

History of Photography  
ARTH 350 sec 001 • Fall 2017  
Dr. Vanessa M. Schulman  
MW 1:30-2:45 pm • Art and Design 2026

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**Course Information:**

3 credit hours. Development of photography from origins in France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present.

**Description:**

This survey examines the technical, aesthetic, and political histories of photography from pre-photographic technologies to the present. Considering photography's complex role as a reproductive medium, this course will address its relationship with other visual arts, its deployment in scientific, factual, and social inquiry, and the ways in which its technological limitations and developments drove photographers' aesthetic experimentation. Understanding photography's role as not merely an art but also a tool for shaping knowledge, this course will also explore the collection, organization, and display of photographic materials in historical context.

**Goals:**

By participating in this course, students should meet the following goals:

- synthesize information to articulate critical responses to objects and texts
- analyze and evaluate visual images
- develop skills of academic communication, both written and oral
- identify major genres, movements, and technologies within the history of photography

**Required Textbook:**

Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Pearson, 2014).

Additional readings will be made available as PDFs or links on the Blackboard site.

**Class Communication:**

I will send messages to your Mason email only, so be sure you check that account or have your mail forwarded to an account that you check regularly. Please allow 48 hours for a response to email.

**Evaluation of Student Work:**

I use a 100-point scale for grading, as well as the following measurements of student performance:

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Clearly stands out as excellent performance
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Level of work is good to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Level of work is satisfactory to average
D (60-69)			Work is below average and marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

The grade for this course will be weighted in the following way:

Participation	5%
Primary Source Essays (2 @ 15%)	30%
Ekphrastic Essay	20%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam	25%

## Course Requirements:

Participation: Students start with an 80 for participation; this will be raised when students participate in a thoughtful, relevant way and decreased when students act disruptive, disrespect class members, or engage in nonacademic activity. Refrain from texting, checking email, or surfing the web. Such behavior, when practiced in a flagrant and repeated manner, will result in a zero for participation.

Two Primary Source Essays (due Mon. Sept. 25 and Mon. Nov. 6): Throughout the semester we will read primary texts on photography. For each essay, choose **one** text and write a 3-4 page response paper discussing how the source fits in with artistic, social, or political developments.

Ekphrastic Essay (due Wed. Nov. 29): A 5-page (double spaced) essay focused on creative interpretation of a single photographic image you have viewed in person. You may select a photograph from our visit to Fenwick Library, from my collection of stereo cards, or from a local museum or archive. This type of writing combines visually vivid description with narrative content. It is up to you to frame the essay around a narrative, theme, or idea you find compelling.

Exams: A non-cumulative midterm will be given in class on Mon. Oct. 16. A cumulative final exam will take place during finals period.

Exams may be missed without penalty in cases of: religious observance, academic, or athletic obligations, with at least one week's advance notification; or serious illness or emergency, with notification as soon as possible. Generally you will be expected to make up the missed test within one week. All cases will require documentation in writing. Any other reasons for missing an exam (overslept, missed bus, etc.) will incur a -20 point penalty on a make-up test.

## A Note on Attendance:

You are an adult and presumably juggle many responsibilities in your life. I understand that sometimes class attendance conflicts with those responsibilities. That said, repeated absenteeism in college students is positively correlated with poor exam performance and lower overall GPA.<sup>1</sup> I will take attendance daily, but only with the goal of noticing patterns of nonattendance and reaching out to students who may be struggling. <sup>1</sup>Credé et al, "Class Attendance in College," *Review of Educational Research* 80.2 (2010).

## Policies for Submitting Written Work:

Assignments will be posted and turned in using Blackboard and are due at 11:59 pm on the due date. Late work will be penalized 5 points for each day past the due date, including weekend days.

Please format your files according to the following guidelines:

- Double-spaced with standard margins and 12-point font
- Cover sheets, works cited, images, etc. do not count toward the page count
- Files should be saved as .doc, .docx, or .pdf and will not be read in any other format

## Academic Honesty:

I have a **zero tolerance** policy for academic dishonesty, whether intentional or not. Students who violate standards of academic honesty will earn a **zero** for the assignment and may risk failing the course or being subject to disciplinary action at the University level.

The George Mason Honor Code reads as follows: "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, and/or lie in matters related to academic work." More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at [oai.gmu.edu](http://oai.gmu.edu).

## Support Resources for Students

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities are entitled to request appropriate accommodations. Students should first register with Disability Services and then bring me the provided letter to receive the necessary accommodations. [ds.gmu.edu](http://ds.gmu.edu), or call (703) 993-2474.

**Help with Writing:** If you have struggled with writing in the past, or if English is not your first language, you may want to seek help from the Writing Center. They offer one-on-one tutoring and workshops throughout the semester. Robinson-A, Room 114, or [writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

**Emotional and Mental Support:** College life is complicated. Students may find it helpful to talk with a professional. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help address both personal and academic concerns. Services are free and confidential. SUB I, Room 3129, or [caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)

**LGBTQ Resources:** LGBTQ Resources “works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies.” SUB I, Room 2200, or [lgbtq.gmu.edu](http://lgbtq.gmu.edu)

**Diversity:** The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education provides support for an inclusive campus, including first-generation and undocumented students. [odime.gmu.edu](http://odime.gmu.edu)

## Course Calendar

### Week 1

Reading: Marien, pp. 3-21; John Berger, “Understanding a Photograph” (in class on 8/28)  
Mon. 8/28 Introduction to Course Policies and Expectations  
Wed. 8/30 Pre-photography and Early Technologies

### Week 2

Reading: Marien, pp. 23-55; Dominique François Arago, “Report”  
Mon. 9/4 NO CLASS: Labor Day Holiday  
Wed. 9/6 Early Uses for Photography

### Week 3

Reading: Marien, pp. 56-95; Charles Baudelaire, “The Modern Public and Photography”  
Mon. 9/11 Portraits and Likenesses  
Wed. 9/13 Art and the Public

### Week 4

Reading: Marien, pp. 97-139; Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Stereoscope and Stereograph”  
Mon. 9/18 Capturing War  
Wed. 9/20 Surveying the World

### Week 5

Reading: Marien, pp. 141-159; review Arago, Baudelaire, and Holmes for Monday discussion  
Mon. 9/25 Primary Sources Discussion; **DUE @ 11:59 PM: Primary Source Essay #1**  
Wed. 9/27 Science or Social Science?

### Week 6

Reading: Marien, pp. 168-189  
Mon. 10/2 Pictorialism  
Wed. 10/4 Visit to Special Collections, Fenwick Library, Room 2400

### **Week 7**

Reading: Marien, pp. 201-227  
\*Tues. 10/10 Art with a Social Conscience \*Monday class meets Tuesday due to Columbus Day  
Wed. 10/11 Technology, Chronophotography, and the Moving Image

### **Week 8**

Reading: Marien, pp. 266-275; Edward Weston, "Seeing Photographically"  
Mon. 10/16 **In-class Midterm**  
Wed. 10/18 Straight and *f.64*

### **Week 9**

Reading: Marien, pp. 236-266; Franz Roh, "Mechanism and Expression"  
Mon. 10/23 Interwar Modernism I  
Wed. 10/25 Interwar Modernism II

### **Week 10**

Reading: Marien, pp. 277-294, 297-306, 328-334; Berenice Abbott, "Photography at the Crossroads"  
Mon. 10/30 Interwar Documentary Photography  
Wed. 11/1 American, German, and Japanese Perspectives on World War II

### **Week 11**

Reading: Marien, pp. 311-328; review Weston, Roh, and Abbott for Monday discussion  
Mon. 11/6 Primary Source Discussion; **DUE @ 11:59 PM: Primary Source Essay #2**  
Wed. 11/8 Globalization after World War II

### **Week 12**

Reading: Marien, pp. 335-389; Jack Kerouac, introduction to *The Americans*  
Mon. 11/13 The Scene: Street Photography, Postwar Documentary  
Wed. 11/15 Photography and the Art World

### **Week 13**

Reading: Marien, pp. 395-435; Jeff Wall, "Marks of Indifference"  
Mon. 11/20 Late Twentieth-Century Globalism  
Wed. 11/22 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

### **Week 14**

Reading: Marien, pp. 437-491; Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others"  
Mon. 11/27 Postmodernism  
Wed. 11/29 Role Playing; **DUE @ 11:59 PM: Ekphrastic Essay**

### **Week 15**

Reading: Marien, pp. 493-517; review Kerouac, Wall, and Sontag for Monday discussion  
Mon. 12/4 Primary Source Discussion  
Wed. 12/6 Twenty-First Century Photography

### **Finals Week**

Wed. 12/13 Final Exam, 1:30 – 4:15 pm