

George Mason University  
School of Art in the College of Visual and Performing Arts  
Fall 2016 / AVT 354 – Digital Photography Techniques  
Class meets Tuesdays/Thursdays 4:30-7:10pm

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Office hours: by appointment before class starting at 3:30pm

### Course Description

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How can we use photography to describe a personal vision? In this class, we will investigate and shape our individual ways of seeing through what we choose to include (and exclude) within a frame. Through photographing weekly, in class demonstrations, slide lectures, and critique, students will engage in the problems of digital photographic production and seeing.

The course will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of digital photography workflow with the end goal of producing high-quality inkjet prints. Students will begin by learning about tonal adjustments, masks, and color correcting using curve layers, then moving into color and monotone negative scanning, and finally Camera Raw workflow for both digitally captured files and negative scans. After covering technical issues of the medium through demonstrations and individual exercises both in class and as assignments, students will apply those techniques to their own photographic work produced for this class. Students are expected to present 5-7 new 8.5x11 inch inkjet prints every other week. By the end of this course, students will have the following four things: 1) a working knowledge of digital workflow in Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Camera Raw; 2) a working ability to adjust and manage negative scans and digitally captured files in color and monotone; 3) the ability to produce high-quality prints; 4) an in-progress body of photographic work existing as inkjet prints.

### Goals

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- To have a thorough understanding and command of camera exposure: aperture, shutter, ISO and how these elements affect photographic description
- To photograph weekly using prompts or by visually responding to particular subject matter
- To produce 5-7 inkjet prints every other week for critique
- To produce a body of work of 12-15 inkjet prints by the end of this course
- To articulate, both in writing and verbally, how and why visual information affects you in your own work and the work of others
- To have a working technical skill set that includes:
  - Color negative and black and white negative scanning
  - Adjusting negative scans in Photoshop and Camera Raw
  - Curve adjustments: color correction, contrast
  - Masking and selections
  - Sharpening
  - Digital camera capture

- Importing files into Camera Raw and manage files as smart objects
- Manage negative scans as smart objects
- Camera Raw/smart object workflow
- Compositing files
- Up-sampling files to produce large prints

## Grading

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Assignments/work presented in critique 40%

Show new work each time your critique group presents. Submit all assignments on time. Bring new files to class to work on

Final project 30%

Show growth, change, and technical mastery in your pictures and prints

Participation/attendance 30%

Speak about the work of your peers in critique. Do work during open lab hours. Attend class on time. Please do not be late. Minus half a letter grade (ex: A to A-) for every two days you are late to class. Up to two absences are permitted. Three absences result in an automatic B- for the course. Four or more absences result in an automatic F for the course.

## On Critique

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Definition - Criticism [krit-uh-siz-uh m]

1. The act of passing judgment as to the merits of anything.
  2. The act of passing severe judgment; censure; faultfinding.
  3. The act or art of analyzing and evaluating or judging the quality of a literary or artistic work, musical performance, art exhibit, dramatic production, etc.
  4. A critical comment, article, or essay; critique
  5. Any of various methods of studying texts or documents for the purpose of dating or reconstructing them evaluating their authenticity, analyzing their content or style, etc.
- Dictionary.com (Retrieved October 9, 2013)

Critique in this class will last for 10-12 minutes per student. All students are expected to participate when reviewing the work of his or her peers. In this class, we aim to analyze and read the visual facts contained within each photographic frame. When making comments about photographs, it is important to explain why. Please do not simply state "I like your photographs." Instead, say "I like your photographs because..." When giving negative comments, please suggest solutions. Offer different ways to solve problems occurring in the photographs. The aim of weekly critique is to discuss how we make pictures, refine our technical choices, and delve deeper into each person's photographic way of seeing.

Weekly review of student work allows each student to clarify his or her thoughts (visually and verbally) in a predictable forum without surprises. Students learn to control and navigate his or her critique in a formalized structure. Furthermore, it allows for a distinctly privileged discussion among the class where we approach each other's work

from a position of knowing and seeing the work develop and change week after week. We are here to talk about, make, and take pictures.

Special note: if you miss a critique, please present your missing prints at the following date your group presents.

#### Materials

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- At least 1TB external hard drive plus *optional* back-up drive. Suggested brands: Seagate, G Drive, WD.
- At least one (1) box of 50-sheets of 8.5x11 inch luster paper from SoA print. Approximately \$100.00, which covers the paper and ink usage
- Digital SLR or micro  $\frac{3}{4}$  camera with lens. The camera must be able to produce raw files
- Memory card reader
- Negatives for scanning (either newly developed or old)

#### Class Schedule (subject to change)

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##### **Day 1 (Tuesday) 8/30:**

Introductions

Review syllabus

Exposure basics: shutter, aperture, ISO

Technical slide lecture: depth of field, motion, how lenses change the picture

Discussion on resolution, file types, compression

##### **Day 2 (Thursday) 9/1:**

Introduction to Photoshop: quick keys, brushes

Tone painting demonstration: layers, curves, masks (burning, dodging)

*Assignment:* work on tone painting exercise files. Submit screenshots at the beginning of the next class. Email them by the beginning of class if you are absent.

##### **Day 3 (Tuesday) 9/6:** (open lab begins, 7:30-10pm Tuesdays and Thursdays)

*3pm – optional b&w developing demo. Sign ups on Thursday 9/1*

Review tone painting

Monotone color correction

Color correction by numbers

*Assignment:* work on monotone color correction exercises and color correct by numbers exercises. Submit screenshots at the beginning of the next class. Email them by the beginning of class if you are absent. Bring in negatives (old or new) if you want to sample scan during class.

##### **Day 4 (Thursday) 9/8:**

Review monotone color correction and color correction by numbers

Negative scanning demo on Imacon and Epson

Scan during class

*Assignment:* make at least two scans (if possible: one monotone and one color) on either the Imacon or Epson using old negatives or new negatives. Bring the files to class.

*Assignment if you do not have negatives:* bring two high quality jpeg or tiff files straight from the camera to edit in class.

**Day 5 (Tuesday) 9/13:**

Working on color negative scans: color correcting, tone painting, spotting  
Working on monotone negative scans: tone painting, spotting  
Sharpening, grain addition/reduction

**Day 6 (Thursday) 9/15:**

Demo: printing  
Color correcting prints  
Open lab: continue to work on negative scans. One-on-one help in class

*Assignment:* make 1 print, 8.5x11 inches. Submit screenshots at the beginning of the next class. Email them by the beginning of class if you are absent.

**Day 7 (Tuesday) 9/20:**

Review printing  
Color negative and monotone scans as smart objects  
Open lab: work on negative scans as smart objects

**Day 8 (Thursday) 9/22:**

*One print due from negative scan*  
Review exposure and using digital cameras  
Demo: depth of field, motion, exposure  
Shooting raw files, analyzing histograms  
Bridge workflow—uploading files to the computer and selection  
Making contact sheets

*Assignment:* Read “The Photographer’s Eye” by John Szarkowski and make pictures in response to the five ways Szarkowski describes photographs.

**Day 9 (Tuesday) 9/27:**

Lecture: The Photographer’s Eye, The New Documents  
Review smart object workflow for scans  
Demo: smart object workflow with raw files in color

**Day 10 (Thursday) 9/29:**

Sign up for critique groups A or B  
Review smart object workflow with raw files  
Printing demo  
Using color checkers for different lighting conditions

Lab: work on your files/prints

*Assignment:* photograph/print for critique.

**Day 11 (Tuesday) 10/4:**

Critique: Group A. Present 5 prints in response to The Photographer's Eye.

**Day 12 (Thursday) 10/6:**

Critique: Group B. Present 5 prints in response to The Photographer's Eye.

**Day 13 (Tuesday) 10/11: no class**

*On-going assignment:* choose any assignment from the "Assignments" list. I suggest either carrying your camera wherever you go or blocking out time every week to photograph so you can make enough work for critique. Bring in your files to class and contact sheets (digitally or as laser prints), or view the files in Bridge

**Day 14 (Thursday) 10/13:**

Lecture: on photographic description—form, content, light, point of view

Demo: smart object workflow with raw files in monotone

*Assignment:* Work on color to monotone conversion exercise files. Submit screenshots at the beginning of the next class. Email them by the beginning of class if you are absent.

**Day 15 (Tuesday) 10/18:**

Critique: Group A. Present 5-7 prints.

**Day 16 (Thursday) 10/20:**

Demo on blending: bracketing, high dynamic range (HDR)

*Assignment:* Work on HDR exercises. Submit screenshots at the beginning of the next class. Email them by the beginning of class if you are absent.

**Day 17 (Tuesday) 10/25:**

Critique: Group B. Present 5-7 prints.

**Day 18 (Thursday) 10/27:**

Lecture: discuss work in direct reference to pictures presented by students in critique

Art star workflow demo

*Assignment:* Make an art star size file. Submit screenshots (at 100%) at the beginning of the next class. Email them by the beginning of class if you are absent.

**Day 19 (Tuesday) 11/1:**

Critique: Group A. Present 5-7 prints.

**Day 20 (Thursday) 11/3:**

Review art star workflow

Lecture: looking at projects/books

**Day 21 (Tuesday) 11/8:**

Critique: Group B. Present 5-7 prints.

**Day 22 (Thursday) 11/10:**

Lecture: on executing projects, logistics of production

Writing about your work

Sign up for individual meetings

Open lab

*Assignment:* write a statement about your work (no more than one page). Please email your in-progress statement to by 9am on the day of your individual meeting.

**Day 23 (Tuesday) 11/15:**

Group A individual meetings beginning at 3pm: discuss your final project (bring prints/contact sheets/Bridge)

Open lab

**Day 24 (Thursday) 11/17:**

Group B individual meetings beginning at 3pm: discuss your final project (bring prints/contact sheets/Bridge)

Open lab

**Day 25 (Tuesday) 11/22:** (no open lab after class)

Open lab / one-on-one help with files

**Day 26 (Thursday) 11/24:** Thanksgiving. No class.

**Day 27 (Tuesday) 11/29:** (no open lab after class)

Critique: Groups A and B. Show at least one (1) art star size print (at least 24 inches on the shortest side)

Groups A and B install work for exhibition (to be confirmed)

**Day 28 (Thursday) 12/1:** (no open lab after class)

Guest lecture TBA

**Day 29 (Tuesday) 12/6:**

Check in about statements and describing your work

Open lab in preparation for final critique

**Day 30 (Thursday) 12/8:**

Open lab in preparation for final critique / one-on-one help with files

**Final critique** groups A and B with guest critics. Read an optional statement to introduce your work. Present 12-15 finished prints and send screenshots of all final files with stacked layers. At least 1/3 of the pictures (4 if you present 12, 5 if you present 15) should be new photographs made this semester that you haven't shown in class or, preferably, produced *after* the last formal critique (group A: 11/1, group B: 11/8) plus perfect prints of older photographs. Dates and times TBA.

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**Unrequired—but suggested—textbook:**

*(handouts will be photocopied and available as PDF)*

Evening, Martin. "Adobe Photoshop CS6 for Photographers" ISBN-13: 978-0240526041

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**Assignments**

Two options: 1) photograph anything you like; your pictures can simply respond to the world around you and/or photograph a series/project of your choosing; 2) complete the following assignments in any order you like. For either option, be prepared to show 5-7 new prints (from new negatives or raw files produced this semester) for each critique. Also, please have screenshots prepared for submission so I can see how your individual workflows progress.

**The Decisive Moment**

What is Henri Cartier Bresson's "decisive moment"? Research what this is. Respond to the decisive moment by undermining it, finding it, or staging it.

**Making versus Taking**

You must "make" pictures and "take" pictures. Try and differentiate between the two words and what making and taking can look like as photographs. Think about your process and what the difference is when photographing and seeing the final product.

**Love and Hate**

Photograph something you love and photograph something you hate. Use the language of photography to suggest or imply love and to also suggest or imply hate. Challenge: photograph something you love and hate.

**Staged versus Found**

Find a compelling situation (example: dinner party, friends playing in the park, making dinner) and photograph it. Then, in a different situation, attempt to stage that event. Compare and contrast the pictures in critique.

**Photograph Someone You Do Not Know Well**

Photograph a stranger/someone you do not know very well. Meet them on the street or arrange an appointment.

### Photograph Someone You Are Close To

Photograph someone you are close to. Use photographic description to suggest your feelings or your relationship toward or with this person.

### Ode To—

Find a photographer whose work you find compelling or inspirational. Produce pictures which trade on the same virtues, either in formal invention and photographic description or in process, as the photographer you have chosen.

### Working the Scene

Find a situation you are interested in (example: a party, an outdoor event, etc.) and photograph it from as many different angles as possible: portraits, landscapes, still lifes, action shots. Photograph from as many different points of view as possible: close-up, far shot, looking up, looking down.

### Every Half an Hour

Expose at least one frame every half an hour you are awake. The aim of this assignment is to respond to different lighting conditions and to see how film/digital sensors and exposure reacts. In another, perhaps more long-term way, the aim is also to find a type of lighting condition that you prefer to photograph in.

### Hard Versus Soft

Produce pictures of the same subject in harsh lighting conditions (hard edged shadows) and also in soft lighting conditions (soft edged shadows or no shadows at all). What is the difference in the pictures? Make pictures in the opposing conditions of similar subject matter and see how it changes the reading of the pictures in critique.

### Photograph a Feeling

Photograph something or someone suggesting emotion: melancholy, sentiment, happiness, anger, etc. Use the camera to point to an emotion either implicitly or explicitly. Think about objects as visual metaphors, how light functions, or how an expression on a person's face can suggest an interior feeling.

### Compare and Contrast

Find or construct a visual comparison using at least two elements in the frame. Examples: apples and oranges, bike and car, adult and child.



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## **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 and Credits*

#### 2015 Fall Semester

September 24

October 22

November 19

#### 2016 Spring Semester

February 18

March 18

April 15

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*

Fall 2016

September 1: Richard Raiselis "Time for Reflection"

September 8: Judith Harris "Renaming Things: The Power of Metaphorical Thinking in Poetry and the Visual Arts"

September 22: Jonathan Linton "The Human Touch in the Digital Age: Portraits, Figures, and Thoughts"

October 6: Siebren Versteeg "Siebren Versteeg"

October 20: Studio 424 – Chicago "We Give a Shit – and We Do It for a Living"

Spring 2017

January 26: Walter Kravitz "Art is What Isn't – Studio Pursuits"

February 9: J.J. McCracken "The Dirt Eater and the Scold: Reflections on a Research-led Art Practice"

March 9: John Jacob "Photography at the Smithsonian American Art Museum"

March 23: E. Carmen Ramos "Rufino Tamayo: The New York Years"

March 30: Helen Frederick "Absorbing Traditions: The Labor of Art"

### *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, College Hall C211. For AVT majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407. (which one?!!)

#### *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 [ittraining.gmu.edu](http://ittraining.gmu.edu) to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.