STUDIES IN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

What can American photographs tell us about the past and the present, and about how Americans have thought about themselves and others? What can we learn from archives, the media, family albums, photography blogs, and facebook snapshots about the role of photographs in crafting individual and collective identities? From the Civil War to Abu Ghraib, and from the daguerrotype to digital media, this course introduces students to critical methods in studying American photography. We will examine the cultural and political work photographs perform at particular historical moments and explore the larger discourses they participate in. Topics include the history of photography, the work of documentary photographers, and the interpretation of photographs as a primary source in historical study and as an aesthetic object in contemporary art. We will also visit several St. Louis cultural institutions to learn first-hand how different professions use photographs on a daily basis.

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS
Book available at SLU Bookstore:

All articles are available on e-reserves, unless a www link is provided.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY
Please review carefully the SLU College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, including the definition and the consequences of plagiarism:
http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml
See also “Plagiarism Prevention Resources for Students”:
http://libraries.slu.edu/academic_integrity/plagiarism/plagiarism_students.html

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students who believe that, due to the presence of a disability, they may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this, or any other, class at Saint Louis University are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or by visiting by
the Student Success Center, Suite 331. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. I am only able to support student accommodation requests upon receipt of an approved letter from Disability Services. I will gladly speak with approved students after registration with Disability Services.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance and Participation (20%)**
Class attendance is mandatory. My attendance policy is strict and in accordance with SLU’s policies. Your course grade will drop by 1/3 (for example, from a B- to a C+) for every absence, beginning with your third. I expect you to come to class fully prepared and to participate in class discussions.

**Class Presentation (10%)**
Prepare a ten-minute class presentation that introduces, analyzes, and contextualizes a photograph, or photo blog, of your choice. Your presentation should raise critical questions about the assigned readings and facilitate an engaging discussion.

**Weekly Reading Reflections (20%)**
Submit short (1-2 pages, double-spaced) reading reflections on Thursdays, at the beginning of class.

**Midterm Paper (20%)**
Write a 5-7 page paper (photo analysis). Topic to be announced.

**Final Paper (30%) OR Photo Exhibit**
Write a 10-12 page final paper that uses historical or contemporary photographs and secondary literature. You can choose your own topic after consulting with me but need to write a formal assignment, including a research question or questions. You will also present your final project for about ten minutes in the last week of the semester.

OR:
Plan a photo exhibit for the SLU community on a topic of your choice, related to the city of St. Louis. You will have to produce the photographs and come up with a curatorial plan (how to display them, what labels to supplement them with). We will find an exhibit space at SLU and open the exhibit at the end of the semester. Submit a 5-page written statement that explains and contextualizes your ideas and choices.

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**Special Requirements for Honors Program Students**
Students enrolled in the Honors version of this class (HR 27761) will be required to submit more extensive written work: a 10-12 page midterm paper and a 15-page final paper based on primary and secondary sources. They will also give a 20-minute class presentation.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction
January 18
Course Introduction and Welcome
January 20
  http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/fashion/17photo.html?ex=1219636800&en=873f0f549100c96f&ei=5070&emc=eta1

Week 2: Reading Photographs
January 25:
January 27
Writing Workshop: “Writing With and About Photography”

Week 3: Picturing America
February 1
February 3

Week 4: Vernacular Photography
February 8
Patricia Holland, “‘Sweet it is to Scan…’: Personal Photographs and Popular Photography,” in Wells, ed., Photography, pp. 113-158.
February 10

Week 5: Family Photography
February 15
February 17
Shawn Michelle Smith, “’Baby’s Picture is Always Treasured’: Eugenics and the Reproduction of Whiteness in the Family Photograph Album.” The Yale Journal of
Week 6: Documentary Photography

February 22
James Curtis, “Making Sense of Documentary Photography”
http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/photos/photos.pdf

February 24

Week 7: Spectatorship and Knowledge

March 1

March 3

Week 8: State Power, Social Control, and Photography

March 8

March 10
- Taryn Simon’s “The Innocents” Project:
http://www.tarynsimon.com/works_innocents.php
- Taryn Simon, “The Innocents: Photographer’s Foreword”
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/burden/innocents/

Week 9
No Classes – Spring Break

Week 10: Digital Photography

March 22
March 24

FIELD TRIP TO MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM ARCHIVES

Week 11: War and Photography

March 29

March 31
  http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=3759
  http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/26/world/middleeast/26censor.html?ex=1217736000&en=d6cc93cc0647f37b&ei=5070&emc=eta1,
  - Listen to segment or read transcript on NPR (National Public Radio):

Week 12: 9/11: Contested Images

April 5
  http://www.slate.com/id/2149578/
  http://www.slate.com/id/2149675/
  http://select.nytimes.com/2006/09/10/opinion/10rich.html

April 7
  http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/ps/hirsch.htm

Week 13: Beyond 9/11

April 12
April 14

Week 14:
April 19
Online Brochure of the 2010 “Focus on Photography: Recent Acquisitions” Exhibition at the Kemper Art Museum
http://kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/exhibitions/2785
http://kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/files/Focus%20brochure.pdf
FIELD TRIP TO THE KEMPER ART MUSEUM AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
April 21
No class—Holy Thursday

Week 15: Lynching Photographs and Their Legacy
April 26
April 28
FIELD TRIP TO ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Week 16: Conclusion
May 3
Final Project Presentations and Feedback Session
May 5
Conclusions