

George Mason University
College of Visual and Performing Arts
School of Art
AVT 253– Introduction to Digital Photography
T/Th
Instructor: Jeffrey Kenney
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

This course will explore digital photography as an art medium. No previous experience in photography is necessary, however Studio Fundamentals I and II are suggested prerequisites and serve as strong foundation courses. Although this class will concentrate on digital processes and the technical aspect of digital SLR cameras, it will not emphasize traditional problems and routine or formalized solutions. Specific unique seeing is our goal and success is incumbent upon the ability to explore, with an open mind, a number of visual possibilities. Personal taste is an issue in this course, not as something to be satisfied and not as a criterion for judgment, but instead as something to be made more intelligent and more sophisticated, through a process of continual challenge. This course is designed to give students control over basic technical aspects of digital image making, while encouraging them to develop their artistic vision.

Student Responsibilities: Students should also spend time in the library looking at as many artists and work as possible. We will spend time in class each week in the lab as a group. This time should be spent exploring digital input and output methods with the instructor in order to help with any questions. Students should come to class prepared with digital files. (**We will not spend class time shooting images.**) Students will need to spend additional time outside of regular class time for shooting images and also exploring visual opportunities in the computer lab. **Students should expect to shoot at least 90 or more digital RAW files per week** (except for the first assignment).

Course Objectives:

1. Students will research and discuss the history of photography, film and video art through current day works to gain an understanding of digital media and its art forms.
2. Students will gain and/or increase photography terminology by learning and applying them in assignments and in class critiques.
3. Students will create a variety of projects that demonstrate skills with camera equipment and image software as well as striving to communicate visually with imagery.
4. Students will gain and/or increase basic skills including various input and output methodologies by using digital means and Adobe Light Room techniques.

5. Students will obtain a personal collection of work through shooting, organizing (workflow), and using their photographs in an intelligent manner.
6. Students will gain basic ink jet printing skills and as well as begin to exercise various display methods of their work.

Attendance:

2 excused or unexcused absences are permitted. If you reach 3 absences (excused or unexcused) you will automatically receive a C for the course. 4 absences or more will result in an automatic F for the course.

Grading is based on several factors:

- 1) Satisfactory completion of visual assignments. These assignments are due periodically throughout the semester with a particular emphasis on a final project. Solutions to the assignments will be discussed and evaluated in class critiques and grades will be based on aesthetic merit, conceptual depth, and technical competence.
- 2) Your personal contribution to the class. Each student is partially responsible for the success of the class.
- 3) Regular attendance on work days and all critiques. Critiques are mandatory. I will not accept any work that is emailed!
- 4) Completion of assignments on time and handed in in person at the beginning of the designated class period. (Late assignments will be graded accordingly – no assignment(s) will be accepted after the due date without prior permission of the instructor. NO EMAILED ASSIGNMENTS!
- 5) Willingness to participate in class discussions, this includes preparation both in terms of completion of projects and coming to class with ideas and opinions that will promote discussion.
- 6) Participation in the orderly functioning of the lab...clean up, care of equipment, proper return of borrowed equipment, etc. are responsibilities everyone must share.
- 7) Presentation of a final series at the end of the semester. This body of work is given utmost consideration in determining your final grade.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- 1) An acknowledged understanding of the assignment and the seeking of unique solutions.
- 2) Demonstration of sensitivity to the camera as an image-making tool.

- 3) Degree to which you develop a concept or idea; indications of your invention and creative thought.
- 4) Willingness to discuss openly all solutions to the visual problems you face with the class as well as the ability to respond to constructive criticism from the class.
- 5) Ambition, rigor, and involvement with the projects undertaken.
- 6) Ability to work independently, with discipline and responsibility.

Grade Breakdown:

- Class participation counts for 40%
- Assignments including but not limited to projects, research (written and presented) counts for 60%

University and School of Art Policies

In accordance with George Mason University policy, **cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class**. The instructor of the class will keep his/her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion; or in the event that the instructor does not have a cell phone, he/she will designate one student to keep a cell phone active to receive such alerts.

Commitment to Diversity

This class will be conducted as an *intentionally* inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

Statement on Ethics in Teaching and Practicing Art and Design

As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the School of Art adheres to the ethical standards and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

This class fulfills a Mason Core requirement for Arts.

Mason courses in the film making, visual and performing arts stress generative, inquiry based learning through direct aesthetic and creative experience in the studio environment. Art history courses address the intrinsic relationship of personal and cultural creativity, and the manifestation of aesthetics, visual culture and visual narrative within historical contexts.

Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete a course in the Arts category must meet the first learning outcome and a minimum of two of the remaining four learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic process, and a work's underlying concept, and where appropriate, contexts associated with the work.
2. Identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary and critique appropriate to that form.
3. Analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form, as well as the works cultural significance and context.
4. Analyze and interpret the content of material or performance culture through its social, historical, and personal contexts.
5. Engage in generative artistic processes, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.

Open Studio Hours

SOA teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the SOA studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

ArtsBus - Dates for Spring 2017

February 18

March 15

April 25

ArtsBus Credit

* Each student must have up to 5 AVT 300/Artsbus credits before graduation. For credit to appear on your transcript you must enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment.

* If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips during a semester and need them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300. Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for additional, very important information regarding ArtsBus policy.

* Non-AVT majors taking art classes do not need Artsbus credit BUT may need to go on the Artsbus for a class assignment. You can either sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket

for the bus trip at the Center of the Arts. Alternate trips must be approved by the instructor of the course that is requiring an ArtsBus trip.

Visual Voices Lecture Series

Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:20- 9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater: <http://soa.gmu.edu/visualvoices/>

Important Deadlines

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for *late adds* (up until the last day of classes) must be made by the student in the SOA office (or the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid being processed) , LATE ADD fee will apply. Requests for non-selective *withdrawals* and *retroactive adds* (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student's major is located. For AVT majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407.

Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences

If you have a diagnosed disability or learning difference and you need academic accommodations, please inform me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Disabilities Resource Center (SUB I room 234, 703-993-2474). You must provide me with a faculty contact sheet from that office outlining the accommodations needed for your disability or learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged in advance through the DRC.

Official Communications via GMU E-Mail

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Attendance Policies

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Honor Code

Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Catalog. The honor code requires that the work you do as an individual be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas. (This does not prohibit collaborative work when it is approved by your instructor.) As a faculty member, I have an obligation to refer the names of students who may have violated the Honor Code to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously.

No grade is important enough to justify cheating, for which there are serious consequences that will follow you for the rest of your life. If you feel unusual pressure about your grade in this or any other course, please talk to me or to a member of the GMU Counseling Center staff.

Using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is *plagiarism*, a very serious Honor Code offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words and punctuation just as the passage appears in the original and must use quotation marks and page numbers in your citation. If you want to paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you must put the ideas into your own words, and you must cite the source, using the APA or MLA format. (For assistance with documentation, GMU recommends Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*.) The exception to this rule is information termed *general knowledge*—information that is widely known and stated in a number of sources. Determining what is general knowledge can be complicated, so the wise course is, "When in doubt, cite."

Be especially careful when using the Internet for research. Not all Internet sources are equally reliable; some are just plain wrong. Also, since you can download text, it becomes very easy to inadvertently plagiarize. If you use an Internet source, you must cite the exact URL in your paper and include with it the last date that you successfully accessed the site.

Writing Center

Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

The Collaborative Learning Hub

Located in Johnson Center 311 (703-993-3141), the lab offers in-person one-on-one support for the Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and a variety of other software. Dual monitor PCs make the lab ideal for collaborating on group projects, Macs are also available; as well as a digital recording space, collaborative tables, and a SMART Board. Free workshops are also available (Adobe and Microsoft) through Training and Certification; visit ittraining.gmu.edu to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.