Art History 273—Summer 2021

History and Theory of Photography

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# Course Description:

Is it possible today to imagine a world without photography? Photographs inform and impact so many aspects of our lives, we know—but how, specifically? This course is a survey of photography from its beginnings in the early 19th century to the digital imaging of today. Online video lectures, course readings and discussion forums will address photography’s multiple histories and theorizations: as an artistic medium, as a social text, as a technological adventure, and as a cultural practice. Key photographers, cultural movements and recurring themes will be explored with close attention to the social and cultural contexts in which photographs were produced, circulated and consumed. Further, we will explore critical approaches to, and complex theories concerning the operations and impact of photography, emphasizing a consideration of how photographic media impacts each of us, today.

**Participants will work through sequences of materials and assignments organized in weekly “modules” on Canvas according to their own individual schedules with a great degree of flexibility.** In the few cases where there is a fixed time that students will need to adhere to, multiple time slots will be offered so that everyone will be able to participate as fits their schedule.

Course content will be delivered through a series of Panopto video lectures, video links and coordinated readings. Online discussion forums, reflective papers on readings, online quizzes and assignments have been designed to engage students with course topics, foster creative and critical thinking, allow dialogue concerning the stakes involved in visual representations, and allow instructor assessment and evaluation of participants’ progress.

# Required Readings:

1. Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography*, 3rd edition (2017)

[Purchase Text Online](https://www.routledge.com/Seizing-the-Light-A-Social--Aesthetic-History-of-Photography/Hirsch/p/book/9781315671994)

2. Electronic reserve (ER) readings of special topics articles on Canvas.

# Student Responsibilities:

**3 Quizzes: (50% of overall grade)**

Each quiz will require students to write short answers and longer essays on topics covered in the Panopto lectures and readings. These are open notes quizzes—you may return to the lectures and readings when composing your answers. Each quiz will only cover the topics for that 3-week section of the course. In other words, they are not comprehensive. These quizzes will be graded on a 100-point scale.

**Summary/Reflective Essays (25%)**

To ensure that participants have on strong comprehension of key ideas from course readings and lectures, and to allow me to offer feedback, each week students will write 3 summary/reflective essays on the readings. These essays will be graded on a 10-point scale.

**Participation in weekly Discussion Forums (25%)**

The topics of this course lend themselves to rich discussion and manifold perspectives. Candidly, this is often difficult to achieve in an online course. My hope is that you will engage with each other, respectfully and thoughtfully in the weekly online discussion forums. Each week I will provide you with specific topics, ideas and issues raised in the lectures and reading. Each student will be required to make one post in the discussion forum before the end of the day on Wednesdays. You are required to respond to at least one of these posts from another student by the end of the day on Fridays. You are welcome and encouraged to post/respond as many times as you desire. Your posts/responses will be graded on a 10-point scale based upon how well the reflect course content and student engagement.

# Late papers and discussion post policy:

Papers will be marked down 1 point for each day they are late and will not be accepted more than five calendar days following the due date. Discussion posts will be marked down 2 points for each day they are late and will not be accepted if more than 3 days late. If you have a serious conflict or emergency, please talk to me about it in advance of the due date and I will work with you.

# The 10-point scale corresponds to the following grades:

10 4.0 A

9 3.4 B

8 2.7 B-

7 1.7 C/C-

6 1.0 D

5 and below 0.0 F

# The 100-point scale corresponds to the following decimal/letter grades:

95-100 4.0-3.9 A

90-94.99 3.8 - 3.5 A-

87-89.99 3.4 - 3.2 B+

83-86.99 3.1 – 2.9 B

80.00-82.99 2.8 - 2.5 B-

77-79.99 2.4 - 2.2 C+

74-76.99 2.1 - 1.9 C

70.00-73.99 1.8 - 1.5 C-

67-69.99 1.4 - 1.2 D+

64-66.99 1.1 – 0.9 D

60-63.99 0.8-0.7 D-

Below 60 0.0 F

# VeriCite anti-plagiarism software:

**Notice**: *The University has a license agreement with VeriCite, an educational tool that helps prevent or identify plagiarism from Internet resources and work submitted by previous students of this course. I will use the service in this class; all assignments and quizzes you submit will be checked by VeriCite. The VeriCite Report will indicate the amount of original text in your work and whether all material that you quoted, paraphrased, summarized, or used from another source is appropriately referenced. All instances of intentional plagiarism will result in zero credit on the assignment, and a report of indicating academic dishonesty to the School of Art and the University of Washington. For further information, visit:* <https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/canvas/canvas-help-for-instructors/assignments-grading/vericite/plagiarism-faqs/>

# Course Outcomes:

1. Learn Actively - *Learning is a personal, interactive process that results in greater expertise and a more comprehensive understanding of the world.*
* Distinguish formal qualities that separate different stylistic periods of photography
* Employ interdisciplinary methods of visual analysis
* Explore the relationships between photography and its social, cultural, political, historical and/or religious contexts
* Develop interdisciplinary knowledge to examine how power and privilege manifest in culture and investigate how systems of power are related to class, race, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, and other identities
* Identify strategies in visual representation for challenging systems of power and privilege
* Apply prominent theories of photography
1. Think Critically, Creatively and Reflectively - *Reason and imagination are fundamental to problem solving and critical examination of ideas.*
* Use a variety of approaches to think critically about and reflect on personal and cultural assumptions and biases, and to consider alternative views regarding issues of power and inequality as they relate to issues of the visual representation of sexuality, ethnicity, gender, and religion
* Identify key art historical issues, determine the assumptions underlying arguments, and recognize the way that historical and cultural context affect meaning
* Explore and articulate various ways that photography represents cultural identity which is shaped by varying degrees of power and privilege, in relation to both a local context and interconnected world
* Investigate and critique prominent theories of photography
1. Communicate with Clarity and Originality - *The ability to exchange ideas and information is essential to personal growth, productive work, and societal vitality.*
* Discuss multiple interpretations of course content as it relates to structures of power, privilege and inequality using discipline-appropriate concepts and theories, and articulate how and why these structures inform personal, professional, and social identities
* Articulate points of view while using details of a photograph and/or its context as evidence
* Demonstrate proficiency to conduct guided research using a wide variety of materials from multiple points of view
* Use appropriate sources and technologies to gather and present information
* Question and reflect on assumptions, statements and information made throughout the course by the text, readings, instructors, and other students
* Demonstrate effective use of interdisciplinary methodologies and theories of photography employed in the course to visually analyze photographs
* Contribute ideas and information individually and in a group dynamic

[**School of Art Policies**](https://art.washington.edu/policies)

[**Religious Accommodations Policy**](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/)

# Course Outline and Schedule:

**(Specific prompts for the assignments listed below will be found on Canvas.)**

**Week 1: *Introduction: Setting the stage***

Module 1: **Introduction to the course: overview**

 **Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

2. Discussion forum—write a brief personal bio and post a picture that represents you. See prompt on Canvas.

Module 2: ***Context and Historical Backdrop: The Invention of Photography***

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto lecture

2. Summary/Reflective essay

**Readings:**

Text: Chapters 1-3

 •Talbot, “A Brief Historical Sketch of the Invention of the Art”

•Kriebel, “Theories of Photography: A Short History” note: we will read sections of this essay over the course of the quarter (the text is subdivided into 4 sections): focus on section 1, pp. 3-15

•Optional: Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces”

**Week 2: Early Photography—Finding a Place**

Module 3: ***Early Photography: Technological Evolution, Differing Looks and Uses—***

 ***and Critical Positions***

 **Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Discussion forum

**Readings:**

Text: Chapter 4

 •Baudelaire, “The Salon of 1859”

•Holmes, “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph”

Module 4: ***Photography and Art: Pictorialism and Traditions of Painting***

 **Assignments:**

 1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Summary/Reflective essay

**Readings:**

Text: Chapters 6, 9

 •Robinson, an excerpt from “Pictorial Effect in Photography”

•Emerson, “Hints on Art”

Optional: Rejlander, an excerpt from “An Apology for Art-Photography”

**Week 3: *Modernist Art or Social “Document”? Photography in the 19th-early 20th***

 ***Century***

Module 5: **Photography and 19th -early 20th C “Documentation”—From the Civil War to the American Landscape**

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Discussion forum

 3. Summary/Reflective essay

**Readings:**

Text: Chapters 5, 7

•Solomon-Godeau, “Who Is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary

Photography”

•Optional: Nesbit, “Photography and History: Eugene Atget”

Module 6: **20th C Art photography: from Pictorialism to Modernism**

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Discussion forum

**Readings:**

Text: Chapters 9 (review), 11

 •Weston, excerpts from “Daybooks 1923-30”

 •Szarkowski, “Introduction” from *The Photographer’s Eye*

•Optional: Swarkowski, “Photography and America”

**Week 4: Quiz #1**

Module 7:

**Assignments:**

 1. Optional discussion forum

2. **Quiz 1**

**Week 5:** ***Photography as an Instrument for Social Change: 1900-1950***

Module 8 **Photography as an Instrument for Social Change: 1900-1950**

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Discussion forum

 3. Summary/Reflective essay

**Readings:**

Text: Chapter 12

 ER: •Hine, “Social Photography”

•Rosler, “In, around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary

 Photography)”

**Week 6: *Photography and the Historical Avant-Garde***

Module 9 **Photography and the Historical Avant-Garde**

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Optional discussion forum

3. **Quiz 2**

**Readings:**

Text: Chapters 8, 10, (review) 11

 • Breton, “First Manifesto of Surrealism”

• Optional: Marinetti, “Futurist Manifesto”

**Week 7: *Mid-Century Currents: from Street Photography to Pop***

Module 10: **Mid-Century Currents: from Street Photography to Pop**

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Discussion forum

 3. Optional Summary/Reflective essay

 **Readings:**

Text: Chapters 15, 16

•Kerouac, “Introduction” to *The Americans*

• Kriebel, “Theories of Photography: A Short History” focus on sections 2-3, pp. 15-38

• Optional: Foster, “Death in America”

•Optional: Coleman, “The Directorial Mode: Towards a Definition”

**Week 8: Photography, “Conceptual Art,” and Identity Politics**

Module 11: Photography and “Conceptual Art”

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

**Readings:**

Text: Chapter 18

Module 12: **Photography and the Politics of Identity**

 **Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Optional Summary/Reflective essay

 **Readings:**

Text: Chapter 19

• Williamson, “Images of ‘Woman’”

• Optional: Meyer, “Barring Desire: Robert Mapplethorpe and the Discipline of Photography”

•Optional: Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

**Week 9: Some Aspects of Contemporary Photography and Quiz 3**

Module 13

**Assignments:**

1. Panopto video lecture

 2. Optional Discussion Forum

 3. **Quiz 3**

**Readings:**

Text: (Review) Chapter 18

• Kriebel, “Theories of Photography: A Short History” focus on section 4, pp. 38-43

• Galassi, “Gursky’s World”

• Optional: Batchen, “Post Photography”

•Optional: Plummer, “String, Space and Surface in the Photographs of Vik

Muniz”

**READINGS:**

Batchen, Geoffrey. “Post Photography.” In *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History,* 109-127*.* Boston: MIT Press, 2001.

Baudelaire, Charles. “The Salon of 1859.” In *Photography in Print, Writings from 1816 to the Present,* edited by Vicki Goldberg, 123-126. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988.

Breton, Andre. “First Manifesto of Surrealism,” from *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (2003), 447-453.

Coleman, A. D. “The Directorial Mode: Notes towards a Definition.” In *Light Readings: a Photography Critic’s Writings, 1968-1978,* 246-257. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979.

Emerson, Peter Henry. “Hints on Art.” In *Classic Essays on Photography,* edited by Alan Trachtenberg, 99-105. New Haven: Leet’s Island Books, 1980.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell. “The Stereoscope and Stereograph.” In *Classic Essays on Photography,* edited by Trachtenberg, 71-83. New Haven: Leet’s Island Books, 1980.

Kerouac, “Introduction” to *The Americans* (1958)

Kriebel, Sabine. “Theories of Photography: A Short History.” In *Photography Theory*, edited by James Elkins, 3-50. NY: Routledge 2007.

Marinetti, F. T. “Manifesto of Futurism.” *in Futurist Manifestos*, edited by Umbro Apollonio et al., 6 pages. New York: Viking Press, 1973.

Meyer, Richard. “Barring Desire: Robert Mapplethorpe and the Discipline of Photography.” In *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in 20thC American Art*, 159-224. Oxford: University Press 2002.

Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” In *Screen* (Autumn 1975), 6-18.

Nesbit, Molly. “Photography and History: Eugene Atget.” In *The New History of Photography* edited by Michel Frizot, 399-409. Köln: Konemann, 1998.

Rejlander, Oscar. Excerpt from “An Apology for Art Photography.” In, *Photography in Print, Writings from 1816 to the Present,* edited by Vicki Goldberg, 141-147. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988.

Robinson, Henry Peach. Excerpt from “Pictorial Effect in Photography.” In, *Photography in*

*Print, Writings from 1816 to the Present,* edited by Vicki Goldberg, 155-62. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail. “Who is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography.” In *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices,* 169-183. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Szarkowski, John. “Photography and America,” The art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies Volume 10 (1983), 236-51.

---------. Introduction to *The Photographer’s Eye*, 6-11*.* New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966.

Talbot, William Henry Fox. “A Brief Historical Sketch of the Invention of the Art.” In *Classic Essays on Photography,* edited by Alan Trachtenberg, 27-36. New Haven: Leet’s Island Books, 1980.

Weston, Edward. “Daybooks 1923-1930, an Excerpt.” In Photography *in Print, Writings from 1816 to the Present,* edited by Vicki Goldberg, 303-314. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988.

Williamson, Judith. “Images of Women.” *Screen,* November-December 1983, 102-106.