STUDIES IN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

“Reading American photographs is also a way of reading the past – not just the scenes recorded and the faces immobilized into permanent images, but the past as culture, as ways of thinking and feeling, as experience.”

This course introduces students to critical methodologies for studying American photography. Using foundational texts about photography as well as recent American Studies approaches to visual culture analysis, we will examine the cultural and political work that photographs perform at particular historical moments. We will explore the larger discourses they participate in, with a focus on the contingent roles of race, gender, class, nation, and citizenship.

Required Books (Available at the SLU Bookstore):


All articles are available on e-reserve, unless a www link is provided. The password is ***.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Attendance and Participation (20%)**
Class attendance is mandatory. I expect you to come to class fully prepared and to participate in class discussions. You must bring to class and submit the “critical reading question” sheet, which will ask you to engage with the assigned readings.

**Student-led Discussion (10%)**
Prepare questions for and facilitate a 30-minute discussion about the assigned readings. The discussion should be introduced by a formal, conference-style, ten-minute statement that relates the assigned readings to relevant broader course issues and raises critical questions.

**One Book Review and one Photo Exhibition Review (30%)**
For *American Quarterly* exhibition review guidelines, see
http://www.americanquarterly.org/index.php/about/exhibition_reviews
http://www.americanquarterly.org/index.php/about/book_reviews/

**Final Project (40%)**
You may choose from two options:
1.) Write a conventional research paper (topic of your own design), 20-25 pages in length
2.) Develop a photo exhibit, to be staged either in St. Louis or online. You may choose the topic, but it has to relate to the city of St. Louis. This project requires you to:
   a) Submit the photographs and a 12-page essay that contextualizes them historically/culturally and engages with other primary sources and secondary literature
   b) Organize a potential exhibition space (a local gallery, a SLU or other institutional site, a community center, or any other public venue) and a provide a tentative schedule and curatorial draft/outline
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (September 1)
Introduction and Welcome

Week 2 (September 8)
“Teaching us a new visual code”: Photography and Its Consequences

Week 3 (September 15):
The Formation of a Cultural History of Photography

Week 4 (September 22)
Locating Visual Archives

Week 5 (September 29)
State Power, Social Control, and Photography
- Taryn Simon’s “The Innocents” Project:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/burden/innocents/

Week 6 (October 6)
Photography and the Making of Immigration Policy

Week 7 (October 13)
Photography and Modern Corporate America
Week 8 (October 20)
Place Production: Landscape, Myth, and Photography
* FIRST BOOK REVIEW/PHOTO EXHIBITION REVIEW DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS *

Week 9 (October 27)
Race and Photography

Week 10 (November 3)
Gender, Race, and Imperialism

Week 11 (November 10)
Visual Texts and the Racialization of Space
* SECOND BOOK REVIEW/PHOTO EXHIBITION REVIEW DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS *

Week 12 (November 17)
Reframing Iconic Photographs/Reframing History and Historiography

Week 13 (November 24)
No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14 (December 1)
War and Photography
http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=3759
http://mcs.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/30/3/279
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/26/world/middleeast/26censor.html?ex=1217736000&en=dbcc93cc0647f37b&ei=5070&emc=eta1,
- Listen to segment or read transcript on NPR (National Public Radio):

**Week 15 (December 8)**
Final Project Presentations and Conclusions

**FINAL PROJECTS ARE DUE VIA E-MAIL ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, BY 5PM.**