



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 1-5) 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 6-12) 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 13-19) deals with photojournalism, and the evolution of the photographic essay, photojournalism's challenge in the new media climate, and the ethics of covering a news event. Students will be required to produce a photographic essay with complimentary text about an issue or story in Barcelona.

Section Four (lectures 20-24) deals with 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.

ONLINE COURSE. This course will be taught in an online format. Please bear in mind the following points, and do not hesitate to contact your course instructor in case of doubts:

The course will hold a single one-hour synchronous session per week, which will be used principally for discussion and interactive activities. The topics and materials listed under the 24 course sessions in this syllabus will be covered during the weekly synchronous sessions, and in an online, asynchronous format.

Attendance is mandatory for the synchronous sessions. Please see the Attendance Policy below.

The expected workload for this course is 9 hours per week, including the synchronous session.

CREDITS: 3 credits

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

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:

Final grades will be based on:

- Photo Project 1 15%
- Photo Project 2 15%
- Photo Project 3 15%
- Research Paper 1 15%
- Research Paper 2 15%
- Research Paper 3 15%
- Class Participation 10%

Written Assessments 1, 2 and 3 (15% each paper): These 1500-word papers, to be handed in on the due dates mentioned in the syllabus, must be related to the course contents and are always subject to approval by the instructor. Three obligatory evaluation sessions will be offered during the course to monitor progress of both the written assignments and the projects. Following academic practice, all sources should be cited and a full bibliography should be included. Papers follow each section. The first paper should treat the theme of fine art photography by submitting a critique of an exhibition, book, document or body of work encountered during the class or course-related trip. The second paper should treat the theme of photojournalism by being a journalistic piece that compliments your photojournalism photo project. The third paper should treat the theme of multi-media and photography, either to complement your project, or in the form of a critique of another subject, be it a website, exhibition or installation. Students can choose what to write about, but no biographies will be accepted. 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.

Photo Projects 1, 2 and 3 (15% each project): 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 should treat the idea of making a fine art document, the second project a work of photojournalism, and the third project can involve multi-media, or be of any style of presentation as long as it can be justified to suit the subject of the work. Projects should typically consist of 10-12 pictures. Individual feedback from the tutor takes place in the scheduled sessions.

General grading criteria:

A: excellent Indicates work of a very high character. This grade is reserved for work that shows inspiration, demonstrating significant insight developed to its fullest extent and presented with exquisite craftsmanship. Strongly exceeding requirements of assignments. Growing level of improvement. Strong positive attitude toward the work.

B: Good, above average Indicates work that is definitely above average. This level of work shows thorough exploration and development, and is well presented with good craftsmanship, but it may not rise to the highest level of excellence. Improvement showing marks of progress. Work is accurate and complete. Positive attitude towards the work.

C: Average Indicates work of average or medium character. Mediocre or conservative performance, satisfying all requirements of assignments with a neutral and ordinary level of initiative and attitude.

D/F: Fail Indicates that the student knows so little of the subject that his/her work cannot be accepted. Work in this category may be unfinished, unimaginative, undeveloped or poorly executed, and shows minimal understanding of issues. Level of initiative, attitude and improvement non-existent.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: 35 mm film camera or digital camera of 5 Megapixels or more.

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:

Attendance is mandatory for online synchronous classes and course-related excursions. 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 one online synchronous class or course-related trip, 3 percentage points will be deducted from the final grade for every additional absence. Six absences will result in a failing grade.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments/Required Readings
Session 1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Syllabus, the course and the defining concepts General overview of course framework and bibliography.</p>	
Session 2	<p>Lecture: Theories of Vision</p> <p>From the Ancient Greeks, to Lacan – we have studied and interpreted the image through theories of vision based on our human perspective. How do we read images, how is it to be observed, to be the observer, and how does this alter the relationship between seeing and seen?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jay, Martin, <i>Scopic Regimes of Modernity</i>, in <i>Modernity and Identity</i>, Scott Lash, Jonathan Friedman eds, Blackwells, Oxford, 1992. Pages 178-191.
Session 3	<p>Cameras</p> <p>A practical session where the functions of the camera are explained and students are shown how to make the most of their imaging devices.</p> <p>Bring Cameras to this class!!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horenstein, Henry, <i>Colour Photography, a working manual</i>, Little Brown, 1995. Pages 25-69
Session 4	<p>Colour Theory, and Photoshop</p> <p>Digital editing techniques are explained in this class, how to maximize the image thorough simple post-production techniques. We look at colour theory and how light and our eyes function.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langford, Michael, <i>Basic Photography, Light: How Images Form</i>, 7th edition, Focal Press, UK. 24-36.

<p>Session 5</p>	<p>Composition and Design</p> <p>Theories of design are presented and explained, with practical exercises in understanding our personal preferences when it comes to making and analyzing composition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Langford, Michael, <i>Basic Photography, Light: How Images Form</i>, 7th edition, Focal Press, UK. Pages 128-148.
<p>Session 6</p>	<p>Making Documents</p> <p>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 media, and we define contemporary documentary photographic practice in terms of the New Objectivity movement in Europe, and the revisionist model of the USA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Godeau, Abigail Solomon, <i>Who is speaking thus?</i> From <i>Photography at the death</i>, 1991. Pages 169-302
<p>Session 7</p>	<p>BRING CAMERAS FOR WALKING WITH CAMERA PRACTICAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phillips, Christopher, <i>The Judgment Seat of Photography</i>, Pages 15-47, in <i>The Contest of Meaning</i>, Richard Bolton, ed, MIT Press, 1992. Pages 15-47.
<p>Session 8</p>	<p>Landscape and Morality</p> <p>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 and contrasts the dynamic and morality behind the motives and implications of landscape photography. <i>Required reading:</i> William Egglestone's Guide, Introduction by John Szarkowski. Pages 5-14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> William Egglestone's Guide, Introduction by John Szarkowski. Pages 5-14
<p>Session 9</p>	<p>The Portrait as Memory</p> <p>How reliable is our memory? Can we confide and trust in a photograph to preserve 'the truth' or is this a relative term based on the viewer? This class discusses the issues of portrait photography, the reasons why we take portraits and the possibility that its meanings are not fixed, but transient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avedon, Richard, <i>Borrowed Dogs</i>, From <i>Richard Avedon's Portraits</i>, MOMA, 2002. Goldin, Nan, <i>The Ballad of Sexual Dependency</i>, Aperture, New York, 1986.
<p>Session 10</p>	<p>Truth or Fiction, does it matter?</p> <p>In documentary practice, the document is seen as a having been legitimized, just by the fact it is there. Can we trust this assumption?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dandis, Danis A, <i>Signs and Symbols</i>, in, <i>Contact: Human Communications and it's History</i>, Williams, R, Thames and Hudson, London, 1981.

Session 11	Course-related trip 1- Camera practical. Bring cameras to the class.	
Session 12	Tutorial One- evaluation of project 1. Students present their work to the class and receive guided feedback from both the tutor and the rest of the class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand in first written assignment
Session 13	Photography of History. We remember our history through images. Name an event in recent times, and we can see an image, either taken as a photograph, or as a still from news footage. We look at the role of photojournalism in History, and how that is changing due to new technologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schuber, Irme, <i>The Eye of solidarity</i>, ICP New York, 2007, Pages 9-37.
Session 14	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kobre, Kenneth, <i>Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach</i>, 6th ed, Photo Story, Pages 228-268, Focal Press, 2008, Pages 228-268.
Session 15	News, Magazines and the web. We see images that reflect our world in various formats. In this class we look at the process involved in taking, selling and presenting a news event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kobre, Kenneth, <i>Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach</i>, 6th ed, General News, Pages 48-64, Focal Press, 2008, Pages 48-64.
Session 16	Ethics and the Law- would you shoot? Based on real life situations, we debate the ethical implications of shooting a photograph, or intervening in an event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kobre, Kenneth, <i>Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach</i>, 6th ed, Ethics, Pages 352-390, Focal Press, 2008, Pages 352-390.
Session 17	Multi-media evolution. Photojournalism is facing a crisis again, this time from the web and the impact the web has had on traditional markets and avenues of mass communications. How is it responding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kobre, Kenneth, <i>Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach</i>, 6th ed, MultiMedia,

		Pages 268-306, Focal Press, 2008, Pages 268-306.
Session 18	Course-related trip 2- Camera practical. Bring cameras to the class.	
Session 19	Session 19: Tutorial Two- evaluation of project 2. Students present their work to the class and receive guided feedback from both the tutor and the rest of the class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand in second written assignment.
Session 20	Time: relative values in a fraction of a second 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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khan, Idris, <i>Traces</i>, Next Level, Issue 6, Brighton, UK, 2006, Pages 41-45. Abbott, Bernice, <i>Eugene Atget</i>, From <i>Photography: Essays and Images</i>, Newhall, Beaumont ed, MOMA, 1980. Pages 234-237. • <i>Muybridge's Motion Pictures: News Accounts</i>, From <i>Photography: Essays and Images</i>, Newhall, Beaumont, ed, MOMA, 1980. Pages 140-145.
Session 21	Words and pictures: a third level of meaning. 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. This class analyses the relationship between the image and the word through History.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siemmons, Rod, <i>Between language and perception</i>, EXIT 16, <i>Writing Pictures</i>, Madrid, 2009. Hapkemeyer, Andreas, <i>Image and word, Photo and Text</i>, From <i>photo text text photo, The synthesis of Photography and text in Contemporary Art</i>, Hapkemeyer, Andreas, ed, Stemmler, 2001. Pages 30-48.
Session 22	Film and the still image. The concept of the movie requires the viewer and the actor to suspend their belief, to allow the silver screen to act like a barrier between them, and create a fantasy world. The actors never look at the camera, as this would break this convention, whereas in Photography, the look toward the camera is encouraged. This class looks at these conventions and how they are broken, and the interesting results that challenge the conventions of both media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dufour, Diane and Toubaine, Serge, <i>The Image to Come</i>, Steidl, 2007.

Session 23	Course-related trip 3 - Camera practical. Bring cameras to the class.	
Session 24	Tutorial Three - evaluation of project 3. Students present their work to the class and receive guided feedback from both the tutor and the rest of the class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand in third written assignment.
	Final Exam	

REQUIRED READINGS

- Avedon, Richard, Borrowed Dogs, From Richard Avedon's Portraits, MOMA, 2002. Goldin, Nan, The Ballad of Sexual Dependency, Aperture, New York, 1986.
- Dandis, Danis A, Signs and Symbols, in, Contact: Human Communications and it's History, Williams, R, Thames and Hudson, London, 1981.
- Godeau, Abigail Solomon, Who is speaking thus? From Photography at the death, 1991.
- Horenstein, Henry, Colour Photography, a working manual, Little Brown, 1995. Pg. 25-69
- Jay, Martin, Scopic Regimes of Modernity, in Modernity and Identity, Scott Lash, Jonathan Friedman eds, Blackwells, Oxford, 1992. Pg. 178-191
- Langford, Michael, Basic Photography, Light: How Images Form, 7th edition, Focal Press, UK. Pg. 24-36; 128-148.
- Phillips, Christopher, The Judgment Seat of Photography, Pages 15-47, in The Contest of Meaning, Richard Bolton, ed, MIT Press, 1992.
- Schuber, Irme, The Eye of solidarity, The photographer Gerda Taro and her work during the Spanish Civil war, From Gerda Taro, ICP, New York, 2008.
- Kobre, Kenneth, Photojournalism, the Professionals' Approach, 6th ed, Focal Press, 2008. Pg. 48-64, 228-268, 268-306, 352-390.
- Khan, Idris, Traces, Next Level, Issue 6, Brighton, UK, 2006. Pg. 41-45. Abbott, Bernice, Eugene Atget, From Photography: Essays and Images, Newhall, Beaumont ed, MOMA, 1980. Muybridge's Motion Pictures: News Accounts, From Photography: Essays and Images, Newhall, Beaumont, ed, MOMA, 1980.
- Siemmons, Rod, Between language and perception, EXIT 16, Writing Pictures, Madrid, 2009. Pg. 30-48. Hapkemeyer, Andreas, Image and word, Photo and Text, From photo text text photo, The synthesis of Photography and text in Contemporary Art, Hapkemeyer, Andreas, ed, Stemmler, 2001.
- Dufour, Diane and Toubaine, Serge, The Image to Come, Steidl, 2007
- Szarkowski, John, Introduction to William Egglestone's Guide, Photographs by William Eggleston, MOMA, 2007. Pg. 5-14