Photography Practices

Instructor: Vibhav Kapoor
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Meeting Time: [To be determined]
Meeting Room: [To be determined]
Office Hours: [To be determined]
Semester: Fall 2025

Course Description

An experiential project-based studio course where students will use digital and/or analog processes to create black-and-white and colour photographs for completing assignments designed to challenge students in the problems particular to the photographic medium. This is a broad course on photography that would follow the medium's historical, philosophical, conceptual, and technical history. Students will be introduced to different genres of photography including landscape, portraiture, still life, and architecture. Through hands-on projects, students will learn essential skills in composition, lighting, and post-processing while developing their unique creative voice. Weekly discussions and critiques will be held to assess each students progress in the course. Students would also understand the complexity, uniqueness, and larger cultural role of the photographic medium through the attentive making of photographs and study of the medium as a social tool.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Technical Mastery**: Achieve proficiency in fundamental photographic techniques including exposure control (ISO, aperture, shutter speed), composition principles, and digital workflow management from capture to final output.
2. **Genre Expertise**: Demonstrate competency across multiple photographic genres including landscape, portraiture, architectural, and documentary photography, understanding the unique challenges and approaches of each discipline.
3. **Critical Analysis Skills**: Develop sophisticated visual literacy and critical thinking abilities through regular participation in critique sessions, peer feedback, and analytical discussions of photographic work.
4. **Historical and Cultural Understanding**: Students will gain comprehensive knowledge of photography's evolution from its invention to contemporary practice, understanding its role as both documentary tool and artistic medium within broader cultural contexts.
5. **Professional Portfolio Creation**: Students will build a cohesive body of work that demonstrates technical excellence, conceptual depth, and personal artistic development suitable for academic or professional presentation.

6. **Industry-Standard Practices**: Students will master contemporary photography workflows including digital editing, image management, and presentation techniques essential for careers in visual arts, architecture, design, journalism, and related fields.

Course Evaluation

Bi-Weekly Assignments (60%)
These assignments will be evaluated during in-person group critiques held every other week throughout the semester.

Final Project (20%)
Students must work on a chosen theme from the various genres of photography discussed during the course. A photo essay consisting of 12-15 images along with an artist statement of 250-300 words will be required as the final submission.

Participation (20%)
This includes attendance, in-class discussions, and critiques. Every class missed without informing the instructor will affect the student's grade.

Course Schedule

Foundations of Photography (Weeks 1-3)

Week 1: Brief History of Photography & Principles of Photography
This introductory module covers the historical background of the photographic medium, establishing foundational knowledge of photography's evolution. Students will learn technical fundamentals including ISO, aperture, shutter speed, lens characteristics, and proper camera operation. This week establishes both the theoretical framework and practical skills necessary for the course.

Week 2: Seeing Photographs
Building on technical foundations, this session focuses on developing visual intelligence, understanding perception and perspective in photography. Students will explore how photographs communicate meaning and learn digital workflow processes essential for contemporary photography practice.

Week 3: First Critique Session
The first bi-weekly assignment critique where students present their initial photographic work for group discussion and feedback.

Black and White Photography & Landscape (Weeks 4-5)

Week 4: Black and White Landscape Photography
Students delve into black and white photographic studies, exploring the representation of both natural and social landscapes. This module emphasizes the unique qualities of monochromatic photography and how it shapes our understanding of environmental and cultural spaces.

Week 5: Landscape Critique Session
Bi-weekly assignment critique focusing on landscape photography.

Architecture, Light & Color (Weeks 6-7)

Week 6: Architecture, Light & Colour
This module combines the photographic study of architectural space and form with an introduction to color photography principles. Students learn to capture the built environment while understanding how color theory applies to photographic practice and how light interacts with architectural subjects.

Week 7: Architecture and Color Critique
Bi-weekly assignment critique session focused on architectural photography and early color work, providing feedback on spatial composition and color application.

Portraiture and Human Representation (Weeks 8-9)

Week 8: Portraiture
Students explore the representation of people through photography, examining both technical aspects of portrait creation and ethical considerations in photographing human subjects. This module addresses the social responsibilities and cultural implications of portrait photography.

Week 9: Portrait Critique Session
Bi-weekly assignment critique dedicated to portrait work, focusing on technical execution and ethical considerations in human representation.

Documentary and Artistic Expression (Weeks 10-11)

Week 10: Realism and Surrealism
This module examines the spectrum between documentary photography and fictional representation, exploring how photography can serve both as a record of reality and as a medium for creative interpretation and surreal expression.

Week 11: Realism/Surrealism Critique
Bi-weekly assignment critique examining student work that explores the boundaries between documentary and artistic expression.

Narrative Photography (Weeks 12-13)

Week 12: Sequences
Students learn the art of narrative building through sequential images, understanding how multiple photographs can work together to tell stories, convey concepts, or create meaning through visual progression.

Week 13: Sequence Critique
Bi-weekly assignment critique focused on sequential photography work and narrative development through image series.

Final Project Development (Weeks 14-15)

Week 14: Introduction to Final Project
Students finalize their chosen theme, genre, and concept for their final submission. This session provides guidance on project development and helps students focus their creative vision for the culminating portfolio work.

Week 15: Final Project Discussion
A dedicated workday featuring Q&A sessions, individual feedback, and collaborative discussion of final projects as students prepare their photo essays and artist statements.

Final Critique during exam week

Supplemental Readings

- Stephen Shore - The Nature of Photographs (Phaidon, 1998)
- Marvin Heiferman - Photography Changes Everything (Thames & Hudson, 2012)
- David Campany - On Photographs (Thames & Hudson, 2020)
- Vilém Flusser - Towards a Philosophy of Photography (Reaktion Books, 1983)
- Leo Rubinfien - The Poetry of Plain Seeing (Art in America, 2000)
- Geoff Dyer - The Mystery at the Heart of Great Photographs (New York Times, 2016)
- Will Steacy - Photographs Not Taken (Daylight, 2012)
- Nathaniel Gaskell and Diva Gujral - Photography in India: A Visual History from the 1850s to the Present (Prestel, 2019)
- Additional contemporary articles and essays

Materials for Photography Project

- Digital camera or smartphone
- Access to photo editing software