



NYU Tandon School of Engineering/IDM

DM-UY 2183 - Contemporary Techniques in Digital
Photography and Imaging
Spring 2024

M/W 10:00-11:50 AM
370 Jay St., Room 311

Syllabus - *changes likely*

Professor: Jack Toolin

Email: jct327@nyu.edu

Office hours: Mondays, 2:15-3:15

Adjunct office

Course catalog:

“This course will cover basic camera use as well as the more sophisticated skills of image editing. Developing sensitivity to the aesthetics of image making through the use of the camera’s technical controls and composition are the central goals of the class. The course will provide a background in the history, theory, and contemporary issues of photography through lectures and visits to museums and galleries. By the end of the semester students will have the know-how to make images that convey their aesthetic and conceptual ideas effectively.”

My additional comments:

I have divided the semester up into three phases. The first is technically oriented and addresses camera use and post-processing using Photoshop. The goal with this phase is to develop a range of skills and approaches to draw upon for the following two phases. Phase Two addresses content and aesthetics-related issues, using photographers from ‘the canon’ as a starting point. In Phase Three you’ll create two photographic statements about your interaction with the world of the world using both ‘straight’ and composited methods of photography. I am interested in exploring with you photography’s relationship to the world as our perceptions are mediated by information and communication technologies – there will be some emphasis on this in various assignments. Throughout the semester philosophical/conceptual aspects of the medium will be addressed through readings and follow-ups; as well, there will be virtual field trips and at least one artist visit. At the end of the semester you’ll have a range of technical skills and conceptual insights to draw upon for your future with photography and image making at large.

Course Objectives:

- The creative exploration of the visual world using a camera and a computer
- Acquiring fluency in industry-standard commercial hardware, software, and professional workflows
- Learning about the history and discourse of photography
- Learning about yourself through creative exploration

- Obtaining a critical understanding of digital media: its historical foundation and role in global culture

Course Learning Objectives (what you walk away with):

- Effectively working with the exposure controls on a sophisticated camera
- Skillful use of industry-standard commercial hardware, software, and professional workflows
- Having a basic knowledge of the history and discourse of photography
- Applying photographic technology to make aesthetically cohesive images
- Assembling a body of images that work together to convey a thoughtful concept
- The ability to formulate articulate responses to photographs you viewed

Student Responsibilities:

- Consistent attendance and participation
- Creative and thoughtful exploration of the topics covered, from actual photography to essay discussions
- Constructive use of studio time and/or independent work
- Demonstration of technical skill: with a camera, with software, and with presentations
- Creative image making

Attendance/Participation:

Missing more than two classes without prior notification (and just cause) will prevent you from receiving an A. Missing four classes will prevent you from receiving better than a B+. Missing five classes will result in a C. More than this you will risk failing – an email will be sent. ‘Prior notification’ means emailing me before class. Arriving more than 20 minutes late is counted as an absence (fewer minutes allowed if being late is an ongoing problem). I will not review missed topics and activities – check with your classmates.

A rich learning environment is created when the teacher and students alike contribute to make it so. Missing classes, spending class time browsing the web, or chatting about unrelated things disrupts this process– please be responsible. When time is devoted to discussing essays or exhibitions, please put your two cents in – it helps you learn, it helps other students learn, and it helps me learn. We will visit photography exhibitions: your attendance is required. (You will be responsible for figuring out how to get there.) If you cannot make class please send me an email notification – you are required to visit the exhibitions on your own in this case.

Assignments:

Assignments will address a range of topics, from technical to conceptual. One final portfolio will be produced, and many smaller assignments addressing technicalities, aesthetics and concepts.

All images turned in for assignments must be made specifically for this course and specifically for its assignments, during this semester.

Do not submit older photographs (unless justifiable; e.g., integrating them with your current photographs), and downloaded photographs may be used only when specified.

Submit contact sheets for all photo assignments (details will be explained)

Late assignments are downgraded unless an extension has been granted prior to the deadline (please communicate with me). Assignments turned in within one day of the due date lose one half grade level. Assignments turned in two to three days late will not receive better than a B. Submissions up to a week late will receive no better than a C, and later than that only a D+ is possible. No make-up assignments, or incompletes, will be possible. If you've run into problems that prevent you from getting an assignment completed on time please inform me and we'll figure it out.

Writing: You will be assigned an exhibition to visit and respond to. Research sketches and follow-up essays regarding exhibitions we may visit. Project preparation in the form of brainstorming, research and sketching contribute to your grade.

Regarding artificial intelligence (AI):

You are expected to do all of your own work. This includes the initial photography, the editing, the research and writing, when required. If the use of AI is detected in the writing of essays or answering quiz questions, you will receive no credit for the given task. If detected more than once you risk failing the course. I understand that for some English is not your native language, and that reading and writing in English is challenging; therefore, AI may be appealing. But perfect English is not a requirement for receiving an A for this class - do your best with what you've got and improve your writing skills along the way.

Regarding AI in images: Adobe has integrated AI tools into its software and it will be explored. However, the emphasis will be on developing camera skills and editing skills – AI is expected to be minimal.

Studio Time:

Photographs can be made in very little time, but don't be deceived by the technology's speed: making good photographs means not only understanding the technology, but using it, both the camera and the computer, thoughtfully and sensitively. Editing photographs is very much a part of this process, from altering the appearance of images to deciding how the images should 'talk' to one another. Getting outside input from me in this process, as well as your peers, can be some of the most valuable use of class time. When in-class time is provided for work use it to your advantage - be productive; get feedback; show me what you've accomplished.

Critiques:

Major projects will be reviewed during classroom critiques. This is a forum for sharing your images and ideas and getting feedback, and all are expected to participate. On the surface a critique appears to be about the images presented by the given student, but it is equally about how everyone verbalizes their thoughts and feelings in response to the images. The goal is to have a productive dialogue, to give the creator constructive feedback, and to learn from others.

Respectful Interaction:

We are a diverse community of learners and creating an environment that fosters growth for everyone will benefit everyone. Please address one another respectfully and sensitively. This is especially true when responding to contributions made during critiques. The process of sharing one's creativity can induce vulnerability - please keep this in mind when providing feedback. At times our conversations may dip into social-political issues, as creativity is always performed in the context of a broader social context. All voices are respected during these discussions and differing points of view are appreciated.

Time Commitment:

You are expected to invest five to eight hours of work a week outside of the classroom (this includes photographing, processing, reading, conceptualizing projects, etc.). If you don't think that you will be able to maintain this workload, either due to work for other classes, a job, or lack of commitment, please consider taking the class at another time. If you're thinking 'I have too many classes,' or 'I don't have enough time,' you very well may not.

Needed Materials:

- Camera: you should buy a brand new, very expensive, professional camera! Joking, of course. But seriously, you need a camera that allows for manual metering and that has RAW image quality capabilities. If you don't have a dedicated camera you'll need to borrow one, buy one, or pay the \$100 insurance fee in order to use the IDM Equipment Room cameras (Note that this insurance also covers items such as your laptop - see the Equipment Room for details. It takes a couple of weeks for the ER to be up and running due to staffing arrangements.)
- A sketchbook and a pencil
- Backup storage of some sort. Backup your work.
- A card reader is needed if your computer doesn't have one built in and you don't have the appropriate tethering cable for your camera.

Electronic Etiquette:

Please devote your attention to class when it is in session – do not use your phone during class. Do not web surf and socialize during lectures and demonstrations, and only for course-related necessity at other times. If it is necessary to speak to you about this behavior your credit for attendance will be affected. Please focus your attention on the class.

Relevant Dates:

- Feb 4 - Add/drop deadline
- April 23 - Deadline to request Pass/Fail grade
- April 23 - Deadline to request withdrawal

Moses Statement:

If you are student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at [212-998-980](tel:212-998-980) or mosescsd@nyu.edu.

You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

The NYU Health Center is there for you: (212) 443-1000

NYU Statement of Inclusion:

The NYU Tandon School values an inclusive and equitable environment for all our students. I hope to foster a sense of community in this class and consider it a place where individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations, and abilities will be treated with respect. It is my intent that all students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with me.

Grades:

Your grades will be based upon the quality of production and creativity visible in your projects, your contributions to discussions, and your attendance. Commitment to your work will earn you points. Late work will not be accepted. Some of the following criteria are part of assessment:

- completion of the assignment (including planning stages, numbers of photos taken, contact sheets, submission organization ...)
- demonstrated technical skill with both the camera and editing
- invested creativity

Breakdown of grade weights:

Phase 1 - 30%

Phase 2 - 35%

Phase 3 - 30%

Exhibition Review: 5%

Excellent: A/A-	Very Good: B+/B	Average: C	Poor: D	Fail
<p>Excellent in all respects: complete, timely and creative assignments; contributions to discussions; excellent attendance.</p> <p>To receive this grade you must have near perfect attendance, demonstrated technical know-how, and have applied creative commitment to all assignments.</p> <p>Submit contact sheets for photo assignments, and work files when requested.</p>	<p>Very good in all respects (or excellent in some, good in others).</p> <p>Very good does not mean average - it is a high level of achievement ... however, it is not excellent.</p>	<p>Basic requirements are met, but little creativity and commitment to work; some or many absences.</p>	<p>Some assignments are missing, incomplete or late; a significant number of classes missed.</p>	<p>Many incomplete assignments; many missed classes; few if any contributions to discussions.</p>

Phase 1 - History & Technology

Week by week activities

Week 1

Mon Welcome! Course introduction - areas covered, expectations, grading, materials
Jan 22 needed

Images: Selected formalist photographs

Assignment:
Photo formalism: capturing the fundamental elements of art: line, shape, pattern.

Read:
Read the Ben Long excerpt about looking & seeing.

Over the course of the next week read Chapters 3, 5, 6 & 8 in *Complete Digital Photography (CDP)*. I have uploaded an older, 6th edition, to Brightspace. You can read the 8th edition online through the NYU library. This reading is intended to

further

inform you about the technical issues covered in my lectures.

Wed

Jan 24

Lecture: A brief history of seeing

Photoshop Demo: Bridge; contact sheets

Assignment:

Know your camera : Where's the aperture? Where's the shutter speed? ISO? Image quality? Where is the metering scale and what does it represent?

Read: Chapter 6 in *Complete Digital Photography (CDP)*, "Exposure Basics"

Week 2

Mon

Jan 29

Brief image sharing – abstractions

Quiz: History (mixed questions - based on my lecture, possibly reading passages)

Lecture: Camera functions: Exposure controls, lenses, filters; advanced exposure control; file formats

Photoshop Demo: Basic image editing; using PS to make diptychs & polyptychs

Assignment:

Photography: aperture control, shutter speed control, ISO

Gather recently shot images for submission as 'contact sheets,' and selected best, edited, for viewing.

Wed

Jan 31

Photo outing 1 - bring your camera with charged battery and usable memory card

Read Chapter 13 in *CDP*, "Workflow"

Assignment: follow-up to photo outing

Week 3

Mon.

Feb 5

Briefly view your four best images from the photo outing

Review camera controls and digital details

Lecture: burst mode, bracketing

Photoshop Demo: Digital Asset Management (DAM); Non-destructive image editing in PS; RAW files & editing

Assignment: study for quiz

Wed

Feb 7

Quiz: Exposure controls and their effects

Photoshop Demo: Cont'd editing

Assignment:

Photography: Make at least 20 new photographs using RAW format, using selected photographers as inspiration (TBA)

Edit 5 selected RAW images for Monday - see asgmt description for details

Read
Chapter
11 in

CDP: "RAW Shooting"
Videos: see Brightspace

Phase Two – Aesthetics and Concepts

Week 4

Mon

Quiz: In-class practical quiz: RAW Image editing

Feb 12

Lecture: Environmental portraits

Photoshop Demo: Selective editing

Assignment:

Photography: Environmental portraits

Read:

Hirsch, Ch 12, "Imagemaker on Assignment"

Wed

Photo outing 2 - bring your camera, charged battery and usable memory card

Feb 14

Assignment:

Field trip follow-up: select four images and edit them for sharing

Read: Hirsch, Ch 12 cont'd

Videos: see Brightspace

Week 5

Mon

Presidents' Day - no class

Feb 19

Wed

Discuss Hirsch

Feb 21

View your selected images

Lecture: Portraits and lighting

Assignment:

Photography: Indoor portraits with modified natural light

Read:

Hirsch, Ch 5, "Natural Light" and "The Time of Day" (continue if intrigued)

Videos: see Brightspace

Week 6

Mon
Feb 26

Studio time: edit portrait photos

Lecture: Postmodern portraits

Assignment:

Read: Bright: introduction to *Auto Focus: The Self-Portrait in Contemporary Photography*
Suggested reading: "Cindy Sherman's Early Blackface Photos and The Art World's White Gaze," www.huffpost.com.

Wed
Feb 28

Photoshop Demo: Masking, compositing, blending

Assignment: Postmodern portraits

Videos: See Brightspace

Week 7

Mon
March 4

Discuss Bright

View your postmodern portraits

Lecture/Images: Aesthetics and content: looking at Roy DeCarava, William Klein. Bernice Abbott ...

Assignment:

Photography: Begin 'street photography' in your locale (city, neighborhood), using DeCarava and Klein as inspiration (see asgmt description)

Videos: see Brightspace

Wed
March 6

Photoshop Demo: Grayscale images

Assignment:

Photography: Street photography; Edit your selected photos

Reading: van de Ven, "The Eyes of the Street Look Back" - answer follow-up questions

Week 8

Mon
March 11

Quiz: Photographers and their images (review the photographers we've considered so far)

Studio time: in-class editing

Lecture: Some female street photographers

Wed
March 13

View your street photography

Photoshop Demo: Preparing images for print and screen output; printing

Assignment:

Read: hooks, "In Our Glory" - answer follow-up questions

Spring Break

Week 9

Mon
March 25

Discuss hooks

Lecture: AI and photography

Assignment:

Read:

Selected passages from Baudrillard's "The Precession of Simulacra"; selected news articles/ editorials about AI and photography.

Wed
March 27

Discuss: Simulacra with regards to AI imaging

Studio time: In-class work on AI imaging

Assignment:

Listen to "On the Media" episode about AI, machine learning ...

Week 10

Mon
April 1

View: AI images

Lecture: Landscape photography - modern

Photoshop Demo: HDR, Panoramas, Focus Stacking

Assignment:

Read: Misrach - passages from *On Landscape and Meaning?*

Videos: See Brightspace

Wed
April 3

Photo outing combined with ICP visit: urban landscape exploration followed by viewing exhibitions at the ICP (International Center for Photography).

Bring your camera with a charged battery and a useable memory card.

Assignment:

Urban landscape photography

Exhibition follow-up; Edit selected images

Week 11

Mon
April 8

Lecture: Postmodern landscape photography

Assignment: research & photograph

Videos: see Brightspace; respond to follow-up questions

Wed
April 10 Studio time: in-class editing

Phase Three - Portfolio

Week 12

Mon
April 15 **View:** Postmodern landscapes

Wed
April 17 **Portfolio Assigned – Due May**
Reading: Schles, "Excerpt from a New History of Photography"

Week 13

Mon
April 22 **Share initial project ideas** - brainstorming, shot lists
Discuss: Schles

Wed
April 24 Studio time - feedback, image editing, printing

Week 14

Mon
April 29 Studio time - feedback, image editing, printing

Wed
May 1 Studio time - feedback, image editing, printing

Week 15

Mon
May 6 **Final Critique**

Bibliography: Sources for readings and/or supplementary information

Avgikos, Jan. "Cindy Sherman: Burning down the House," in *The Photography Cultures Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra," homeworkforyou.com. January 20, 2023 (originally

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- Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1983.
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- Hand, Martin. *Ubiquitous Photography*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012.
- Hartley, John. *The Politics of Pictures: The creation of the public in the age of popular media*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
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- Lehmann, Ulrich. "Chic Clicks: Creativity and Commerce," in *The Photography Cultures Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Long, Ben. *Complete Digital Photography, 8th Edition*. Boston: Course Technology, 2015.
- Solnit, Rebecca. "The Blue of Distance," in *A Field Guide for Getting Lost*. New York, Penguin, 2006.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. London: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Vitamin PH: New Perspectives in Photography*. London; New York: 2009.
- Wells, Liz, editor. *The Photography Cultures Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Wolf, Sylvia. *The Digital Eye: Photographic Art in the Electronic Age*. Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2010.

Museums and galleries

The International Center of Photography
The Guggenheim Museum
The Japan Society
The Jewish Museum
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
The Museum of Modern Art
The New Museum
The Whitney Museum of American Art

Baxter St. Camera Club of New York
Bruce Silverstein Gallery (Chelsea)
Clamp (Chelsea)
Fotografiska (Flatiron District)
Higher Pictures Generation (DUMBO)
Howard Greenberg Gallery (Midtown)
Klompching (DUMBO)
Penumbra (Koreatown Appt needed?)
Signs and Symbols (Lower East Side)
Sous Les Etoiles Gallery (Uptown)
SoHo Photo Gallery (Soho)
Yancey Richardson (Chelsea)
Yossi Milo Gallery (Chelsea)

Websites useful for exhibition searching:

photographmag.com
Artforum (specifically their list of exhibition openings)
lenscratch.com

Cameras and equipment

Adorama: www.adorama.com (18th St.)
B&H Photo & Video : www.bhphotovideo.com (33rd St.)
FYI: Photo gear can be rented at various locations