ARTS 3650: History of Photography

**Texts:**

Prerequisites: Sophomore standing; 6 hours of 1000-level Art History courses or departmental approval.

Bulletin Description: An introduction to the history of photography with critical survey of documentary photography in America.

**Course Description.**
This course will present both a basic introduction to the history of photography, from Daguerre to Google Earth, and a critical survey of documentary photography in America. We will focus equally on photography as technology and artistic medium, and on photography as a social practice deeply caught up in culture, class, politics, and ideology. We are fortunate that Alabama, and the Southeastern United States generally, were arguably the epicenter of the great documentary project of the Roosevelt Administration during the Great Depression of the 1930s, undertaken principally to document rural poverty, for the explicit purpose of proposing ameliorative legislation to Congress.

**Course Objectives.**
The primary objectives of this course are to introduce students to:
- The basic chronology and development of photography as a technical practice.
- Photography’s gradual absorption into critical discourse.
- Some critical elements of photographic history.
- Some of the major figures, both artists and writers, in the history of photography, and some of their major works, both critical and photographic.
- The place of photographic practice and criticism in the histories of modernism and its late/post-capitalist kin.
- Refined skills of visual and textual analysis.

**Success in Art History Classes: Attendance, Note Taking, & Preparation.**
This is a lecture class. As such, students are expected to do the assigned reading before lecture, attend class, and take notes. The instructional heart of the class is the lecture. My
lectures draw on material from the textbook, but they also include considerable material from many other sources. There will be opportunities in each class for questions, dialogue, and argument. All of this is predicated on two things: your attendance, and your preparation. In lecture classes, students take notes. The intellectual activity and skills developed in an art history course include reading, listening, writing, and visual and textual analysis. Notes taken during lecture should be rewritten and refined before the next class. As a rule, the quality of your notes will have a direct bearing on your final grade. Students who have questions or problems regarding note taking should make an appointment to talk with me early on.

Attendance is required. As Auburn University literature makes clear, presence in class is an essential part of the educational experience and may be used to determine part of the final course grade. Attendance will be taken each class period; chronically late arrivals will be considered absences, as will leaving class early without permission and valid explanations. After three unexcused absences, each successive unexcused absence will result in a 5-point deduction from your final course grade. For example, the fourth unexcused absence will result in a 90 average being lowered to an 85; the fifth absence lowers the grade to an 80, and so on. You must familiarize yourself with the Auburn University attendance policy as explained in the current edition of the student handbook. In this course there are no provisions for missed lectures. Documentation of an excused absence must be submitted on returning at the first class after the absence. Back-dated medical excuses will not be accepted.

Evaluations and Grading.

The final course grade is based upon the cumulative total of the following evaluations. For example, to achieve a letter grade of D, the minimal passing grade of 60, would require a total of 300 points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four in-class writing assignments (25 points each)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final letter grades will be as follows:

- 90-100% (450-500 pts.)  A
- 80-89.5% (400-449 pts.)  B
- 70-79.5% (350-399 pts.)  C
- 60-69.5% (300-349 pts.)  D
- 59-0% below 300 pts.  F

Exams may include slide identifications, slide questions, and essays. The final exam includes a cumulative essay that provides you an opportunity to discuss some of the issues that we will consider during the term. Exams start at the beginning of the class period; students who arrive late do not receive extra time. If you miss an exam and have a valid excuse, you will be able to take a make-up exam. Make-up exams will be administered 10-14 days following the missed exam; because of the heavy use of our classroom, the make-up exams will be scheduled either for very early in the morning, or after the end of the business day.

The in-class writing assignments will be based on material from text and lecture. They will each be one page or less in length. These evaluations are unannounced, and you will have 10 minutes in class. At the end of the term there will be one opportunity to make up missed in-class assignments, but only for those students who have already submitted valid excuses as outlined above.

A separate term paper assignment handout will be distributed in the second week of classes (see schedule below), and will be discussed at length at that time. Late papers are only accepted with valid excuses, and due-date extensions will only count excused absences.
Art history is a discursive discipline; there is a constant dialogue between art and viewer, between text and reader, and between student and teacher. Much of that dialogue takes place in writing. Hence, all written work is graded for writing as well as for factual accuracy. Writing is graded on grammar, spelling, and clarity of expression, up to a maximum of 25% for each evaluation, whether in-class or out of class.

Mid-semester is the last day to withdraw from a course with a W.

**Classroom Behavior and Etiquette.**

Auburn students have traditionally displayed high standards of courtesy and decorum, and I expect that to continue in this class. In a university lecture setting, electronic noises of any kind are intrusive and inappropriate. When in class, you must turn off cell phones, pagers, digital watch alarms, music players, or any other electronic gear. Laptops may not be used during class unless authorized by the Office of the Program for Students with Disabilities. Please refrain from any behavior that may be distracting to your colleagues. Eating and drinking are not permitted in the lecture hall. Students should pay attention during class. Questions are welcome at any time, if you interrupt politely. During the term you may be exposed to cultures, imagery, values, issues, and opinions very different from your own. I expect each of you to be tolerant of divergent points of view, whatever your private beliefs. Remember that academic discourse has its own norms and protocols, among which civility is a *sine qua non*. Auburn University is a public, secular university, committed to the free exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of tolerance.

Auburn University has recently instituted a policy statement regarding disruptive classroom behavior, which will be distributed as a separate handout but as part of this syllabus. University policy will be strictly followed.

**Academic Ethics.**

Auburn students are governed by the Student Academic Honesty Code, Title XII of the SGA Code of Laws, published in the *Tiger Cub Student Handbook*. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism, and to guard against it. The University clearly defines plagiarism (see SGA Constitution and Code of Laws, Title XII, Student Academic Honesty Code). Ignorance of the Honesty Code is not a defense. In brief, all work submitted must be your own. The use, in any way, of class notes that are commercially prepared and not approved by the instructor is forbidden, and will be treated as plagiarism. Likewise, students may not record or in any way distribute class notes for commercial purposes without the consent of the instructor. In academic writing, the sources of ideas and information that are not considered common knowledge must be cited. In using sources in academic writing, you must cite your sources fully; this includes direct quotes and paraphrases.

**Electronic Communication.**

The University provides each student with a University e-mail account, and students living on campus have high-speed Internet access. Blackboard provides for notification of important events and changes via each student’s e-mail account. You are responsible for any information sent through Blackboard or otherwise posted electronically. I check e-mail on weekdays, and try to respond to time-sensitive queries within 24 hours. I neither open nor respond to e-mail from non-University e-mail accounts.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.**

Students who have registered with the Program for Students with Disabilities and who require special accommodations in class should make an appointment with me before the end of the first full week of classes. You must bring your Accommodation Memo and your Instructor Verification Memo from the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD). If you do not have a memo, you should make an appointment with a member of the professional staff in the PSD Office in 1244 Haley Center (844.2096).
Lecture Schedule and Required Readings for ARTS 3650

**Week 1**
Course Prospectus
The History of Art and the History of Photography

**Week 2**
The Prehistory of Photography (Marien, Chs. 1, 2)
“Photography” before Photographs
Photography Discovers the World

Photography’s First Round of Conquests (Marien, Ch. 3)
The Photography of Modern Life
Photography and War

**Week 3**
**Term paper assignments distributed**

Photography and Modernism (Marien, Ch. 4)
Photography’s Contributions to the Modernist Critique of Capitalism

**15th Class Day**

**Week 4**
Photography and Political Modernism (Marien, Ch. 5)
After the Great War: Dada and Surrealism
The Camera in the Soviet Union
Edward Weston and Tina Modotti in Mexico

**Week 5**
The Subject Shoots Back: The Globalization of Photography
(Marien, Ch. 6)
Photography and the Process of Decolonization

**Exam I**

**Week 6**
Whither/Wither Photography after Modernism (Marien, Chs. 7, 8)
Beyond Film: The Digital Reinvention of Image-Making
Let’s Go Photoshopping

The Defeat of Pictorialist Photography (Raeburn, Chs. 1-3)
Edward Weston
Ansel Adams

**Mid-Semester: Last day to drop classes with grade of W.**

**Week 7**
Photography’s Colonization of Visual Culture (Raeburn, Chs. 4, 5)

MoMA’s Empire of Photography (Raeburn, Ch. 6)
The Emperor Newhall

**Week 8**
Photography in Print: The Role of the Camera Magazine (Raeburn, Ch. 7)
The *U.S. Camera* Annual

**Spring Break**
Week 9  Photography and Social Practice (Raeburn, Chs. 8)
Berenice Abbott Changes New York

Exam II

Week 10  The Farm Security Administration and Roy Stryker’s Vision of a Visual Franchise (Raeburn, Chs. 9, 10)
Photographers Rediscover America, and Don’t Like What They See

Week 11  John Collier: Chickens for Airmen in Selma, August 1941

Week 12  Photography Comes to Life: The Picture Magazine (Raeburn, Ch. 11)
Look, It’s Life!
 Fortune Magazine and the Afterlife of Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

Term papers due

Week 13  Photography and the Left: Agitation and Repression (Raeburn, Chs. 12, 13)
The Harlem Project

Week 14  The New York Photo League
Lynching Photography
Civil Rights Photography

Week 15  Course Critique and Review (Raeburn, Ch. 14, Afterword)

Classes End

Final exam will be held on the day and time set by the university.