

Documentary Photography - AVT 457 SPRING 2016 MW 1:30-4:00 PM

Instructor: Professor Sue Wrbcian

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Office Hours T/W 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

THIS SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Prerequisite: AVT 353/354 Photo II or permission of instructor

This course explores documentary photography as an art medium—it's history, philosophy and aesthetics-- while examining the differences between traditional and experimental forms via projects, lectures and field excursions. Primary emphasis will be placed on research, development and production of a final project, presented in the form you choose including extensive research to inform the project's content, and a thoughtful written statement framing and reflecting on the project's intent and results. Projects should demonstrate the potentials of documentary photography to have societal impact. Final projects can take on any number of forms such as a book, installation, website, portfolio, etc.

Research will be very important to your work as it will inform it on a number of levels particularly through historical and contemporary periodicals, books, and media, which can all be easily and conveniently accessed using GMU's Fenwick Library and Provisions Research Center for Art and Social Change located here in the Art and Design Building, Room L001. The web address for Provisions: <http://www.provisionslibrary.org/>

Think of research as *source material* and your work as the *form* that is *generated* as a result of this study. Another aspect of your research will include *defining and locating your work's relationship* to the photographic tradition. In terms of outside resources, we may be visiting places such as the Library of Congress in DC or the National Archives in College Park, MD and, if time permits, a weekend at Elsewhere in Greensboro, North Carolina, a living museum created in an old thrift shop, <http://www.goelsewhere.org/>



NOTE: This course has been designated as a Research & Scholarship intensive course through the Students as Scholars program. Students can learn more by visiting OSCAR.gmu.edu. The *Students as Scholars* student learning outcomes that have been chosen for your course are:

Creation of Scholarship:

1. Justify that the project intends to be engaging and novel to a particular audience.
2. Take responsibility for executing the project.

Scholarly Inquiry:

1. Articulate and refine the question.
2. Follow ethical principles.
3. Assess the validity of key assumptions and evidence.

Here is a BASIC (SUBJECT TO CHANGE) synopsis of the projects, how they relate to the RS requirements and grading breakdown:

15% - 1 Assigned Community Project (from a list of approved projects happening in the greater GMU community) note: *Creation of Scholarship* for RS course.

20% - 1 Collective project (we will work a common topic as individuals and present as an off-campus exhibition) note: *Creation of Scholarship* for RS course.

10% - 1 Research Presentation (the basis for your personal project) note: *Scholarly Inquiry* level for RS course

45% - 1 Personal Project – Note: *Scholarly Inquiry* level for RS course

Create a set of 10 well-conceived images accompanied by a concise, well-written informative statement. This statement addresses your creative research, source material and references and should be one to two double-spaced pages. *Do not do this in the final hour. Keep a notebook with you for field notes. You can draw your ideas from there and expand on them when the time comes to write the statement.*

NOTE: you are welcome to contact OSCAR for additional support. If you want to continue to build on your course project for another semester, you can apply for support from our Undergraduate Research Scholars Program and

apply for funding from the Undergraduate Student Travel Fund if you travel to exhibit your project!

10% - Class Participation & Keeping up with Bb postings for in-class discussion. Note: *Scholarly Inquiry & Creation of Scholarship* level for RS course

Process will be the key to success in this class. Simply: The more work you generate the more feedback you will receive. I cannot stress the importance of this enough. In regard to the assigned and collective projects, these assignments are designed with community engagement in mind. They are also unique as they have been generated by School of Art faculty/staff possessing extensive experience working in communities. Past projects include: *Finding a Line* by Ben Ashworth at the Kennedy Center and the 5x5 Floating Lab Collective project *ReMuseum*. View these projects as opportunity to gain direct experience working with diverse populations and engaging in critical dialogue/thinking and production.

Since you will have only a few creative production assignments the responsibility is placed on your shoulders as far as subject matter and execution of your final project. As a guideline, make use of GMU's library system, the Library of Congress as well as Provisions Library for as a resource in terms of subject matter. The "meridians" that are the key elements of the contents of Provisions can be used as guidelines in terms of where your interests and general relevancy to contemporary thought intersect. The GMU libraries will provide Library instruction sessions on library research tools for photography, such as databases and books and image databases and/or using Special Collection and Archives (SC&A)

Part of what I hope will happen in this class is that your accustomed way of working takes a new and different direction through intense personal study and devotion to your chosen subject matter. While within the process of considering and questioning the constructs of "documentary" you are expected to develop an understanding specific to the issues you are examining. The expectation is that your practice of photography matures through a well-informed course of study.

Keep in mind that you will be shooting a lot. **Whether you are working with color, digital or B&W you are required to show 15 images per critique.** You will have appx 4 crits over the course of the semester. (2 for collective project (w/laser prints) & 2 (w/fine art prints) for personal project) For final/personal project: be prepared to shoot the equivalent of **10-12 rolls of film (350-400 images)** and prepare a minimum of **30 8x10 prints** of which you will choose **10** for your final project. Since you will need to produce an enormous amount of photographs, you must use your lab time wisely. Please come to class prepared to print during Open Labs as this is when I am here & can give you the most feedback on your work. Come with complete contact sheets. Use Open Labs during non-class time to develop your film & make contact sheets.

Articles, Chapters & Books of interest:

(Reading Material may or may not include ...)

Lonely Planet Guide to Experimental Travel

You Are Here (artists making maps)

Cities and Photography, Jane Tormey

Lure of the Local Lucy Lippard

Documentary Now Frits Gierstberg (Author), Hans Scholten (Author), Maartje Van Den Heuvel

The Photograph as Contemporary Art Charlotte Cotton

"Surveyors and Surveyed" Liz Wells

"In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" from *Decoys and Disruptions* by Martha Rosler

"Who Is Speaking Thus? Some Questions About Documentary Photography"

Abigail Solomon-Godeau

"Regarding the Torture of Others" Susan Sontag

"The Person as Documentarian," "The Tradition" from *Doing Documentary Work*

Robert Coles

"Surveying the Subject: An Introduction," "Filling up the Hole in the Real: Death and Mourning in Contemporary Documentary Film and Video," "The End of

Autobiography or New Beginnings? (or, Everything You Never Knew about Someone You Will Probably Never Meet," from The Subject of Documentary by Michael Renov

Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow / Documentary film about Anselm Keifer

List of Narrator Styles

Possible Field Trips to research institutions:

Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html>

Provisions Library <http://www.provisionslibrary.org/>

National Archives <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/>

ATTENDANCE is mandatory! This is an experience class and growth comes only through continued active participation. **In case of an unavoidable absence, please contact your Instructor immediately. You are responsible for all missed information. Excessive tardiness and/or absence (more than two classes) will result in a severely reduced or failing grade for the course regardless of performance. Open lab periods serve to provide additional work time. They do not serve as a replacement for scheduled class time.**

GRADING is based on several factors:

1- Satisfactory completion of visual assignments. (40%) These assignments (such as Class Project, Powerpoint Presentation & Informative statement) are due periodically throughout the semester and represent a cross-section of the principles of photographic seeing. Solutions to these problems will be discussed and evaluated in class critiques and grades will be based on aesthetic merit and technical competence.

This accounts for **50%** of your final grade

2- Your personal contribution to the class. (10%) Each student is partially responsible for the success of the class. Contributions include:

A-Completion of assignments on time. Your fellow students expect that you will have the work completed and ready to discuss as well. Come prepared.

B-Class Participation ... 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.

Class participation also means respectful listening, no cell phone talking or text messaging, no laptop surfing, no ipod listening ... and anything else that is considered disrespectful, disruptive or distracting to the class.

C- Participation in the orderly functioning of the lab and classroom...clean up, care of equipment, proper return of borrowed equipment, etc. are responsibilities everyone must share. A good guideline is to leave the workspace/equipment in a better state than you found it.

Keep in mind all the above (together and/or separately **at instructor's discretion**) accounts for **10%** of your final grade.

3- Presentation of a final series at the end of the semester. (50%) This body of work & statement is given utmost consideration in determining your final grade.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Regular attendance. 3 Missed Classes = ONE (1) lowered letter grade.

Late assignments will be graded accordingly – no assignment(s) will be accepted after the due date without prior permission of the instructor.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

- 1-**An acknowledged understanding of the assignment and the seeking of unique solutions in relationship to the **research component** of your projects.
- 2-** Demonstration of sensitivity to the camera as an image-making tool.
- 3-** Individual initiative and an effort to carry assignments as far as possible.
- 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-** Technical proficiency - skills in processing, printing, and final presentation are judged by fine art standards...technique should be appropriate to the image and idea.

University and School of Art Policies

In accordance with George Mason University policy, turn off all beepers, 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).

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 25

April 18

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

Dates for Spring 2017:

January 26

February 9

March 9

March 23

March 30

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

<i>January / Day of Week</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
Martin Luther King Day (no classes)	Mon Jan 16
First day of classes ; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date; full semester waitlists removed	Mon Jan 23
Last day to add classes —all individualized section forms due Last day to drop with no tuition penalty	Mon Jan 30
Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty	Mon Feb 13
Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)	Fri Feb 24
Immunization Record Deadline	Wed Mar 1
Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via Patriot Web	Mon Feb 20 – Fri Mar 24
Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)	Mon Feb 27 – Fri Mar 31
Spring Break	Mon Mar 13 – Sun Mar 19
Incomplete work from Fall 2016 due to Instructor	Fri March 31
Incomplete grade changes from Fall 2016 due to Registrar	Fri April 7
Dissertation/Thesis Deadline	Fri May 5
Last day of classes	Sat May 6
Reading Days Reading days provide students with additional study time for final examinations. Faculty may schedule optional study sessions, but regular classes or exams may not be held.	Mon May 8 – Tue May 9
Exam Period (beginning at 7:30 a.m.)	Wed May 10 – Wed May 17
Commencement and Degree Conferral Date	May 20

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, I recommend 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 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 itraining.gmu.edu to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.

COURSE SCHEDULE
Documentary Photography - AVT 457- SPRING 2015
****This Schedule Subject to Change****

Professor Sue Wrbican swrbican@gmu.edu 3-8570 M-W 1:30-4:00 PM

January

- Mon. 23: Introduction to class, course requirements
Lockers / Enlargers Assigned
Reading Assignment: **“Which Came First, the Chicken or the Egg?”**
Bring your most recent work into the next class
- Wed. 25: Present your work to the class
Intro for Class Project: **Experimental Travel/Special Collections**
Film: **Lessons of Darkness**
Lecture: Early Documentary: William Henry Jackson / Jacob Riis / Matthew Brady / Lewis Hine / Evelyn Cameron
Poetics, Reality & Fiction / Lost Book Found / Rings of Saturn
- Mon. 30: **Lecture: Roy Stryker and the FSA**
Discussion: “Which Came First, the Chicken or the Egg?”
Visit Fenwick Library for guidance on periodical and image searching, and visual literacy.

February

- Wed. 01: **Lecture: The Americans / Robert Frank / Diane Arbus**
Assignment #1 Photographers/Artists
Discussion on Ethics
Present your personal choice from Photographers/Artists in Content Folder
Have preferences for what you’d like to see at NGA & LOC trip
- Mon. 06: **Personal Documentary / Nan Goldin / LaToya Ruby Fraser**
Discuss Experimental Documentary Show & Individual Projects
Visiting Artist: Lewis Francis
- Wed. 08: **Lecture: The Bechers / Video / Leviathan**
(unless we meet at LOC on Friday the 10th)
Assignment #2 Online Resources
Present your personal choice from Online Resources in Content Folder
- Fri 10: **Visits to Library of Congress & National Gallery**
- Mon. 13: **Critique Experimental Documentary**
6 ~ 8-1/2 x 11 Laser Prints each
Visit Provisions Library for research materials for personal projects
- Tuesday 14 <3**
- Wed. 15: Assignment #3 Historical/Contemporary Concepts
Present your personal choice from Historical/Contemporary Concepts in Bb

SAT 18 ARTSBUS

Mon. 20: **2nd Critique Experimental Documentary & Prep space to hang 6 ~ 8-1/2 x 11 Laser Prints each & MAP / Discuss ideas for Final Projects**

Wed. 22: Visiting Artist
Hang Experimental Travel Show Work must be ready to hang Today! & Proposals for FINAL PROJECTS DUE

Mon. 27: **Take down Experimental Travel Show in student gallery (need volunteers)**

March

Wed 01: Assignment #4 Issues w Documentary (groups of two)
Present your discussion from Issues w Documentary Concepts in Bb
Present works from collaborative projects

Mon 06 Review Proposals for Final Project before Spring Break

Wed 08. Open Lab for printing / research / discussion etc.

March 12 – March 19th *** SPRING BREAK - No Classes!! **☺*******

Mon. 20 Open Lab for printing / research / discussion etc.

Wed. 22: **Contemporary Artist/Photographer Presentations (Mark S)**

SAT 25 ARTSBUS

Mon. 27 **RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS for Final Project (Mark visits)**

Wed 29: **RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS for Final Project (Workshop w/ Mark)**

April

Monday 03 (tentative S-CAR) FILM TBA / Form 3 groups for critique

Wed. 05: Open Lab for printing / research etc.

Saturday 08: OFF THE WALL – collaborative project w/ foundations

Mon. 10: 1st Critique – 1st Group – FINAL PROJECTS
10 ~ 8x10 or 8-1/2 x 11 Prints each
Presenters TBA

Wed. 12: 1st Critique – 2nd Group – FINAL PROJECTS
10 ~ 8x10 or 8-1/2 x 11 Prints each
Presenters TBA

SAT 15 ARTSBUS

- Mon. 17: 1st Critique – 3rd Group – FINAL PROJECTS
10 ~ 8x10 or 8-1/2 x 11 Prints each
Presenters TBA
- Wed 19:** Open Lab for printing / research etc.
- Mon. 24: 2nd Critique – 1st Group – FINAL PROJECTS
10 ~ 8x10 or 8-1/2 x 11 Prints each
Presenters TBA
- Wed. 26: 2nd Critique – 2nd Group – FINAL PROJECTS
10 ~ 8x10 or 8-1/2 x 11 Prints each
Presenters TBA
- May**
- Mon. 01: 2nd Critique – 3rd Group – FINAL PROJECTS
10 ~ 8x10 or 8-1/2 x 11 Prints each
Presenters TBA
- Wed 03:** Open Lab for ALL Photo Classes
- Mon. 08: Reading Day: **This is the last available day to work with me on your final projects**
- Wed. 10: **FINAL PROJECTS Due In Class Critique**

LINKS:

Provisions Library <http://www.provisionslibrary.org/>

ARTSBUS <http://artsbus.gmu.edu/>

ACRL's Visual Literacy Standards can be found here:

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/visualliteracy>

The Code of Best Practices for Fair Use for the Visual Arts:

<http://www.collegeart.org/fair-use/>

Potential Field Trips:

Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>

Robert Frank Collection at National Gallery of Art:

<http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/features/robert-frank.html>

National Archives <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/>

Elsewhere / Residency in North Carolina <http://www.goelsewhere.org>