

# Frances F. Denny

## Teaching Portfolio

Photography

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## *Teaching Philosophy*

My goal as a teacher is to develop my students' technical, conceptual, and analytical capabilities in the classroom so that they may pursue their independent work confidently and with ingenuity. At the beginning of a course, students must master the fundamentals of their discipline so that they can fully realize ideas for ensuing projects. It is also imperative that students become familiar with the historical predecessors of their discipline in order to appreciate the ways in which these techniques have been implemented in a variety of ways. For example, it is not enough to learn the Zone System in a black and white darkroom class: a student should be aware of how and why Ansel Adams invented it for his landscapes; to know why Julia Margaret Cameron allowed her subjects to be blurry at times, eschewing a tripod to achieve an ethereal effect; to understand how Friedlander's distinct points-of-view achieve a quality of watchfulness. Equally important, students must be versed in the work of contemporary artists in the field in order to understand how other artists have internalized a medium's history and forged unique, boundary-pushing work. Students must be immersed in these frameworks of photography as they begin thinking about how a personal vision will take shape.

Over the course of my photographic education, many instructors have pushed and motivated me in ways that now inform my own teaching ethos and methodology. My teachers have each imparted lessons that influenced the artist that I am now. I've been shown the "magic" of photography; that in photographs exist secrets hidden by the photographer to be discovered by a perceptive viewer. I was taught to understand the qualities of different kinds of daylight by being taken outside to examine it directly. When necessary, I've been pushed to relinquish a need for technical perfection in order to take a necessary risk. I was shown a toolbox of techniques to artificially light any situation, and internalized them in tricky assignments like lighting an egg on a white backdrop. A master black and white printer taught me to pull out tone in the overexposed areas of a negative by burning my print with a low-contrast filter, to agitate the print well in the developer for good contrast, and to tone (carefully) in selenium to make the final print sing. In the digital darkroom, I learned to make the best possible high-resolution scans of my negatives in order to make lush inkjet prints. By participating in hundreds of critiques as a peer, I now read my students' photographs like text, and can formulate questions to ask them in order to provoke next steps and deep critical thinking. As a product of my many instructors' diverse curricula, I am a teacher well equipped to impart these layered photographic missives to my students, filtered through my voice as an artist, and reinforced by a dedication to my students' individual needs.

My teaching methodology relies on establishing good structure for my students, and setting challenging but attainable goals for them each to succeed. Each assignment builds on the last, first establishing technical proficiency, then pushing students to experiment in different genres (like street photography and portraiture), and then emboldening them to personalize and self-direct a final project. Lectures, field trips, visiting artist lectures, and peer presentations give students a rich context for their artistic process; one-on-one meetings with

me support their individual growth as artists. By the end of the course, students have a carefully articulated, polished body of work that describes an informed, personal vision.

Research and preparation are critical to the success of a class, but it is also crucial to be able to adapt to the particular personalities and characteristics of a given group of students. If a student asks a question that opens another path of inquiry that elicits a response from her peers, it's important to see that thought through, even if it means adjusting the day's schedule. If the students are quiet in critique, or unresponsive during a reading discussion, I ask them to prepare responses before the next class or to take ten minutes to reflect on the work that is hung up before responding. In order to maintain student engagement and dynamism, each class's lesson plan has at least three of the following components: lecturing/slideshow, reflection and discussion, demonstration, group critique, a field trip, a visiting artist lecture, one-on-one meetings, and a group work period.

The most significant element of every class meeting is group critique. As an artist, I think of critique as a mirror that reflects back the work I have made: if the reflection is murky or distorted in the group's eyes, then the fault is usually mine as the maker. When teaching a critique-based course, my goal is to elicit responses to new work from the class, and then to synthesize that feedback so that the student can move forward in their work. If a student becomes frustrated when the work is not received the way they've intended, it is often because of a miscommunication on their part in the formal or conceptual aspects of the work. My task is to ascertain what it is they are attempting to express—and to help them find better (and sometimes slyer) ways of making their ideas available to their viewers.

A professor's personality and enthusiasm directly influences their students' appreciation for a subject. Central to my teaching methodology is maintaining a healthy degree of levity while commanding the respect of my students. Sometimes students can be too fixated on grades and achievement—my task is to submerge them in the process of making photographs, to get them to laugh and learn through their technical mistakes and risk-taking in the pursuit of making a body of work that coheres and resonates. I expect to learn from my students, to be asked questions I don't have a simple answer for—and to also be inspired by the work going on in the classroom. I am able to track my students' individual progress, to “take the temperature” in the classroom, and address issues before they become repeated problems. I look for the potential for thematic expansion in each individual student's conceptual framework, and foster their growth as artists by giving personal assignments, reading recommendations, artist references, and one-on-one support. In creating an environment where my students have the tools and encouragement to probe deeply into their work, I guide each student along my personal framework for artistic growth—and eventually lead them to establish an independent practice of their own.

## *Proposed Course Descriptions*

### **Introduction to Photography (Black and White Darkroom for Non-majors): Rendering Personal Expression in Shades of Gray**

Instructor: Frances F. Denny

Meeting time: Mon/Wed, 1:10-6:10pm (January 6<sup>th</sup>-February 28<sup>th</sup>)

No pre-requisite; open to both undergraduates and graduate students currently enrolled at The Rhode Island School of Design.

Credits: 3

Estimated materials cost: \$200.00

Lab fee: \$100.00

#### **Course description:**

The enduring appeal of black and white film photography is in how it adapts to many different kinds of personal expressions, styles, or motives in an immediately recognizable visual language described in a spectrum of gray tones, black, and white. The goal in this class is for students to discover, appreciate, and then adapt that language to make their own ideas resonate. Designed to immerse students in the use of 35mm SLR analog cameras and the black and white darkroom, and to introduce them to the historical and conceptual frameworks of photography, this course will push students to develop their technical skills quickly so that they can pursue their own artistic ideas in a new medium. Ideally, students will come away from this course with a firm foundation for any kind of lens-based work they go on to pursue.

Class time is structured around group critique, printing in the darkroom, student presentations, field trips, demonstrations, one-on-one meetings, and lectures. Techniques that will be covered include: using a 35mm SLR analog camera, developing black and white film, printing in a darkroom, dodging and burning, making photograms, using contrast filters, and preparing final prints for a portfolio. Weekly shooting and printing assignments will provoke students to think imaginatively and resourcefully about their image making. Students will each give a presentation on a chosen photographer that will supplement lectures by the instructor that trace the history and mutability of photography during its relatively short existence. At the end of the course, students will present a final, cohesive portfolio of 15 final prints that not only demonstrate their proficiency in these techniques, but also indicate a personal style, narrative, documentation, or point of view.

- **Goals:**

Technical: mastery of the 35mm SLR camera, the ability to develop 35mm black and white film and to make tonally rich silver-gelatin prints in the darkroom.

Theoretical: familiarity with the critical discourse, history, and evolving canon of photography.

Critical: integration of feedback, making informed, intentional choices about composition, subject, lighting, framing, and printing so that a personal vision can be realized in a final body of work.

- **Objectives:**
  - At least 20 rolls of film, contacted and archivally sleeved.
  - A 10-minute student presentations on a chosen artist that locates the artist in the canon of photographic history and discusses the ways in which they have pushed the boundaries in their field. Supplemented by images, artist statements, and quotations.
  - A printed portfolio of 15 final prints that cohere thematically to a personal vision and demonstrate a nuanced understanding of darkroom technique and process.
  
- **Methods:**
  - Respectful, diagnostic, and inquisitive group critique
  - Demonstrations and printing work periods overseen by the instructor and TA
  - Slideshows, visiting artist talks, field trips to the RISD museum print collection and the Fleet Library Special Collections to develop an appreciation and familiarity with both photographic history, and with masterfully-made black and white silver gelatin prints and books.
  - One-on-one meetings with the instructor in which individualized goals and references can be made explicit.

*Proposed Course Descriptions (continued)*

**Advanced Photographic Practice:  
Crafting a Professional Artist Portfolio**

Instructor: Frances F. Denny

Meeting time: Tuesdays 1:10-6:10pm (Jan 26<sup>th</sup>-May 8<sup>th</sup>)

Pre-requisite: Introduction to Photography and Intermediate Photography (or with permission from the instructor).

Credits: 3

Estimated materials cost: \$150.00

**Course description:**

This course is for students who wish to develop the concepts and themes in their work in order to produce a polished and cohesive professional artist's portfolio. Students should come to the first day of class ready to propose their project or path of inquiry. Over the course of the semester, each student will continue to photograph and print independently, returning to class each week to demonstrate and discuss the progress they've made through group critique and in one-on-one meetings with the professor. Students will come away with an appreciation for the distinctive, personal ways in which a professional artist portfolio can be crafted. Ultimately, this class will prepare students to publically and expertly showcase their best original work.

Prior to enrolling in this class, students should be comfortable working in the digital or analog darkroom. They should be prepared to give informed reasons for those technical choices, but also be able to abandon them if need be. Readings and assignments will be given to further students' critical and creative growth, as well as recommendations pertaining to student's individual projects. Students will be required to write an artist's statement to accompany their portfolio. Visiting lecturers will speak to various elements of producing a portfolio, from sourcing inexpensive or custom portfolio cases, to crafting written artist statements and 2 sentence verbal summations, to making "leave-behind" cards, to demonstrating good portfolio review etiquette. This course goes beyond the technical aspects of photography, prioritizing critique, research, and the development of the final print portfolio of 20-25 prints contained in a professional artist's portfolio.

- Goals: to understand the potential of the finished "portfolio," to develop each student's work into a finished series of images, to learn professional tactics to best represent yourself and your work.
- Objectives: a polished, contained artists portfolio of 20-25 prints, a correlating artist's statement, a 2-sentence artist "pitch," and the final, formal presentation of the work in a mock portfolio review setting.
- Methods: individual shooting assignments, readings, exhibition referrals, guest lecturers, writing workshops, and one-on-one meetings.

## *Proposed Course Descriptions (continued)*

### **Working from Home: The Family Photograph**

Instructor: Frances F. Denny

Meeting time: Thursdays 1:10-6:10pm (Jan 28<sup>th</sup>-May 10<sup>th</sup>)

Pre-requisite: Introduction to Photography (or with permission from the instructor).

Credits: 3

Estimated materials cost: \$100.00

#### **Course description:**

Since the advent of photography in the early nineteenth century, amateur and professional photographers alike have made photographs of the family. Whether that is due to the relative proximity to their subjects, or because of a need to express the complexities inherent in the closest of human relationships, photographers who train their focus on the family do so with a variety of reasons and impetuses. We will together address ethical and emotional concerns, forming subjective notions about how we define “the family” and how we wish to describe its members photographically.

In this course, we will examine the historical precedents of this typology such as Julia Margaret Cameron, Jacque Henri Lartigue, Alfred Stieglitz, Harry Callahan, Emmet Gowin, Sally Mann, Larry Sultan, Tina Barney, Latoya Rubee Frasier, Nan Goldin, and Leigh Ledare, among many others. In surveying the vast trove of work made about the family, we will discern how artists make images that differ from the usual family snapshot. Themes of the course include: defining a family, the home/domestic scene as stage set, staged vs. found imagery, mining the family archive, ethical concerns in representation, and truth and fiction in storytelling. Students will be expected to delve into their image-making by the second week of class and should plan travel/logistics ahead of time if possible. Weekly readings, one-on-one meetings, student presentations, writing workshops, and assignments will be given to push students to think about the representation of family. Please note: while we will inevitably discuss technique and execution, students should already be comfortable with camera operation and be able to print (either digitally or in a darkroom). Each student will present a series of 20 final images the last week of class, as well as a well-crafted artist’s statement.

- Goals: to immerse students in the typology of the family photograph, to investigate issues of photographic representation, to provoke an ongoing dialogue about relationships and dynamics within the family, and to produce an original photographic body of work that expands on the theme of the family photograph in an informed, original, and expressive way.
- Objectives: Weekly written responses to readings, photo books, and gallery/museum visits, a finished series of 18-20 images, and an accompanying artist’s statement.
- Methods: Weekly readings, written responses, presentations, writing workshops, and individual meetings/assignments.

## *Proposed SYLLABUS*

### Introduction to Photography (Black and white darkroom for non-majors): Rendering Personal Expression in Shades of Gray

Instructor: Frances F. Denny

Email: [fdenny@risd.edu](mailto:fdenny@risd.edu)

Phone: 617.833.3934)

RISD Wintersession 2014 (Schedule A)

Meeting times: Mon/Tues, 1:00-6:00pm (Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>-Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>), and Weds 1/8, 1/22, and 2/5.  
Design Center, Room 417

#### **Course description:**

The enduring appeal of black and white film photography is in how it adapts to many different kinds of personal expressions, styles, or motives in an immediately recognizable visual language described in a spectrum of gray tones, black, and white. The goal in this class is for students to discover, appreciate, and then adapt that language to make their own ideas resonate. Designed to immerse students in the use of 35mm SLR analog cameras and the black and white darkroom, and to introduce them to the historical and conceptual frameworks of photography, this course will push students to develop their technical skills quickly so that they can pursue their own artistic ideas in a new medium. Ideally, students will come away from this course with a firm foundation for any kind of lens-based work they go on to pursue.

Class time is structured around group critique, printing in the darkroom, student presentations, field trips, demonstrations, one-on-one meetings, and lectures. Techniques that will be covered include: using a 35mm SLR analog camera, developing black and white film, printing in a darkroom, dodging and burning, making photograms, using contrast filters, and preparing final prints for a portfolio. Weekly shooting and printing assignments will provoke students to think imaginatively and resourcefully about their image-making. Students will each give a presentation on a chosen photographer that will supplement lectures by the instructor that trace the history and mutability of photography during its relatively short existence. At the end of the course, students will present a final, cohesive portfolio of 15 final prints that not only demonstrate their proficiency in these techniques, but also indicate a personal style, narrative, documentation, or point of view.

- **Goals:**
  - Technical: mastery of the 35mm SLR camera, the ability to develop 35mm black and white film and to make tonally rich silver-gelatin prints in the darkroom.
  - Theoretical: familiarity with the critical discourse, history, and evolving canon of photography.
  - Critical: integration of feedback, making informed, intentional choices about composition, subject, lighting, framing, and printing so that a personal vision can be realized in a final body of work.
- **Objectives:**
  - At least 20 rolls of film, contacted and archivally sleeved.
  - A 10-minute student presentations on a chosen artist that locates the artist in the canon of photographic history and discusses the ways in which they have pushed the boundaries in their field. Supplemented by images, artist statements, and quotations.
  - A printed portfolio of 15 final prints that cohere thematically to a personal vision and demonstrate a nuanced understanding of darkroom technique and process.
- **Methods:**
  - Respectful, diagnostic, and inquisitive group critique
  - Demonstrations and printing work periods overseen by the instructor and TA
  - Slideshows, visiting artist talks, field trips to the RISD museum print collection and the Fleet Library Special Collections to develop an appreciation and familiarity with both photographic history, and with masterfully-made black and white silver gelatin prints and books.
  - One-on-one meetings with the instructor in which individualized goals and references can be made explicit.

### **Grading:**

Final portfolio of 15 final prints and *at least* 20 contact sheets: 40%

6 shooting assignments: 30% (5% each)

Class participation: 20%

Photographer presentation: 10%

**A** grade: student completes all assignments and meets all requirements/deadlines on time, participates actively during critiques and reading discussions during every class meeting, demonstrates a proficiency of technical skills, and shows a willingness to work hard, take risks, and participate generously.

**B** grade: student meets expectations, but does not show notable enthusiasm, effort, or personal investment. Printing could be more nuanced/take more care.

**C** grade: student misses classes, does not complete assignments, shows up late, and/or doesn't contribute to class discussions/critiques. Printing is sloppy, final portfolio does not demonstrate an internalization of class goals.

**D** grade: student does absolute minimum to pass this course.

**F** grade: failure to complete the course.

### **Class expectations and policies**

Students will arrive at class promptly and will pin up their assignment right away so that class can begin at 1:05 sharp. Prints will be completely dry when hung, and all film must be bone dry, neatly cut, and sleeved. Artist presenters will be ready to present at the start of class. Sloppy or messy darkroom habits will not be tolerated: students must clean up after themselves. Cell phones are not permitted in class, and are not to be used as a note-taking device. If you need to miss a class, you must email the instructor in advance, and provide a doctor's note. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of your final grade (from B to B- for example).

### **Equipment list:**

- Fully manual 35mm SLR camera in good working order
- 1 box 50 sheets Ilford Pearl RC paper (8"x10")
- At least* 20 rolls Kodak Tri-X 400 ISO film (plan to shoot more like 30 if possible)
- Enclosed binder for negatives/contact sheets with rings: <http://www.printfile.com/black-safe-t-binder.aspx>
- PrintFile acid-free negative sleeves (at least 20) [http://www.printfile.com/35-7b\\_25.aspx](http://www.printfile.com/35-7b_25.aspx)
- 8x10 acid-free archival box for holding prints  
[http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/174694-REG/Lineco\\_733\\_0008\\_733\\_0008\\_Museum\\_Quality\\_Drop\\_Front.html](http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/174694-REG/Lineco_733_0008_733_0008_Museum_Quality_Drop_Front.html)

### **Photographic resources:**

Photo supplies and used equipment: B&H Photo and Video <http://www.bhphotovideo.com>  
Film and darkroom supplies: Freestyle Photo Supplies <http://www.freestylephoto.biz>  
Photo storage: <http://www.printfile.com>  
Used cameras: <http://www.keh.com>  
Local photo repair: <http://www.zackscamerarepair.biz> (791 Hope Street Providence, RI)

## Class Schedule (for proposed Syllabus)

### Monday, 1/6:

Introductions, syllabus overview, class expectations, equipment check/supplies, checking out kits at the photo “cage.” BREAK. Demo of exposure and camera operation. BREAK. Intro B/W photo history slideshow and field trip to photo book section in library. Shooting excursion outside on the way to the library (looking at light). Assignment of optional darkroom buddy system and student presentation dates.

Demo: exposure and camera operation.

- Assignment: Shoot Assignment #1, and do Reading #1. Brings objects for photograms. Due tomorrow.

*Learning outcome*: how to work an SLR 35mm film camera, learning to look at and measure light.

### Tuesday, 1/7:

Lecture/slideshow, discussion of technical issues. BREAK. Demo on film development. BREAK. Demo of photograms and contact sheets.

Demo: film development, making contact sheets, making photograms.

- Assignment: Develop your film from Shooting Assignment #1, make contact sheets, and make 3 photograms using materials from home or found objects. Do Reading #2. Due tomorrow.

*Learning outcome*: how to develop 35mm black and white film, how to make a contact sheet, and how to make a photogram print in the darkroom.

### Wednesday, 1/8:

Critique of contact sheets and photograms, discussion of Reading #2. BREAK. Discussion of “found vs. created” photographs. Demo of printing. BREAK. Printing time.

Demo: printing with contrast filters, dodging and burning.

- Assignment: Shooting Assignment #2. Make 6 prints from Assignment #1 and 4 prints from Assignment #2. Bring all prints, film, and contact sheets to class, including your test strips on Monday.

*Learning outcome*: how to make a silver-gelatin print from a negative in the darkroom and learning the differences between “found vs. constructed” image making.

### Monday, 1/13:

Critique of 10 prints from Assignment #1 and #2, plus all 4 contact sheets. BREAK.

Lecture/slideshow. Two student presentations. BREAK. Printing time.

- Assignment: Reading #3, Shooting Assignment #3, shoot and contact 2 rolls for tomorrow.

*Learning outcome*: troubleshooting for shooting and printing, more nuanced printing techniques.

### Tuesday, 1/14:

Reading #3 discussion, lecture/slideshow, two student presentations BREAK. Group critique, one-on-one meetings looking at contacts and printing selects from Assignment #3.

- Assignment: Shooting Assignment #4, contact sheets, 5 prints, and Reading #4 for Tuesday.

*Learning outcome:* Students bridge the gap between what they are doing, and what they envision doing photographically.

**Monday, 1/20:** Martin Luther King Day (\*\*NO CLASS\*\*)

**Tuesday, 1/21:**

Critique of Assignment #4 and prints from #3. BREAK. Three student presentations. Field trip to RISD Museum's print collection. BREAK. Printing time.

- Assignment: Reading #5 due tomorrow, Shooting Assignment #5, contact and make 3 prints (due tomorrow).

*Learning outcome:* In critique, students will see where the strengths and weaknesses lie in their own work, and in that of their peers. At the RISD Museum, they will develop their eye for tonally rich prints.

**Wednesday, 1/22:**

Critique of Assignment #5. BREAK. Three student presentations, discussion of Reading #5, discussion of final projects, individual meetings. BREAK. Printing time.

Demo: split filter burning.

- Assignment: Shooting Assignment #6, contact sheets, make 5 prints, and do Reading #6.

*Learning outcome:* Having received feedback in critique, and having met one-on-one with their instructor, students will develop a vision for their self-directed final project.

**Monday, 1/27:**

Discussion of Reading #6. Three student presentations. BREAK. Critique of Assignment #6. BREAK. One-on-one meetings with instructor to set individual goals for final project. Printing time.

- Assignment: Work on final project development.

*Learning outcome:* Students will receive feedback on their final shooting assignment so that they can advance their final projects in earnest—and move deeply into the shooting stage.

**Tuesday, 1/28:**

Reading discussion. Two student presentations. BREAK. Discussion of presentation expectations for final portfolio and field trip to see photography portfolios at RISD Museum/Library. BREAK. Printing time.

- Assignment: Intensive production for final portfolio (shooting, developing, and printing). Shoot *at least* 2 more rolls (there is no shooting assignment), make contact sheets, and 5 last work prints for Monday.

*Learning outcome:* after their individual meetings, students will be able to set personal goals for their last week of shooting before the final. And students learn how to finalize a body of work and prepare it for formal review.

**Monday, 2/3:**

Three student presentations. Looking at photo books. BREAK. One-on-one meetings with new contact sheets/work prints before the final presentations. Printing/working time.

- Assignment: Final portfolios and 20 (or more) contact sheets.

*Learning outcome:* making a final edit, finalizing and presenting a body of polished work.

**Tuesday, 2/4:**

*Final presentations* (9 students, 25 min per person). Guest critic (TBD).

Learning outcome: using the historical, technical, and conceptual frameworks that have been put in place since the beginning of the course, students demonstrate their printing prowess in a final group of 15 cohered images that speak to a personal vision.

**Wednesday, 2/5:**

*Final Presentations* (9 students, 25 min per person). Guest critic (TBD).

Learning outcome: (see above)

**Assignments:**

**Shooting Assignments 1-6:** The shooting assignments are designed to not only develop your technical skills, they are meant to provoke purposeful and imaginative image-making. Your contact sheets are always due the day the assignment is due, and your film must already be sleeved and ready to be examined at the start of class. You will notice there are 6 shooting assignments; each requires only 2 rolls of film, and your final portfolio must include contact sheets for *at least* 20 rolls of film. You must therefore shoot 8 additional rolls of film for this class than is dictated by the assignments. You can either shoot extra rolls for the assignments, or shoot more heavily towards the end of class for your final project; it's up to you.

(Detailed shooting assignment descriptions attached)

Shooting assignment #1: *Driving Your Camera*

Shooting assignment #2: *From Mechanics to Ideas*

Shooting assignment #3: *A Sense of Place*

Shooting assignment #4: *The Subjective Portrait*

Shooting assignment #5: *Photographing the Familiar*

Shooting assignment #6: *Dream/Memory*

**Photographer Presentations:** In order to encourage research and inspire enthusiasm for photographers and photo books, each student will give a 10 minute PowerPoint or Keynote presentation on a photographer of your choice from the list of options that will be provided on the first day of class. Your presentation must include biographical information, historical context, career trajectory, quotes or artist statements, bodies of work, and any other relevant information about the work itself (if the artist has a book or monograph, please bring a copy to pass around). Please include as many images as possible in your presentation.

Note: images sourced from Google Images are discouraged: you must make scans from books and use only good-quality, artist-approved files from photographer/gallery/museum websites. The point of this assignment is to go beyond Wikipedia: I want you to spend time researching in the library. Go bury your nose in a beautiful photo book and report back!

**Texts:**

- **Required:**  
Henry Horenstein, *Black and White Photography: A Basic Manual* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- **Recommended:**  
Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4th edition  
Barbara London/Jim Stone/John Upton *Photography* 11<sup>th</sup> edition  
Susan Sontag *On Photography*  
Charlotte Cotton *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*  
John Szarkowski *The Photographer's Eye*  
Steichen, Edward *The Family of Man*  
Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida*

**Req. Readings 1-6:**

- Reading #1: Horenstein, Chaps. 1 and 2, *Black and White Photography: A Basic Manual*  
Reading #2: Szarkowski, Introduction of *The Photographer's Eye*  
Reading #3: Sontag, Introduction of *On Photography*  
Reading #4: Cotton, Chapter 3 "Deadpan" *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*  
Reading #5: Cotton, Chapter 5 "Intimate Life" *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*  
Reading #6: Steichen/Sandberg, Introduction of *The Family of Man*

## Assignment #1: DRIVING YOUR CAMERA

**Goal:** The purpose of this assignment is simply to develop your skills operating the camera. At first when you begin using a manual camera, it can feel like the camera is “driving” you—I want you to learn how to “drive” your camera with confidence and intentionality so you can use each of these stylistic elements in the future whenever you choose to. To that end, this assignment will push you to isolate the most important visual capabilities of your camera, and create them deliberately.

### Shooting criteria:

- 6 frames that freeze motion (*hint:* use a high shutter speed)
- 6 frames that show blur (*hint:* use a low shutter speed)
- 6 frames that show a shallow depth of field (*hint:* use a wide aperture—a low F-stop # like F2.8 or F4)
- 6 frames that show a deep depth of field (*hint:* use a small aperture—a high F-stop # like F16 or F22).
- 6 images that show even light (*hint:* look for a shaded area that doesn’t have shadows of many things but rather one wide, even area of light)
- 6 images that show a range of at least 2-3 different stops of light in one picture. (*hint:* look for an area with both direct sun and deep shadow).

You will choose 1 frame from each of the 6 criteria to make a print from later this week (for 6 total prints), choosing the best representation of each requirement.

### **Methods:**

-For this assignment, it doesn’t matter *what* you photograph, it matters *how* you photograph it, so don’t worry too much about your actual subjects. The key is to think about finding good, strong daylight that you can work with to create each stylistic element.

-\*Please make a note of your exposures for each frame. This sounds tedious, but it’s an important step in understanding your technical train of thought.\*

### **Outcomes:**

You will have one picture that freezes motion, one with blur, one shallow depth of field, one deep depth of field, one with even light, and one with several stops of light. A mini portfolio that can stand as a reference of some of the basic technical and stylistic tools now in your tool kit.

For tomorrow: please bring 2 rolls of developed film that you shot for this assignment.

For Monday 1/13: Bring in prints of the 6 frames you chose, plus contact sheets and your shooting log/notes. Note that Assignment #2 is also due on 1/13 (see syllabus).

## Assignment #2: FROM MECHANICS TO IDEAS

Now that you have begun using your camera more skillfully, it's time to focus on the subject of your photographs. Please either photograph one element in each of the following 4 categories or photograph all of the elements in 1 category. Interpret/represent each item in your photographs however you choose. Shoot *at least 2* rolls—how many frames you give to each element is up to you. Please bring all film and contact sheets to our next class.

### *Categories:*

- Formal: geometry, contrast, abstraction, texture, shadow.
- Physical: water, air, earth, fire, skin, breath, body.
- Conceptual: a secret, a symbol, a contradiction, an enigma.
- Emotional: Love, sadness, ecstasy, apathy, anxiety. Note: pick any emotional state, but be specific. Find these emotional states in different people, scenes, and settings, using a mix of strangers and familiars, objects or surrogates.

### **Goal:**

Your goal in this assignment is to use one or all of these frameworks to expand your creative image-making skills. How can you apply your new technical understanding to making pictures with intention, imagination, and responsiveness? The aim is to begin using your camera purposefully—instead of letting your camera ‘drive’ you, now you should begin to ‘drive’ your camera. This assignment encourages you to both make the pictures you visualize and to begin seeing the photographic potential in your surroundings.

### **Methods:**

- Look for the light you need. How can a certain quality of light enhance or redact texture? How can it illuminate breath? How can it help evoke tension? Experiment and be on the lookout for the light you want.
- The found vs. created image. Before you pick up your camera to shoot, brainstorm a few ideas of specific subjects to photograph, including the light you need (and perhaps the time of day it exists). It will be helpful to approach some of the categories systematically, and leave others up to chance and serendipity. Design your images with intention, and go looking for others. Get comfortable working in this balance, but begin to notice which you gravitate to personally.
- Don't be afraid to delve deeply into one of the categories. If you need to cover 4 elements for this assignment, then each can have 18 exposures spent on it if you shoot 2 rolls. It's up to you how you portion out the exposures, but if you find something great—just keep shooting! This is a good assignment to spend more film on.

### **Outcomes:**

- At least 2 rolls of film and contact sheets for our next class.
- An appreciation for the “found vs. created” image.
- We begin to understand what our own attraction to image making is—what kind of pictures do you envision? What will you train your focus on? What is *your* point of view?

### Assignment #3: A SENSE OF PLACE

Choose a place and photograph it with the purpose of describing it to your viewer photographically. Pick a site, building, intersection, square, park, or street, and take a documentary approach to photographing it. Think carefully about how you want to represent this place in two dimensions. Return to it more than once to photograph at different times of day.

Questions to think about:

- Who occupies this place?
- Who is just passing through?
- Does this place somehow change with you in it? Does your presence affect it somehow?
- What does the light look like at 7AM versus 7PM?
- How can you describe what it feels like to be there in your pictures?
- What did you witness there?

**Goals:** To think about issues of representation, and of the photographer's responsibilities in being the author of that representation, and to begin developing a personal shooting style or ethos.

**Methods:** Brainstorm an interesting place before you go out shooting. Choose your time of day carefully, and be sure to return at a different time of day if you can to capture it in that light, too. Spend as much time there as possible. Watch what happens around you.

**Outcomes:** 2 rolls of film, contacted for our next class. Students will have an increased sensitivity to space and light, the occupants of that space, and how their presence (and their camera's presence) is felt.

## Assignment #4: THE SUBJECTIVE PORTRAIT

Photograph someone. It could be a friend, family member, acquaintance, classmate, or a stranger that you approach on the street. Think about how you want to go about representing this person. Do you want to treat them as a surrogate to describe a state of mind you determine? Do you want to tell a story using them as a narrator or protagonist? Do you want to understand something about this individual and reveal that in a thoughtful portrait of them? Do you want to document one person's daily existence?

Questions to think about:

- How can you make your subject comfortable?
- How can you communicate with your subject to bring out what you are looking for?
- Can you make a portrait of someone without including his/her face or body in the picture?
- How can you connote abstract qualities about a person (personality, emotion, psychology) in a picture?
- Do your pictures editorialize, narrate, or document?
- How does the subject's gaze change the feeling of the picture?
- What is the main piece of information you want your viewer to take away from looking at your photographs?

**Goals:** to practice working with a single human subject, to appreciate the responsibilities of representation, to also consider the differences between making portraits, editorials, and working with models.

**Methods:** be intentional; make decisions about light and location before photographing. But also leave something up to chance, intuition, or collaboration. Be honest and direct with your subject about what you are looking for.

**Outcomes:** Please bring in 2 rolls of film, contact sheets, and at least 5 prints that together make a portrait or representation of that person according to your choices as the photographer and editor.

## Assignment #5: PHOTOGRAPHING THE FAMILIAR

Photograph the familiar: your home, your family, your routine; yourself. The challenge here is to make interesting, personal pictures that can appeal to an audience by speaking to some larger concept or idea that can be understood or perhaps related to. Your pictures can remain mysterious, but you should be thinking about elevating the commonplace somehow beyond their literal representation.

Questions to think about:

- How can you think about using metaphors to describe a state of mind, routine, or even a secret?
- How can you design ways to photograph intimacy and domesticity--or tension and discord?
- How can you elevate the mundane to become universal or even extraordinary?

**Goals:** to learn how to communicate through making pictures, to see the things we take for granted more subjectively, to think metaphorically.

**Methods:** think about metaphor and symbol. How is a picture of a single toothbrush in a cup by the sink different than a picture of a cup with two toothbrushes? What does an overflowing garbage bin symbolize—and how is the meaning change when the bin is placed next to a stack of notebooks and papers? As always, think about and plan for your light source—bright window light may be your best asset, and you will want to use a tripod if you plan on photographing inside.

**Outcomes:** Please bring in at least 2 rolls of film, contact sheets, and 5 prints. Students will make progress toward finding a stylistic voice or point of view while looking at their intimate surroundings in a new way.

## **Assignment #6: DREAM/MEMORY**

Photograph a memory or dream. It can be yours or someone else's, real or imagined. You can either take a narrative approach to this or a conceptual one. This is completely open-ended, and requires you to think about how you want to describe/narrate /conceptualize/illustrate/imagine your idea or story.

Questions to think about:

- What tone or qualities do you want to impart about your dream or memory and how can you establish that right off the bat?
- How can you embrace mystery?
- How can you simultaneously be specific?

**Goal:** to mine the personal archive for material, to take an idea and find a way of representing it photographically.

**Methods:** Choose a dream or a memory of your own or someone else's—it could even be from a piece of literature—and think about the visual elements in it.

**Outcomes:** Please bring in at least 2 rolls of film, contact sheets, and 5 prints. This assignment pushes students to self-direct and make a personal interpretation of a loosely-defined subject.

## Mid-term Course Evaluation:

Rendering Personal Expression in Shades of Gray: An Introduction to Analog Photography  
Instructor: Frances F. Denny

*Please answer the following questions honestly and with as many specific examples as possible. Your **anonymous** feedback will be considered for improvements to the course in the second half of the semester.*

- 1) How is this course going for you? Are you learning the material you expected to learn?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) Are you disappointed in any aspect of this class?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) How could the instructor improve the class in the coming weeks?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What has been the most effective teaching method so far for you and why (Powerpoint presentations, lectures, hands-on demonstrations, one-on-one meetings, field trips, student presentations, shooting assignments, visiting artist talk)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) What has been the least effective teaching method for you and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) Please evaluate your own effort in this course on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the hardest you are capable of working, and 1 being very little effort made at all (circle one).

(Minimum effort)   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**   (Hardest you are capable of working)

How could the instructor encourage you to apply yourself more this semester?

