



ART 215 Photography: Portfolio of Perugia

Course Syllabus
Fall Semester 2025

Instructor: Philippa Stannard, MFA ATR

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 - 2:00 pm

Office Hours: by appointment, or before/after class

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: USD\$50

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of photography. No previous photographic experience is required. The focus will be to capture and record the students' experience in Italy through weekly photo walks around Perugia, an ancient Umbrian hilltop town, as well as to create a portfolio of these images. The class will explore the cultural phenomenon of photography and the role it plays in society. Students will learn basic concepts, processes, and techniques, including camera usage; exposure controls; manipulating and printing digital photographic images; and print presentation. At the end of the semester, all the photographs will be displayed at the Umbra Art Show.

"The question is not how to take a good picture, but how not to miss one." - Harold Feinstein

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *Demonstrate* a thorough and functional knowledge of the essential mechanisms of a camera. (Quiz, Assignments, Critiques)
- *Create* photographs with interesting and effective compositions, lighting, and points of view. (Critiques and Assignments)
- *Apply* appropriate edits to digital images. (Assignments)
- *Understand* the visual language of photography, and how it can be used to express and communicate ideas. (Quiz, Community Engagement activities, Written and Oral Report)

Course Materials

Readings

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Textbook

Joel Meyerowitz, *Seeing Things*, New York: Aperture, 2016

Assessment

Attendance	10%
Photographic Assignments (3x25% each)	75%
Quizzes	7%
Oral and Visual Report on Photographer	8%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: Decimal and centesimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Photographic Assignments (3x25% each = 75%)

Students will have three photographic assignments due during the semester. Each assignment will consist of taking many photos, placing these photographs in a folder in your device which we can view, compare, choose, and edit your best work. The photographs for each assignment should be renamed in the following format: LastnameFirstname1.jpg , LastnameFirstname2.jpg etc. Please upload the 4 photographs to the appropriate folder on Google Drive. Please do not put your photographs in a folder. For each of the following assignments, there will be a full prompt in Moodle.

Assignment 1: Rule of Thirds and Exposure

- Four edited and optimized photographs.
- There are a lot of things to think about when taking a photograph. We're going to focus on the first and the most important, The Rule of Thirds. Each photograph you turn in should have important elements in the photograph that are on the Third Lines. This first assignment is your chance to put into practice all we've learned about your camera focus on what makes photographs memorable. Please pay special attention to composition and correct exposure in order to draw the viewer into the scene. The subject matter is open.

Assignment 2: Viewpoint and Focal Length

- Four edited and optimized photographs.
- In addition to getting a great composition (rule of thirds), and the correct exposure, the viewpoint or place where you are when you take the photograph can really add a lot of interest to a photograph. Photographs taken from below tend to make the subject appear bigger and more powerful, photographs taken from above can make the subject appear smaller and more childlike. Focal length can also make subjects appear bigger or smaller in relation to their backgrounds. Keep in mind how your subject is related to your background. Get creative and have fun!

Assignment 3: Lighting and Aperture

- Four edited and optimized photographs.
- In addition to great compositions, correct exposure, interesting points of view, and focal length affecting focus, distortion and perceived distance and size of background objects, we have what can make every photo magical... Lighting! Photographers often go out and take pictures during the “golden hour” but the middle of the day with bright sunlight can give dramatic shadows... rainy days can make everything glow with reflections... cloudy days are great for portraits. Speaking of portraits... let’s blur out the background by using our Aperture!

Quizzes (7%)

Students will be assigned quizzes every week. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. There will be a combination of *technical*, *methodological*, and *content questions*. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The technical questions will help students learn the class’s policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author’s argument and assessing sources.

Oral and Visual Report on Photographer (8%)

Photographers have done amazing things in the world with their work. They have used it to capture beauty, humor, and humanity in everyday life, as a way to document social injustice and push for change, and as a way to document the state of our world to inspire conservation and prevent climate change (among many other things). Students will choose a photographer and give a 10-15 minute presentation to the class documenting their photographer's work and how they use it to bring awareness to a specific issue. Please include at least 20 examples of their work, each piece taking up the entire slide.

Please place your presentation (Google or Keynote) in the appropriate folder at the top of the course page. Please label it with your photographer’s name and your name (example: AnselAdams_JoeSmith). Please ensure all sharing and editor permissions are turned ON. This way it can be easily accessed without losing class time logging in and out of various email accounts.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused “sick days” and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student’s academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student’s final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students’ grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious

observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be turned off before the beginning of each class.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, students are asked to keep computers and phones away and use a regular notebook or tablet of some sort with a pen. There are three exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools, 3) if you use a tablet to take notes, but one that is not connected to the internet, or 4) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer.

Communication Outside of Class

I prefer talking face-to-face about assignments and other questions as I know that method of communication is richer and can address things I can't 'read' in an email. That said, when you have questions, first check the Moodle site and the syllabus, as many are answered there. I check and respond to emails during the week between 10am and 4pm. It might take me 72 hours to respond to an email so it's often best to come see me before or after class. I'm also happy to make an appointment to meet with you outside of class time.

TRIGGER WARNING: Photographs capture part of our reality, but are they reality or an editorial? Some of the photographs we see may be upsetting; please understand that I don't endorse the messages of photos we see: I am using them in class so you can see how certain photos create messages through powerful use of juxtaposition, lighting, viewpoint, and composition.

TRIGGER WARNING: Fine Arts classes involve shared viewing, discussion, and critique of your work. It's not done privately and it's a great opportunity to learn from each other. With that being said, it's important to be respectful. Always expect an "I like this because..." and a "If I could, I might do to make it better." This is how we learn in Fine Arts Class. It's an inherently collaborative, rather than individual, learning approach.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

What Makes a "Good" Photograph? Rule of Thirds and Exposure

Meeting 1 *Introduction to the class, expectations*

Meeting 2: *Rule of Thirds and Correct Exposure*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp.1-19

WEEK 2

How to Choose Your Best Images, Editing: Straightening, Cropping & Distortion

Meeting 1 *Photowalk: How to get a correct exposure and a great composition in every photo you take...*

Meeting 2: *Identifying your best images, editing by straightening, cropping, and fixing distortion*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp. 20-24

WEEK 3

Histograms and Curves: Setting a Black Point, White Point, & Midtones.

Meeting 1 *Photowalk: Rule of Thirds*

Meeting 2: *Learning Basic Editing. Photo challenge, working in groups.*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp. 25-31

WEEK 4

Assignment 1 Due

Meeting 1 *Using and refining basic editing, working in groups, one on one feedback*

Meeting 2: *Critique and Grading*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp. 38-43

WEEK 5

Photography as a tool for Social Change

Meeting 1 *Critique and Grading*

Meeting 2 *Photography for Social Change Highlight: Dorothea Lange, Lewis Heine, Gordon Parks, JR, James Nachtwey*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp. 44-49

WEEK 6

Viewpoint and Focal Length - How Camera Lenses Change and Distort What You See

Meeting 1 *Museum Visit: Mario Giacomelli: Papaveri Rossi. Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria*

Meeting 2 *Introduction to Assignment 2: Viewpoint and focal length*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp. 50-55

Semester Break

WEEK 7

Selective Editing: Dodging, Burning, Adjusting Contrast in Highlights, Shadows, and Midtones

Meeting 1 *Photowalk: Practice using our cameras to make objects (or subjects) in the background appear bigger or smaller, nearer or further away. Using viewpoint, focal length and depth of field to make photographs more interesting and infer meaning.*

Meeting 2: *Learning Selective Editing: Midtone contrast, masking, vignette*

WEEK 8

Assignment 2 Due

Meeting 1: *Practicing and Refining Selective Editing, working in groups, one on one feedback*

Meeting 2: *Critique and Grading*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp. 56-61

WEEK 9

Assignment 2 Due

Meeting 1 *Assignment 2 Due. Peer feedback, Critique, Grading.*

Meeting 2: *No Class, (MPP and FSE Capstone Trips)*

WEEK 10

Photographers who find Beauty, Humor and Meaning in Everyday Life

Meeting 1 *Robert Doisneau, Elliott Erwitt, Martin Parr, William Eggleston, Steve McCurry*

Meeting 2: *Lighting and Aperture Introduction to Assignment 3 photowalk*

Readings for the week:

Meyerowitz, Joel, 2016 *Seeing Things* Aperture, New York pp. 62-67

WEEK 11

Photowalk, Preparing Photographs for Printing

Meeting 1 *Advanced editing: Healing Tool, Structure and Sharpening, uploading photographs to print*

Meeting 2: *No Class, Thanksgiving*

WEEK 12

Photography as a tool for Environmentalism

Meeting 1 *Hanging work. One on One help Practicing and Refining use of Healing Tool, Structure and Sharpening*

Meeting 2: *Photographers for Environmentalism Highlight: Ansel Adams, Sebastião Salgado, Cristina Mittermeier, Yann Arthus-Bertrand, Paul Nicklen*

WEEK 13

Final Classes, Final Exams, & Special Academic Events Week

Meeting 1 *photowalk*

Meeting 2: *Assignment 3 Due. Peer feedback and Critique. Grading*