

AVT 253: Intro to Digital Photography  
Course Syllabus- Spring 2014  
George Mason University  
School of Art

Section 003: Monday & Wednesday; 4:30 -7:10  
Room: L016

Instructor: Rahshia Linendoll Sawyer  
Contact: [rlinendo@gmu.edu](mailto:rlinendo@gmu.edu)  
Office Hours: By appointment

### Prerequisites

No previous experience in photography is necessary and no prerequisites are required for this class.

### Required Text

A Short Course in Digital Photography: Second Edition London and Stone

### Course Description

This course is an introduction to the technical and aesthetic properties of digital photography with an emphasis on the use of a digital SLR camera as a tool for electronic photographic image making. Additionally, students will learn to create efficient digital workflow using basic image editing skills and software programs. Students will learn the technical aspects of photography as well as how to use the camera as a tool for creating art and idea expression.

### Course Objectives

- Learn basic functions of a Digital SLR Camera (DSLR) including:
  - Proper exposure control and light metering
  - Aperture and Shutter speed
  - White balance
  - The use of ISO in controlling digital noise
- Gain basic understanding of digital darkroom software, applications and equipment
- Build critical thinking and problem solving skills and learn formal art principles of image composition and design
- Learn to communicate ideas visually through photographs
- Learn how to discuss their work verbally and give constructive feedback to others in group critiques.

### Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance is an essential part of the course. This is an experience-based class and artistic growth comes only through continued active participation. In case of an unavoidable absence, please contact me immediately (email is best). You are responsible for all missed information. Excessive tardiness or leaving early from class (more than five minutes) and/or absences (more than two classes) will result in a severely reduced or failing grade for the course regardless of performance. Non-class open lab periods serve to provide additional work time. They do not serve as a replacement for scheduled class time and instruction.

### To be successful in this class, you must:

- Be prepared to participate fully in all aspects of the course.
- Attend class on time, regularly, stay for its entirety, and come to class prepared.
- Be committed to spending time outside of class hours to shoot and edit your photographs. This course cannot be done within the allotted class time and you must be willing to spend time out of class.
- Participate in class discussions and critique. The more you participate in the discussion or your and other's work, the easier it is to communicate your ideas. Receiving constructive criticism is critical in the artistic process.
- Follow the requirements of the assignment and complete it on time. Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in the grade being dropped two grades for each class it is late.
- Take ownership of the lab and equipment, This includes following any posted rules, cleaning up at the end of

class, and returning borrowed equipment on time in the same condition it was received.

- Satisfactory completion of visual, written, and presentation assignments. These assignments are due periodically throughout the semester and represent a cross-section of the principles of photographic seeing, thinking and discussing. Solutions to visual problems will be discussed and evaluated in class critiques and grades will be based on aesthetic merit and technical competence.

### Criteria for Evaluation and Grading

- Use of appropriate tools and techniques to demonstrate understanding of the assignment
- Image quality of the final image
- Idea development and creativity
- Risk taking, ambition, and engagement with the assignment
- Participation in class discussions and critiques

### Grade Breakdown:

All Assignments (except your final):	50%
Final Assignment:	20%
Participation	10%
Photography Research and Presentation	10%
Pop Quizzes	10%

### Assignment Resubmission:

Students, after receiving feedback in critique, can turn their work in for grade reconsideration up to one week after critique. Work that is turned in late is not eligible for resubmission.

### Final Assessment

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| A Excellent | Work far exceeds the expectations for the assignment. Shows exceptional grasp of technique, craft, and creative expression |
| B Very Good | Work is of a high standard that shows a firm understanding of technical considerations and individual creative expression. |
| C Average   | Meets the expectations of the assignment and shows technical competency  |
| D Poor      | Does not meet the expectations of the assignment. Work is uninspired and does not show a technical understanding.          |
| F Fail      | Failure to complete the assignment in the time allotted.   |

### Course Materials and Supplies

- A fully manual DSLR camera and manual
- Card reader with USB connection
- Memory storage (flash drive or external hard drive)
- Envelope 11.5x14.5 (for turning in mounted prints)
- Printing at SOA print
- Texts
  - Required: A Short Course in Digital Photography: Second Edition London and Stone
  - Recommended: Classroom in a Book: Lightroom 3

The Program provides equipment such as, cameras, lenses, flashes, tripods, lights and other miscellaneous items for rent/loan through the Photo Cage #L013J. Borrowed equipment is your responsibility and you are held liable for any and all costs if the equipment is damaged, lost or stolen. The program also charges a late fee of \$5.00 per day for all equipment past due.

### Local Photo Stores

Photo Craft - 703.250.5555  
6025 Burke Center Parkway, Burke  
Penn Camera: [www.penncamera.com](http://www.penncamera.com)

Online Photo Stores  
B&H Photo [www.bhphotovideo.com](http://www.bhphotovideo.com)

**This class fulfills a General Education Core requirement for Arts.**

Core requirements help ensure that students become acquainted with the broad range of intellectual domains that contribute to a liberal education. By experiencing the subject matter and ways of knowing in a variety of fields, students will be better able to synthesize new knowledge, respond to fresh challenges, and meet the demands of a complex world.

**Arts goal.**

Courses aim to achieve a majority of the following learning outcomes: students will be able to identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary appropriate to that form; demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic technique and the expression of a work's underlying concept; analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form and cultural context; analyze and interpret material or performance culture in its social, historical, and personal contexts; and engage in the artistic process, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.

**University and School of Art Policies**

In accordance with George Mason University policy, turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. The instructor of the class will keep his/her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion; or in the event that the instructor does not have a cell phone, he/she will designate one student to keep a cell phone active to receive such alerts.

**Commitment to Diversity**

This class will be conducted as an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

**Statement on Ethics in Teaching and Practicing Art and Design**

As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the School of Art adheres to the ethical standards and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

**Open Studio Hours**

SOA teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the SOA studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

**ArtsBus - Dates for Spring 2014**

- February 22
- March 22
- April 19

**ArtsBus Credit**

- Each SoA major must have up to 5 AVT 300/Artsbus credits before graduation. For credit to appear on your transcript you must enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment.
- If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips during a semester and need them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300. Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for additional, very important information regarding ArtsBus policy.
- Non-AVT majors taking art classes do not need Artsbus credit for graduation BUT may need to go on the Artsbus for a class assignment. You can either sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket for the bus trip at the Center of the Arts. Alternate trips must be approved by the instructor of the course that is requiring an ArtsBus trip.

## Visual Voices Lecture Series Spring 2014

Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:20- 9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater.

- January 21, *Syllabus Review* Linton
- February 6, Dale Culleton; *Improvising a Living Beyond the Studio*
- February 13, Adel Iskandor; *Activist Arabia: Revolt as Medium, Street as Canvas*
- February 27, Monica Amor; *Lygia Clark: Object to Subject*
- March 30, Margery Amdur; *Between my Selves*

## Important Deadlines

- Last Day to Add Tuesday, January 28
- Last Day to Drop (No Tuition Penalty) Tuesday, January 21
- Selective Withdrawal Period – February 24-March 16
- Incomplete work from Fall 2013 due to instructor- Friday March 28

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for late adds (up until the last day of classes) must be made by the student in the SOA office (or the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid being processed), LATE ADD fee will apply. Requests for non-selective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student's major is located. For AVT majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407.

## Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences

If you have a diagnosed disability or learning difference and you need academic accommodations, please inform me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Disabilities Resource Center (SUB I room 234, 703-993-2474). You must provide me with a faculty contact sheet from that office outlining the accommodations needed for your disability or learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged in advance through the DRC.

## Official Communications via GMU E-Mail

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

## Attendance Policies

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

## Honor Code

Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Catalog. The honor code requires that the work you do as an individual be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas. (This does not prohibit collaborative work when it is approved by your instructor.) As a faculty member, I have an obligation to refer the names of students who may have violated the Honor Code to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously.

No grade is important enough to justify cheating, for which there are serious consequences that will follow you for the rest of your life. If you feel unusual pressure about your grade in this or any other course, please talk to me or to a member of the GMU Counseling Center staff.

Using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism, a very serious Honor Code offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words and punctuation just as the passage appears in the original and must use quotation marks and page numbers in your citation. If you want to paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you must put the ideas into your own words, and you must cite the source, using the APA or MLA format. (For assistance with documentation, I recommend Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*.) The exception to this rule is information termed

general knowledge—information that is widely known and stated in a number of sources. Determining what is general knowledge can be complicated, so the wise course is, “When in doubt, cite.”

Be especially careful when using the Internet for research. Not all Internet sources are equally reliable; some are just plain wrong. Also, since you can download text, it becomes very easy to inadvertently plagiarize. If you use an Internet source, you must cite the exact URL in your paper and include with it the last date that you successfully accessed the site.

### Writing Center

Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

### The Collaborative Learning Hub

Located in Johnson Center 311 (703-993-3141), the lab offers in-person one-on-one support for the Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and a variety of other software. Dual monitor PCs make the lab ideal for collaborating on group projects, Macs are also available; as well as a digital recording space, collaborative tables, and a SMART Board. Free workshops are also available (Adobe and Microsoft) through Training and Certification; visit [ittraining.gmu.edu](http://ittraining.gmu.edu) to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.

### Important Dates

First day of classes; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date; full semester waitlists removed	Tue Jan 21
Summer 2014 Graduation Intent Available via Patriot Web	Mon Jan 27
Last day to add classes—all individualized section forms due Last day to drop with no tuition penalty	Tues Jan 28
Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty	Tues Feb 11
Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)	Fri Feb 21
Last day to file your Spring 2014 Graduation Intent	Fri Feb 21
Immunization Record Deadline	Sat Mar 1
Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via <a href="#">Patriot Web</a>	Mon Feb 17 – Fri Mar 21
Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)	Mon Feb 24 – Fri Mar 28
Spring Break	Mon Mar 10- Sun Mar 16
Incomplete work from Fall 2013 due to Instructor	Fri Mar 28
Incomplete grade changes from Fall 2013 due to Registrar	Fri Apr 4
Dissertation/Thesis Deadline	Fri May 2
Last day of classes	Mon May 5
Reading Days Reading days provide students with additional study time for final examinations. Faculty may schedule optional study sessions, but regular classes or exams may not be held.	Tue May 6
Exam Period (beginning at 7:30 a.m.)	Wed May 7 – Wed May 14
Commencement and Degree Conferral Date	May 17

## Assignment Summary

### 7 Photo Critiques + Discussion:

Choose 1 photographer/photograph from 1 of the approved blogs listed below that interests you, and write 1 paragraph to why. Copy the photo and save it along with your paragraph and submit it to Blackboard as a PDF file.

<http://www.jmcolberg.com/weblog/>  
<http://lenscratch.com/>

<https://www.lensculture.com/>  
<http://newlandscapephotography.com/>

### Netflix Instant Watch List

Gregory Crewdson: Brief Encounters  
The Woodmans  
An American Journey: Robert Frank

Connected  
Exit Through the Gift Shop

### 6 Assignments:

1. Camera Scavenger Hunt
2. Visual Experiment
3. Landscape Prompts
4. Portrait Prompts
5. Under the Influence/Art Copy
6. Final Project

#### Project assets:

- Final prints (number dependant on assignment)
- Name and Assignment written on back of all prints
- Contact sheets
- Artists statement 250 words
- Assignment checklist

Each assignment will need to be **printed at SOA print**, the number of final prints will depend on the assignment. Include with each assignment an artist statement to go along with the work.

If you need help start by answering the following questions in relation to the work for the assignment:

- The subjects and style or methods I use are \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.
- I became interested in the genre because, or when \_\_\_\_\_.
- When people see my work I would like them to \_\_\_\_\_.
- I choose to work with \_\_\_\_\_ (materials) because \_\_\_\_\_.
- I am most inspired by (nature, light, using objects that were intended for another purpose) \_\_\_\_\_.
- How do you begin a piece (a sketch/drawing, a photograph)?

After the assignment critique, place your prints in an envelope with your assignment checklist attached to the front.

**\* ANY missing asset will result in an ungraded assignment \***

### 1 Presentation:

Quality art is never neutral! Significant, lasting images are always the result of passion, devotion, obsession, inspiration, desire or some other compelling force. Make a 10 to 15 min class presentation - the focus of your presentation on your most important concerns and issues about art. Possible starting points:

- What are you committed to in your Art/Photography?
- What aspects of are and life command your attention?
- Why do you bother giving so much time, energy and money making art?
- What issues do you struggle with in your artwork?
- Where do you go for inspiration?

### 5 POP Quizzes

Pops quizzes will cover material both from the readings and class discussions.

**Course Schedule for AVT 253**  
**Subject to change based on the needs of the class**

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE
1	1/22	Introduction to class Syllabus review Photo Cage tour (check out cameras)	In class reading What is a Photograph, Graham Clarke	Class field Trip – Visit PHOTO CAGE
2	1/27	Lecture Intro to Digital Photography	Chapter 1 The Camera	ASSGN 1 SCAVENGER HUNT <b>IN CLASS ASSIGNMENT BRING CAMERA &amp; OBJECT TO CLASS</b>
	1/29	Class field Trip - Visit to SOA Print Lecture Exposure and Camera Controls Lecture Seeing through a Lens Lecture Contemporary Photography	Chapter 3 Light and Exposure  Chapter 5 Image Editing	Class field Trip – Visit SOA PRINT  Time:_____.
3	2/3	Presentation: the issues	Gregory Crewdson: Brief Encounters	Presentation: the issues
	2/5	Lightroom Demonstration Basic Workflow, Editing RAW images, Digital Contact Sheets	Chapter 9 Seeing like a Camera	<b>DIGITAL REVIEW ASSIGNMENT 1</b>
4	2/10	Lecture Aperture and Depth of Field In class motion demonstration of shutter speed  <b>CRITIQUE: Assignment #1</b>  (ASGN2)	Chapter 2 Lens	Assignment #1 Camera Scavenger Hunt
	2/12	PHOTO RESEARCH DAY (NO CLASS)		
5	2/17	Lecture Motion Capture Lecture The Print  Review Images Lecture Lighting	Chapter 8 Lighting	Photo critique + discussion (1)
	2/19	<b>CRITIQUE: Assignment #2</b>  (ASGN3)		Assignment #2 Visual Experiment

6	2/24	Lightroom Demonstration: Color adjustments	Chapter 6 Printing and Display	Photo critique + discussion (2)
	2/26	Lecture Aperture Review	An American Journey: Robert Frank	
7	3/3	<b>Lecture Landscape and Place</b> (ASGN3)		<b>Photo critique + discussion</b> (3)
	3/5	<b>Lecture Portraits</b> (ASGN4)	Chapter 10: History of Photography  The Woodmans	<b>Photo critique + discussion</b> (4)
8	3/10	SPRING BREAK MARCH 10TH-16 <sup>TH</sup> NO CLASS		
	3/12			
9	3/17	Lecture Photo Editing  <b>Digital Work In Progress Critique Assign 3</b> <b>Digital Work In Progress Critique Assign 4</b>  <b>Under the influence/Art Copy</b> (ASGN5)	Chapter 7: Organizing and Storing	
	3/19	<b>CRITIQUE: Landscape Prompts #3</b>		<b>Assignment #3</b> <b>Landscape Prompts</b>
10	3/24	<b>CRITIQUE: Assignment #4</b>		<b>Assignment #4</b> <b>Portraits Prompts</b>
	3/26	Photoshop Demonstration: Selective Color Digital Work In Progress Critique Assign 5 (ASGN5)		<b>Photo critique + discussion</b> (5)
11	3/31	Lecture Building a Body of Work, Subject vs. Theme  Digital Work In Progress Critique Assign 5		<b>Photo critique + discussion</b> (6)
	4/2	<b>CRITIQUE: Assignment #5</b> (ASGN6 – FINAL PROJECT)		<b>Assignment #5</b> <b>Under the influence/Art</b> <b>Copy</b>



12	4/7			DRAFT final projects
	4/9			Proposals for final projects
13	4/14	Digital Review Final Project	Connected	
	4/16			Photo critique + discussion (7)
14	4/21	Work In Progress Critique	Exit through the gift shop	Work In Progress
	4/23			
15	4/28	Digital Review Final Project		ALL RE-SUBMISSIONS DUE
	4/30			
16	5/5	FINAL CRIT		Assignment #6 Final Project
	5/7	FINAL CRIT		Assignment #6 Final Project

**AVT 253: Intro to Digital Photography  
Assignment checklist**

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Name:

Assignment:

Due Date:

I'm turning in:

- Name & Assgn written on back of all prints
  - Artist statement
  - Contact Sheets
- 

Aesthetic	POINTS	OUT OF POSSIBLE
Visual interesting	_____	40
Follow Assignment Guidelines	_____	15
<b>Technical</b>		
Shadow/Highlights	_____	15
Focus	_____	15
White Balance	_____	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

Teacher Comments: