical debates around photography. The second photo project will require students to tell a story through pictures. This photo project will be presented to the class, and discussed jointly.
- C) Project-oriented: Weeks 10 – 11 are devoted to the knowledge of the most up-to-date techniques of presentation of audio/visual projects, but in the art world and in the documentary/journalistic milieu. The final photo project should make use of these techniques. The final written study paper shall deal both the critical issues of the second section of the course, and with the theory explained in the third section.

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1 <i>Session 1</i>	Course Introduction 1. Overview, teaching methodology, bibliographical references, students’ personal presentation of own experiences and needs, course grading criteria, and professor’s expectations	
<i>Session 2</i>	Art and Visual Representation 1. The Renaissance 2. The invention of perspective and the evolution of automatic image-making technology	
Week 2 <i>Session 1</i>	Camera Equipment I 1. Films, digital sensors, and image format	

Session 2	Camera Equipment II <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lenses, focal length, and use of different lenses 	
Week 3 Session 1	Camera Equipment III <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aperture, shutter speed, exposure controls, and sensitivity 2. Course-Related Trip: Photo Exhibit (TBD) 	
Session 2	Lighting, Color, and Contrast <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Color, tones, dynamic range, and contrast 2. Light: Natural and artificial 3. Knowledge and control of practical lighting conditions 	
Week 4 Session 1	Image Design <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Composition, framing, proportions, perspective, and image design skills 	
Session 2	Introduction to the Photo Essay <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eugene Smith's <i>Country Doctor</i>, and the art of storytelling using photos 2. How to find a story to tell 3. Examples of photographic stories 	
Week 5 Session 1	Digital Workflow <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital workflow, image management, photographic processing software 	
Session 2	Midterm Exam <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple-choice Exam 2. Project Photo #1 Class Presentation 3. Open debate with instructor and class 	
Week 6 Session 1	The Myth of Photographic Truth <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The photograph as a document 	
Session 2	Mass Media <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The mass media and the public sphere 	
Week 7 Session 1	Electronic Imaging <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Photography in the age of electronic imaging 2. The use of software to enhance photographs 	

<i>Session 2</i>	Visual Persuasion <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visual Truth 2. Visual Lies 	
Week 8 <i>Session 1</i>	The Art of Breaking the Rules of Perspective <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From Picasso to David Hockney 	
<i>Session 2</i>	Course-Related Trip <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Course-Related Trip (TBD) 	
Week 9 <i>Session 1</i>	Image Ethics <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. James Nachtwey, War Photographer Documentary 2. Discussion of the ethics of taking photos of people in a war environment, as well as in normal situations 	
<i>Session 2</i>	Intermediate Exam <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Photo Project #2 Class Presentation 2. Open debate with instructor and class 	
Week 10 <i>Session 1</i>	Multimedia Storytelling: An Overview <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Telling stories with pictures and sounds 2. The power of multimedia 	
<i>Session 2</i>	Multimedia Storytelling: An Overview <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notable examples from the web 2. Multimedia components 	
Week 11 <i>Session 1</i>	Sound Editing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Audio technical specifications, sound editing tools and software, audio genres, and typologies 2. Privacy issues 	
<i>Session 2</i>	Audio Slideshows <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examples of Audio Slideshows 2. Elementary and complex editing software 3. Copyright issues 4. Students receive questions for final research paper 	
Week 12 <i>Session 1</i>	Final Photo Project Presentation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Final photo project presentation to the class 2. Open debate with instructor and class 	

Session 2	Final Photo Project Presentation 1. Students hand in final written assignment	
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COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- TBD

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Course-pack (digital form) including all of the instructor’s presentations, required readings, and other study material. These materials will come available during the course, on a weekly basis
- Freeman, Michael. *The Photographer’s Eye*, Oxford: Focal Press, 2007.
- 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* - 9th Edition. Oxford: Focal Press, 2010.
- Messaris, Paul. Visual Persuasion. *The role of images in advertising*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Simon, Dan. *Digital Photography Bible*. Desktop edition. Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing Inc, 2004.
- 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].
- Berger, John. *Ways of seeing*. London, New York: Penguin Books, 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.
- 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.
- Newton, Julianne. *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. Mahwah, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.
- Levi Strauss, David. *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*. New York: Aperture, 2003.

FILMOGRAPHY:

- James Nachtwey, War Photographer Documentary