

NCAL 416B: HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY FOR OLDER ADULTS

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Winter 2026
Units:	0
Hours:	3 lecture, 3 laboratory per week (72 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Non-Degree-Applicable Non-Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Non-GE
Transferable:	None
Grade Type:	Non-Credit Course (Receives no Grade)
Repeatability:	Unlimited Repeatability

Student Learning Outcomes

- Examine the life and work of a historically significant photographer, explaining how their images reflected and influenced the cultural and social contexts of their time.
- Recognize the contributions of photographers from diverse cultural and social backgrounds in the historical development of photographic processes and practices.

Description

This noncredit course is targeted towards older adults. Examination of the history of still photography from the earliest investigations of the camera obscura to late 20th century electronic imaging. Emphasis on the role of photographs as a social and cultural force and on our artistic heritage of camera work.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Analyze historic images to understand their technological and cultural significance.
- Evaluate how the photograph as an inexpensive and reproducible picture affected nineteenth and twentieth century culture.
- Assess how photography influenced historic and modern painting and graphics and how those media, in turn, affect photography.
- Identify the major photographers through their photographs and philosophies.
- Compare and contrast the major photographic practitioners and photographic movements.
- Analyze how contributions of photographers from different cultures and backgrounds contributed to the richness and diversity of modern photography.
- Examine their own photographic work in relation to the photographers and styles presented during the course.
- Investigate how the technical evolution of the medium occurred and how techniques and technology affect reportage and vision.

- Appraise and critique in writing the important qualities of a photograph and compare and contrast one photograph to another.

Course Content

- Pre-history and inception of photography
 - The camera obscura
 - Early photochemical experiments
 - Daguerre, Fox Talbot, and the early experimenters
- Technical evolution in the nineteenth century
 - Daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and tintypes
 - Collodion glass plate process
 - Dry plates
 - Kodak and the rollfilm camera
- Technical evolution in the twentieth century
 - Advances in optics and film sensitivity
 - The 35mm camera
 - Color films
 - Digital imaging
- Major photographers and photographic genre
 - Landscape photography, portraiture, documentary, and other genre
 - Photo-Secession, The West Coast School, formalism, New Photographics
 - Journalism, documentary photography, and the evolution of war photography
 - Censorship, cultural bias, and freedom of expression
 - Commerce and photography: the gallery system, magazine, and value
 - Contemporary and evolving trends
- Writing about photography
 - Vocabulary of critical writing
 - Methods of discussion and comparison in art history

Lab Content

- Field trips to museums and galleries
- Emulation of historic images in traditional or digital darkroom
- Online discussion and critique of other students' writing

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

- Lecture room equipped for motion picture and slide projection, computer projection, and video presentation.
- When taught via Foothill Global Access: on-going access to computer with email software and capabilities, email address, and access to learning management system.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Objective and subjective quizzes
 Short essay responses
 Midterm exam
 Final exam
 Slide identification

Portfolio of written papers, including reviews of gallery/museum visits, book/film reviews, image analysis, and a longer research paper

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

During periods of lecture and demonstration, students will learn of the historical and technical developments in photography
 When delivered on campus, field trip(s) to galleries and museums will present students with the opportunity to see relevant works up close for more intensive study of the images
 Online instruction presented via lectures and discussion forums
 Quizzes, exams, and short essay responses will help to test students and solidify their knowledge

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Hirsch, Robert. [Seizing the Light A Social & Aesthetic History of Photography](#). 2024.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Longer essay/presentation on a photographer: 3-5 page essay about a photographer or topic in photo history that inspires you. Biographical information and significance in history of photography should be discussed. You should use a minimum of four sources, of which two must be books to research this photographer.
2. Outside readings: Choose a chapter from the list provided of the following books to read and write a short discussion of it. Post this in the online classroom. Read other students' postings and comment. Return to answer questions on your own posting. Examples of books on list: [A Choice of Weapons](#) by Gordon Parks, [On Photography](#) by Susan Sontag, [Photographers on Photography: A Critical Anthology](#) by Nathan Lyons, [Beauty in Photography: Essays in Defense of Traditional Values](#) by Robert Adams.
3. Short essay responses to assignments posted in online forum and feedback to other classmates.
4. Website articles on current event topics.
5. Photography exhibition review, 2 pages.

Discipline(s)

Photography