

French Photography

Prof. Catherine Clark
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Office Hours: M 3:30-4:30 and by appointment in 14N-426

Spring 2017
MW: 2-3:30pm
14N-217

Writing Advisor: Nora Jackson
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Course Description: This course introduces students to the world of French photography from its invention during the 1820s to the present. It approaches the topic through the question of how people conceive of and use photographs. Each week provides a different response to the question, what do photographs do? Photographs capture human likeness. They function as proof in police investigations and in the courtroom. They spread the news on the pages of newspapers and magazines and on the Internet. Photography serves as a means of urban exploration, and in the twentieth century it has become a major art form. Our approach will allow us to encounter the major photographers and images of the French tradition. We define that tradition beyond simply the work of French-born photographers to include those of other nationalities who have lived and worked in France, French institutions' international roles, and the place of photos of France in international photographic production. The course's organization will encourage us to explore the role of institutions and printed forms in disseminating and giving meaning to photographs. Students will learn the language of formal description and hone skills in visual, social, cultural, and historical analysis. Taught in English.

Designations: HASS-A; CI-H

Course Goals

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- Identify key figures, works, and aesthetic trends in French photography.
- Analyze the role of photography in modern society.
- Perform visual and formal analysis of images.
- Craft effective oral and written arguments about visual materials and texts.

Assignments

Class Participation: 20% Evaluated based on student's attendance, the demonstration of adequate preparation, and the quality (not just quantity) of oral participation.

Weekly Wiki Posts: 10% Students will, each week, upload either a photograph with explanatory caption (~50 words), a potential discussion question (~50 words), or short response to the week's materials (~100 words) to the course Wiki. These are due by 7am every Monday (Wednesday if Monday class is canceled). Each week, as a class, we will discuss one or more questions/responses/photos. Individual responses will not be graded, but students must post each week to receive the full credit.

Presentations: 15% Each student will give one 7-10 minute oral and visual presentation about a topic relevant to that week's discussion. Students will sign up for presentations at the beginning of the semester. Presentations must present an argument about the material and will be graded on content, clarity, engagement with the topic, and oral communication skills. They will include a bibliography and end with a discussion question for the class.

Exhibition Reviews: 10% Students will write a review (1,100 words) of the exhibition "Charlotte Moth: Seeing while Moving" The review should read like exhibition reviews published in newspapers and magazines. It will explain the show to a general audience with an interest in photography, and make an argument about the content and its quality.
Due: .

Visual Analysis Papers: 30% Students will submit 3 visual analysis papers (1,300 words each) over the course of the semester. These papers will use visual and formal analysis as well as context discussed in readings and in class to explore the meaning of one image or a pair of images. Students will have the option of writing about the materials presented in different weeks. These papers are due the Wednesday after we discuss the topic in class, but students must submit **Paper #1 on or before March 10, Paper #2 on or before April 8, Paper #3 on or before May.**

Writing Advisor Meeting: Students must meet with Nora Jackson, our writing advisor to discuss a draft of their first visual analysis paper. If students do not meet with the writing advisor, their papers (even if submitted) will count as late until they do so.

Paper Revision and Expansion: 15% Students will revise and expand one paper (1,500 words) by incorporating research about the photograph or ideas in their original paper based on feedback received from the instructor. Students must meet with me in order to discuss the revisions (Failure to do so will mean that submitted papers lose 3 full letter grades). Once they have received feedback on two papers, students are free to submit the revised paper at any time. The very last date to turn it in is: **May 18.**

Citations: All written assignments must employ a standardized citation system (ie MLA, Chicago). Students must submit a list of resources consulted for their oral presentations.

Late assignments will lose one full letter grade for each day past the deadline. Assignments handed in a week late will automatically receive no credit. No extensions will be granted after an assignment's due date has passed.

Key Dates

VA Paper #1: by 3/10

VA Paper #2: by 4/8

Exhibition Review: 4/21
VA Paper #3: by 5/5
Final Revised Paper: 5/18

Technology

Cell phones must be silenced (not just placed in vibrate mode) and put away during class time. You may use laptops/tablets, but only to take notes or access information relevant to the topic at hand. If used for other purposes, laptops/tablets will be banned.

Enrollment Limits: Limited to 25 for pedagogical purposes. Priority will be given according to the CI-H/HW Enrollment Tool.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to MIT's Academic Integrity policies (integrity.mit.edu). All work (research papers, weekly papers, presentations) must be completed independently. Students are encouraged to discuss the readings and their projects with each other (they may, for example, want to practice their presentations for their classmates), but they are individually responsible for all written work.

Violating the Academic Integrity policy in any way (e.g., plagiarism) will result in official Institute sanction. Possible sanctions include receiving a failing grade on the assignment, being assigned a failing grade in the course, having a formal notation of disciplinary action placed on your MIT record, suspension from the Institute, and expulsion from the Institute for very serious cases.

Please review the Academic Integrity policy and related resources (e.g., working under pressure; how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote; etc.) and contact me if you have any questions about appropriate citation methods, the degree of collaboration that is permitted, or anything else related to the Academic Integrity of this course.

Course Organization

Copies of or links to all materials (unless otherwise noted) are on the Stellar Site. Many of the books are also available on reserve in Hayden Library.

Week 1 Introduction

Classes 2/8: Photography, France, How to talk/write about photographs

Week 2 What is photography?: I (Networks and News)

Watch "Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Decisive Moment"

Read Henri Cartier-Bresson "The Decisive Moment," Nadya Bair, "The Decisive Network"

Classes

2/13: The Decisive Moment with **Special Guest** Dr. Nadya Bair

2/15: Making the News

Week 3 What is Photography? II (Science & Art)

Watch Watch at least one of the videos about photographic processes made by the George Eastman House

Read Bruce Warren “Technical History of Photography” in *Photography: The Concise Guide* (Second Edition); Jonathon Jones “The \$6.5million Canyon;” Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, “Daguerreotype;” Lev Manovich “The Paradoxes of Digital Photography;” Wilfrid Rouff’s artist’s statement

Classes

2/21: Is it Technology?

2/22: Is it Magic? With **Special Guest** Photographer Wilfrid Rouff

Week 4 Capturing the World: Albert Kahn to Instagram

Read: Susan Murray, “Digital Images, Photo-Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics;”

Watch: Albert Kahn [documentary]

Classes

2/27: Albert Kahn & The Archives de la Planète

3/1: Aerial photography and surveillance

Week 5 Likeness and Identity (Portraiture)

Read Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* [selections] and “Studio Harcourt Actor;” Roger Grenier *A Box of Photographs* [selections]; Julian Stallabass, “On Selfies”

Classes

3/6: From Early Portraiture to the Selfie

3/8: Photography, Identity, & Resemblance

****1st Visual Analysis Paper Due by 11:59pm, 3/10****

Week 6 Politics, Propaganda, Protest

Read Barthes, “Electoral Photography;” “Is there a President who can save the tabloid press?” etc

Classes

3/13: Propaganda and Protest

3/15: Photography and the President

Week 6 Urban Exploration (Street Photography)

Watch “André Kertesz BBC Master Photographers”

Read Paul Morand, “Foreword” in *Paris by Night*; Julien Stallabbras, “Paris Pictured: Street Photography 1900-1968”; Meyerowitz and Westerbeck, “An American in Paris,” in *Bystander: A History of Street Photography*; Jon Rafman “The 9 Eyes of Google Street View” + Comments

Classes

3/20: Documenting Urbanism

3/22: People in the Streets

Week 7 Research and Investigation

Watch “How Fast is Fast?”

Read “The Body of Evidence” & “The All Powerful Eye” in *A New History of Photography*

Classes

3/27: Science & Society

3/29: ****Visit**** MIT Museum – Berenice Abbott Archive

****SPRING BREAK****

Week 8 Tourism & Travel

Read Karl Steinorth, “Photography for Everyone” in *You Press the Button, We do the Rest*; Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* [selections]

Classes

4/3: **Peer Review Workshop**

4/5: Picture-taking & Picture Postcards

****2nd Visual Analysis Paper due by 11:59pm, 4/8****

Week 9 Marking Art I (Realism & Abstraction)

Read Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*; Rosalind Kraus “The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism”

Classes

4/10: Photography & Painting

4/12: Charlotte Moth Exhibition visit ****MEET DIRECTLY AT LIST GALLERY****

Week 10 Writing Week

Read Sarah Moroz exhibition review dossier; Jonathon Jones review dossier;

Watch Shelley Rice on the Role of the Critic

4/17 – Patriot’s Day

4/19: **Exhibition Review Workshop**

****Exhibition Review due by 11:59pm, 4/21****

Week 11 Making Art II (Institutions)

Read Charles Baudelaire, “The Salon of 1859”; Stuart Alexander “Photographic institutions and practices” in *A New History of Photography*; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Calotypomania: The Gourmet Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photography” in *Photography at the Dock*

Classes

4/24: **MUSEUM VISIT** Details TBD.

4/26: Photography and the Art Market/Museum

Week 12 Surveillance & the Law

Read Jennifer Tucker, “How Facial Recognition Photography Came to Be;” Tom Gunning “Embarrassing Evidence: The Detective Camera and the Documentary Impulse”; “Protecting Privacy, Limiting Street Photography” & “Can You Take a Photography Anywhere?” in *The New York Times*

Classes

5/1: Photographs as Witnesses
5/3: Photography as Crime

****3rd Visual Analysis Paper due by 5/5****

Week 13 Spreading the News II (Humanistic Photography and ethics)

Read Susan Sontag, “Looking at War”; Jean-Claude Gaubert, “Looking at others: Humanism and neo-realism” in *A New History of Photography*; Roland Barthes, “Shock Photos” & “The Family of Man” in *Mythologies* Vincent Lavoie, “War and the iPhone: New Fronts for Photojournalism” in *Etudes photographiques*;

Classes

5/8: Humanist photography
5/10: Aesthetics and Suffering

Week 14 Audience’s Choice

Read TBD

Classes

5/15: TBD
5/17: TBD

****Revised and Expanded Paper due by 5/18****