

DOCUMENTARY

481.1

Spring 2015 MW 1:30-3:15 CA58

“There were two things I wanted to do.
I wanted to show the things that had to be corrected.
I wanted to show the things that had to be appreciated.”

– LEWIS HINE

It is a tremendous privilege to be able to share people’s lives and tell their stories. With this privilege comes a responsibility for fairness, accuracy, commitment and hard work. In photojournalism, one can choose to serve self or to serve humankind by illuminating the human condition. My hope is that you will choose the latter.

Welcome to Documentary. In this course we will seek to strengthen your foundation of technical and journalistic skills, and help guide you into leveraging the power of visual storytelling to engage and affect your community.

Many photographs simply state fact as the photographer recorded it. Within this class we will create photographs – not just photographs but *idea photographs* – that tell stories, photographs that educate and reach into the social conscience. Not every documentary picture story uncovers social problems, however. Many documentary stories celebrate things that are right within a society or reveal unknown cultural and societal gems.

Effective documentary photography is impossible without a commitment on the part of the photographer to become involved and spend enough time to get beyond the surface. Genuine life moments are KEY elements of documentary storytelling. The “quick-hit” approach, projecting an incomplete and stereotypical understanding of a given subject, is sadly prevalent in today’s media. The antidote is time and an unselfish commitment to truth – and this is what it will take to succeed in this class.

LONG-TERM PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY / DOCUMENTARY VIDEO

The heart and soul of this class will be the photographic essay and narrative story. Each student will complete an in-depth photographic essay or short documentary. This project will involve: Research, Access, Photographic Storytelling and Final Presentation.

You must focus on the visual storytelling, and you may present your project as a documentary short film. Ask yourself: “What is the best media to tell the story?” The key is INTENTION. We’ll talk more about this in class.

→ We will stress the vital elements of compelling storytelling: Character, conflict, dramatic tension, unfolding action, and resolution. **No conflict = no story.**

Your documentary project must address a social issue, with some critical requirement: your story **must challenge a stereotype**. That stereotype may pertain to gender, race, communities, sexual orientation, economics, class, etc. You must

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♦ OFFICE HOURS:
Tuesday - 1:15-3:15

♦ Please try and meet with me during office hours, but if you cannot I will be happy to schedule an appointment.

♦ Required Text:
[One mind-blowing photography book of your choice.](#)

♦ GRADE BREAKDOWN:
Your final grade will be determined out of a 1000 point scale:

Final Doc Project - 400
Weekly shoots - 400
(worth 50 points each)
Proposal & Roadmap - 100
Beyond the Box Assign - 100

♦ This syllabus is flexible.
Be prepared for change.

♦ ATTENDANCE is vital to the success of this class. There will be demonstrations that cannot be redone.

BE ON TIME.

♦ IMPORTANT DATES:
[MLK Day](#) - 01/19
LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW - 03/11
SPRING BREAK - 03/07-15

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find a strong story and establish how it challenges current stereotypes. I want you to think critically, act creatively and create a story that connects with the audience in a compelling and unique way.

As a team, we will discuss how to transform concepts into meaningful stories. More to come on this.

Weekly shoots: You will be turning in weekly shoots worth 50 points each. You will turn in a catalog of your entire shoot that must total at least 500 frames each week. You will present every frame in class in the order you made the images. We will critique, not the single image, but your approach, style, visual variety and how well you worked each situation. If video is the best medium through which to tell your story, then you will submit roughly edited scenes each week.

BEYOND THE BOX | Early in the semester, I will give you creative, conceptual assignments. Take risks!

Note: Waiting to the last minute does not count as taking a risk. I know that trick; I've tried it myself.

THE IMAGE, DECONSTRUCTED WORKSHOP | The Image, Deconstructed (TID) is "a weekly blog that examines and image, or a theme, and attempts to deconstruct the mental approach behind it." We're lucky to be hosting the third annual TID workshop at UNC in early April. As part of this class you are required to apply to this workshop, a workshop that perfectly addresses the goals and themes of this course. There are two ways to be involved: 1) You can participate, if accepted (there will be a fee) or 2) You can volunteer to work behind the scenes at the workshop. Detailed info about TID can be found at: www.imagedeconstructed.com

Expectations

I expect you to take risks. True growth occurs when we learn from the risks we take. **Do not mistake complacency for risk-taking.** Risk-taking is the relentless pushing of the boundaries, forcing yourself out of your comfort zone and exceeding expectations.

I am here as your guide. My goal is to create an environment in which your potential can explode. However, even though I may open the doors, it is YOU who must walk through. Take ownership of your learning.

As your teacher in this capstone course, I do have some core journalistic expectations. Here they are:

- 1) I expect images that are technically advanced. By this point in your photojournalism training, your technical skills should be nearly intuitive. I expect images to be in focus (with rare exception), exposed well and toned correctly.
- 2) I expect images and footage to communicate and connect.
- 3) I expect you to be striving to make images and footage that contain one, or preferably all, of the key elements of a successful photograph: **MOMENT, LIGHT, COMPOSITION.**
- 4) I expect you to think creatively and independently when approaching any assignment/project, and I expect content to reflect this creative and independent thinking.
- 5) I expect professionalism in all areas including presentation, ethics and caption writing.

Grade Determination

I will do my best to be fair and accurate, but to do this there must be some very specific guidelines and boundaries. Here they are: 1) Assignments and/or shoots are due at the very minute class begins! 2) Any assignment not turned in will, obviously, receive zero points.

Although this is a subjective world (how do you define quality?), there still must be a final say, and that is where I come in. I am the editor. The critical elements that must be included in any assignment: Are you pushing yourself? And does this **communicate** to the viewer? Remember, it's not about you! It's about the people in your stories and the audience.

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PhotoNights

PhotoNight is a monthly speaker series that is held usually on the last Tuesday of every month. Presentations are from 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Attendance at PhotoNight is considered part of the class and is mandatory and will be recorded. Attendance will count according to the guidelines above. *And the list of speakers this semester is looking stellar!*

Required Equipment and Supplies

You will need a digital 35mm SLR camera with manual controls and interchangeable lenses. Best case scenario would be a HD SLR camera, allowing you to shoot video. Although you can check out through the school, you **MUST** start acquiring your own gear if you plan to survive out there. If you rent from the school, realize you are responsible for any lost, damaged, or stolen equipment, and your access to gear will be limited.

You will definitely need buy your own CF cards - as large as possible. Also you need two harddrives for your personal photography archive, video and Premiere projects. One is for backup. I suggest you get at least 1TB drives, 7200 rpm, and Firewire 800 or USB 3.0 or Thunderbolt. Harddrive failure will not be accepted as an excuse for not completing projects.

Excuses

Photography is problem solving. You will be faced with many challenges in the field – in this class and beyond. It will be up to you in each moment to make it a learning opportunity. Nothing worth anything is easy. Be prepared and realize the one thing you can control is your attitude.

Attendance Policy

Here's the deal folks, the field of journalism is going to require more of your mind, body and spirit than you can fathom at this point. The rewards are great, but the demands are high. It is critical that you attend every class. You **CANNOT** miss a class in order to shoot an assignment. You must be in class to present your work for critique. Turning in an assignment on the server alone does not count as a turn-in. Part of your completion of the assignment is the critique. You will be allowed 2 un-excused absences; after that 2 percentage points will be deducted from your **FINAL GRADE**. The only exception to this will be a serious medical condition.

ACEJMC

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on points 5-10 and 12, under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

Honor Code

Students will operate within the requirements of the honor code. All work must be your own, must be done specifically for this class, and should be done with the high level of honesty and integrity that this University demands.

"The only thing to do is to get it right.
The only way to get it right is to keep asking yourself if it is."

– KEN LIGHT