

Course Syllabus / Photography

Skagit Valley College: Art 181, 182, 299
(line numbers 0199,0202, 0207, 0239)
Instructor: Larry Bullis Winter, 2007

This document:

This is a long read, but read it carefully because it answers virtually all the questions you might have. It accurately describes the entire course. It is the course. If you understand it, you will know everything you need to know and you most likely will do quite well in the course. If you do not understand it, you will be unlikely to do well and very well could fail the course. There may be an exam on its content at any time throughout the quarter, or there may not; either way, your presence in the class indicates your acceptance of this document as a contract, the terms of which are binding upon you and upon the instructor. This responsibility is intentional and essential to the course. Without it, there is no education. Education is about taking responsibility for the development of your own mind.

While you need to know that the syllabus is a contract and its terms are firm and binding, the tone of it may at times give something of a falsely harsh impression. This course is fun, both for the students and myself. Having a good time and playing by the rules are not at all incompatible.

The course:

The courses of differing numbers are very similar. The lower numbers in each sequence indicate 'beginning' and the higher numbers indicate 'having already begun'. They are essentially workshops, but with lots of content, mostly given up front. Photography is complex; basic concepts and process must precede most of the work in order for successful results to be possible. The beginning class is approximately 1/2 lecture, 1/2 lab overall. The upper level is more workshop, more independent, but involves substantial individual consultation.

Format:

My classes are discursive, rather than didactic; I like to teach one-on-one as much as possible, in a community setting where everyone is included. I want my students to engage the medium as practitioners with as much energy as possible. You will spend a lot of time in the lab and in the field.

Most people who sign up for a photography class do so because they are interested in photography. Indeed, they may have always wished, possibly for a whole lifetime, to make a lot of photographs, to go into the darkroom and play to their heart's content. Let me say at the outset: You have my permission to make as many photographs as you possibly can. You have no restrictions beyond practical limitations of our lab and the equipment and resources you have available. You may photograph any subject you wish in any way you see fit. You are not subject to limits or restrictions on what you may photograph (of course, if your fellow students object to your subject matter, etc., you may encounter consequences for which, also, you are responsible). There may be a few assignments which could be photographic, written, reading, or seeing shows, or a combination of any of these elements. I will make every possible effort to keep my peculiar aesthetic biases out of your way. We will discuss our aesthetic orientations openly. Mine are always available for discussion.

Your roll in the course:

You are solely responsible for your work, and you will be evaluated upon the quantity and quality of energy that you put into it. If you put out -- you will do well. If you procrastinate, fail to participate in active lab sessions, or if you do not consult with the instructor, you can be sure that it will show in your work. Pay close attention during lectures and review the material. An exam will occur, and there could be a paper. These do not substitute for photographic work, but they are important. Everything about the course is organized to provide the maximum work time and encouragement to work. Except for the first two weeks when lectures and demonstrations are long and intense, lectures, demonstrations, and critiques will be distributed through the session. They will be designed to disrupt the work time as little as possible.

Most of the interaction in the classroom will be in the presence of your work. We will discuss ideas that arise from your work, aesthetic and philosophical assumptions that your work may reveal, social issues your work may address, and the technical issues you are encountering. I will always be present during class time, and I will expect to be consulting with students individually and in informal groups.

Course Content, official "Outcomes" and other goals:

The formal content of the course could be described as "tools, materials, and concepts".

Here are the official "Outcomes" as listed in the course documents as submitted for approval:

After completing this course, the student will be able to:

1. use a knowledge of photographic history in understanding or creating images.
2. use critical thinking skills in understanding and creating images.
3. demonstrate understanding of the technical concepts and practice of the photographic medium
4. demonstrate ability to operate a manual camera
5. demonstrate awareness of 2 dimensional design principles in making and displaying photographs.

These are fine as far as they go. They fit on the form. I want to be more specific, and more complete, however, so below are my plans for you:

1. You will develop an understanding of how photography came to be, the condition of the world at the time of its development, and the social forces that influenced its invention and development. You will also know something about the progression of the medium through time from prior to its introduction in 1839 to the present day.
2. You will have a good basic command of the technical aspects of black and white photography in actual practice. If you work hard, that command will be substantial. This will include camera work, film and paper exposure and processing, and critical analysis.
3. You will have an increased sensitivity to light. You will be more aware of it and you will know something about how to use it in imaging.
4. You will have an increased understanding of and ability to design in a two dimensional visual field.

5. You will have experienced and have developed a sense of the kinds of issues that are involved in photographic imaging, how photographs convey meaning and the kinds of information that they can convey directly or imply.
6. You will have developed some skill in talking about images.
7. If you know any conventions or rules about photography, such as the “rule of thirds”, you will have a splendid opportunity to forget about them.
8. You may have developed some understanding of what your images mean for yourself, and possibly, you may learn something about yourself through your photographs. There are no guarantees about this, but it can happen. We always hope for it.
9. You will not learn anything by rote (except the essential f-stop sequence), including the roster of the sacred cows of photography. (Moo).
10. If you are committed to the idea that photography is a means of representing "reality", (that is, "taking pictures of things"), I hope to upset you!

If you have studied photography before:

We are all beginners; just beginning at different places. If you have already had considerable experience in photography, the process will be the same. You will emerge from the course with a much enhanced understanding of the whole medium and will have learned new possibilities and processes. If your prior experience has been with me, then you are excused from lectures you have already heard. If your prior experience was with someone else, even if it was Ansel Adams or Louis Daguerre, you are required to attend all lectures and demonstrations anyway. Every course is different, and in these courses, we go into considerable depth. If Ansel or Louis were in the class, they would have to come also, even if they had no expectation of learning anything, because I would expect them to contribute. No exceptions will be made, so please don't expect it. All students may attend all lectures, critiques etc. even if they are in a different class. Review is always useful and more immersion produces greater growth.

I do not allow advanced placement for high school courses. I have in the past and have always regretted doing so. Since instruction is largely on a one-on-one basis, advanced placement is of no advantage anyway unless it would give you some kind of ego boost. Most graduate students would benefit from the beginning course. I would, too. I wish I could take it.

Students enrolled in the higher numbered courses should be prepared to meet weekly during the last hour of the Wednesday or Thursday class, with one finished (mounted) print to discuss, after the second week of the quarter. There may also be outside assignments; galleries, museums, etc. If you are on one of the higher numbered rosters, you must meet with the appropriate group. Do not disappear into the beginning group.

Students' Responsibilities and Expectations:

A Dire Warning: Students who do not come to the final critique which is held on the last scheduled class meeting before finals week always suffer serious damage, and risk failing the course even if they have done well up to that point. If you show up for the final without work, it is the same as not showing up at all. No attendance is taken at the final, and the only record of that day is that of the portfolio.

Students are responsible to show up, and to work. A sign-in sheet will be posted in class. If you do not find one, ask, and one will be provided, or set one up yourself. This is roll, and it counts. "To work" means to process film and make prints, which of course implies that you have been running that film through your camera. If you quit coming to class, do us all a favor and formally drop. Otherwise, you will most likely receive a failing grade. You may drop right up to the last day of class preceding the final critique; I will sign the form. After that, it's too late. If you fail to take care of yourself at least to this extent, it's your problem. Students have concocted stories to trick me into granting them emergency withdrawals at the end. If this happens, I require documentation to remove an incomplete which otherwise turns to an "E". For instructor initiated reprieves with N, V or Z grades, the break-off date is the midterm critique unless YOU initiate contact and request something else prior to the last day of class. Same with Pass/Fail option. If you are still a member of the class after the midterm print critique, but just quit coming, YOU WILL FAIL.

I encourage students to help each other, and I regard it as an essential student responsibility to work together and share information freely. If you know something that someone else needs, by all means help them. If you receive information from another student, however, you are also responsible to evaluate it critically. Acceptance of information is risky; it may be wrong, and if it is, the results which reflect upon you, will reveal it. Test the information you are given. This is important with all information, even if it is supposedly authoritative, including what you learn from the book or the instructor.

Students wishing to hold conversations with other students are welcome to do so, even if the instructor is speaking. However, all such conversations must be conducted in some other location where the class does not have to experience them. Anywhere in the southern hemisphere would be appropriate for this purpose. I find it very uncomfortable to have to correct inappropriate behavior and if I have to do so, I sometimes do it with very little grace. If you make it necessary for me to do so, it is likely that you will find it somewhat embarrassing. I don't care if you are talking "about photography" or "about plumbing".

Informational Postings:

Watch the board in the lab finishing room. Anything of importance regarding events will be posted and should be considered to be the "schedule", or the "time line". You are responsible to attend all events listed there. Check it frequently. It can change unexpectedly.

Another source of information is a blog online: "<http://circle-of-confusion.net>" which is used as a forum for present and former students. You may join this blog, post to it, and link image files from other sites such as Flickr or Photobucket.

The Lab and Classroom:

Every quarter, a strong community develops among the students working in our lab. People help one another, they work together to develop greater understanding and they have lots of fun.

This works beautifully, because students do their part to maintain the laboratory equipment in good working order and to keep the lab clean as well as to keep their relationships within the community in good condition. When someone drops the ball, everyone notices and tensions develop. It is important for everyone to play on the same team. When the end approaches and the lab is full of bodies under stress, we rely upon relationships developed in the prior weeks to keep the situation under control.

Lab assistants and faculty are not here to clean up after any student nor are the other students (some are mothers and have little patience for cleaning up here just like at home). Lab usage

must be limited or curtailed if we have problems with the lab being a mess. Everyone who works in the lab must clean up after working. Leave the lab in the same condition - or better than - you found it.

Do not force anything. Doing so causes breakage. Keep the filters dry, in their folders, and off the floor. Keep liquids in the sink or under your control. Never leave unidentified chemicals! There is a wash protocol and you are responsible to honor it: We do not just throw chemical laden photographs in the running wash. All prints that go in together come out together, and new ones do not go in until the old ones are all out. Consult the instructor or the lab assistants. This will be discussed in class. If you don't understand it, ASK.

Our classrooms are sometimes used by other instructors. If present, you must honor their wishes. If they express unwillingness for you to work during their class times, it is very simple: you may not work then. Never argue with them. Treat them with respect. If you don't, they will inevitably win, and the loser will not just be yourself, but the whole photography community.

Do not bring your children to the lab or to class. (Sorry about that; it may be a hardship but there are dangers, liability issues, and it is distracting for everyone). The college cannot allow access to any persons not enrolled in a photography class or otherwise officially entitled to be in the lab.

Cellphones: Please turn it off when the class is meeting. If it is open lab, phones are OK.

Lab Hours and Time Expectations:

The lab is usually kept open during the day when the school can provide a lab assistant to supervise. No employee, no lab; it is a legal and practical requirement. We will try to get you as much lab time as we can. You will have an opportunity to express your needs and preferences. You will have an opportunity to work during class hours. The reason for this is that I will be there for you and you are expected to consult with me. You will need to use the lab at other times as well. Expect to spend about three hours in the lab per week outside of class time, on average.

Safety in the Lab:

Photography uses chemical processes. The chemicals used require your respect. They are not overly dangerous, for the most part, but if misused can cause problems. It is important to understand each chemical class that we use, and use each chemical appropriately. Additionally, some classrooms are used by other classes which also use chemicals which are different from ours. It is important to avoid those chemicals, especially if you don't understand their natures and correct uses. Our health and safety depend upon your understanding basic lab principles and procedures. We will go over safety issues very thoroughly in class during the first couple of weeks.

About Grades:

a. The unfortunate necessity of grades.

Many people see a certain paradox here, but if you really think about it, it will most likely make sense to you. Let's face it. Grades involve a lot of factors. It is not an easy topic. Grades, in a studio art class, really are antithetical to the whole idea of what it's about; they are inherently harmful because they inhibit a student and introduce a wrong motivation. When students work for grades, they aren't working for themselves. In fact, they reward students for NOT working for themselves, but, instead, for an external

evaluator. The criteria one such evaluator uses may differ radically from the criteria used by another. So what do they tell us? Grades are unfortunate, but because I have to give them, I try very hard to do so responsibly. The grades that I give tend to indicate the level of motivation toward one's own work that each student is able to generate.

b. Quantity and consistency.

I often say that I grade by the ton (of work you produce) and that I don't even care whether the photographs are any "good". This last part, about "good", must be qualified. Can you imagine that the quality of your work -- the efforts you make and the time you spend -- could be superb, but the photographs you do may sometimes not show it? Or that the photographs look beautiful, but you did hardly any work in getting that to happen -- that they all came from the same day's shooting and show the effect of good luck, rather than work? For this reason, one of the most important things that we hope to see in a portfolio is consistency in the quality of your work. If the work is lacking in consistency overall, it is hard to give an image the credibility that it may appear, if taken without reference to the body of work as a whole, to deserve. We frequently encounter consistency issues and they do affect your grade.

To me it is self-evident that if you do enough work in a setting which includes a certain discipline, the quality of the work will eventually take care of itself. The last photograph you make in this class will not be the last photograph you ever make, (we hope). Ultimately, the effect this class may have on you may not become apparent until many years from now. Then, who will care about a grade? My task is to balance this factor with my assessment of the work I see.

c. The courage to take risks and the fear of failure

In my courses, I want students to work for themselves. I want them to develop a love of the work and the courage to try things that might not work, to take risks. To take risks is to place one's self in a condition where failure is inevitable, at least some of the time. Failure, in that sense, is quite a healthy thing. But what college student does not dread failure above all else? It may not be easy for some of you to grasp the idea that in this class, the willingness to risk failure is the one thing that will be your best asset; if you take the risk, you may fail in your particular project, but you will not fail the course.

d. Performance over time

When beginning a study in photography, many students think it is going to be easy. They are shocked when they discover how hard it can be, because they have never seen the process itself. Manufacturers and services have taken that away from view. At first, it may take several hours to make a print. With practice and perseverance, with skill and insight, it becomes exciting and fun for most students. Photographic skills depend upon insights gained through practice. It is a lot like music that way.

Not everyone learns in the same way. Each of us has our own style of learning and our own velocities and rhythms in learning. Typically, courses are evaluated in ways that make it possible to gauge a student's progress through the term. Students expect to know where they stand at any time.

That doesn't work very well in our context. I have seen students "get it" right away. I have seen others struggle for weeks or months, only to have a sudden insight, after which they produce masterfully. This is often almost breathtaking, it is so dramatic. For this

reason, grades are weighted heavily upon the work submitted at the end as a whole portfolio. To do it otherwise really isn't fair. Everyone who is there at the end has had the whole term for the development of insight. To evaluate early on is to give advantage to those who learn easily but may not necessarily have the endurance to continue growing through the whole quarter. A quarter is not even long enough. I wish I could review the grades and redo them a few years down the road. What scares me the most is that someone will have that insight a week after the quarter is over.

Who wins in this scenario? Those who get to work right away and immediately begin to develop those skills that make insight possible, which leads in turn to further skill development and further insight. Who loses? Those who procrastinate lose; those who think that they can learn it all in a couple of weeks at the end. This is not a "knowledge" course, but a process. Dive into the process and stick with it. It is not just about knowledge, facts, etc. It is about actually becoming something more than you were when you came in the door. That does not happen overnight.

e. Presumption of entitlement

Many people today seem to view a grade lower than "A" as less than acceptable somehow, but everyone can't get "A". You are very invested in your own work and may think it's pretty good, but somebody else may be showing more work, work that is absolutely amazing, and you may be totally unaware of that. I see all of it, and I have to make the decisions. I have to grade on the WORK, not on how much you might need a better grade for some reason or another, on your own opinions. I do not respond with kindness when students whine about their grades, either before or after the end of the term. This is college. You either work or you don't. Do not come to me and inform me that you NEED a certain grade to satisfy your parents expectations, insure your eligibility for athletic scholarships, or for any other reason. I don't care. Doing so will not help you, and could very well count against you.

There seems to be an increasing tendency for people to believe that since they have paid for the course, an "A" is to be expected. No. You have paid for your opportunity to work in the area of the subject. The quality of the work you do will be reflected in the grade. The average grade over the last few quarters in my classes has been running as it should: C. "A" means exceptional. Typically there are only two or three students who receive "A"s. Sometimes, nobody does. If I give many of them, I need a good reason. The only good reason is that the work is truly exceptional. From time to time, it has happened that a lot of work is exceptional. Then, there are a lot of "A's". That is rare. More often it happens that a lot of work is really wonderful, but somehow doesn't seem exceptional. It would be unfair to those who've done exceptional work were unexceptional work to receive the same grade.

f. Quantity counts.

People who do come and produce huge piles of prints usually do very well unless the large quantity has been produced simply to hedge the bet by having a large quantity. It is easy to tell.

g. Honesty, dishonesty, plagiarism

At the end of the quarter I will be looking at your work with my grade sheet in front of me. I will be very uncomfortable and will be wishing I were doing something else; almost

anything else. I have to grade on something. If you are working at your capacity, you have absolutely nothing to worry about in the area of grades. If you are working honestly, you will pass the course.

If the work you present is not your own, you will fail the course. Sound preposterous? It has happened. It is called “plagiarism” and is a serious breach of ethics. That, and any other form of dishonesty or attempt at manipulation will be dealt with summarily, at my discretion.

There has been a rash of cheating nationwide, which indicates that many people are not going to school to study and learn but to gain material advantage without regard for their own integrity. Too bad. Most of the specific ways of cheating that are listed in academic syllabi don't really quite apply here. It is not so easy to cheat in a creative course like this, but there have been students who have tried. People who try to put something over on me usually step in it. I don't put up with it for a minute. The most common gambit is to get work from someone else and turn it in as part of your portfolio. If found trying to represent another person's work as your own, you will fail the entire course (not just an assignment). Another popular ploy is to save time by sending work out to a lab for printing. This is always obvious, and fatal. What surprises me most is that people think I won't see it. How could I not?

Our community operates on trust; if you compromise that trust, don't expect any mercy.

h. Assignment of grades, criteria and weighting:

The way the grading works is relatively simple. I use a spreadsheet. Actual percentages may vary slightly because I am always learning and changing the course as I go. However these weights are assigned, you can be sure that they will apply equally to all. The actual weights will be similar to this:

1. Quantity of film shot and processed: 5%
2. Attendance: 5%
3. Proof sheets (quantity and quality) 10%
4. Shooting (quality of vision and effort) 20%
5. Book (graded on quantity and quality): 20%
6. Final presentation (quality of work and finishing): 20%
7. Exam: 20%

If quizzes or papers, etc., are added, they will be factored in with the rest and the numbers may be adjusted to accommodate. For example, an exam on the content of this syllabus may be added. If so, the other percentages would be reduced proportionally. The final prints and book will have the most weight.

About my subjectivity:

SURPRISE!! IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER I LIKE YOUR IMAGES OR NOT.

I do not associate my own tastes necessarily with "good", work that doesn't conform to them as "bad", etc. In fact, I prefer not to use words such as "good" and "bad" unless the standards they imply are carefully defined. You may be able to catch me using these words in a way which does not appear to conform to this standard; you may call me on it, and I try very hard to change my ways. I aspire, but I do not pretend to be perfectly consistent because I am human and therefor fallible, but I hold these principles to be very important and I try to act according to them. The quantity, quality, and honesty of the work are far more valid criteria

for assigning grades (since I have to do so) than some vague and arbitrary aesthetic standard rooted in my personal opinions, whatever they may be - and I do have them, as everyone does. I do look for a certain coherence of effort, however. I hope and expect that the work will be uniquely your own, rather than conscious or unconscious imitation of myself or anyone else. That does not mean that you need to make self-conscious attempts to be "different", either; just that you do the work you wish to do. I will express my opinions, but I try very hard to evaluate you only upon what you do.

Students sometimes try to figure out what I like, on the theory that if they give me what I like, I will give them their "A". This is severely misguided; if you approach this course from that point of view (and many people do), I can guarantee that you will do poorly. I don't give good grades for what I like. I sometimes give good grades for what I don't like at all, or even hate. I give good grades for what makes me think, learn something, or experience something new. Work that challenges my level of being, work that shows insight from which I can learn or which disturbs my complacency; these earn my respect. Show me That!

Your puppy will give you an "A" if you give him a dog biscuit. I am not your puppy. If you grill me to find out what I like, you will show me that you think I am your puppy. I do not like that, and you may not like the way I respond. This drives a few students nuts. If this is true for you, it will be your particular personal task this quarter to understand it. Have fun. It may very well set you free.

To quote that great American poet and teacher, Theodore Roethke: "Those students get the highest grades who take their responsibilities of educating me most seriously".

Checklist of factors relating to your grades:

1. Attend class every time. Don't forget to sign in. Non-attendance will hurt you. You will have no chances to make up lectures or demonstrations missed, because I cannot give a lecture or demonstration over again for one person, two, three, etc. I try to keep lectures and demonstrations to a minimum, but I work hard on the material I present and I don't do it for myself. I do it for you. Students sometimes think that they don't need it. Please do not ask me if you can skip a slide lecture or a demonstration. My answer may well be "If you think that you don't need the material I am going to present, then why don't you just drop the course?" If you think you can sign the sheet at the beginning of class and leave before the lecture starts, or while the room is dark: I have been known to notice that and enter a negative number for your attendance. I could circulate a second sign-in sheet at the end of class and subtract points for those not appearing on both. For students who are returning for a second or third time and have already heard that particular lecture, there is no reason to stay unless you want the review. Do not assume that because you had a photography class from someone else you already know the material. I guarantee that it is not the same.

2. Use the open lab times. Your use of these times will show in the quality of your work and the consequential quality or lack thereof will make a difference in your grade.

3. Work very hard throughout the quarter, from the beginning right through to the end.

4. Do lots of work, but do it because you want to do it, not just to get a better grade. If you do it for the grade, it will be obvious. In a way it could be said that the main criterion for your grade, from this and other perspectives, is how interested you are in your work.

5. Produce at the very least ten rolls of film throughout the quarter. Ten rolls is credited at 100%, each roll credited at 10%. Additional rolls are given half as much credit, over and above 100%; in other words, with 11 rolls, you would get credit for 105%. If you produce twenty, you are beyond reproach. What about the rolls that don't work? Well, if you throw them away, how can I count them? Put them in with the rest of them. The record for rolls/quarter is 83. Can you beat that? No working photojournalist would have difficulty in knocking off 35 or so rolls in a day's work. Ten rolls is such a paltry requirement it is almost embarrassing.

6. Show new prints at the final and do your best work on them. You will need six prints of any size and they must be mounted on boards and spotted. Us no tape, no rubber cement, etc. The prints must not all be the same ones we've been seeing all quarter. If they are, I will be bitterly disappointed. At least half of them should be new since the midterm review. Sometimes, students seem to think that they can get away with prints at the final which all seem to have come from the same roll. Absolutely NOT! You need to work, consistently, all the way through, and your work must show growth over the entire quarter.

7. Do fresh, imaginative, original work that comes from your own ideas, your own vision.

8. The Book: The book is **the** item which is most often undervalued by students. It is one of the largest factors in the computation of the grade. As such, if it is sloppy, or deficient, a student will be unable to do very well in the course. If it is missing, it results in a failing grade.

Your book must present your material neatly. It must present work in an orderly fashion, on separate pages. Within that requirement, you have a lot of freedom to choose or invent. Some people have made their own books, hand-bound. This is not necessary, but it certainly helps to do something special. It helps even more to do something really wonderful. Typical for most students is a loose-leaf binder with plastic pages. This is practical, and acceptable. Even with this simple and modest format, there is a vast difference in what different individuals do with it.

Some students use one book for the prints, another for negatives and proof sheets. The negatives and proof sheets are essential parts of the package. Proof sheets must agree with the rolls of negatives.

Your book is your portfolio, and it is important that it look like one. Professional photographers always have a book, which they show to colleagues and prospective clients. It is a showpiece, a professional tool. Think of your book in that way, even though your book will contain negatives, etc. while the professional books do not. It ought to be possible, in looking at your book, to know what you are capable of doing. It is NOT a repository for stuff that didn't make it! Remove materials that are defective or boring, and make sure it looks good. If it doesn't look good to you, I can assure you that it won't look good to me! Do not put multiple copies of the same prints in it, unless there is some very compelling reason to do so (i.e. real prints which are made very differently for some valid reason, other than that you just can't decide). If you try to pad your book with extraneous material, it will count against you. If piles of prints are stuffed into a single pocket, when it comes time for me to look at them, I can assure you that I will only see the top one. I do not take prints out of the pages and go through them.

Prints in the book must be presented, not just stuffed in pages. The book must never

include test strips, prints that you cannot accept yourself, or any of the many varied kinds of junk. Do not give me bags of scraps and expect me to consider it real work. It must not include fading prints, prints which are not fixed, or prints that have other obvious defects. Do not leave extra empty pages in the book, or anything else that will detract from my experience in looking at it. Be aware that I could have fifty to one hundred of these to look at, and so my time is severely limited. Assume that I will have about 5 minutes to look through it. You must make it easy for me to know what is going on. If you make it hard for me, it is likely to have the result of making it hard for yourself. Be aware that I see between 5000 and 10,000 student pictures each quarter. You will have a better chance if yours stand out from the crowd.

There should be substantially more prints in the book than you have mounted prints and they should, ideally, be consistent in quality with those you have mounted. Your book should be a real "Piece of Work". The first impression is very important.

The book should contain, in separate, clearly defined sections:

a. Prints. How many? Lots of them. They should constitute a record of your experience of photography over the entire term. They should be your best efforts. Weak ones should be edited out. People often ask how many they need. There's no firm number, but if there are not a minimum of twenty five or more, most likely the score will be low. The quantity and quality balance out. If you give me 1000 pieces of garbage, the score will be low, too.

You need to be aware that it is not unknown for me to see a book with over a hundred really beautiful prints. Now, what do you know? Often, I find books with EXACTLY 25 prints, generally mediocre. All this shows is that the student really didn't understand, or didn't think about it. There is not a requirement for 25 prints. It is not "enough". If there were ten truly wonderful prints, it might be enough. But they would have to be wonderful. 25 mediocre prints might get one a "C", really ugly inconsistent prints with problems might produce a D. 100 really horrible prints that are disgusting to look at and demonstrate that one is not only a slob but a hazard in the lab, would result in failure. It has happened!

If you try to take any "number" literally, it will mislead you. Think about this, and don't try to pin me down to a magic number.

b. Negatives. All of them. They should be kept as discreet rolls, not mixed willy-nilly. Negative pages should be **arranged chronologically and numbered sequentially**; it helps if they are dated with the date the film was processed. Do not put work in the book from prior quarters or from your previous life. I must be able to view the negatives by transmitted light (see through them) so please do not use the pages that hold the whole roll of film back to back with the proof sheet!

c. Proof sheets of all the film. I prefer that the page of negatives be adjacent to its proof sheet so I can easily refer from one to the other.

9. I will be looking for certain elements of technical proficiency. Refer to this list from time to time and evaluate your own work in relation to it. You may discuss the specific points with me in the presence of your work.

a. Understanding and the ability to control the quality of your negatives in their exposure and development. This means you need to know what exposure and development do and to be able to demonstrate that knowledge in your negatives and prints. You must demonstrate that you understand the relationship of the four factors involved in exposure: light, film sensitivity, aperture and shutter speed.

- b. Understanding and command of value (light and dark) and contrast.** I will be looking for blacks and whites, and adequate separation of gray values in your prints, and evidence that you understand the factors in subject lighting that influence this as well.
- c. Your prints must show a command of the basic camera controls which are:**
- 1. Focus**
 - 2. Aperture and its effect - depth of field.** You need to show me that you understand and can use depth of field in more than one way. That is, you should have some prints that show sharpness throughout, and some that use selective focus to produce some coherent visual statement.
 - 3. Shutter speed.** You need to be able both to stop action and produce intentional blurs or streaks.
- 10. A sensitivity to design must be apparent in your work.** We talk about this constantly throughout the quarter.
- 11. Consult regularly with me one-on-one.** If you have a problem with this you need to take the bull by the horns and talk with me about it RIGHT NOW. The last week is too late.
- 12. Attendance at the Final Critique is Absolutely Mandatory.** Not being there is the KISS OF DEATH.



Events:

Lectures: There will be one, two, or three slide lectures on photographic history. There will be lectures and demonstrations on specific topics such as design, print mounting and spotting, etc. There may be discussion sessions. Watch the board.

Exam: The exam will be scheduled as any other event and posted on the board. It will be given twice; the first time will not count but will be material for a thorough review. The exam is largely about technical material, much of it from the first few weeks' lectures. It is designed to be very challenging, and the review between the two sessions is a critical resource for you. Be sure you don't miss it. It constitutes an important part of the grade for the course.

Critiques:

There will be a midterm critique in week 6 (or, in the middle of the course if it is not a standard ten week quarter) and a final critique. You are required and expected to attend the critiques.

The purpose of the critique (not a good name, but it is traditional) is to have a discussion around the issues of the work with everyone present. If you leave after your work is discussed, thinking that your part is over, you deprive your fellows of your insights and interest, as well as to deprive yourself of the most valuable learning

experience of the course. Besides defeating the purpose of the entire course, to leave is extremely rude and will result in a penalty. You must stay and participate in the discussion. The discussion is to be focused. Private conversations are not permitted. There is very little time, and a lot needs to be done. Do not distract the class.

Midterm: NOT a test! To this event, bring what you have done. It is not graded. Please bring anything that you have questions about. Don't just bring things that worked well for you. We need to discuss all of the issues that have emerged.

Final Critique: There will be a final portfolio which will consist of 6 prints in any size, the best you can do, spotted and mounted on boards. These prints will be of your own selection, and I will not give advice about what to put in. This is because your judgment is a part of the project. Also, at this time, you will turn in your book. Please see the extensive discussion on the nature and quality of the book above.

Missing the final critique is most likely fatal. If you miss, your grade will be reduced at the very least one full grade, not just a plus to a minus. It is entirely possible that if you miss the critique, you will fail the course outright. This will be at my discretion. There is no way that missing the critique can leave you undamaged.

At the end of the quarter.

If you ask me questions toward the end of the quarter that are already answered in this document, you are not going to get a friendly response!

- 1. The Final Critique will be held on the last class meeting date of the quarter.**
- 2. Final Exam. Also, prints will be returned.** This time can also be used as an opportunity for informal discussion of the class and whatever other topics emerge. If you do not pick up your portfolio on this day without making other arrangements, it may factor into your grade as a negative number. It would show me that you don't really care about your work after all. This two-part format will help me get your work back to you and grades filed in time. It will also help avoid your work being stolen, as has sometimes happened in the past, and it will free me from having to worry about your work. You must pick up your prints at the appointed time or bear the consequences. Neither myself nor the college can be responsible for lost prints.



Do Not Miss The Final Critique!

A word about how we see ourselves:

There are a lot of people in our society (maybe most of us) who have difficulty in valuing anything that they themselves do. These problems tend to emerge everywhere, but especially in art classes; we were nearly all told, as children, that what we do isn't very good. Little did we know that the persons who told us that did so projecting from their own inadequacies, their own crummy self-image, but that is what we were given. I understand this problem pretty well; I've seen a lot of it. I may very well find value in your work when you cannot, and I will let you know. So do work that you, yourself, are proud of. Do work that you just can't take your own

eyes away from, work that you love. Learn to give yourself to your work. If you do that, I will know it and there will be no problem. I have noticed that when I take student's work to shoot slides, I often find myself pulling things out of their books, and often, the work comes from students who have not done as well as some of the others. I have to wonder why this seems to be true. I think that people are sometimes hurting themselves by deciding against images that are really fun and fresh, in favor of things that they think I'll like for the final portfolio. Watch for this tendency in your work and challenge it. Try to be positive in the way you make your selections.

Contacting your instructor:

Email is best: "bullis@alumni.reed.edu". In the subject line, please put simply "****S". This is because I may receive many other messages on a heavy day and I would not want to inadvertently delete yours. "****S" will alert me that it is a student message.

phone: 360-416-7812. This is a real phone in my office and it has voice mail.

Office hours: Hodson, 223. I am in my office from 3:30 on, for an hour or so, after my afternoon class.

You are responsible to read, know, and to agree with the contents of this document as a condition of your presence in the class. Save it and refer to it occasionally throughout the quarter, and be sure to reread the pertinent sections toward the end of the quarter.



Stuff: What you'll need and where to get it

Your supplies (excluding the camera itself) will run at least \$150 -- more likely somewhat more -- for the quarter. Photographic materials increase in price every year. It is impossible to present you with a hard number because to do so would mean keeping abreast of the current price of each item.

1. Adjustable camera.

Your camera must have independently adjustable *f*/stops, shutter speeds, and focus. It can be a rangefinder, single-lens reflex, focus by scale, etc. It doesn't have to be new and shiny. In fact, these are not so easy to find new and shiny anymore at reasonable prices. If you are buying a new one, Pentax does make a new manual camera, the zx-m. For our purposes, the best cameras are older; in particular, the Pentax K 1000 and the various Minolta SRT's (100, 200 series - they are all similar). They are tough and simple. Some people have used Olympus OM-1's and Canon AE1's. All fully manual Nikons are great, as are Nikormats. The Nikon EM is not suitable, nor is the Olympus OM-10 (unless you have the manual attachment). "Point and Shoots", even expensive ones, don't work for us at all.

Because many of these cameras are old, we sometimes experience mechanical problems. Sometimes they need repair. There's not enough time in the quarter; if your camera needs repair, you may need to make other arrangements. Sometimes the problem is simple; one common one is that the foam seals are disintegrating and allowing light leaks, or they become gummy and glue the mirror in the up position. A repair shop may be able to fix that while you wait, or I can show you how to do it yourself.

If you need to buy a camera, we need to talk about it in class, right away. By the way, it is not a good idea to buy one at a pawn shop unless certain conditions apply (notably an unconditional refund for a full 90 day period). Our biggest heartbreaks have come from pawn shops; there have been real disasters.

2. Light meter (only if your camera doesn't have one built-in).

A used one will cost about \$15, and it will not be guaranteed. Older light cells may die suddenly. A new meter would cost \$75-\$100, or more for a really good one. A good light meter is a very important investment, so take it seriously.

3. Film: We will be using BLACK AND WHITE film only.

There are a lot of films out there, and it can be confusing. In fact, right now the industry is in an uproar and we can't count on any stability. Most students use Tri-x (Kodak), or HP-5 (Ilford). It would be all right to use Freestyle's Arista films, Tura film, EFKE, Fuji Neopan 400 or one of the Forte films. I recommend an ISO of 400 rather than the lower speeds, for beginning classes. If in doubt, just buy HP 5.

Film can be confusing. If information comes printed on the inside of the box, please don't throw it away (at least one). Most privately labeled films are made by Tura and the data for

Tura applies to them.

You may buy a bulk roll if you wish. 100 feet of film is about 20 - 35 rolls, depending on how long you make them. That is not too much for a person to use during one quarter. For two persons, that may not be enough. No-one ought to get out of this class with less than ten rolls of film done; that would be 50 feet, minimum. If you bulk load, you will need reloadable 35mm cassettes, and some masking tape. We can provide a loader if you are willing to load all of your film at one time or load a few and remove your bulk roll; otherwise you may need or wish to buy one. If your camera requires DX coding (ask if you don't know what this means) you will need DX coded cassettes or stickers.



BOGUS FILM ALERT:

Avoid "Chromogenic" black and white films! Every quarter, some students use the wrong film because they don't read this warning. Please do not be one of them! How will you know?

Consumer stores -- even camera stores that should know better, and especially the one-hour labs -- will often sell students "black and white" films which are not designed to be processed in black and white chemistry. Specifically, Kodak's CN 400 and Ilford's XP2 present insurmountable problems for us. These films are good for their intended usage, but they require color processing which we do not do in these labs. If the film says (usually in fine print) "for C-41 processing" it is useless for our purposes. Don't use it. If you inadvertently buy a roll of it, shoot it and get it processed at a color lab.

If you use these films and process them here, it tells me two things. First, you did not read this document, and therefor probably ought to just outright fail the course. Second, you can't possibly understand the basics of film development. Nowhere is there a published development time, nor has anyone bothered to work one out since the results, at best, would not acceptable. Some of you will make the mistake once, and that's alright, but I've actually had students shoot all of their work on these films I have specifically asked them not to use. It's hard to believe.

4. Photographic paper

Buy at the very least a 25 sheet package (to start) of one of the following:

1) Ilford Multigrade RC. or 2) the Forte or other equivalent.

Stay away from fiber based papers for now (unless you are an advanced student and want to use them- and have discussed it with me), simply because they require special wash disciplines. Later on, you may wish to use them; most photographers prefer them once they have got the basics. The designation we want for prints that are to be printed and washed in our labs is "RC", for "resin coated" and "Multigrade", "Multicontrast", or "Polycontrast" for the way the paper is designed to control contrast. If you can, you might as well buy a 100 sheet box. You should plan to use at least that much this quarter.

Consider buying film and paper together in the Ilford “value pack” or the Forte equivalent. These are rolls of film packaged together with paper, especially for students. It is the least expensive way to buy film and paper. Four of these packages would take care of most of the needs of a typical student for the whole quarter and would cost quite a bit less than to buy the film and paper separately.

5. Negative pages.

A storage system for finished film is essential. If you get the pages (which is the easiest system to use) I prefer the ones that have 7 strips of five frames each. They fit in standard binders. The ones that hold 6 strips of 6 frames each require a special and expensive binder and larger printing paper to make contact sheets. You may be able to get these sheets singly at the college bookstores. If you use something other than 35mm film, pages are available for other sizes as well.

6. Matting Supplies.

You will need a Crescent or equivalent matte board, and will need to participate in a package of Seal Colormount or equivalent dry mount tissue. You will not need a whole package, so go in with someone else.

7. Text book(s):

Required: London, Barbara and Jim Stone; A Short Course in Photography. Addison Wesley, publisher.

This book is now out in the 6th edition, but the 3rd, 4th, and 5th editions are still quite useful. Price is \$35 or thereabouts. The Bookstore may have used ones. We use this book for reference and to provide you with a point of view that is different from my own.

8. A spotting brush.

Not everyone needs to buy a spotting brush, but everyone will need to spot. Some of the more serious students will buy brushes and everyone else will try to borrow them. Brushes that are called "spotting brushes" and made to sell to photographers are horrible. They would probably be good for applying makeup. Don't buy the cheap brushes that the camera stores will try to sell you.

The best spotting brush in the world (and the only one I use) is the Isabey (manufacturer) kolinsky sable (kind of animal that provides the hairs) "repique" (French for “retouch”), bearing the item number “6229” on its handle. I like the size "1" in this brush. The SVC bookstore has it for a good price, around \$11, I believe). This probably seems like a lot to spend on a really itty-bitty brush, but it is well worth it.

If you can't find the repique, or if you don't want to spend that much, get a good quality round watercolor brush with a fine point. It should be made from the hair of a kolinsky sable, and be size "0". Be sure it makes a very good point with no independent hairs. If you find a brush for less than \$5, I'd sure be suspicious. Price often indicates quality, and quality is what makes

these brushes work.

9. A scissors (small and cheap is OK; kid's scissors with blunt points are very suitable) and perhaps a thermometer (the best deal is the small dial type pocket thermometer available at appliance parts outlets for about \$5 if my memory serves me).

10. Masking tape. We try to keep some around the lab, but it never seems to be there when we need it. Since it is cheap, why not have your own roll?

11. You Do Not need a flash -- if you already have one, please don't use it for your work in this course. Not that it's bad, but it short-circuits your brain.

**If you need to buy equipment, new or used,
please bring this up in class immediately.**

A word of caution about Light Sensitive Materials.

Read this part twice. Mistakes in photography ~~can be~~ are extremely expensive.

Film and paper are sensitive to light. That is how they are designed and why we use them in the first place. When you buy your materials Do Not Open the Packages until you understand the particular light requirements that pertain to that particular material. If you do, you will ruin part or all of that package of paper or film. No one but yourself will be responsible for that.

Students with Special Needs:

All students are responsible for all requirements of the class, but the way they meet these requirements may vary. If you need specific academic accommodations due to a disability, please speak with me and with the disability advisor in Student Services. Please note that this course involves significant amounts of darkroom work and that the darkroom facilities are limited to what we already have. Our ability to accommodate to specific needs may be limited. We will do our best with this.

Materials, Supplies, and Sources:

Regarding your lab fee and supplies:

The college supplies the basic chemicals used in the course as well as the equipment you will use in the lab. At SVC, we are fortunate to have a dedicated lab fee which is generally adequate to cover the costs of these items, but we cannot supply film, paper, storage devices, incidental and matting materials. Photography is expensive. The college catalog gives a figure for approximate cost of supplies for this course, but the catalog is not updated every year, and it is impossible for us to track costs of all of the items, each of which increases independently. Keep your costs lower by shopping carefully.

Photo Supplies:

Local:

Ken's Cameras, off College Way in front of Safeway and behind Schucks.
Quicksilver, on Cornwall in Bellingham, under Kulshan Cycles.
The Business in Anacortes sells a few cameras, etc. but no materials.

Seattle area:

Rainier Photo Supply. They have recently moved to Burien and have joined with Dick's Camera. 1-800-ALL FILM. Generally considered to have the lowest prices in the region, and they will ship to your address quickly and efficiently, as they do a lot of business nation wide.

Optechs. Republican and Fairview, in Seattle. Competitive with Rainier. 206-343-9900

Glazer's. Republican and 8th ave., in Seattle. 206-624-1100. Generally competitive with Rainier and Optechs. They are huge, have rentals and lots of stuff.

University Book Store. The main store in the U District. 1-800-335-7323. Pretty good prices and good selection for a small department.

Kenmore Camera. in Kenmore. 425-485-7447. I dont know the prices. Students have had good experiences buying equipment here.

Mail order suppliers: You can possibly save a lot of money, and if you are careful to trade with reputable dealers, at very little risk. Ask about it in class.

Former students have acquired a good deal of experience in dealing with the local shops. Ask around. One problem we have had is that some of the shops like to sell what they want to sell. They don't always respect the needs of the course, even though I think that they really do try. Require them to sell you what you have been asked to have if it differs from what they might want to sell you.

Matting, Art Supplies: Scraps of board may be all right if you just have an occasional piece to matte, but you are at the mercy of the availability of colors and types. For final projects, etc., you will need a full sized sheet.

Repairs: If you need repairs, we have had good success with Camera Clinic in Shoreline or North Seattle (165th and 5th NE, in the area known as North City), and Northwest Camera Repair, at 5130 Evergreen Way in Everett. Repair shops also sell used cameras, understand our needs, and could very well be the best source of cameras for this course, because their warrantee period would correspond with the length of the quarter.

The above suppliers are not endorsed by the school or your instructor, but are offered simply to help you find what you need. If you find other places that have the necessary supplies, we will add them to the list.