

FRESHMAN SEMINAR 1

Fall 2007, Parsons School of Design
5132-PUPH-1010-A
Fridays 9am-2:40pm
8 East 16th St., Room 703

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Office Hours: by appointment (flexible)

Description:

This introductory seminar explores the multiple modes and roles of photography. In a supportive atmosphere students are encouraged to explore the possibilities of the medium, embrace creative risk, and tackle aesthetic concerns as they refine their craft. Participants will utilize both traditional and digital image capture and output and work in both black and white and color. Weekly assignments, lectures, and critiques will further the students understanding of picture making possibilities.

Course Outline:

Topics – B&W and color photography, both technical and aesthetic instruction
Activities – technical instruction, discussion of conceptual issues, field trips and critique
Assignments – readings and written assignments, exams, photography assignments

Course Objectives:

You should have an understanding of B&W film exposure and development, B&W darkroom printing, color film exposure and color darkroom printing, ways of seeing photographically and aesthetic and conceptual concerns when you complete this course.

Required Reading:

Photography, by London & Upton (Seventh or Eighth Edition)

The Photograph, by Graham Clarke (Oxford University Press, 1997)

All other readings will be distributed via Blackboard as downloadable PDF files, or as photocopies, and are available in Gimbel Library, 2 W 13th St, 2nd fl. See below for specific titles.

Grading:

Evaluation and grading will be based on:

Attendance and participation in class discussions and critiques (15%), completion of readings and written assignments (15%), completion of photo assignments (35%), exams and quiz (15%), and final photography project (20%).

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. Faculty members are expected to fail any student who is absent for a significant portion of class time – defined as three absences for classes that meet once a week.

Please be respectful at all times. Attend class on time, be prepared for each class session, listen while others are speaking, and turn off your cell phones. I reserve the right to ask any student to leave the classroom if they do not abide by these standards of behavior.

For further information on Parsons School of Design Academic and Attendance Policies, please refer to the Student Handbook.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

9/7 **Introduction: Exposure & Seeing**

Explain schedule, assignments and the long term project

Exposure

In class writing exercise

In Class Shooting Assignment: *Visual Scavenger Hunt*

Field trip to Union Square to shoot 1-2 rolls of B&W Kodak Tri-X 400 ISO film within a 1-block radius. Take at least 3 photographs of each of the following themes:

Ruins, Transition, Shadows, Doubles, Transgression, Magic

Daybook Assignment:

Write in your daybook about impressions of Parsons, New York, photography, ideas for projects (particularly the year-long project), passions, etc. Make sketches of projects and ideas. Make notes about films, exhibitions, books, music, performances, magazines, etc.

Shooting Assignment: *Depth of Field and Shutter Speed*

Shoot 1 roll of B&W Kodak Tri-X 400 ISO film in natural light, paying close attention to the quality, strength and direction of light and shadow, and choosing your exposure carefully based on your evaluations. The subject matter is up to you, but for each photograph make two exposures: one using a shallow DOF and one with a wide DOF. Be aware of your shutter speed to make sure you control motion and blur.

Readings (due for the next class):

- *Photography*, by London & Upton, Chapter 5
- Weston, Edward. "Seeing Photographically," in *Classic Essays on Photography*. Ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Leete's Island Books, 1980), p.169-175.
- Clarke, Graham. "What is a Photograph?" in *The Photograph*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- Brautigan, Richard. Selected poems from *The Pill Versus the Springfield Mine Disaster*. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968).

WEEK 2

9/14 **Film Processing & Seeing**

Film processing demo – bring your developing tank, 2 rolls B&W film

Slide lecture and discussion of articles

Film screening: *La Jetee*

Shooting Assignment: *Every waking moment*

From the time you wake up until the time you sleep make a photograph every 15 minutes. Do this for one day. 3-5 prints.

Writing Assignment: Write a one-page response to the movie *La Jetee*. What means has the photographer/filmmaker employed to construct the narrative? What is the symbolic meaning? What is the relationship between filmmaking, photography and the short story? Must be typed, double spaced, and have a title.

Reading (due for the next class):

- *Photography*, by London & Upton, Chapter 4
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), Chapter 1 p. 7-33.

WEEK 3

9/21 B&W Printing & The City

The Gestalt of the Image

Discussion of *La Jetee*

Introduction of *Long Term Project*

Darkroom orientation and B&W printing – bring negatives, B&W printing paper

Shooting Assignment: *No Place Like Home*

Shoot two rolls of b/w film (400 ISO) of what you consider your home and neighborhood in New York City. Photograph at various times of day. Think of what parameters you use to define your 'home' and 'neighborhood.' Write your impressions in your daybook.

Remember, you are shooting B&W film, so subjects should be considered not for their color palette but for the formal/graphic compositions. Use this assignment as a way to learn about/tell us about your surroundings. 3-5 prints.

Long Term Project:

Select a person, place or thing. Examine your subject from multiple directions, both literally and metaphorically. Engage in research to expand your ideas – research your subject, if relevant, or other artists' work, films, novels, fashion design, etc. Photograph your subject three times per week. Do not repeat the same photograph twice. 8-12 prints.

Reading (due for the next class):

- *Photography*, by London & Upton, Chapter 6 & 7
- Clarke, Graham. "The City in Photography" in *The Photograph*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

WEEK 4

9/28 The City

Review Assignment (*Every Waking Moment*)

Visual Literacy – Considering context & documentary positions

Understanding Filters for B/W

Field Trip - Gallery Visits

Shooting Assignment: *Neighborhood Site Visit*

You will be put into groups of three and assigned a neighborhood to photograph. Work together to decide what you want to focus on – inhabitants, structures, natural landscapes, waterways, labor/activities, leisure, the mood of the place, change and transition, etc. 6 prints, each student must print two of them, but edit and organize as a group.

Reading (due for the next class):

- Clarke, Graham. "The Portrait in Photography" in *The Photograph*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

WEEK 5

10/5 The Portrait

Discuss reading

Review Assignments (*No Place Like Home & Neighborhood Site Visit*)

Darkroom Work Session??

In Class Assignment: *Spontaneous Response to a Photograph*

Communicate on paper whatever you feel is most significant, important, and noteworthy about the photograph as if you were writing to a stranger, friend, lover, or other person who has not seen and will not see the photograph.

Shooting Assignment: *Self portrait*

Take a photograph of yourself. Endeavor to share something private about yourself with the viewer. This public disclosure of the self can range from a highly refined mask, to an indefinite stare, a cathartic expression, a dramatic ecstasy, a comic exultation, or a rare and raw openness. 3-5 prints.

Reading (due for the next class):

- *Photography*, by London & Upton, Chapter 12

WEEK 6

10/12 The Portrait

Review Assignment (*Self portrait*)

Artificial Lighting and Flash Photography

Lighting Demo

Shooting Assignment: *Environmental portrait*

Create an environmental portrait that uses window lighting. Decide on your concept ahead of time, and then endeavor to communicate your idea through technical choices. Choose a location and quality of light that help illustrate the concept of your picture. Present one print in class, but bring 2 prints of alternative photographs to show your thought process.

Reading (due for the next class):

- *After You, Dearest Photography: Reflections on the Work of Francesca Woodman* by David Levi-Strauss, link on Blackboard
- Goldberg, Vicki. "Richard Avedon" in *Light Matters: Writings on Photography*. (New York: Aperture Foundation Inc., 2005), p. 40-60.

WEEK 7

10/19 The Portrait

Guest Lecturer: Christine Collins

Review Assignment (*Environmental portrait*)

Field Trip: MoMA

Shooting Assignment: *Collaborate with your subject*

Make three or more images, taken on more than one occasion, in various different life situations, that relate to their reality and sense of self. Together the fragments should add up to a rounded portrait that hints at who they might be. 3-5 prints.

Writing Assignment: *Long Term Project* description

Write one page (typed, double spaced) about your ideas for the *Long Term Project*.

WEEK 8

10/26 Still Life 1

Discuss MoMA exhibit

Review for exam

Review Assignment (*Collaborate with your subject*)

Shooting Assignment: *Transforming an object*

Create photographs which visually transform objects. Each photograph can be of a different object, or they can be a series of the same object. 4-6 prints. Due 11/9.

WEEK 9

11/2 Exam

Still Life 2

Student Conferences: *Long Term Project*

Darkroom Work Session

Shooting Assignment: *Create a thematic still life*

You will work in teams of three. Use a studio or studio-like set-up to create your still life, and use lighting to help create your theme and mood. You may check out the tungsten hot lights from the cage, or use other lighting, as long as you are controlling the light (moving the lamps around, being aware of different effects, etc.). Sketch your ideas and plan your still life as a group.

Each student will turn in: one paragraph explaining your group's idea for the assignment and how you accomplished it in the image (typed), one sketch of the scene (made before you take the photograph). Each group will turn in 3 prints.

WEEK 10

11/9 Color & Abstraction

The World of Color

Discussion of article

Review Assignments (*Transforming an object & Create a thematic still life*)

Shooting Assignment: *Color wheel and color contrasts* and *Open Shooting Assignment in Color*

Shoot one roll of slide film focusing on the color wheel (at least two photos per color) and color contrasts. Get the film developed and mounted so we can have a slide show in class. Shoot 1-2 rolls of color negative film in natural light of any subject matter you choose. Get the film developed and we will print contact sheets next week.

Reading (due for the next class):

- *Photography*, by London & Upton, Chapter 9
- *Exploring Color*, by Robert Hirsch, Chapter 1

WEEK 11

11/16 Color & Abstraction

Lecture

Review Assignment (*Color wheel and color contrasts*)

Introduction to C-printing – bring negatives, C-printing paper

Shooting Assignment: *Abstractions in Color* and *Open Shooting Assignment in Color*

Create a series of abstractions that make strange everyday life or communicate themes beyond what the subject matter itself “means” in everyday life. 3-5 prints. Shoot a roll of color film and choose your own subject matter. 2-4 prints. Due 11/30. Reminder: we will have time to print in class for these assignments.

Reading (due for the next class):

- Barthes, Roland. “The Photographic Message,” in *Photography in Print*, Ed. Vicki Goldberg. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981).

11/23 Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 12

11/30 Color & Abstraction

Time and Motion Lecture

Discuss reading

Work Session - C-printing

Shooting Assignment: Work on *Long Term Project*

WEEK 13

12/7 Review Assignments (Abstraction & Open Shooting Assignment) and *Long Term Project*

Review for exam

Field trip

Shooting Assignment: Work on *Long Term Project*

WEEK 14

12/14 Exam on Color

Work Session – Darkroom

WEEK 15

12/21 Final Critique

Long Term Project due