

MEJO 180-001: Foundations of Photojournalism

Spring 2024

Monday/Wednesday 10:00am-11:45am

Carroll room 60

Professor Rachel Jessen (she/her/hers)

rcjessen@unc.edu

OFFICE HOURS:

By appointment only; please try to reach out and schedule at least two days in advance

REQUIRED TEXT:

Photojournalism: A Professional's Approach, 7th edition, Kenneth Kobre
(PDFs uploaded to Canvas)

NOTE: This syllabus is a living document, meaning it is flexible and open to change.

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn how to effectively use your DSLR
- Understand what makes a good photograph in terms of content, composition/aesthetics, technical quality
- Acquire and develop the intellectual, technical, and analytical skills of visual journalism communication
- Understand the essential contribution of the idea(s) to the photograph—the critical element that separates the picture taker from the picture maker

TOPICS COVERED:

- Camera mechanics
- Exposure (Shutter speed, Aperture, ISO)
- Idea generation
- Caption writing
- Light/Lighting
- Composition
- Story research, pitching
- Photojournalism history
- Basic toning with the Adobe Creative Suite

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

You will be allowed 3 excused absences. You will be allowed one (1) unexcused absence; after that, 1 percentage point will be deducted from your final grade. For example, if your semester average is 91% and you miss 3 classes, your final average would be 89%, etc. Students may seek an official excuse for absences from the University Approved Absence Office (UAAO). UNC-CH's attendance policy stipulates that "No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences."

You must be in class to present your work for critique. Late assignments will receive a reduced grade. If you must miss a class, I ask that you communicate with me as much as in advance as possible.

ZOOM attendance is only for those of you who are experiencing health issues that are cleared by UAAO and COVID-19 related safety precautions. We need each other. Part of your grade evaluation will include participation. The success of this class depends in large part on the quality of class discussion. I distinguish between attendance and participation. I expect everyone to be active participants in the class – ask questions, offer your opinions, and challenge. This includes discussions during critique and on reading materials.

More information on the University attendance policy can be found here:

<https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/#text>

All of that being said, what I ultimately ask for is as much (advance) communication as possible. I understand that things come up—they may for me, too. Work with me and I'll work with you.

GRADING SCALE:

>92%=A; 90-92=A-; 88-89=B+; 83-87=B; 80-82=B-; 78-79=C+; 73-77=C; 70-72=C-; 68-69=D+; 60-67=D; <59=F

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

- Photo Assignments 1-4 16%
- Photo Assignments 5-6 16%
- Written responses 10%

* including, but not limited to: news story assessments, podcast responses, critique feedback

- Quiz 3%
 - Attendance 10%
 - Participation 20%
 - Photographer Research 5%
 - Final Project 20%
 - Pitch/proposal 3%
 - Work-in-progress 5%
 - Final photo story 12%
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EQUIPMENT ROOM & CHECKOUT:

Equipment Room hours: 9:00 am – 3 pm Monday through Friday

1. Install the VPN
 - a. Video: https://youtu.be/YZYTb93Q1_0?si=_F_v38LA_kfgp7S3
 - b. Article: <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/equipment-room/vpn>
2. Reserve gear in Connect2
 - a. <https://equipmentroom.mj.unc.edu> (good idea to bookmark)
 - b. Never borrowed gear before?
 - i. Article: <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/equipment-room/check-out>
 - ii. Video: <https://youtu.be/dGGZBoX2BDI>
 - c. Text the Equipment Room number if you can't login
 - i. (919) 442-8077
3. Terms and Conditions
 - a. If any equipment is returned in damaged condition, or if any equipment is not returned for any reason, including but not limited to destruction, confiscation, theft or act of God, User shall pay to the School either the cost of repair or replacement. The School shall have sole discretion to determine whether damaged equipment shall be replaced or repaired, and the School's judgment shall be conclusive upon User. User shall not attempt to repair, or authorize anyone else to repair, any item of equipment that may be damaged. Damage, destruction or loss must be reported to the equipment room no later than the beginning of the next workday following knowledge of such damage, destruction or loss. User may not use or check out equipment until the cost of any repair or replacement is paid.

While you do have access to a complete camera kit for the length of the semester, I strongly urge students to have an external harddrive (or, at minimum, a high-capacity flash drive). Students must provide their own SD (memory) cards—I would advise you to invest in nothing less than 16gb.

HONOR CODE:

The Honor Code (<https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/honor-code/>) forms a bond of trust among students, faculty, and administrators. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill operates under a system of self-governance, as students are responsible for governing themselves. As such, our University is transformed into a powerful community of inquiry and learning. The Honor Code embodies the ideals of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship, and governs the performance of all academic work a student conducts at the University. Acceptance of an offer of admission to Carolina presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in our century-old tradition of honor and integrity.

SEEKING HELP:

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

DIVERSITY:

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined on the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office's webpage (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>). UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:

If you require special accommodation to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Resources & Services site at <https://ars.unc.edu/>.

ACCREDITATION:

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media'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 about them here:

<http://hussman.unc.edu/accreditation>. 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:

- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
 - demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
 - think critically, creatively and independently
 - write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
 - critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
 - apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work
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SCHEDULE:

	DATE	TOPIC	HOMEWORK
WEEK 1	Jan 10	Syllabus, equipment room	
WEEK 2	Jan 15	MLKJ Day (no class)	Read Ch. 1-4
	Jan 17	Basic camera mechanics, Exposure Triangle **bring cameras to class	
WEEK 3	Jan 22	Cont. discussion; Light lecture; shutter speed and aperture exercise	

	Jan 24	Finish in-class exercises; introduce Day in the Life assignment	Shoot DITL
WEEK 4	Jan 29	Artist visit with Ed Kashi (Zoom)	Shoot DITL
	Jan 31	Critique Day in the Life; intro Light assignment	Shoot Light
WEEK 5	Feb 5	Critique Light assign (Part 1); digital workflow lecture	
	Feb 7	Critique Light assign (Part 2); Portrait lecture; intro Portrait assignment	Shoot Portrait
WEEK 6	Feb 12	Well-being Day (no class)	Shoot Portrait
	Feb 14	Critique Portrait assign (Part 1); toning/editing lecture	
WEEK 7	Feb 19	Critique Portrait assign (Part 2); composition lecture & discussion; intro Juxtapositions assignment	Shoot Juxtapositions
	Feb 21	Discussion; newspaper/mag story assessment	Shoot Juxtapositions
WEEK 8	Feb 26	Critique Juxtapositions (Part 1)	
	Feb 28	Critique Juxtapositions (Part 2); newspaper/mag story assessment due & discuss; introduce photo podcast written response	Research & write story assessment Listen to photo podcast
WEEK 9	Mar 4	Pitch workshop; intro event assignment	Research and shoot event assign
	Mar 6	Picture Story lecture; photo podcast response due	Shoot event assign
WEEK 10	Mar 11	SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)	Shoot event assign
	Mar 13	SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)	Edit event assign
WEEK 11	Mar 18	Critique event assignment; intro Conceptual assignment	Brainstorm for conceptual assign
	Mar 20	Critique event assign (if needed) Conceptual assignment pitch workshop	Shoot conceptual assignment

WEEK 12	Mar 25	Editing and sequencing lecture and exercise; newspaper/mag story assessment	Write newspaper/mag story assessment
	Mar 27	Film screening (looking at sequencing); film response & discussion	
WEEK 13	Apr 1	Critique conceptual assignment (Part 1); story assessment due; photo podcast written response	Listen to photo podcast
	Apr 3	Critique conceptual assignment (Part 2); introduce final project & photog presentations	Write photo podcast response Brainstorm final project ideas (min. 3)
WEEK 14	Apr 8	Final project pitch workshop; photog presentation research; podcast response due	Write finalized project pitch Prepare photog presentation
	Apr 10	Final project pitch due; visiting artist (TBD)	Prepare photog presentation
WEEK 15	Apr 15	Presentations	Shoot final project
	Apr 17	Presentations	Shoot final project
WEEK 16	Apr 22	Final project WIP workshop/studio day	Shoot final project
	Apr 24	Final project WIP workshop/studio day	Shoot final project
WEEK 17	Apr 29	Final project WIP critique	

FINAL EXAM PERIOD: Thursday, May 2 at 12pm

PHOTO ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments are due before the start of class on their due date. Late work will receive a reduced grade. There will be no exceptions made for technology failure—this requires that you save multiple copies/versions of your work and not wait until the last minute to complete assignments.

To submit, you need to*:

1. Upload your edit to Canvas (JPG, 300dpi, 2000 pixels on longest edge)
2. Name your photos according to the prescribed naming convention
3. Be present with your edit on an external hard drive in class for critique

*unless otherwise specified

The first four assignments are designed to get you comfortable with your camera and explore technique. Experiment, play, get creative. There is no such thing as failure if you demonstrate that you put in the time and try different approaches. Edits are expected to be approximately 8-10 images, unless otherwise noted.

The fifth and sixth assignments are designed to be more intentional photographic assignment stories. I encourage you to maintain the mindset of experimentation as before; that being said, these edits are expected to contain more thought-provoking and polished images. Edits are expected to be approximately 12-15 images, unless otherwise noted.

RE: Editing – Editing is a critical part of the photography process. Take the time to sit with your images and choose your selects to bring to class. You will need to shoot a significant amount more photos than what is shown in your final edit. Sequencing, likewise, is a vital component to the process and will be integrated as the semester goes on.

RE: Captions – Captions are an essential element in the storytelling process. This begins in the field—take notes while you are shooting. Do not rely on memory. In this class we will be using AP style caption standards.

RE: Data management – It is good practice to have all of your files and work backed up in at least two locations—for example, an external hard drive and a cloud-based storage. Do NOT store your work (solely) on your laptop. Check for compatibility between your computer and your hard drive.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

Any written assignments are due in print form and in Canvas at the beginning of class on their due date. Word counts will be given with each assignment; word counts will be an approximation within 50 words.

CRITIQUES:

Our goal with critiques is to discover what makes a compelling photo story, to draw attention to the strengths and weaknesses in your edit, and to prepare you to go out and make images that communicate their intended meaning. Critiques are essential to growth. Be honest, thoughtful, and constructive. When receiving a critique of your work, appreciate it—feedback is necessary for growth. Try to separate yourself from your work. We will be each other's best critics and supporters.