

History of Photography

ARTH 350 sec 001 • Fall 2018

Dr. Vanessa M. Schulman

MW 12:00-1:15 pm • Art and Design L008

Email: vschulma@gmu.edu • Office Hours: Wed. 10:00-11:45 am • Office: Robinson-B 377D

Course Information:

3 cr. hrs. Development of photography from origins in France in the 19th 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.

Mason Core:

This course satisfies the Arts requirement in Mason Core. Students who successfully complete a course in the Arts category must meet the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic process and a work's underlying concept, and where appropriate, contexts associated with the work.
2. Identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary and critique appropriate to that form.
3. Analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form, as well as the work's cultural significance and context.
4. Analyze and interpret the content of material culture through its social, historical, and personal contexts.

Course Readings:

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

We will not use a textbook, but these two texts offer excellent surveys of photographic history for students who are interested or who like to follow along with additional background.

-Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (Pearson, 2014).

-Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social and Aesthetic History of Photography* (Routledge, 2017).

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	10%
Photo Blogs (7 @ 5% each)	35%
Midterm Tests (2 @ 15 each)	30%
Take-Home Final	25%

Course Requirements:

Participation: Students start with an 80/100 for participation; this will be raised when students participate in a thoughtful, relevant way. You may use electronics, but please try to restrain yourself from texting, Instagramming, streaming video, etc.

Photo Blogs: Throughout the semester we will read primary texts and look at hundreds of photographs. For each required blog post, you will write about the reading for that week and apply it to one of the photographs we have seen in class. Full instructions are on Blackboard.

Midterm Tests: Two non-cumulative midterms will be given in class on Wed. Sept. 26 and Mon. Nov. 5. The format of the tests will include term IDs, image IDs, and a short comparison essay. 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.

Take-Home Final Exam: The final exam will be a cumulative essay-based take-home test. We will brainstorm themes for the essay questions together, and I will write the questions, which will be distributed in class on Wed. Dec. 5. You will have one week to complete the essays.

A Note on Attendance:

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

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, 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. 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. 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.” 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

Course Calendar

Week 1

Mon. 8/27 Introduction to Course
Wed. 8/29 Pre-photography and Early Technologies

Week 2

Mon. 9/3 NO CLASS: Labor Day Holiday
Wed. 9/5 Early Uses for Photography

Week 3

Reading: Dominique François Arago, “Report”
Mon. 9/10 Photography’s Publics
Wed. 9/12 Creating Narratives
Due: Photo blog 1

Week 4

Reading: Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Stereoscope and Stereograph”
Mon. 9/17 Capturing Current Events
Wed. 9/19 Surveying the World
Due: Photo blog 2

Week 5

Mon. 9/24 From the Amateur Revolution to the Moving Image
Wed. 9/26 **Midterm 1 in class**

Week 6

Mon. 10/1 Visit to Special Collections, Fenwick Library, Room 2400
Wed. 10/3 NO CLASS: I will be out of town at a conference.

Week 7

Mon. 10/8 NO CLASS: I will be out of town at a conference.
Wed. 10/10 Art with a Social Conscience

Week 8

Reading: Edward Weston, "Seeing Photographically"
Mon. 10/15 Pictorialism
Wed. 10/17 Straight and *f.64*
Due: Photo blog 3

Week 9

Reading: Franz Roh, "Mechanism and Expression"
Mon. 10/22 Interwar Modernism I
Wed. 10/24 Interwar Modernism II
Due: Photo blog 4

Week 10

Reading: Berenice Abbott, "Photography at the Crossroads"
Mon. 10/29 Interwar Documentary Photography
Wed. 10/31 American, German, and Japanese Perspectives on World War II
Due: Photo blog 5

Week 11

Mon. 11/5 **Midterm 2 in class**
Wed. 11/7 Globalization after World War II

Week 12

Reading: Jack Kerouac, introduction to *The Americans*
Mon. 11/12 The Scene: Street Photography, Postwar Documentary
Wed. 11/14 Photography and the Art World in the 1960s
Due: Photo blog 6

Week 13

Mon. 11/19 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break
Wed. 11/21 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14

Reading: Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others"
Mon. 11/26 Documentary, 1970s-2000s
Wed. 11/28 Postmodernism and Art Photography
Due: Photo blog 7

Week 15

Mon. 12/3 Trends in Twenty-First Century Photography I
Wed. 12/5 Trends in Twenty-First Century Photography II
Take-Home Final Exam Questions Distributed in Class (will NOT be posted)

Finals

Wed. 12/12 **Due: Take-Home Final Exam at 11:59 pm**

Note: This class does NOT meet during the scheduled exam slot. The last day you need to be present is Wed. 12/5.