

George Mason University
College of Visual and Performing Arts
School of Art
AVT 359 - About Photography: Practice and Research, Spring 2016

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Office Hours: Wednesday, noon to 3:00PM by appointment

"We are bound to get a little confused when we open a system of ideas. We can no longer ignore our ignorance and refuse to recognize or consider any significant contradictory evidence. When we are able to say, "I don't know" or "I don't understand," we graduate to pretty good company and are in a position to perform an act of will. We may say, "I want to try to know" or "I want to try and understand." If we are aware of either of these desires, we may begin to recapture a sense of wonder and delight. To experience this feeling is the common privilege of children and a moving stimulus for many artists."

Henry Holmes Smith, from his lecture, "Light Study", (1947)

"I'm not interested in photography because of the cameras, lenses, and developing processes, but because it is a repository for all of those intellectual conflicts, all of the problems humans have had to live with in these decades. I think the 20th century has been defined by that vision, the photographic culture."

Joan Fontcuberta interviewed by Cristina Zeklich (2001)

"Art, whatever it is, is part of picture making, and picture making has been and is one of the ways of exploring and defining "realities" of various kinds and in various guises. And maybe one of the things we want to know from a history of photography, as part of the history of picture making is how people have used pictures to shape the past and the present. For that might help us guard against how pictures will be used to shape our future. How we perceive past and present is directly related to how we perceive and respond to pictures."

Carl Chiarenza, in Afterimage, (1979)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This combined lecture and discussion course will provide students with a critical overview of photographic history and contemporary photography that emphasizes the relationships between the various image-forms and functions developed from the 1840's to the present day. Unlike a general history course, which catalogues basic formal and technical chronologies or surveys contemporary photographic history; this course will focus on a variety of issues and theories and examine how photography has both influenced and altered human perception as well as influenced contemporary art and culture. Lectures, readings, discussions and projects will encourage critical looking, thinking, writing and working with photographic images as well as understanding the histories of ideas about photography.

OBJECTIVES

- 1- To gain an understanding of the many facets of photography, their issues, approaches and theories.
- 2- To understand the value of photographic discourse.
- 3- To enrich one's skills in applying exploratory aesthetic criticism and increase one's understanding that criticism is much more than judging the photograph.
- 4- To learn editing and aesthetic principles necessary for the communication of ideas through visual imagery.
- 5- To complete the semester assignments as outlined.

CLASS POLICIES

1- ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY! You are expected to be present for the entire class.

Please note that if absent, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what you have missed and what to prepare for the following class. **You are permitted a total of up to three excused absences.** Any additional absences will result in a very low or failing grade for this course. Except for a serious emergency and /or a letter from a doctor, no excuses for late work or absence will be accepted. If you wish to be excused from class to observe a religious holiday, or for any other serious matter of a personal nature, you must bring it to my attention so that arrangements can be made for you to keep up with the progress of the class. Class starts and ends at its designated time. Habitual tardiness or leaving early on a habitual basis will affect your grade.

2- Assignments are to be submitted when due. Late assignments will be reduced one full letter grade for each class past due. Late assignments over one week past due will be subject to failure.

3- Subjects for your presentation and the visual book are to be approved by me.

4- I will meet with each student at mid-term to discuss your grade and progress in the class. We will review all assignments up to that point and outline steps that you can take to improve your performance if necessary.

5- Each student is expected to participate in class discussions and class critiques.

6- Each student is required to complete all reading assignments prior to the class lectures as noted on the course outline.

7- New book work should be brought to class for review as noted in course outline.

8- All cell phones must be turned off before entering the classroom. Calls and text messages may be made before class and during class breaks, but must take place outside of the classroom. No cell phone calls are permitted in the film processing or darkroom areas and NO TEXT Messaging is allowed during lectures, critiques or general class time.

9- Laptops may be used for note taking only!!! Anyone caught using either the classroom computers or their laptops for anything but note taking during the class will be banned from using a computer for the entire semester.

10- Please adhere to all University and AVT policies, see below:

OTHER POLICIES AND DISCLAIMERS

1- University Policy - Assumption of Risk

There are inherent risks that you assume as a student participating in a laboratory course. You are responsible for observing both safety precautions and specific guidance when working in a GMU photo lab. Laboratory hazards to which you may be exposed may include, but are not limited to the following: toxic and chemical substances, mounting presses and cutters, and the operation of electrical equipment in an environment containing water (shock potential).

Individuals, who suffer allergic reactions, are pregnant, have sensitive skin, or have other medical issues, must make these concerns known to the course instructor before being exposed to the laboratory environment. Course descriptive materials and the course instructor will address specific hazards to which you will be exposed. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for hazardous materials used in the laboratory are available for review through the course instructor or the laboratory manager.

2- Photography Program Policies

The Photography Program provides equipment such as, cameras, lenses, flashes, tripods, lights and other miscellaneous items for loan. 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 uses Mason Money for deposit charges and fees may vary depending on equipment borrowed. Please check-out/reserve your equipment on the program's website: gmuphoto.wordpress.com under **Reserve Equipment**.

The photography area has established a policy prohibiting use of an I Pod or other portable audio devices during scheduled class time. You may however, use your audio devices during any open lab period (i.e. non-scheduled class time). ALWAYS, remember turn off any and all illuminated dials before entering the darkroom!

University and AVT Department 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

The dates for Spring 2016 trips are Feb 20, March 19 and April 09

ArtsBus Credit

* Each student 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 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

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.

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Important Deadlines

Last Day to Add **Tuesday January 26**

Last Day to Drop (67% Tuition Penalty) **Friday February 19th**

Selective Withdrawal Period – **Monday Feb 22 – Friday March 25**

Incomplete work from Spring 2013 due to instructor - **Friday March 25**

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 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.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are three "defined" assignments for this semester. (Handouts for shooting assignments will be distributed at various times through out the semester.) The defined assignments are as follows:

1- Presentation – a 20- minute presentation on a SIGNIFICANT CRITICAL ARTICLE written on photography since 1980. Your presentation should briefly discuss the author, the purpose of the article (where it was published and its context), your reason for selecting it, what you gained from the article, any criticisms you have and what you feel the work brings to the world of photographic theory and criticism. I recommend the use of projected images but no more than 20 images. Please review the attached recommended reading list for possible consideration (you may also research the web). I will assist you with recommendations as well. You **MUST** let me know your selection before the end of March and no later than March 29th.

2- Responses to Readings – Our required text is Lucy Soutter's *Why Art Photography*, which consists of an introduction and 6 chapters. Responses must be written for each assigned reading. These written responses are due on the day of the reading's discussion. (Please refer to the class outline.) Each response must be typed, double –spaced, 12 font size and at the very least one page. I will post questions on BB to assist you with your thoughts.

3 – The Visual Book - the major studio project for the semester is the creation of a visual book. This book is to be made by you, although the work contained in it need not be your own. You must make use of the book form as a mode of expression and presentation. This means that the images contained in your book must take advantage of, and indeed **DEPEND** upon the page and the book experience (self-contained object with pages and a binding, etc.) for their ability to convey ideas.

A book is a harmonious unit; therefore all aspects of its appearance should be consistent. **EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT** – the physicality of the book (its tactile and visual nature as well as, but not necessarily including, the other senses - auditory, olfactory and taste) the images included- their relative size, contrast, tone, the binding of your book, the nature of the page, the stock of its paper, typography or calligraphy (if any) – ALL must be carefully selected with the overall concept in mind. Nothing should disrupt the unity of your idea, and your book is the physicalization of that idea and its vehicle.

In order to assure that you do not deal with this as a test, but rather as a problem to be dealt with openly and with all the assistance I can offer, you will be **REQUIRED** to bring your books into the class at several stages of completeness. Bookwork in progress will be checked every four weeks during the semester. The work can be in digital form. You will receive progress grades, so be prepared!

Websites for publishing photo books - BUT be careful - remember you're making an artist's book not a scrapbook or a portfolio of your images. The book must have a solid concept and involve thoughtful approaches. A self-published book may not necessarily be the best-finished product.

www.lulu.com

www.blurb.com

www.viovio.com In order to assure that you do not deal with this as a test, but rather as a problem to be dealt with openly and with all the assistance I can offer, you will be **REQUIRED** to bring your books into the class at several stages of completeness. Bookwork in progress will be checked every four weeks during the semester. You will receive progress grades, so be prepared!

Visit the National Museum for Women in the Arts - They also have an excellent collection of artist's books and great resources at the museum.

Contemporary Artist's Works - Varied Approaches to Book Forms

*Anselm Kiefer	Abelardo Morell - photographs of books	
Lucas Samaras	*William Kentridge	Terry Winters
Clarissa Sligh	*Marcel DuChamp	Jim Dine
Susan kae Grant	*Russell Crotty	
*Kiki Smith	Yoko Ono	
John Wood	Beverly Pepper	

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Grades are a reflection of how well you accomplished the objectives set out for the course. They are based primarily on the quality of your work, but timeliness, class participation and effort will also be taken into account.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING

A = Superior

- * demonstrates a commitment to course material
- * demonstrates an excellent understanding of formal and conceptual concerns
- * intellectually interesting approaches and solutions to the assignment
- * submission of assignment on time

B = Strong

- * fulfills all course requirements with dedication and understanding
- * most solution(s) to assignment(s) are thoughtfully executed, but could be taken further
- * some minor problems in presentation of materials

C = Competent/Satisfactory

- * adequate understanding of course content
- * most solutions do not yield significant interpretation or insight to the problem

* minor/major presentation problems

D = Unsatisfactory

- * inadequate understanding of course content
- * solutions lack rigor and understanding
- * submitted work is poorly presented

F = Failure/Inadequate

- * lack of understanding in all course requirements
- * assignments are incomplete
- * work submitted lacks an understanding of assignment as given and shows very little creative effort.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

Presentation	= 20%
Book Project	= 40%
Other in class assignments	= 20%
Participation	= 20% (includes written responses to Soutter's Chapters)

SUPPLIES

- 1- **REQUIRED TEXT:** *Why Art Photography*, Lucy Soutter
- 2- **Recommended Texts:** *On Photography*, Susan Sontag, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, Charlotte Cotton
- 3- **Standard photographic equipment**
- 4- **Notebook for recording notes, ideas, etc.**
- 5- **Other suggested readings and materials to be discussed**

COURSE OUTLINE (Schedule subject to change)

Tues. 1/19

Introduction, explain syllabus and overview of course

Assignment/ #1 – Short Presentation – *The One Photography (and perhaps photographer) you have found the most influential for you.* **Be prepared to present and discuss your selected image next Tuesday – a projected image is preferred for sharing**

- Thurs. 1/21** **Lecture on Photography's development as an art form**
Read: Soutter - Introduction
- Tues. 1/26** **Be prepared to present and discuss your selected Photograph.**
Discussion on Soutter's Intro (no written paper needed)
Read: Soutter, Chapter 1
- Thurs. 1/28** **Lecture: Defining Subjects – The Portrait**
Visual Assignment #1
- Tues. 2/02** **Meet in lobby of Fenwick Library** to visit their artist book collection. Time permitting, further discussion on book project.
- Thurs. 2/04** **Discussion on Soutter, Chapter One**
Read: Soutter, Chapter 2
- Tues. 2/09** **Lecture: Examining Objectivity**
- Thurs. 2/11** **Critique on #1**
Read: Soutter, Chapter 3
- Tues. 2/16** **Discussion on Soutter, Chapter 2**
Visual Assignment #2
- Thurs. 2/18** **In class meetings to discuss book project – submit proposal**
- Tues. 2/23** **Lecture: Documenting the Constructed Tableau**
Visual Assignment #3
- Thurs. 2/25** **Viewing of Christopher Marker's *Le Jette***
- Tues. 3/01** **Critique on #2**
- Thurs. 3/03** **Discussion on Soutter, Chapter 3**
Read: Soutter, Chapter 4 and BB reading, "The Hug"
- Spring Break***
- Tues. 3/15** **Critique on #3**
Read: Soutter, Chapter 5
- Thurs. 3/17** **Carrie Schneider in class visit <http://www.carrieschneider.net/index.html>**
- Tues. 3/22** **Lecture: Questioning Authenticity**
- Thurs. 3/24** **Discussion on Soutter, Chapter 4 and BB reading**
- Tues. 3/29** **BRING IN WORK COMPLETED ON VISUAL BOOK**
- Thurs. 3/31** **Lecture: Death of the Faithful Witness**
Read: Soutter, Chapter 6
- Tues. 4/07** **Discussion on Soutter, Chapter 5**
- Thurs. 4/12** **Lecture: Photography's New Directions**

- Tues. 4/14** Wrap up and closing discussion on Soutter, Chapter 6
- Thurs. 4/19** BRING IN WORK COMPLETED ON VISUAL BOOK
- Tues. 4/21** Presentations/Discussion
- Thurs. 4/26** Presentations/Discussion
- Tues. 4/28** Presentations/Discussion
- Thurs. 5/02** NO CLASS – WORK ON BOOKS
- Tues. 5/10** Critique on Books – end of the semester party!

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

AVT 359: ABOUT PHOTO - Theory and Practice, Spring 2016

Check Blackboard for links, and more!

(This is not a definitive list, although I've attempted to include as many significant publications as possible. Most assigned reading materials are from these books.)

***Top books for your library on photo history/theory/criticism**

***Camera Lucida, Reflections of Photography, Roland Barthes**

***On Photography, Susan Sontag**

***The Photograph as Contemporary Art, Charlotte Cotton**

Photography Theory, ed. James Elkins

The Meaning of Photography, ed. Robin Kelsey & Blake Stimson

Photography, A Very Short Introduction, Steve Edwards

Reading Into Photography, Barrow, Armitage & Tydeman

Photographers on Photography, Nathan Lyons

***The Contest of Meaning, ed. Richard Bolton**

The Art of Interruption, John Roberts

***Ways of Seeing, John Berger**

About Looking, John Berger

Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography, Geoffrey Batchen

Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance, Geoffrey Batchen

Photography Degree Zero, Reflections on Roland's Barthes Camera Lucida, ed. Geoffrey Batchen

Photography at the Dock, Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices, Abigail Solomon-Godeau

The Politics of Focus, Women, Children and 19th Century Photography, Lindsay Smith

The Body and the Lens, Photography 1839 to the Present, John Pultz

From Adams to Stieglitz, Nancy Newhall

***Crisis of the Real, Writings on Photography since 1974, Andy Grundberg**

Critical Focus, A. D. Coleman

***Light Readings, A Photography Critic's Writings, 1968-1978, A. D. Coleman**

The Photograph, Graham Clarke

***Between the Eyes, Essays on Photography and Politics, David Levi Strauss**

***The Photography Reader, ed. Liz Wells**

***Photography: A Critical Introduction, ed. Liz Wells**

Basic Critical Theory for Photographers, Ashley la Grange

Why Photography Matters As Never Before, Michael Fried

Singular Images, Essays on Remarkable Photographs, ed. Sophie Howarth

Black Photographers, 1840-1940, Deborah Willis

Constructed Images, New Photography, Deborah Willis

***Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the present, Deborah Willis**

***The Black Female Body, A Photographic History, Deborah Willis and Carla Williams**

Light Matters, Vicki Goldberg

***Power of Photography, How Photographs Change Our Lives, Vicki Goldberg**

Conversations with Contemporary Photographers, Umbrage Editions

Photography Speaks: 150 Photographers On Their Art, ed. Brooks Johnson

Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography From the 1850's to the Present, Liz Heron, author and Val Williams, ed.

Photography and Beyond in Japan, Space, Time and Memory, Robert Stearns

Shifting Tides, Cuban Photography after the Revolution, Tim B. Wride

***Photography, A Cultural History, Mary Warner Marien**

German Photography, 1870-1970: Power of a Medium, Klaus Honnef

Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers, Jeanne Moutoussamy

A History of Women Photographers, Naomi Rosenblum

***Reframings: New American Feminist Photographers, ed. Diane Neumaier**

Diana and Nikon, Essays on Photography, Janet Malcolm

Seizing the Light, A History of Photography, Robert Hirsch

History of Photography, Beaumont Newhall

Photography and The American Scene, A Social History, 1939-1889, Robert Taft

Classic Essays on Photography, ed. Alan Trachtenberg

***OverExposed, ed. Carol Squiers**

The Nature of Photographs, Stephen Shore

Why People Photograph, Robert Adams

After Photography, Fred Ritchen

***Defining Eye: Women Photographers of the 20th Century**

Towards a Philosophy of Photography, Vilem Flusser

***The Education of a Photographer, Charles Traub**

PERIODICALS

Afterimage

Art on Paper (out of publication)

Nueva Luz

Contact Sheet (Published by Light Work)

Aperture

21st: The Journal of Contemporary Photography

Blind Spot

The Photo Review

Photo-Eye (subscribe to their list serve and check out their blog www.photoeye.com)

Zoom International Magazine

Exposure, Society for Photographic Education publication Join them!

Photography Quarterly, a publication of the Center for Photography at Woodstock

MUSEUMS (dedicated and/or with large photographic holdings)

International Center for Photography (ICP), New York City

International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

Photographic Resource Center at Boston University <http://www.bu.edu/prc/>

The Center for Fine Art Photography, Fort Collins, CO

Museum of Modern Art, New York City

Center for Photography at Woodstock, Woodstock, NY

The American Museum of Photography (totally web-based
www.photographymuseum.com)

The Getty and Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA

RESEARCH/STUDY/NON PROFIT CENTERS

Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Smithsonian:
American History Photographic Collection
Archives of American Art

Museum of Modern Art, Ema and Victor Hasselblad Photography Study Center, New York City

Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ www.creativephotography.org

Woodstock Center for Photography, Woodstock, NY

Light Work, Syracuse, NY

Aperture, New York City

Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, Durham, NC

Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin
www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/photography

Southeast Museum of Photography at Daytona State College, FL