Art 482 History of Photography (from WWII to the Present)       SPRING 2020

The Photographic Image in Modern and Contemporary Context:  
Ideas, Images, and Some Image Makers, 1945—Present

Professor: Dr. David A. Lewis  
Office Hours: MTWRF, 10:00-10:50; MW 1:30-2:20pm, T/R 2:00-4:00pm, by  
appointment  
Office phone: 936.468.4328  
Class meets: M/W 2:30-3:45pm  
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(Dr. Lewis does not use social media like Facebook or Twitter)

TEXTS: Handouts will be provided, with selective readings to be assigned as  
appropriate. Required for graduate students, and recommended for Undergraduates, John  
students: Terry Barrett, Criticizing Photographs, 4th Edition. (Some of the handouts are from  
this book, but the whole book provides useful and sometimes powerful insights on the art of  
photography and how we can understand and interpret it.  

For modern and contemporary trends, see especially these publications: Aperture and Blind  
Spot Magazine. There are numerous photography sites on the web, from “fan-based” sites and  
artist’s blogs, to notices by commercial galleries, professional foundations, photography  
programs, museum sites: all can be useful. Artdaily.org often features notices on photography  
exhibitions, auction sales/records, etc.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
Art 482B/582B provides an intensive examination of the major ideas, themes and some of the  
controversies germane to photography created after W.W.II and to the present. The course  
surveys the work of major individual artist photographers and their work, as well as provide  
further examples by less well known photographers. Working within the framework of an “Art  
in Context” approach, lectures and discussions will examine representative works not only in  
terms of formal conventions and innovations, but also with the idea of placing them within the  
broader historical milieu. The instructor encourages lively discussion among the students, who  
may wish to explore more fully certain issues raised in either the class lectures or assigned  
readings.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:  
Students who successfully complete ART 482/582 will demonstrate competency in  
understanding the core principles, events, theory and practice of photography as an art form  
from the Postwar years through the early 21st century. They will demonstrate: 1) an ability to  
identify and describe the significance of major photographers, 2) be able to identify  
representative examples of photography in fine arts, fashion, and popular culture for the period,  
3) a mastery of the core theoretical principles of postwar, pop, and postmodern photography as  
a broad historical phenomena, and  
4) articulate aspects of the interaction between photography and other visual arts.
STUDENT EVALUATION:
Students will be assigned according to their performance on three examinations (100 pts each, consisting of essays and objective questions), a term project (50 pts., keeping a weekly journal, with notes from readings, guest speakers and films viewed for the course, copies of handouts, other documents you may collect, and your own thoughts about photographs and photographic issues you find of interest), and class participation (50 pts., which includes: both attending class regularly and being involved in class discussions, attending the **Photofest Houston field trip on April 6th**). Grades: A 380-400; B 360-379; C 340-359; D 300-339

ADVISORY:
This course is NOT for the faint of heart: It necessarily presents and discusses some imagery of an explicit nature, i.e., photographs that explore (or exploit?) controversial subject matter (human sexuality, death and disease, religion, atheism, violence, crime and punishment, war, the ecology, politics, prejudice, social injustice, and other things that could/should be upsetting and even disturbing to someone, anyone, or everyone at some point in their lives.) This is the nature of the photograph of the last few generations.

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

PART 1. INTRODUCTORY TOPICS AND ISSUES

Week#:

1. Jan. 15.
   **Prologue: From Modern to Postmodern and the Metamodern Present**

2. Jan. 22.
   **Introduction: In and Out of Focus: Major Themes of Modern and Postmodern Discourse**

   **Viewfinder: What Do We See Photographically? Modernist Strategies and Typologies in the Photographic Arts.**

4. Feb. 3, 5. **PART II. STREET PHOTOGRAPHY**

   **The Decisive Moment: The Legacy of Cartier-Bresson**
   Readings: Handout on Cartier-Bresson

   **Word War II and its Aftermath: ‘The Family of Man’ in a House Divided; Robert Frank and the American Road**
   Readings: Handout.
Urbane and Mundane—City Life and Ordinary Experience
Readings: Students are encouraged to explore the internet on this topic.

The Re-emergence of Clandestine and Surveillance Photography
Readings: Students are encouraged to explore the internet on this topic.

5. Feb. 10, 12. PART III. STRAIGHT ART PHOTOGRAPHY AT MIDCENTURY

In Evidence: Traces of Traces
Readings: Handout. Students are encouraged to explore the internet on this topic.

What is the Sugar Doing in the Salt? Or Objects Objectified
Readings: Handout.


7. Feb. 24, 26. PART IV. PORTRAIT & FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY, 1940—1980s

“All Avedon All the Time, Everywhere, and Inescapably So!”
Film: “Darkness and Light,” class discussion

8. March 2, 4. PART V. VERNACULAR PHOTOGRAPHY

Picturing the Mundane and the Overlooked
Readings: Handout(s)

SPRING BREAK

9. March 17, 19. PART VI. CONCEPTUALISM & PHOTOGRAPHY

The Photograph as a Document, as an action
Readings: Students are encouraged to explore the internet on this topic.

    Camera Pictura: The Imaging Studio
    Readings: none.

    We See What We See—Observations on the “Gaze”
    Readings: Handout


12. April 9, 11. PART V. PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE POSTMODERN AGE, Stirrings, ca. 1965—1995

    On the Meaning of Nature in the Information Age
Readings: Handout

“The Politics of the Camera, or “Whose Taking the Pictures and What’s on the Agenda?
Readings: Handout

13. April 19, 22. PART VI. FROM POSTMODERN TO CONTEMPORARY PRAXIS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The Postmodern Photograph and Transmedia Expressions; Constructed Realities and the Hyperreal.

"Unpacking the Chocolate Box: Photographic Invention and the Eye-Candy Dreamscape"
Readings: Handout

15. April 30, May 2.
Postscript on Post-photographic Art in the Emerging Metamodern Era
“Seeing and Being: Are We What We See?”
Readings: Students are encouraged to explore the internet on this topic.

Final Exam (Consult official exam schedule)