
VART 3500: Photography in the Documentary Tradition (Italy)

4 credits

Instructors: Stephan Apicella-Hitchcock & Joseph Lawton

The theory of photography can be taught in an hour; the first ideas of how to go about it in a day. What can't be taught is the feeling for light – the artistic appreciation of effects produced by different sources; it's the understanding of this or that effect following the lines of the features which required your artistic perception. What is taught even less, is the immediate understanding of your subject – it's this immediate contact which can put you in sympathy with the sitter, helps you to sum them up, follow their normal attitudes, their ideas, according to their personality, and enables you to make not just a chancy, dreary cardboard copy typical of the merest hack in the darkroom, but a likeness of the most intimate and happy kind. – Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon)

Objectives: This intensive class will introduce you to the basic and advanced techniques of image production with a major emphasis on generating documentary projects directly relating to the people, architecture, and culture of Italy. The cosmopolitan city of Rome, rich with artistic history, will serve as the source for our photographic explorations, as well as the catalyst for discussions addressing the historical significance of the documentary impulse. Our studies and production will take us from exhibitions in progressive contemporary art galleries, to the ancient architecture of the Colosseum as we utilize the wealth of visual stimuli as a resource, as well as a backdrop against which to critically discuss the strategies that documentarians utilize in communicating their interests.

The primary objectives of the class are an understanding of camera construction, camera usage, control of image, image output, and most significantly, the development of a personal vision over the course of study. Instruction methods will be comprised of technical demonstrations, lectures regarding historical and contemporary photographers, rigorous critiques, and numerous gallery and museum field trips. Additionally, there will be a mixture of guided assignments and self-directed endeavors.

Textbook: The primary suggested text for the class will be *A Short Course in Photography*, 7th ed., by London / Stone, Prentice Hall. Moreover, diverse supplementary readings will be provided during the semester. The following texts, although not required, are suggested reading for reference in addition to the required course text and supplementary readings: Marien, Mary Warner. *Photography: A Cultural History*. Second Ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. Willis, Deborah. *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to the Present*. New York: WW Norton & Company, Inc., 2000. Wells, Liz. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. Second Ed. London: Routledge, 2000.

Class Attendance: Your class attendance record counts for a substantial portion of your grade. Upon your third unexcused absence your final course grade will be lowered by a half letter. Lateness to class is extremely disruptive to both the class and your peers. Consequently, regular lateness will lower your final grade. Lastly, be conscious of the fact that non-attendance does not constitute drop or withdrawal.

Class Assignments: Assignment grading will be based on a combination of the quality and quantity of images, as well as the intelligence with which the images were generated in relation to the task. Expect to shoot and develop a minimum of two rolls of film and print a minimum of 10 prints per assignment.

Grading: Grades will be calculated according to your performance in the following categories: Attendance & Class Participation 20%, Overall Production & Assignments 40%, Final Project/Exhibition 40%. I urge you to review the Policy on Academic Integrity stated in the Student Handbook.

1. Arrival (planned daily events are subject to weather)

- Topic: Arrival in Rome, orientation, dinner
-

2. Class Introduction

- Topic: Syllabi and equipment list
 - Screening and Discussion: Chris Marker's *La Jeteé*
 - Readings: "Time and Stasis in *La Jeteé*," *La Jeteé* script
 - Assignment: Shooting: None
-

3. Camera Basics

- Topic: Camera, Lens, Exposure
 - Screening and Discussion: Arte Video/Facets Video: *Contacts Volume 2: William Klein*
 - Readings: London & Stone – Chapter 1: Camera, Chapter 2: Lens, Chapter 4: Exposure
 - Assignment: Shooting: 100 images
-

4. Image Editing

- Screening and Discussion: Arte Video/Facets Video: *Contacts Volume 2: Roni Horn*
 - Readings: "Pictures from Home (1992)" Larry Sultan
 - Assignment: Shooting: 100 images
-

5. Making Digital Contact Sheets

- Topic: contact sheets, editing
 - Screening and Discussion: Arte Video/Facets Video: *Contacts Volume 2: Hiroshi Sugimoto*
 - Assignment: Shooting: 100 images
-

6. Museum

- Topic: Visit St. Peter's Basilica; the Forum; the ancient roman theatre; Museo Vaticani
-

7. Screening

- Screening and Discussion: Abbas Kiarostami's *Five*
 - Readings: "Picture Perfect: The Selling of the KODAK Image"
 - Assignment: Shooting: 100 images
-

8. Photographic Seeing

- Topic: Burning and dodging tools and techniques in Camera Raw
 - Screening and Discussion: Arte Video/Facets Video *Contacts Volume 2: Sophie Calle*
 - Readings: London & Stone – Chapter 9: Seeing Like a Camera
 - Assignment: Shooting: 100 images
-

9. Lecture

- Screening and Discussion: *Henri Cartier-Bresson*
- Readings: "Interview with Vera Lutter (2003)" Peter Wollen
- Assignment: Shooting: 100 images

10. Lecture

- Screening and Discussion: Peter Fischli & David Weiss *Der Lauf Der Dinge* (The Way Things Go)
- Readings: "The Medium as Subject" An Interview with Penelope Umbrico
- Assignment: Shooting: 100 images

11. Advanced Contrast Control

- Readings: "Objects of Desire" An Interview with Sarah Charlesworth
- Assignment: Shooting: 100 images

12. Museum

- Borghese Gallery

13. Opera

- Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*

14. Screening

- Screening and Discussion: Helen Levitt's *In the Street*
- Assignment: Shooting: 100 images

15. Critique

- Assignment: Shooting: 100 images

16. Critique

- Critique
- Readings: "Uplift and Separate" Rebecca Solnit
- Assignment: Shooting: 100 images

17. Contemporary Photography

- Topic: gallery tour
 - Readings: Allan Sekula "The Body and the Archive"
 - Assignment: Shooting: 100 images
-

18. Critique

- Discussion: Allan Sekula "The Body and the Archive"
- Assignment: Shooting: 100 images

19. Screening

- La Grand Bellezza by Paolo Sorrentino

20. Cinecittà

- Topic: La Dolce Vita

21. Digital Seminar

- Topic: Advanced printing strategies and digital photography – masking, curves, adjustment layers

22. Digital Seminar

- Topic: Advanced printing strategies and digital photography – sharpening techniques, output concerns

23. Final Critiques

- Readings: "The Paths of Modern Photography (1928)" Alexander Rodchenko

24. Final Critiques and Presentations

- Topic: Initial preparation for the final book design
- Screening and Discussion: *Walker Evans*
- Readings: "A Conversation with Jeff Wall (2000)" David Shapiro

25. Individual Progress Meetings

- Topic: The significance of the artist statement
- Screening and Discussion: Haroun Farocki's *An Image*

26. Book editing

- Screening and Discussion: Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Eclisse*

27. Book completion

28. Open shooting day

29. Departure
