

History of Photography — Photo 1105

Professor, Jeff Curto
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- Jeff's Classes Website: www.cod.edu/photo/curto

I) Catalog Description

A visually oriented history of the development of photography in both its commercial and creative aspects.

II) Class Meeting Schedule

Mondays, 6:30PM to 9:20PM. There will be approximately two to two and one half hours of lecture and discussion each evening, with the balance of the class time to be used for student research projects and/or discussion groups.

III) Course Objectives

- A) Describe the significant people and events in the development of photography
- B) Recognize the various uses that have been considered appropriate for photography
- C) Evaluate the photographs of individuals who have set new trends in the art of photography
- D) Analyze and compare the work of significant photographic practitioners through writing
- E) Describe the relationship between photography and other contemporary events that have shaped the nation and the world

IV) Website, Visual Resources & Podcasts of Class Lectures

A significant amount of information related to this class is available on the class web page:
www.cod.edu/photo/curto/1105/

The site has a copy of this syllabus (complete with all the assignments and due dates), as well as numerous links to information pertinent to this class and to photography in general, links to my email addresses, etc.

A link on the page will take you to the "Handouts & Podcast" page:
<http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com>, where you'll find:

- Downloads of weekly classroom handouts
- Slideshows of lecture presentation slides
- Recorded Podcasts of the lecture presentations (also available via subscription through iTunes)

Another link will take you to the college's Blackboard login page:
<http://bb.cod.edu>

Blackboard is an online course management system where you can track information about all your classes, interact with other class members, complete some of this course's assignments, see your grades, etc. Your Blackboard login information is the same as for the MyCOD site.

V) Topics Covered — Week By Week

1) 8/23	Course introduction & Technology Overview, Library assignment The Problems of an Art History of Photography
2) 8/30	History of Photography Survey: 1800 BC to 1888 AD Library Assignment Due: Late Work Not Accepted
3) 9/6	Labor Day - No Class
4) 9/13	History of Photography Survey: 1888 to 1990 + The Language of Photography Photo History in the News #1 Due; Late Work Not Accepted
5) 9/20	Light and Likeness: 19th & 20th Century Portrait Photography Think Piece Paper Due; Late Work Not Accepted
6) 9/27	Photography as a Form of Transport in the 19th Century + On The Road
7) 10/4	Photography and Painting; A Symbiosis Examined Photo History in the News #2 Due; Late Work Not Accepted
8) 10/11	The Stereograph / Photography and the Standard Subject + Re-Photography Mid-Term Quiz
9) 10/18	Muybridge, Marey and the Movies Mid-Term Papers Due ("Comparison / Contrast"); Late Work Not Accepted
10) 10/25	Stieglitz and the Pictorialists Photo History in the News #3 Due; Late Work Not Accepted
11) 11/1	Slow Cameras / Straight Pictures; Fast Cameras / Fast Pictures Review of Photo Exhibition/Local Historical Society Due; Late Work Not Accepted
12) 11/8	Women in Photography
13) 11/15	The Past is Prologue – The Manipulative Impulse and the Digital Age
14) 11/22	Szarkowski: How To See Final Paper or Photo Project Due; Late Work Not Accepted
15) 11/29	The Atomic Age and New Frontiers
16) 12/6	Photograph as Document, Concept as Photograph
17) 12/13	Final Examination – An Essay Exam concerning topics covered during the course (Exam during regular class meeting time)

Note: • This is an estimated schedule. There may be changes at the discretion of the professor or as class progress dictates.
• Students should be familiar with the rules and regulations of the College of DuPage as spelled out in the college catalog.

VI) Text

- Our Primary Text for the Course: • *A World History of Photography* — Naomi Rosenblum
- Suggested Additional Reading: • *The History of Photography* — Beaumont Newhall
• *The Keepers of Light* — William Crawford

Additional reading materials may be suggested

VII) Suggested Weekly Reading

Complete the following reading from Rosenblum's *A World History of Photography* **before** each class.

Week 2: The Early Years: Technology, Vision & Users AND A Short Technical History, Part I

Week 3: A Short Technical History Parts II AND III

Week 4: A Plenitude of Portraits AND *The Galerie Contemporaine; Appearance & Character in 19th C. Portraiture*

Week 5: Documentation; Landscape & Architecture AND Documentation; Objects & Events

Week 6: Photography & Art; The First Phase AND Art Photography; Another Aspect

Week 7: None

Week 8: Watch an old movie. Have you ever seen "Citizen Kane"? How about "Birth of a Nation", "The Seventh Seal" or "8 1/2"? Find them at Blockbuster or, better yet, at the College of DuPage Library (cheaper).

Week 9: Art, Photography and Modernism

Week 10: None

Week 11: Words & Pictures: Photographs in Print Media

Week 12: Photography Since 1950: Manipulations and Color

Week 13: New Technology, New Vision, New Users

Week 14: None

Week 15: Photography Since 1950; The Straight Image

Week 16: Documentation; The Social Scene

VIII) Grading Criteria

Student grades will be based on the total number of points accumulated in the following areas:

- Class Attendance..... 15 points (Each absence after the first one deducts 5 points)
- Library Assignment 2 points
- Message Board Introduction..... 2 points
- Photo History in the News (2 points x 3)..... 6 points
- Think Piece (First Paper) 5 points
- Mid-term Quiz 10 points
- Mid-term paper 10 points
- Photo Exhibit/Historical Society Review 5 points
- End of term project or paper 15 points
- Final examination..... 30 points

Grade Scale

100 to 90 Points	=	A
75 to 89 Points	=	B
65 to 74 Points	=	C
50 to 64 Points	=	D
Below 50 Points	=	F

Possible Total: 100 points

Note: Students wanting permission for the pass/fail option must request this by the date of the mid-term quiz. Incompletes are not available in this class except in extraordinary circumstances.

IX) Assignments for History of Photography

Some general notes on the assignments:

- The purpose of these assignments is to get you in front of some good photographs and have you really *look* at them. Once you've looked, I'm interested in having you tell me (or, in the case of the final assignment, possibly show me) what you have seen, and how that impacts you as someone who is interested in photography. If you don't look at the photographs, you can't do well on these assignments.
- The papers *must* be typewritten. Presuming that most of you will type on a computer, remember to use your spelling checker. The quality of your writing is important to these assignments. You will lose credit for misspellings or errors in grammar (run-on sentences, incorrect sentence structure, etc). You should always have someone *proofread* your paper. If English is not your primary language, please state your primary language at the top of any submission.

- If you have concerns about writing your paper, feel free to see me during office hours, or contact me through phone or email. I am *very happy* to look at rough drafts, go over ideas with you, etc, as I would rather help you sort out mistakes before you turn in your work for a grade. Alternately, you may want to use the College's *Writing Assistance Area*. Call (630) 942-3355 or see: <http://www.cod.edu/write/>
- The College of DuPage Library is an *extraordinary* resource for you, especially for starting out each of these projects. You're cheating your course experience if you *only* look at pictures in our textbook and never venture into the library. If you've not used our Library much (or ever), don't forget that the Librarians are faculty members whose "teaching assignment" is to teach you how to use the Library. They are there to help you navigate around an amazingly broad and deep source of information; use the facility and use them.
- Looking at actual, original photographs rather than reproductions in books can make an assignment like the ones below far easier. Fortunately, Chicago has many fine museums and galleries devoted to photography. Museums include the Art Institute of Chicago, Columbia College's Museum of Contemporary Photography, The Chicago Cultural Center and the Chicago Historical Society. Further, many communities around the area have historical societies that have archives of photographs from the mid-nineteenth century through more contemporary times. Additionally, there are a number of galleries in Chicago and the suburbs that specialize in photographic images. Among the best known in Chicago are Catherine Edelman Gallery (300 West Superior), Schneider Gallery Chicago (230 W. Superior) and Steven Daiter Gallery (311 W. Superior).
- Though it should go without saying, **plagiarism of any sort is prohibited** and will be dealt with in accordance with College of DuPage policies. See the college catalog for details.
- Given that you have all of the course assignments here in front of you, **I do not accept any late work** ("Late" defined as any time after class is over on the due date for the assignment) for this class unless there is a documented medical excuse. The three formal papers may be emailed to me if they are in either Microsoft Word (.doc) or PDF format. No other file formats are permitted. The due date and time remains the same for email submissions.

1) Library Assignment – Due at Second Class Meeting

Go to the College of DuPage Library and check out a book that deals with photography's history in some way and bring it to class with you. You should be prepared to: hold the book aloft, tell the class your name, the title of the book, its author and a sentence or two about the book's topic from your perspective (why you chose it, what it's about, etc).

The book *must* be from the College of DuPage Library, not a local suburban library's collection. My objective is to get you into the COD Library, have you get a Library Card (if you don't already have one), find a book about photography and its history and render some opinion about its usefulness or how it interests you. You needn't have read the entire book by the time you present it to the class, but you should have an idea of its contents.

You can browse the stacks in the "TR" (the Library of Congress prefix for photography) or you can search entire Library catalog online at: www.cod.edu/library/

Typing in a subject search for "Photography" will find over 1600 items that feature photography as their primary subject. It bears mentioning, though, that many other books on photography are scattered through the entire collection, bringing the total to a *much* higher number than it originally appears.

2) Blackboard Message Board Introduction – By Second Class Meeting

Log in to the Blackboard site (<http://bb.cod.edu>) and select our class. Find the "Assignments" link on the left side, locate the link for this assignment and click on the link. This will take you to the forum where you can complete your assignment.

By the time of our second class meeting, each class member will be expected to enter: Their name & number of semesters studying photography, their goals in photography, name one of their favorite photographers, list any hobbies, interests, or other photo experiences they might have and upload a photograph of themselves (we are photographers, after all!)

2) Photo History in the News (Submitted via Blackboard Only - Not Printed and Turned In)

Three times during the semester (dates listed on the calendar), find and read an article related to photography's history from a newspaper, magazine or reputable online news source. By the date that each assignment is due (early is fine), you will submit a short (around 200 to 350 words) essay to me via Blackboard.

Log in to the Blackboard site (<http://bb.cod.edu>) and select our class. Find the "Assignments" link on the left side and select the Photo History in the News assignment you want to complete. Click the "View/Complete" link at the bottom of the assignment and write your essay in the "Comments" section of the Blackboard page; do not attach an external file (such as a Word document).

The article you choose could be a photo exhibition announcement or review, a book review, a story about how photographs were or are being used in some significant way, information about changes in photographic technology that influences how photographs are made or used, etc. In short, the objective is "current events as history."

For each Photo History News assignment, do the following:

- Include a citation or a link to the article. (Which publication? Page number? Who wrote it?)
- Keep the length around 200 to 350 words (in the body of the Blackboard page - no attachments). Use about half of your space to summarize the article, and the rest to draw connections to class content or pose relevant questions.

3) Think Piece Paper (Printed and Turned In)

Write a short (1 to 2 double-spaced typewritten pages) "Think Piece" about one particular photograph. The photograph *must be* one from the 19th Century (made before 1900), but you are otherwise free to select any image you would like to write about. Examine the photograph carefully and write about what you see and what the photograph makes you think about. Some (but not all) things you could consider are:

- What does the photograph tell you about the photographer?
- What does it tell you about the subject of the image?
- Does the technical quality of the image (or lack thereof) help or hinder the success of the photograph?
- Where did the photographer stand to make this picture?
- How does his or her camera position affect the outcome of the image?
- Why does this picture interest you?

In short, tell me what you think about the image in your own words.

4) Mid-Term Paper (Printed and Turned In)

Write a 3 to 4 double-spaced typewritten page paper comparing and contrasting two specific photographs that you admire and that have some acknowledged historical significance. Examine each photograph carefully and make specific comments regarding each photographer's technique, composition, and vision. The questions listed above for the Think Piece paper could be a good place to start when looking at the images you've chosen to write about. Discuss what you think may have been the maker's intention; or how the photograph has inspired you personally. Additionally, comment on how the two photographs are similar to or different from one another. There is no date restriction on this assignment; any two images from the 19th, 20th or 21st centuries are fair game.

5) Review of Photo Exhibition / Historical Society (Submitted via Blackboard - Not Printed and Turned In)

Visit a photographic exhibition and write a brief (1 to 2 double-spaced typewritten page) review of the exhibit. What is the purpose of the exhibit? Are the photographs interesting? Did you find the exhibition worthwhile? Troubling? Thought-provoking?

As an alternative to viewing an exhibition of photographs, visit a historical society in Chicago or one of the suburbs and write a brief (1 to 2 double-spaced typewritten pages) review of the group's use of photography in the museum and/or archives. Is there a photograph of the town's founding fathers? Why or why not? What do the photographs you see in this venue contribute to your knowledge of the area? Does the society or museum seem to value photographs over other objects, or vice-versa? Submit your brief paper via the assignment link in Blackboard, attaching and uploading your file.

6) End of Term Paper or Photograph Project (Printed and Turned In)

For the third assignment, you have two options from which to choose.

You may either:

- A) Write a paper comparing and contrasting the life's work of two photographers whose work you admire and who have some acknowledged historical significance. They could be contemporaries of one another, or one could have worked in the 19th century, one in the 20th. This paper is *not* to be a biographical analysis, detailing the birth and formative years of its subjects. Rather, it should be an interesting synthesis of your ideas about the photographer's *photographs* giving full indication that you have examined each photographer's work in depth, using specific photographs to prove the points you want to make. Again, those questions from the Think Piece paper (see above) are a great place to start. Tell me what *you* think, what *you* see in their photographs in 5 to 7 double-spaced typewritten pages.

Or, you may:

- B) Choose two photographers whose work you admire and who have some acknowledged historical significance and imitate their styles as closely as possible in three pictures each (total of 6 photographs). This would mean that you would research each person in order to discover all you could about how they worked (equipment, subject matter, etc.). Then you would examine their work to see what common threads hang through all their pictures (where do they stand? Always above? In front? Is there a preference for time of day? Type of light?—etc.). Finally, you would make photographs, matching, as closely as possible, the *type* of photographs they made, both technically and aesthetically, *presenting images that are similar finished products to theirs*. Please note that *I do not want you to copy their images exactly*. Rather, I want you to make *your* original photographs *as if you were them*. In other words, if Adams or Weston or Strand were to suddenly find themselves alive and plopped down in the Chicago Metro Area, what would they photograph?

Turn in your 6 finished photographs along with a paragraph for each one that explains why you, as these photographers, made them that way.

X) I'm A Photographer – Why Must I Write?

Photographers, like other visual artists, often display a distrust of words, with good reason. After all, they're making an effort to reveal something in their photographs that words cannot express. But at times words can be trusted to lead the public successfully into a work of art, or the photographer into him/herself.

Though each spoke eloquently, Brett Weston and Henri Matisse shunned the written word to become more absorbed in their craft. On the other hand, Edward Weston and Paul Klee, as two examples, sought emotional equilibrium and clarity of thought in the auxiliary mode of writing.

Writing can be public or private, or a mixture of the two. As information, writing introduces exhibitions, outlines artists' biographies and concerns, and describes images. As a means of dialogue in journals or essays, words can unveil hidden feelings, tie together strands of personality, and save and savor impressions.

The photographer who can communicate in language has a distinct advantage. Articulating your strengths as a photographer can help you sell your work, get it exhibited, or give people a handle on how to begin to approach it as something new. Well-organized, intelligent cover letters and artist statements are more rare than many realize. Publishing articles, gathering in organizing information to use and lectures, or writing portfolio text all have a place in a photographer's give-and-take with audience and peers. Writing about other photographers' work can not only help the writer come to grips with what that photographer may have been trying to express but also how that photographer's expression has affected the writer.

Good writing comes as much from self-knowledge as through English skills, and working with words is as hard, but it is also as rewarding as other paths in this difficult process. Photographers, through long-developed habit, empathize intensely through their eyes; writing can be a temporary release from the physicality of the outside world and the limitations of the photographic medium. The inner reflection of memory, emotion, and desire evoked by words may suggest unthought-of escapes from traps encountered in the technical struggles with aesthetics and materials.

Like making photographs, writing over a period of time can reveal unexpected continuities, result in a new respect for one's own capabilities and provide practice in the discipline of solitude. For photographers, words may seem to be the sharpened weapons of other fighters in the battles of art, but we all do a fair job of talking, right? Writing is the next step.

XI) Some Notes on Higher Education

This is college. It is for adults who want to learn. Sometimes it is hard. Sometimes it is fun. Oftentimes, it is both. Most jobs return what you put into them and if you give this course maximum effort, you will learn and earn a high grade.

Classes begin on time, so be in the classroom at the scheduled hour. Additionally, each class will contain information pertinent to the assignments, and each week builds upon information learned the previous weeks, so, make the commitment to be here for the classroom sessions or do not take the class.

You have a job as a student. That job is to come to class, be attentive, ask questions, keep your mind open to new ideas and fulfill assigned projects on time. Doing your job will assist you in being perceived as a serious student.

In an educational forum, it is always best to inform the professor in advance about problems with correct completion of an assigned project. When understood and anticipated, contingencies can often be handled easily.

All of the assignments must be completed by the date listed on your syllabus, as late work is not accepted in this course.

Lastly, learning is synthesis of ideas. Try to use the ideas presented in this class to your best advantage by putting them together with what you already know to produce high quality work. If you have problems, see your professor.

You are the one who will determine whether or not this course is a success for you. Take your work here seriously and you will learn things, have fun and enhance your GPA.

XII) Classroom Policies

Students are encouraged (even expected!) to ask questions, express opinions and put forth ideas at any time. I like being interrupted for things that are related to course content. Conversely, I'm not fond of being interrupted for issues that are not related to course content.

To that end:

- Come to class on time. Everyone has a day when they are late for some reason, but please don't make a habit of it.
- Please put your cell phones on silent or vibrate. If you must take a call, please leave the room.
- Refrain from text messaging your significant others during class time; they will still be there when we're done.
- Laptop computers... a conundrum... you are welcome to bring a laptop to class for note-taking, though web surfing, IM-ing and Photoshopping are counter-productive to our classroom time. In any case, I ask that all laptop users sit in the back row of the classroom, so if you do fall prey to the web's siren song, your screen's contents won't be disruptive to anyone seated behind you. Remember: the internet will still be there when class is over.