

ARTH 350

History of Photography

Thursdays 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm
Science/Technology I, Room 224

INSTRUCTOR:

Andrea Nelson, Ph.D.
Email: anelso11@gmu.edu
Office Hour: after class and by appointment



Walker Evans, *License Photo Studio, NY 1934*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce students to the history of photography, from its inception in the 1830s to contemporary postmodern practices. Students will analyze the medium from a cultural viewpoint, focusing on the contradictory social functions and uses of photography, including documentary, advertisement, avant-garde art, science, and fashion. In addition, students will examine the work of key practitioners and learn to recognize various technical processes.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 2nd edition (2006)

Selected readings on course reserve, both print and electronic:

Richard Bolton, ed., *The Contest of Meaning* (1989)

Michael Jennings, ed., *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and other writings on media* (2009)

Nathan Lyons, ed., *Photographers on Photography* (1966)

Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (1980)

Liz Wells, ed., *The Photography Reader* (2003)

SUGGESTED TEXT:

Sarah Kennel, *In the Darkroom: An Illustrated Guide to Photographic Processes Before the Digital Age* (2009)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT:

In order to do well in this course, students must be open to the learning process and engage with the course material by critically reading and thinking.

Lectures and Discussions----Students should arrive for class having read **in advance** the assigned readings. In addition, students should also be prepared to discuss verbally or in written form questions concerning these readings. This course depends on active engagement and discussion by students. In-class writings and group work will comprise part of your overall grade and cannot be made up.

Reading Questions----In order to facilitate in-class discussion, the instructor will assign questions concerning the course readings. Students will be required to bring their typed answers to class and turn them in for a grade.

Laptops----Laptop use is not permitted during lecture.

Exams----There will be two exams scheduled during regular class time. These exams will include short-answer questions, slide identifications (this includes name of producer, title of work, and approximate date), slide comparisons, and essay questions covering all concepts and keywords discussed during lecture and in the assigned readings.

Writing Assignment---There will be a short writing assignment consisting of an exhibition review. A detailed handout covering the assignment will be given out at a later date.

Blackboard----This course has an online Blackboard classroom where students will have access to course materials and special announcements. Please make sure that you forward your Blackboard email account to your gmu account. Students should use email for all course-related correspondence.

GRADING: Participation (including Reading Questions)---15%
 Exam I---25%
 Exam II---35%
 Writing Assignment---25%

Grades will follow the normal +/- letter system and the instructor will note improvement when issuing final grades. Incompletes will not be given for this course. The following are the grading guidelines for this course:

- A = The student is "fully present" in class by regular attendance and participation and responds in an above average ability to all aspects of the course by demonstrating an exceptional understanding of course content.
- B = The student regularly attends class and participates often exerting a high degree of effort and interest and performs at a better-than-average level on all course requirements.
- C = The student regularly attends class and is fairly consistent in participation and demonstrates an acceptable knowledge and understanding of course content.
- D = Student demonstrates no more than minimum levels on all or most of the criteria of the course, including attendance, participation, and tests.
- F = Failure of the course; the student fails to meet minimum levels on course criteria.

ATTENDANCE:

Students are allowed **ONE** absence for the semester. However, final grades will be lowered one half of a grade point for every absence over the allowed one. In addition, two late arrivals to class will equal one absence; **so arrive on time, arriving late for class is disruptive to everyone.** This policy will be strongly enforced; students who cannot complete work on time or who miss a class due to health-related problems must bring documentation of illness. If some other unavoidable circumstance arises, please contact the instructor. Please note that if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to turn in any required assignments on time and to find notes from a fellow classmate.

HONOR CODE:

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1.21	The Origins of Photography Marien, Introduction and Chapter 1
1.28	The Second Invention of Photography Marien, Chapter 2 Talbot, "A Brief Historical Sketch," in Trachtenberg, ed.
2.4	The Expanding Domain Marien, Chapter 3 Lutz and Collins, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes," in Wells, ed.
2.11	No Class—Museum/Writing Day
2.18	Photography in the Modern Age Marien, Chapter 4, 201-234 Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in Bolton, ed.
2.25	Photography as Art-Pictorialism Marien, Chapter 4, 165-200 Stieglitz, "Pictorial Photography," in Trachtenberg, ed.
3.4	Mid-term Exam Special Session-Questions Concerning the Writing Assignment
3.11	Spring Break

3.18	<p>A New Vision</p> <p>Marien, Chapter 5, 235-275 Brik, "What the Eye Does Not See," in Wells, ed. Moholy-Nagy, A New Instrument of Vision," in Wells, ed. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," in Jennings, ed.</p>
3.25	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Marien, Chapter 5, 276-306 Cartier-Bresson, "Introduction" to <i>The Decisive Moment</i>, in Lyons, ed.</p> <p>**Writing Assignment due**</p>
4.1	<p>Through the Lens of Culture</p> <p>Marien, Chapter 6, 307-310, 334-386 Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," in Bolton, ed. Frank, "A Statement," in Lyons, ed.</p>
4.8	<p>Cultural Relativism and Resistance</p> <p>Marien, Chapter 6, 310-333</p>
4.15	<p>Convergences</p> <p>Marien, Chapter 7, 387-433 Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography), " in Wells, ed.</p>
4.22	<p>Postmodernism</p> <p>Marien, Chapter 7, 434-488 Solomon-Godeau, "Winning the Game When the Rules have been Changed," in Wells, ed.</p>
4.29	<p>Contemporary Practices</p> <p>Marien, Chapter 8 Review</p>
5.6	<p>Final Exam</p>