

Digital Photography

Course Syllabus

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Course Information

Course Description

In this course, students learn to take artistic digital photos. They will analyze photos they have taken prior to the course and discuss if they fulfill criteria to be seen as art. Several theories of artistic expression will be discussed. Rules of composition, light, exposure, colors, etc. will be reflected on. In a second step the students will develop the competence to alter their digital photos with a program like "Photoshop Elements". They will be able to change the expression of their photos, combine different shots, creating their personal piece of art. As a final product students will create a portfolio with about 5 photos including detailed descriptions of their work.

Course Learning Goals

Depending on the competences you are signed up for, after completing this course, you will be able to:

- define and analyze a creative process, defining the concept of creativity and describing the components of a creative process in the field of digital photography
- explain how engaging in a creative process affects your perception of the world
- define indicators of artistic expression and reflect on the elements necessary to consider a photo a form of artistic expression.
- analyze digital photos in terms of their artistic style and expression
- create artistic digital photos and alter it electronically using computer software
- discuss the process of creation of an original work of art using a digital camera and specific software
- demonstrate technical ability in taking digital photos, discussing concepts, themes, or ideas expressed through this medium and the limits and possibilities of this technology.

Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net>.

Hint: type DePaul for name of the school.

[Click here for help buying your books](#)

- Students will need Adobe Photoshop Elements (version 4.0 or higher) to participate in this course. Adobe Photoshop Elements is a light version of the much more expensive and complete "Adobe Photoshop" (versions 4 and higher) or "Adobe Photoshop CS" series. If you already have access to more advanced software, you do not have to buy Photoshop Elements.
- The required book we will use in this course is: Peterson, B. (2003). Learning to See Creatively: Design, Color & Composition in Photography (Updated Edition) New York: Amphoto Books. ISBN:0-8174-4181-6.
- You may find it helpful to also use this optional text: Miotke, J. (2005). The betterphoto guide to digital photography. New York:Amphoto Books. ISBN: 0-8174-3552-2.
- To reduce the strain on the Blackboard course management system, you will be using Flickr to share your photos this term. Flickr is a popular photo sharing website that allows you to upload photos, join groups, organize your pictures with tags, and search for shared pictures on any subject area. To sign up for a free account, go to www.flickr.com and click the "Sign Up Now" button from the home page. If you have a Yahoo account, you can just enter your Yahoo! ID and password and click "Sign Up". If not, enter the typical sign up information. Once you sign in, you can create a Flickr screen name and sign in.
- You can use any digital camera in this course which
 - is not older than about 4-5 years
 - takes photos with 3 or more megapixels
 - has the possibility to alter at least two or three functions when you shoot a photo (that means not everything should be automatic)

If you do not have such a camera and if your budget does not allow you to purchase one, please contact me. We will find a solution.

A word of caution concerning the purchase of a camera on the Internet: If the price is too good to be true, you most likely will never get the camera. There are some stores on the internet which only send you the cheap camera you bought if you purchase several other overpriced items. If you deny buying more than the cheap camera, they never send you anything.

- One of the first assignments in the course will be that you present yourself together with "your best shot" (a picture you took which you think is the best you ever took). If you want to take some pictures before the course starts, you will have some more to select from.

Course Competences

In this course, you will develop the following competences:

Competence

Competence Statement and Facets

Can define and analyze a creative process.

- A-5
1. Can define the concept of creativity.
 2. Can identify, analyze, and describe the components of a creative process in one or more fields of human endeavor.
 3. Can explain how engaging in a creative process affects one's perception of the world.

Can analyze digital photos in terms of their artistic style and expression.

- A-1-X
1. Can define indicators of artistic expression to evaluate a digital photo.
 2. Can analyze and evaluate digital photos using established indicators.
 3. Can efficiently describe the artistic expression of a digital photo.

Can create an original work of art using an electronic medium and can discuss the creative process.

- A-2-D
1. Demonstrates technical ability in a form of electronic media.
 2. Discusses concepts, themes, or ideas expressed through this medium.
 3. Discusses the limits and possibilities of the chosen technology in the creative process.

Can create artistic digital photos and reflect on the elements necessary to consider a photo a form of artistic expression.

- A-2-X
1. Can take artistic photos using a digital camera.
 2. Can improve and alter a digital photograph using computer software.
 3. Can evaluate and explain how the final product matches the criteria of artistic expression.

Assessment Criteria for your Final Paper or Project by Competence

Your final project consists of a portfolio of 5 images with a detailed description of what they show, what they should express and how they attend to the quality criteria of art and digital photography. The images are:

1. A retaken best shot from Module 6
2. A cropped and improved image from Module 7
3. An artistic alteration of an image from Module 8
4. A combination of different photos from Module 9
5. A Student Masterpiece which the student considers his or her "best work" in this course.

The project will be assessed according to your competence:

A-5:

The student demonstrates in the portfolio that he or she is able to define and analyze a creative process. The description of the photos and the write-up contain a definition of the concept of creativity, an analysis and description of the components of a creative process in the field of digital photography, and an explanation of how engaging in a creative process affected his or her perception of the world.

A-1-X:

The student demonstrates in the portfolio that he or she is able to analyze digital photos in terms of their artistic style and expression. The student defines indicators of artistic expression to evaluate a digital photo efficiently and describes the artistic expression of each digital photo.

A-2-D:

The student demonstrates that he or she is able to create an original work of art using a digital camera and specific software while discussing the process of creation. The student will demonstrate technical ability, discussing concepts, themes, or ideas expressed through this medium and the limits and possibilities of this technology.

A-2-X:

The student demonstrates that he or she is able to create artistic digital photos and reflect on the elements necessary to consider a photo a form of artistic expression. This includes the electronic alteration of a digital photograph using computer software. The portfolio should contain an explanation of how the final product matches the criteria of artistic expression.

Course Structure

This course consists of 10 Modules. The estimated time to complete each Module is 1 week.

To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

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Assessment

Assessment of Learning

All students who are signed up for two competences have to complete all assignments. Assignments which relate to your competence will be specifically taken into account for the evaluation of your competence development. If you are signed up for one competence only, you may skip assignments based on the one competence you are signed up for. Please contact the instructor for further details. It is the quality of the work and the quality, breadth and depth of the analysis and elaboration in the particular sections that contribute to the grade on each competence.

Specific assignments relate to specific competences:

- A-5: Module 2 (Assignments #1 and #2). Note: Students will reflect on and analyze creative processes during the whole course. In Module 2 we will create the "theoretical knowledge base," the foundation for the analysis of our art work.
- A-1-X: Module 5 (Assignments #1, #2 and #3), Module 6 (Assignment #1)
- A-2-D: Module 4 (Assignment #1), Module 7 (Assignment #1), Module 8 (Assignment #1), Module 9 (Assignments #1 and #2)
- A-2-X: Module 3 (Assignments #1, #2, #3 and #4), Module 4 (Assignment #1) and Module 5 (Assignment #1)

As stated, for the assessment of your competence development specific importance is given to the assignments which relate to your competence. Please elaborate these assignments with special attention to quality and detail. Nevertheless you may elaborate all assignments (participate in all Forums) as the assignments built on each other.

In general we will assess competence development in this course, not so much writing skills or presentation skills. The evaluation of artistic work is a very subjective matter. It is important that the students develop skills to assess art work and pay attention to quality indicators. Students should develop courage to try something new, to step over their boundaries imposed by themselves and by others. Learning in this sense includes emotional and social processes. Evidence which students provide for the development of competence in this course include but are not limited to:

- a very detailed description of a photograph with a clear statement of the artistic intention
- a clear suggestion to a fellow student how a photo could be improved and how this would change the artistic expression
- the posting of a shot which is technically well taken, together with an analysis of what the student paid attention to
- a detailed personal statement indicating what emotions a specific photo provoked in comparison to the artistic intention of the author

It is very difficult to put points or grades too these issues. The sum of all course contributions should result in the final grade.

Digital Photography and Taste

Art is often a question of taste. You will show pictures in this course which you consider creative and artistic. Please keep in mind that we all have our own convictions what art is and what it is not. You may carefully evaluate which topics or themes are appropriate for this course. Please also consider the University Guidelines in your judgment. In general it is not the instructor who will make the final judgment if a photo is appropriate or not. This judgment will be made by the community of learners in this course.

If you plan to post pictures which display nudity, violence, sexual content, or content which may arouse disgust or aversion, please be aware that the appropriateness of these photos may be the topic of a discussion by the learning community.

Only photos which violate United States laws or University guidelines will be immediately removed from display.

Not a step by step instruction but a personal learning process

This course is not a step by step instruction to take digital photos. Furthermore, this course does not guide students through the detailed use of the Adobe Photoshop software. These functions are fulfilled by the textbook and user manuals.

In this course you will learn to reflect on artistic photography and develop competence in evaluating photos with a critical eye. After this course a digital photograph, from you or from others, will never look the same.

Learning in this course is not a linear process. Different people may learn different things from the same situation. Your learning in this course will depend on your prior knowledge and experience with digital photography and the required software.

Event Photography

Taking photos at an event is very difficult, especially when people are not expecting that their photo will be taken. At a wedding you might get people to stand still for a moment, not so at a party in reduced space. Almost always there are items in the picture which should not be there. Very often the illumination is poor or the composition is deficient. For this course you may opt for easier settings to take pictures and leave the "event photography" for later in your "career as a photographer."

General Assessment Criteria for All Writing Assignments

Your writing style is not graded in this course. Nevertheless all assignments should be written in English, without grammatical errors and with complete sentences. Your written expression should be clear and coherent and your text should be properly formatted and structured. References should be provided in an appropriate and consistent style, such as MLA or APA.

In the case that a specific text is not understood by your instructor, you might be asked to improve it and hand it in again.

A = 95 to 100 A- = 91 to 94 B+ = 88 to 90

B = 85 to 87 B- = 81 to 84 C+ = 77 to 80

C = 73 to 76 C- = 69 to 72 D+ = 65 to 68

D = 61 to 64 F = 60 or below INC

For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a "Pass" represents a grade of "A" for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement. Students wishing to declare a Pass/Fail option must do so before the end of the 2nd week of the quarter.

Percentage distribution of Assessments

Every student will receive a grade in this course based on his or her effort put forward, on the quality of the assignments handed in, and according to the demonstrated development of competence. This learning experience is considered adult education and the percentage distribution of assessments is handled in a flexible manner according to the general performance of each student. If you disagree with an assessment you can either defend your viewpoint or improve your work.

Grading Policies and Practices

All students who put forward a reasonable effort in this course and hand in quality assignments in a timely manner will achieve a passing grade (either a letter grade (A to C-) or a pass). We all start at a different competence level. For this reason you are evaluated if you demonstrate and gain competence. If you are a complete novice in the area of digital photography, you will be evaluated on the competence you gained, not on the "expert level" of your assignments. On the other hand, assignments of poor quality constantly handed in late or lack of participation in the Forums may cause that a student to fail this course.

Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

In general there are two types of postings: Your initial postings in which you present your content to your peers (introduction, your "best shot", your critique of an expert photo, etc.) and your replies to your peers. In your initial postings you demonstrate that you read the suggested texts and that you did your own research on the subject. If photos are requested, you post them with a detailed description of what they show and how they attend to the criteria of artistic digital photography. The other postings are replies to your peers. In these you may comment in a kind and supportive manner on the photos, ideas, analysis and conclusions of your fellow students. Your postings will be evaluated on how much they contribute to the discussion in content and number.

Online Participation Guidelines

We all want to create a pleasant and harmonic online learning environment. To do this, we must consider each other. Please write in a language that does not sound offensive; start your messages with a greeting and sign them with your name or nickname (no initials). Praise the work of others, giving critical feedback, including the following three points:

- What do I like in your posting?
- What could you improve based on what indicators?
- How could you improve it?

Abstain from using offensive language, do not make fun of anybody, and treat everybody kindly. If you receive critical feedback you may want to thank the person who posted it and either

defend your viewpoints or improve your work. The learning environment is the responsibility of all learners, including the instructor.

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Policies

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions"--interviewing and or observing other people--discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm"-physical, mental, or social-does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please

change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.

- a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an "informed consent" document. For information on creating an "informed consent document" see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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Course Expectations

Time Management and Attendance

SNL's online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than "face to face" courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour "face to face" course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

Final Note

Participating in SNL courses can be an enriching, rewarding experience, and a chance to share ideas in a safe environment.

Some difficulties at the beginning of an online course are quite normal; solving them is part of every distance learning experience. Enjoy your journey into lifelong learning!

Credits

This course was designed and produced by Hartwig Stein and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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