



Pigeon photography is technique invented in 1907 by Julius Neubronner.
A pigeon is fitted with an aluminum breast harness to which a lightweight time-delayed miniature camera can be attached.

SART 206: The Reproducible Image I

Nicely 401

Spring 2020 | M/W 3:30pm – 5:50pm

Assistant Professor Heather M. O'Brien, ho17@aub.edu.lb

Office: Fisk 302B

Office Hours: M/W, by appointment

Course Description:

The camera, on the one hand extends our comprehension of the necessities that rule our lives; on the other, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action.

- Walter Benjamin

This class is designed to collectively learn how to see and process the world through the lens of an analog camera. Content and context will drive our technical investigations. Where do we stand? When do we press the shutter? From there, we can address larger questions: What role do we want photography to play in our lives? What is at stake in our images? What is visual literacy? What are the intersections between photography and the political?

Photography is a generator of epistemological dilemmas. These range from mimesis to self-reflexivity, from document to construct, from aesthetics to sociology, from technical program to apparatus, from production to reproduction, from freeze frame to filmic montage, from auratic image to society of the spectacle, from indexical to virtual, from performative address to mass-media dissemination, from analog to digital, from amateur to professional, from local to global, from analytical study to interdisciplinary, etc. These dilemmas need no longer be mutually exclusive. Rather, they are engaged in a distinctive relationship of entangled indebtedness. An impure medium, photography discloses itself as a model of contamination. It thus touches every aspect of the world.

This darkroom photography course is geared towards first time practitioners and will begin with an overview of the camera and its socio-historical development followed by a basic overview of both negative development and darkroom printing techniques. This course will give a comprehensive overview of the basic tools that concern analog photography coupled with an in-depth opportunity to develop a cohesive body of work around the film camera and darkroom printing. We will interrogate the “why you photograph” and how your intentionality begins to reveal more of yourself in the image.

Finally, this studio course explores photography as a means of artistic expression. Through applied practice, weekly readings and discussions, this course engages the complexity of the medium, its history, accomplishments and problematics. This course will cover the basic fundamentals of analog photography, with an emphasis on planning a photograph, choice of camera, aperture, shutter speed, white balance, ISO, the use of natural and artificial light, and the function of lenses. The course also includes visiting artists and field trips to photographic exhibitions.

Please note: this syllabus may be altered throughout the course of the semester.

Learning outcomes

In this course students will:

- Practice the use and functions of an analog camera
- Practice developing B&W film in the photographic darkroom
- Practice post-camera manipulation and printing in the photographic darkroom
- Learn about historic and contemporary analog photographers and their work
- Critique the medium's technical specificity
- Analyze the medium's historical specificity and position their own practice within contemporary conditions

Required materials and equipment

- Canon AE-1 analog cameras will be provided by SART (Note: you are responsible for any repairs or replacement if the camera is broken or damaged)
- 12 rolls of Kodak T-Max 400 or Ilford Delta 400, FujiAcros 100 or equivalent B&W film (Note: we do not use C-41 process: B&W FILM ONLY!)
- 12 packs of Ilford Multigrade Deluxe “Pearl” surface A4 sheets or equivalent B&W photographic printing paper (Note: NO Fiber Paper)

- 10 Print File 35-7b negative sleeves, 5 frames across and 7 rows down
- Storage device (hard drive) no smaller than 250GB (to store scans)
- Memory card / CF Card, no smaller than 8GB
- Memory card reader

Teaching methods

This is a studio course that is informed with lectures on the history and theory of photography. Readings written responses are assigned in conjunction with texts, in preparation for discussions in the studio. The applied work of the students takes place in the studio and outside when on field trips and during assignments

Reading responses

We will have readings and reading responses to be done outside of class, printed out, and turned in (minimum two pages, typed, 12 point font, double spaced).

What is your opinion about the piece and how does it relate to photography? Please do not simply recap exactly what the writer is saying; these responses should include your personal take and argument on the artist's work—content, form, etc. Consider the political context of the writing, in other words, *what is at stake?* This might include the timeframe and location in which the writer was/is writing, the writer's background, identity, etc. Finally, what about this work is inspiring to you? What (if anything) do you disagree with in this work/approach, and why? Is there a critical element to the work? If so, what is it critiquing? Also, please bring up any issues about the reading that may relate to photographic themes that may have come up in the classroom.

Grading policy

Attendance and participation 20%

Weekly Assignments (x8) and Reading Responses 50%

Final Project 30%

Grades for each project will be determined across three parameters:

- Technique: How well did you resolve the technical objectives of the assignment?
- Concept: How well did you resolve the conceptual objectives of the assignment?
- Effort: How well did you demonstrate your effort? This can be through quantity, scale, showing me failed efforts, discussions with instructor, scope of project, etc.

Note: Participation is a grade component for your overall grade separate from assignments. It includes positive participation in class discussions, activities, and critiques. This means speaking up and completing in-class exercises.

Withdrawal policy

It is the student's responsibility to officially drop the class. Please refer to the AUB website for the withdraw date.

Course outline

Week 1: Introduction to photography; Content/Context: A Short History of Photography & Semiotics

Assignment: Report on a B&W photographer of choice (work in pairs).

Questions to ponder and discuss:

- What is the photographer trying to convey in their work? Or, what is at stake?
- What is the political context of the work (timeframe, location, events)?
- What do you find aesthetically and conceptually interesting?
- Provide a critique and suggest alternative approaches.

Photographers:

Nicephore Niepce, Zoe Leonard, Eugène Atget

Readings:

Szarkowski, John, *The Photographer's Eye*, The Museum of Modern Art, NY, 2007.

Shore, Stephen, *The Nature of Photographs*, Phaidon Press, 1998.

Excerpts from Barthes, Roland, *Camera Lucida*, Hill and Wang, 1980.

.pdf handout on Semiotics

Week 2: Light and Shadow

Assignment: ISO and exposure/Recreate a memory

For this assignment you will recreate a memory that's important to you from the past and photograph it, whether it be a scene, object or person, by using the following various ISO settings:

1. ISO 100
2. ISO 400
3. ISO 800
4. ISO 1600

Note: Shoot one roll of film (1/4 for each ISO setting). Keep aperture & shutter speed the same.

Photographers: Wayne Liu, Dirk Braeckman, Awoiska Van Der Molen, Hiroshi Sugimoto

Reading:

Excerpts from Davey, Moyra, *Long Life Cool White: Photographs and Essays*, Harvard University Art Museums, 2008.

Week 3: Movement: Street photography/The Snapshot Aesthetic

Assignment: Shutter Speed

Photograph one roll of b&w film on the street:

1. ½ a roll using HIGH shutter speeds (1/500th or higher) – To FREEZE the

person/people/object.

2. ½ a roll using LOW shutter speeds (1/60th or lower) – To BLUR the moving person/people/object.

Note: Adjust the aperture & ISO settings so as to avoid over or under exposures.

Photographers:

Muybridge, Henri-Cartier Bresson, Martha Rosler, Garry Winnogrand, Robert Frank, Vivian Maier, JH Engstrom, Fouad El Khoury, Daido Moriyama, Susan Meiselas, Lee Friedlander, Eric Gyamfi, Helen Levitt, Samer Mohdad, Danny Lyon, Eamonn Doyle, Tadahiko Hayashi, Shigeichi Nagano

Readings:

Excerpts from Rosler, Martha, 2 Works: 1. *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*; 2. *In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)*, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2006.

Galassi, Peter, *The Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort*, Museum of Modern Art, 1991. https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_347_300063036.pdf

Week 4: The Landscape vs Still Life

Assignment: Depth of Field/Aperture - Abstraction/Object of importance

Place your chosen object in a scene within at least 15-20 feet of space with objects in the foreground, in the background and in the middle ground. Photograph the same subject repeatedly. Take a whole roll of film. Work with changing your Aperture/Depth of Field. Remember that aperture also effects your lighting conditions so you may have to alter your other settings (Shutter Speed/ISO) to account for your change in aperture. Keep your notebook handy and jot down the settings for each frame. Once you look at the developed images, compare your notes with your images.

You will present three final images:

1. Everything in the frame completely in focus (expansive Depth of Field).
2. The foreground in focus and the rest out of focus (shallow Depth of Field).
3. The object in the middle in focus, and both the foreground and background out of focus (middle/narrow Depth of Field).

Photographers:

Alfred Stieglitz, Lewis Baltz, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Taysir Batniji, Allan Sekula, The Sarrafian Brothers, Saul Leiter, Christian Coigny, Rula Halawani, Michiko Kon, Dora Maar

Reading:

Excerpt from Sekula, Allan, *Dismal Science: Photoworks 1972-1996*, University Galleries of Illinois State University, 1999.

Week 5: Composition

Assignment: Make three photographs of each: Converging Lines, Leading Lines, Perspective, Space, Balance, Shapes, Contrast, Rule of Thirds

Photographers: Harry Callahan, Nadar, Joan Fontcuberta, Markus Andersen, Ray Mortenson, John Davies, Ayla Hibri, Joshua Lutz, Brassai, Fan Ho, Berenice Abbott, Bill Brandt, Marcin Ryczek, Jananne Al-Ani, Matt Black, Yasuhiro Ishimoto, Oliver Gagliani

Reading:

Excerpts from Flusser, Vilém, *Towards a philosophy of photography*, Reaktion Books, 2000.
<http://cmuems.com/excap/readings/flusser-towards-a-philosophy-of-photography.pdf>

Week 6: Issues of Intimacy, Body Politics, Gender, & Sexuality

Assignment: Workshop with Johanna Breiding; Written proposal for final project with visual examples and historical references; prepare and study for midterm.

Photographers:

Mark McKnight, Larry Clark, Latoya Ruby-Frasier, Karolina Karlic, Carrie Mae Weems, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, Igor Posner, Alexia Monduit, Eugene Richards, Bear Guerra

Reading:

Sultan, Larry, *Pictures from Home*, MACK (2017)

Week 7: Portraiture

Assignment: Exchange/Collaboration/Reciprocity; work on final project; prepare and study for midterm.

Talk to someone for a minimum of one hour before you take their portrait. The portrait should be a collaboration between you and the sitter. You should both discuss how to take the photo. What will it mean to you both? Where will it be taken? In what clothing/mood/lighting? Why is the location significant?

Photographers:

Sally Mann, Richard Avedon, Seydou Keyta, Van Leo, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Alvin Baltrop, Sabelo Mlangeni, Gordon Parks, Toni Frissell, Shadi Ghadirian, Scott Typaldos, Anne Wardrobe Brigman, Tina Modotti, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Steven Arnold, Gauri Gill, Lee Miller, Dayanita Singh, Duane Michaels, Shomei Tomatsu

Reading:

Excerpt from Cotton, Charlotte, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, Thames & Hudson, 2004.

Week 8: Mid-term & Self Portraiture

Assignment: Mid-term (in class); Self-portrait, or Performing for the camera: the non-selfie self; work on final project

Take a conceptual self-portrait that addresses an aspect of your background. What are you trying to communicate to your viewer? How is the setting, props and other accessories indicative of your chosen performed persona? Experiment with Shutter Speed, Aperture, ISO, etc.

Photographers:

Francesca Woodman, Man Ray, Claude Cahun, Robert Mapplethorpe, Jo Spence, Zanele Muholi, Caroline Tabet, Caimi And Piccinni, Tseng Kwong Chi

Reading:

Excerpt from Morris, Errol, *Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography*, Penguin Press, 2011.

Week 9: Night photography: Transgression

Assignment: Photograph using a tripod and external flash; work on final project

Take one roll of nighttime photographs that convey or capture moments or moods of imminent or actual transgression.

1 – 16. Photographs with a long exposure using a tripod

16 – 32. Photographs of something outside at night, using a flash or a bright light

Photographers:

Antoine D'agata, Larry Fink, Daido Moriyama, Kohei Yoshiyuki, Weegee, Dirk Braeckman

Reading:

Excerpts from Levi Strauss, David. *Words Not Spent Today Buy Smaller Images Tomorrow: Essays on the Present and Future of Photography*, Aperture, 2014.

Week 10: Archive Fever: Memory & Myth

Assignment: Write a report about our field trip to The Arab Image Foundation; scanning workshop; work on final project

Photographers: Emily Jacir, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Walid Raad & The Atlas Group, Akram Zaatari, John Divola, David Fathi, Christian Boltanski

Reading: Excerpts from Enwezor, Okwui. *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, Steidl/ICP, 2008.

Final deliverables: Ten printed photographs (A4) and artist statement with historical references to be submitted at final critique

Week 11-13: Lab time

Work on final project; final critiques

General course policy and attendance policy

Students are expected to be familiar with AUB Academic Rules and Procedures, which will be strictly applied in all circumstances. Students are expected to come to class and to have read and prepared for the scheduled assignments. Students are responsible for taking their own notes and must come to class equipped to do so. Students are responsible for all information, assignments, etc., given in class even during their absence.

- Three unexcused absences = No credit for the course.
- Two unexcused lates = 1 absence.
- Students will not be penalized for excused absences, but missing more than three classes will be disruptive and will most likely affect your final grade.

Class attendance is required. I take this seriously and I will fail you if you flake. Art theory, criticism and production amounts to a large conversation, where different people voice their respective ideas and their reasons for holding them. As a class, we will aim to recreate that kind of exchange, but we can't do it unless everyone shows up and shares their thoughts. An excused absence would include being seriously (and / or contagiously) ill, a death in the family, or an unexpected emergency with a family member.

To be considered for an excused absence you must email me the request at ho17@aub.edu.lb *prior* to being absent.

Participation

Each student is expected to be focused on the material being covered while present. Working on other assignments, browsing the Internet, etc., is not permitted, and violations will result in a significant reduction in a student's grade. Assistance to fellow students is permitted and encouraged during class as needed. Please try to keep such assistance brief and quiet so as to minimize distraction to other students.

Late work

Late work will not be accepted. Projects deadline are specified when the projects are assigned. If you are unable to attend class on a due date it is your responsibility to hand the work in or have a classmate submit the work prior to the critique.

Presentation day

Projects must be completed and ready for critique at the start of class or a lower grade will result. This includes technical issues that should be dealt with prior to presentation.

Technology policy

Smart phones, ipods, etc. can be disruptive and should be turned off or in airplane mode and put in your bag. If you need to make an urgent call or text, please step out during the break. You will be asked to leave if you cannot respect this curtsy.

Academic Integrity

Please refer to AUB Student Code of Conduct:

www.aub.edu.lb/pnp/generaluniversitypolicies/Documents/StudentCodeConduct/StudentCodeConduct.pdf, in particular section 1.1, which concerns academic misconduct including cheating, plagiarism, in-class disruption, and dishonesty. Please be aware that misconduct is vigorously prosecuted and that AUB has a zero-tolerance policy. Course policy is that credible evidence of cheating will result in course failure.

Recommended Accessibility Statement to Acknowledge the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities

AUB strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to a disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please inform me immediately so that we can privately discuss options. In order to help establish reasonable accommodations and facilitate a smooth accommodations process, you are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Office: accessibility@aub.edu.lb; +961-1-350000, x3246; West Hall, 314.

Non-Discrimination

AUB is committed to facilitating a campus free of all forms of discrimination including sex/gender-based harassment prohibited by Title IX. The University's non-discrimination policy applies to, and protects, all students, faculty, and staff. If you think you have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual misconduct, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. If you speak to a faculty or staff member about an issue such as harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, the information will be kept as private as possible, however, faculty and designated staff are required to bring it to the attention of the University's Title IX Coordinator. Faculty can refer you to fully confidential resources, and you can find information and contacts at www.aub.edu.lb/titleix. To report an incident, contact the University's Title IX Coordinator Trudi Hodges at 01-350000 ext. 2514, or titleix@aub.edu.lb. An anonymous report may be submitted online via EthicsPoint at www.aub.ethicspoint.com