

***Nicole Schwartz***

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*Teaching Portfolio*

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*"A photograph is a secret about a  
secret. The more it tells you the  
less you know."*

*-Diane Arbus*

## *Teaching Philosophy*

A professor can impact a student's life in many ways, but the deepest is to inspire them. Inspiration is defined as, "something that makes someone want to do something or that gives someone an idea about what to do or create." As a professor, my main objective is to inspire. Through a critique based class discussions, students will critically think about the work around them as well as their own. The classroom goals are to have students think more critically about work, to finish with a cohesive body of work, and most importantly to be inspired to continue making images.

When I was an undergraduate student, I remember the first time a teacher showed a great interest in me and my work. At first I did not realize this teacher was impacting me until I saw the drive and motivation I had to come to class every week with good work. Our classroom structure was based in critical discussion, something that was new and challenging for me, but was something that pushed me to work hard. There was one week in particular that I came to class with only two images to show due to film exposure problems. I was so upset I didn't have the required amount that I didn't realize the two images I did produce were lovely and groundbreaking for my project. Instead of being negative that I didn't have the required amount, she took the time to discuss the two images I did have. She was so proud that in the images I was taking risks and doing something very different with the project that she loved. I was so stuck in my own head and emotions

that I couldn't allow myself to look at the image in a critical way. Her support and encouragement pushed me to continue to create a unique project that to this day I am very proud of. It is important to challenge the way your students are thinking and to suggest strong ideas and concepts to push them in a positive direction. Critique based discussions are valuable to me and play a key role in the way I teach. Constant conversation and the same class structure day to day allows for students to constantly grow in the way they think and talk about making photographs. The growth in the way they vocalize may not become immediately apparent to the students, but the evolution is seen weekly on the walls as the imagery shifts and grows before our eyes.

Students should not only practice analyzing their classmates work and their own, but also the work of established professionals. Research and inspiration journals are a great way for students to collect thoughts, draw and contrast, and to gather future inspiration. I find this technique is useful in my own work, especially if I am in a rut in a project and do not have other artists around me to provide analysis of my work. Gathering inspiration from outside sources and compiling them into a journal can stimulate the mind and trigger something thought provoking. Inspiration can be found anywhere and having students practice seeking it out will better them in their own development as independent artists.

I have a great passion for sharing my knowledge and hope to influence future photographers; helping them expand their work and to

feel comfortable about the discussion of art. In a darkroom photogram class I taught to high school students I had one student who was struggling. Ahnyee's lack of drawing skills had her frustrated because she wanted to use bold illustrations in her photograms. I acknowledged her struggle and suggested she cut out shapes of images in magazines like a shoe or a person, anything to strike her imagination and bring her idea to life. She was enlightened by my advice and went on to create beautiful poetic photograms using cutout shapes. It was amazing to see how with my advice she overcame a challenge that allowed her vision to become a reality. When a student overcomes an obstacle, they are more likely to continue to challenge the way they work. This fact hones true for Ahnyee, who continued to push herself and entered the work she created in my class into an art scholarship competition. I couldn't have been more proud of her growth throughout the course. Her pride over her art filled me with joy and also inspired me. There is nothing more satisfying then seeing that your teaching has impacted the lives of your students.

## *Proposed Course Descriptions*

### **The Print and the Negative: Darkroom Photography 101**

Immerse yourself in the dark and learn how film is exposed, developed, and transformed into a silver gelatin print. In this beginner level course, students will learn 35mm camera handling and darkroom printing techniques. The first two weeks of class will consist of learning how to properly operate and meter the 35mm camera and also focus on film development. After learning these foundations, students will then advance into the darkroom where they will hone in on their skills and craft perfect silver gelatin prints through hands on approach for the remainder of the semester. Some darkroom techniques that students will learn are enlarging, dodging and burning, contrast filter usage, and experimentation with RC and fiber papers. Each week there will be a required amount of three rolls of film due in contact sheet form. Students will be required to process film and spend additional hours in the darkroom outside of class time. There will be an in class midterm review as well as a ten image final portfolio that is due at the end of the semester. Students will leave this course with vast knowledge of darkroom photo skills, knowledge of how to operate a 35mm film camera, and a finished portfolio.

*Credits: 3.00 / Pre-Req: Open to all / Lab fee: \$100 / Material Fee: \$100 / Class Level: Beginner Level*

*Requirements: Students are required to bring their own 35mm film camera.*

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### **The Active Storyteller: Exploring Visual Journalism**

How can you tell a narrative through imagery? Photojournalism is the act of storytelling through photographs. In this course students will devote their time to creating a single documentary project. Students will examine and practice conceptualization of a planned narrative project of their choosing. Students will be required to shoot weekly and bring contact sheets and five prints each week for discussion. The class structure of this course is a critique based seminar. Students and the instructor will participate in conversation about each other's work providing guidance, comments, and constructive feedback. Photo essays and documentary projects by contemporary photographers will also be discussed. At the end of the course students are required to

present a fifteen image project that demonstrates a unique and compelling documentary narrative.

*Credits: 3.00 / Pre-Req: Photo 1 & Photo 2. / Photo majors only / Lab Fee: \$100 / Class Level: Advanced Level*

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### **Documenting Identity: The Intimate Portrait**

What makes a portrait memorable? A portrait can change our perception of how we look at people. Portraiture is about the decisive moment when the photographer chooses to capture someone through the lens. There are critical steps to take the perfect photograph of an individual. In the course students will be asked to examine portraiture and the relationship between the photographer and the subject. Throughout the semester students will be devoted to the development of a single project. Documenting identity is a critical discussion based seminar where students will learn how to think critically about portraiture photography. Participants will be required weekly to produce work and bring assignments to class to be discussed. The professor and students will aid in discussion of student work, ranging 15-20 minutes per student. As a class, we will analyze and discuss the imagery, providing guidance and constrictive feedback for the work to improve and grow. Along with weekly assignments, students will also be required to complete a 2-3 page analysis on a portrait photographer of their choosing due during midterms and a finished 10-12 image cohesive final project due at the end of the semester. Students can expect to walk away with the skills to hone in on their intuition to create expressive portraits.

*Credits: 3.00 / Pre-Req: Photo 1 & Photo 2. / Photo majors only / Lab Fee: \$100 / Class Level: Advanced Elective*

## *Proposed Syllabus*

### **Documenting Identity: The Intimate Portrait**

(RISD Spring 2015 - Wednesday 12:30-3:20 ROOM 315 DESIGN CENTER)

Instructor: Nicole Schwartz

Email: NSchwartz@risd.edu

Office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 9:00-12

What makes a portrait memorable? A portrait can change our perception of how we look at people. Portraiture is about the decisive moment when the photographer chooses to capture someone through the lens. There are critical steps to take the perfect photograph of an individual. In the course students will be asked to examine portraiture and the relationship between the photographer and the subject. Throughout the semester students will be devoted to the development of a single project. Documenting identity is a critical discussion based seminar where students will learn how to think critically about portraiture photography. Participants will be required weekly to produce work and bring assignments to class to be discussed. The professor and students will aid in discussion of student work, ranging 15-20 minutes per student. As a class, we will analyze and discuss the imagery, providing guidance and constrictive feedback for the work to improve and grow. Along with weekly assignments, students will also be required to complete a 2-3 page analysis on a portrait photographer of their choosing due during midterms and a finished 10-12 image cohesive final project due at the end of the semester. Students can expect to walk away with the skills to hone in on their intuition to create expressive portraits.

*Credits: 3.00 / Pre-Req: Photo 1&2 / Photo majors only /  
Lab fee \$100 / Class Level: Advanced Elective*

**Goals:**

- Engage with the topic of portraiture photography and develop an understanding of its technical aspects as well the relationship between the photographer and the subject
- Build skills in critical discussion and analysis
- Develop a cohesive project

**Anticipated Outcomes: -100%**

- A large group of images that shows the students progress from beginning to end - 25%
- The ability to discuss and critique photographic work - 25%
- Knowledge and analysis of an established portraiture photographer of the students choosing - 15%
- A finished cohesive printed project of 10-12 images - 35%

**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance:**

Class begins promptly at 12:30.

One absence- no penalty

Two absences-grade lowered by .5

Three absences- grade lowered by a full grade

**Critical Participation:**

This class is based on critical discussion. Participation is a vital key to the course and will be required from each student.

Participation makes up 25% of the final grade. Our goal is to have passionate discussion of each other's portraiture photography work. Students will see effective participation as an aid to improving the way they think and make photographic work.

**Assignments:** Students will be devoted to the development of a single portraiture project. Assignments include weekly assignments, a midterm analysis paper, and a printed final project.

- **Weekly Assignments-** Each week students will be required to come to class with finished work to be pinned to the wall to be discussed. In order to meet the requirement students will be required to shoot 150 digital captures/ 3 rolls of 35mm film / 2-3 rolls of 120 film / or 6 sheets of 4x5. Students must bring contact sheets and 3-5 work prints to class. Weekly assignments are critical to further the development of your project through the feedback of the class.
- **Midterm Analysis Paper-** Students will be required to write an analysis paper of an accredited portraiture photographer of their choosing. The analysis paper must be 2-3 pages in length and have an additional bibliography with a minimum of 3 sources. The paper is meant to be explorative and allows for students to look at a current practicing professional.
- **Final Project-** Students will be required to print a 10-12 image project that will be critiqued by faculty on the last day of class. The final images will be cohesive and express the portraiture project that the student has been working on the whole semester.

**Grading:**

Weekly Assignments-	25%
Class Participation-	25%
Mid-term Analysis Paper: 2-3 pages + bibliography -	15%
Final Project: 10-12 cohesive finished prints -	35%

**Class Schedule:**

**Week 1- March 9<sup>th</sup> - *Introduction to Documenting Identity***

Discussion: Introduction to the course including syllabus overview and breakdown of class structure.

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class

**Week 2- March 16<sup>th</sup> -*First discussion of work***

Discussion: Critical discussion of student work.

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class (3/30)

\*Also due (3/30) name of photographer for your analysis paper

Learning outcome: students will take their first steps in critically discussing work and leave class thinking about what was mentioned about work.

**Week 3- March 23<sup>rd</sup> - *NO CLASS SESSION - spring break***

Take the time to think about prospective photographers to write about in your portraiture analysis paper! A shortlist of fifty photographers you can look at to research can be found on Digication under Mid-Term analysis paper tab. Please email me for approval if a photographer you want to write about is not on the list.

**Week 4- March 30<sup>th</sup> - *Portraiture now and then***

Discussion: Critical discussion of student work. Brief overview of portraiture photography and different styles associated.

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class

**Week 5- April 6<sup>th</sup> - *Applying critical feedback / Shaping a cohesive project***

Discussion: Critical discussion of student work - looking for observation of cohesive projects and projects where feedback has been applied.

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class.

\*Also due (4/13) 2-3 page + bibliography of mid-term analysis paper

Learning outcome: Students will be able to identify what it means to be cohesive in terms of a photographic project.

**Week 6- April 13<sup>th</sup> - *Mid-Term course evaluations / MID-TERM ANALYSIS PAPERS DUE BY 12 MIDNIGHT***

Discussion: Critical discussion of student work.

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class, Mid-Term analysis paper due at midnight

Activity: Students will complete mid-term course evaluation prior to the end of class time.

**Week 7- April 20<sup>th</sup> - *Understanding the gaze***

Discussion: Class discussion on how the eyes play a large role in a portrait. What can you tell from someone's gaze? Should the sitter always be looking right back at you? Critical gaze versus oppositional gaze will be discussed.

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class. Please go to the RISD Museum and photograph with your cell phone three examples where you feel gaze is distinguished in a work of art. Please bring these three images printed to class for discussion.

**Week 8- April 27<sup>th</sup> - *How do we effectively discuss our own work in an artist statement?***

Discussion: In the beginning of class, examples the gaze will be shown by each student's trip to the RISD Museum. Students will then be asked to discuss what they are trying to communicate within their imagery.

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class.

Learning outcome: Students will write and revise an artist statement about their portraiture project that will increase self-awareness of one's own signature in portraiture photography.

**Week 9- May 4<sup>th</sup> - *Personal reflection and prospected outcomes of final projects***

Discussion: Students will reflect on their progress so far, will talk about what are the next steps in their photo making as they prepare for their edit next week

Assignment: Required shooting allotment, 3-5 work prints, due next class

**Week 10- May 11<sup>th</sup> - *The edit***

Discussion: Class discussion of the selected works from each student. Creating cohesion/discussing what is missing.

Assignment: Start working on 10-12 cohesive finished prints, additional photographing is optional but welcomed

Learning outcome: Students will have a understanding of how to edit their own work. Cohesive practice from earlier in the semester will play a key role as the class and the instructor help edit student work.

**Week 11- May 18<sup>th</sup> - *In class printing session, 1 on 1 discussion welcomed***

Assignment: Final 10-12 image project due next class for faculty critique

**Week 12- May 25<sup>th</sup> - *FINAL 10-12 IMAGE PRINTED PROJECTS DUE IN CLASS, CRITIQUE FROM FACULTY ON EACH STUDENTS WORK***

Learning outcome: Students will have a finished portfolio of selected 10-12 images and a more profound understanding of portraiture photography.

## *Proposed Assignment*

### Weekly Assignments Overview

- Weekly assignments are vital to the development of your critical voice in the classroom and to the growth of your final project.
- Through the constant production of imagery students will be furthering the development of their project (due to the amount of work being produced weekly and the constant feedback given from the class)
- Everyone having work to hang on the wall is important so that students can receive constant feedback and the class can grow as we hone in our comments into constructive and analytical thoughts throughout the semester
- Each week, student will be required to come to class with finished work ready to be pinned to the wall for class discussion.
- If you come to class without work, you will not be able to have critical discussion towards the development of your project.
- Weekly assignments make up  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the final grade.

#### Goals:

- To constantly be producing work throughout the semester to the development of a chosen portraiture project
- To clearly demonstrate student growth from beginning to end of the project
- To allow for a variety of images to choose from for final cohesive project
- To gain insight from critical discussion and to self evaluate steps to build on to the project

#### Outcomes:

- Continuous growth on a project
- Constant feedback from others

- Improvement on critical analysis and discussion in photographic work
- Yielding a large body of work to select from for final edit
- A cohesive final project

Requirements:

- A minimum of 150 digital captures/ 3 rolls of 35mm film / 2-3 rolls of 120 film / or 6 sheets of 4x5 must be captured weekly.
- 3-5 work prints and all contact sheets must be pinned to wall at the beginning of each class.

Basic Level of Achievement:

- Comes to class prepared most of the time with stated materials
- Participates occasionally in critical discussion of student work
- Sometimes uses critical feedback to push work further
- Displays an average, somewhat cohesive final project

Advanced Level of Achievement:

- Class preparedness with required materials
- Actively participates in critical discussion of student work
- Uses critical feedback from others to push work further
- Displays growth in project throughout the course of the semester
- Displays a thoughtful cohesive final project

## Grading Rubric

A- excellent	B- above average	C- average	D-below average
Exceeds work expectations and pushes oneself to make exemplary work. Completes <i>all</i> assignments thoroughly and on time.	Completes <i>most</i> assignments thoroughly and on time. Student exceeds work expectations numerous times throughout the semester.	Meets work expectations at a minimum, Completes <i>some</i> assignments on time	Does not exceed work expectations, does not come to class prepared
Actively participates during classroom critique discussion multiple times each class session.	Participates in classroom discussions consistently.	Occasionally participates during classroom critique discussion.	Hardly ever participates during classroom critique discussion
Displays significant growth throughout the course of the semester. Final project is cohesive, creative, and compelling.	Displays growth throughout the course of the semester. Final project is well constructed, but lacks some finesse and cohesion.	Displays some growth throughout the course of the semester. Final project has some cohesion, but does not exceed student's known potential.	Does not display significant growth throughout the semester. Final project has a insufficient amount of images and lack of cohesion

## Mid-Term Course Evaluation

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### Documenting Identity: The Intimate Portrait

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Course Goals:

- To engage with the topic of portraiture photography and develop an understanding of its technical aspects as well the relationship between the photographer and the subject
  - To build skills in critical discussion and analysis
  - To develop a cohesive project
- 

**Please respond to these statements by selecting 1-5, with 1 for if you strongly disagree and 5 for if you strongly agree.**

The teacher communicates class expectations clearly.

(strongly disagree )    1            2            3            4            5    (strongly agree)

Class time is divided evenly amongst students and is well organized.

(strongly disagree )    1            2            3            4            5    (strongly agree)

I feel encouraged to participate in the classroom critique discussion.

(strongly disagree )    1            2            3            4            5    (strongly agree)

I feel my passion for this subject has grown since the beginning of this course.

(strongly disagree )    1            2            3            4            5    (strongly agree)

**Turn onto back for continued questions.**

**Please answer the next 5 questions below. Feel free to be as descriptive as you like.**

1). How efficient do you find the instructor's teaching?

2).What do you think about the critique style format of the class?

3). If you could make any suggestions to the way the class is taught for the remainder of the semester, what would they be?

4).What are the best and worst aspects of the course so far?

5).Any other suggestions or thoughts?