

**DePaul University**  
**School for New Learning**  
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## **AI 333 ARTISTIC ISSUES IN INSTANT IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY**

NAPERVILLE Campus  
SPRING 2007 Quarter

### **FACULTY**

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### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

I am a photographer and an enthusiastic teacher of photography and the place of the photograph in history. My work has been exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide for almost thirty years. Since 1992, I have been teaching at DePaul's School for New Learning; since 1987 at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and, since 1999 at Columbia College Chicago. In the SNL, I teach photography and the medium's relationship to culture and civilization while, at the other institutions, I teach the history of photography or specialized black & white darkroom technique courses. Over the years, I have also worked as curator, art purchase consultant, reviewer, critic, lecturer, and interviewer.

I have a B.Sc. in Nuclear Engineering from North Carolina State University. While working at Argonne National Laboratory, I started doctoral work in high temperature thermodynamics at Northwestern University. Before completing that work, I changed direction and earned a M.Sc. Photography degree from the Institute of Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Specific information [exhibitions, lectures, publications, collections] is available at [alan-cohen.com](http://alan-cohen.com).

In 2001, the Block Museum and The University of Chicago Press co-published the monograph ON EUROPEAN GROUND, a book of my photographs made over the decade of the 1990s. Now run out and buy many copies of the book and I'll sign every one of them. A number of monographs of newer photographic work are moving through the idea-to-planning-to-fund-raising-to-execution stages with publication beginning in 2008 through 2010.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

9 am - 4 pm

Saturday **MARCH 31<sup>st</sup>**

Saturday **APRIL 14<sup>th</sup>**

Saturday **APRIL 21<sup>st</sup>**

Saturday **MAY 5<sup>th</sup>**

Saturday **MAY 19<sup>th</sup>**

### **4 CREDIT HOURS**

## PRIMARY BA–1999 COMPETENCIES OFFERED

**A-1-C** Can analyze artistic or textual works in terms of form, content, and style.

**A-1-H** Can explain the function of folk arts in transmission of culture and values.

**A-2-A** Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process.

**A-5** Can define and analyze a creative process.

And **some** other competencies **by arrangement**.

## PRIMARY PRE-1999 COMPETENCIES OFFERED

**AL-2** Can create an original work in an artistic form and justify that form.

**AL-3** Can evaluate works of art or literature in terms of form, content, and style.

**AL-E** Can explain the function of popular or folk arts in the transmission of culture and values.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

We live in a digital visual world so every analog method of seeing and making pictures might seem to be *behind the curve*. But digital and Polaroid imagery share commonalities of vision and color because each is a unique system and a singular method of image creation without precedent across the entire history of photography. If Polaroid materials ceased being so widely available, inexpensive and so interestingly beautiful, this course might transform into a wholly digital experience but that is **NOT YET** the case. Several other compelling issues lead me use analog instant visual systems: (1) moderately sophisticated digital cameras cost many times that of a Polaroid camera; (2) Polaroid cameras are easy to operate while a digital camera worth owning requires training and real technical savvy; (3) making a digital image is only the beginning of the real time and effort required to get a print while, with Polaroid, the distance between idea to a finished, resolved image is merely the one-minute needed for the image to appear; (4) Polaroid photographs are done in 60 seconds and fully color stable in 24 hours while digital image software (I am thinking of PHOTOSHOP CS2) offers no actual termination point because the software allows infinite micro- or macro- transformations. Knowing PHOTOSHOP CS2 and working with that software is neither quick nor functional and equally time-absorbing for individuals who do and do not know how to use it; (5) digital photographs are dependent upon the ink technology of the output printer, premium inkjet photo-reproduction papers and the power of the computer itself. For these accumulating reasons, this course requires a Polaroid camera **ONLY**.

That said, this is a terrific course because everyone in the class, very quickly, is making wonderful, direct, insightful, equal-opportunity, and meaningful photographs without the

distraction, in time and concept, of technology beyond our grasp. Further, fine art photography and the serious issues that it references are present in the images that emerge from what some people define as "amateur" cameras. These issues — aesthetic, cultural, intellectual, historical, and technical — are the issues that animate and define contemporary art and culture and will be explored through the Polaroid pictures created by class members. The ideas that emerge from the classroom discussions will be placed in a context that is personal, historical, and global. Personal artistic visions will be explored, encouraged, and developed.

Using instant image cameras to make purposeful pictures, students will learn a universal language to discuss those pictures and to develop the necessary personal and intellectual distance from their own photographs to understand how good their images are and to be able to critically analyze them and the work of others.

**NOTE:** Although the Polaroid Corporation is/was in bankruptcy and in transition, its films continue to be available at most major camera stores and the kinds of camera models marketed for their film is, surprisingly, being increased. IF YOU DO NOT OWN A POLAROID CAMERA AT THIS MOMENT, COME TO CLASS SO THAT WE CAN DISCUSS THE NUMEROUS GOOD OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO YOU. Of special note is the new Fuji INSTAX camera and film system. The wide-view camera is only \$50 but the film is more expensive than Polaroid film. The INSTAX pictures are wonderful. The camera and film are in limited supply in the Midwest but are fully available at [Central Camera](#) (230 S Wabash Avenue, Chicago, 312 427 5580).

## **TEXT**

**ICONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY: THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY** is the course text although there will be no specific required readings. This lavishly produced 1999 book is an extraordinary photographic resource. The book is filled with illustrations and observations about many of photography's most influential artists and commercial photographers. The book should be very helpful in leading you to and helping you define your final essays. Book details: Editor=Peter Stepan; Publisher=Prestel Verlag, Germany; ISBN=3 7913 2001 7; List price=\$29.95, available at both [barnesandnoble.com](#) and [amazon.com](#) for \$20.97.

## **LEARNING STRATEGIES**

This course assumes no prior digital nor analog photographic experience, no prior experience with art critiques, and no prior classes in contemporary art or photographic history. Success in this course is strongly dependent upon active, in-class student participation and out-of-class photographing. Presentation of at least *ten new Polaroid images per assignment* per student is anticipated. It is expected that each student will contribute to the in-class discussion and evaluation of the Polaroid images produced, as assigned, for each session.

In addition to the creation of photographs by each member of the class, all other arts will be informally explored to: (1) help establish the parameters and possibilities of each assignment; (2) assist in the formation of effective images; (3) help develop an

appropriate jargon-free analytic language responsive to art ideas and objects; (4) provide a means for judging the works of significant photographic artists.

The course will be structured as follows: each session will be devoted to the discussion of the Polaroid pictures assigned for that day and the issues arising from that work. Also, the works of established artists who use photographic materials will be presented to assist in the definition of the next assignment.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

I want to discourage absences for these reasons: (a) each class meeting is 20% of the quarter; (b) there is no effective way to make up or overcome a missed class; (c) progress in this class is cumulative and linear; (d) this is a participatory class rather than a tutorial. That said, I understand how life can insert itself into course plans so please talk with me about attendance problems and I will try to accommodate everyone, in every way possible, with a stellar reason for messing with the class schedule. The key: talk with me.

### **COURSE DELIVERABLES**

Through discussion and presentation, this course offers access to the insight required to *realize* the visionary, creative, and expressive dreams you share with accomplished artists. The photographic process offers an extraordinary means to help you formulate and share your thoughts and opinions with yourself and others. By the end of the course, you will be fully able to discuss and write about visual culture. If you feel you are not good at creative expression, you will, surprisingly, be making intensely creative images quickly; if you feel you are creative, then you will become more so; if you are not good at writing, I will help you get better; if you are good at writing, you will help us get better. The means by which the course grades will be determined will be this: 80% of the final grade will come from the four class assignments outlined below while 20% will derive from the competence essays. I will assist everyone in the formulation of these essays. Please be aware that this course wholly embraces the University policy on academic writing and integrity.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

#### **Class 1 / SATURDAY, MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup>**

Camera options: specific models and best price strategies.  
Introduction to instant image film: the color, response and more.  
Introduction to lighting and color: some theory and implications.  
Discussion of ASSIGNMENT #1.

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#### **Class 2 / SATURDAY, APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup>**

Presentation of photographs from **ASSIGNMENT #1**.

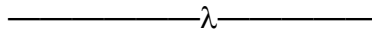
### **ASSIGNMENT #1 DOCUMENTARY IMAGERY —**

## **PERSONAL LIVES AND PUBLIC EVENTS**

Documentary photography can, at its best, be defined as a visual approach to truth through documentation - a purposeful method of gathering evidence. To fashion a truthful, communicative document is, as we know, difficult; to fashion a truthful visual document about oneself is yet more difficult because truth and reality can become entangled with self-image and memory. To cope with this evident dilemma, artists often rely on the summation of small details to provide bigger, broader, textual definitions. USING WHATEVER MEANS YOU DEEM APPROPRIATE, MAKE A SERIES OF PICTURES TO DEFINE YOURSELF THROUGH THE OBJECTS OR EVENTS OR INDIVIDUALS THAT COMPRISE YOUR LIFE, ENGAGE YOUR TIME AND REVEAL YOUR THOUGHTS.

The work of the following artists will be shown in class to help define and illuminate the documentary assignment:

Tina **BARNEY** (privilege, privacy and family life)  
Harry **CALLAHAN** (life as form in rarefied commonplaces)  
Eleanor **CARUCCI** (beyond the intimate family)  
Eileen **COWIN** (reality through theatricality)  
Sol **LEWITT** (unanalyzed autobiographical information)  
Judith Joy **ROSS** (finding yourself in the children of neighbors)  
Lydia **SCHOUTEN** (an invented vision of oneself)  
Hellen **VAN MEENE** (girls almost women)



### **Class 3 / SATURDAY, APRIL 21<sup>ST</sup>**

Presentation of photographs from **ASSIGNMENT #2**.

### **ASSIGNMENT #2: PORTRAITURE**

Descriptive portraiture enjoins the motives of the photographer with the needs of the sitter to create perhaps the most complex and difficult photographic situation. After adjusting to the face, the body, gestures, garments, and the environment, the portrait photographer then confronts these dichotomous issues: intimacy versus distance, masked versus explicit, idealization versus truth, desire versus limits, collaboration versus authorship, invention versus realism. AS YOU MAKE PORTRAITS OF FRIENDS OR FAMILY OR STRANGERS, REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU WANT YOUR WORK TO CONVEY, AND THAT THROUGH YOUR SUBJECT YOU REALIZE YOUR INTENTIONS.

The work of the following artists will be shown in class to help define and illuminate the assignment:

Patrick **FAIGENBAUM** (the Italian economic aristocracy)  
Roni **HORN** (repeating portraits)  
Philip **PEARLSTEIN** (figure as sculpture)  
Thomas **RUFF** (the faces of a generation)  
Cindy **SHERMAN** (the invented self)  
Egon **SCHIELE** (a study in painting perspective)

**Class 4 / SATURDAY, MAY 5<sup>TH</sup>**

Presentation of photographs from **ASSIGNMENT #3**.

**ASSIGNMENT #3: STILL LIFE -- FOUND / FABRICATED**

Photographers, once bound to chance and randomness within the *found* fraction of a second, are now *making* their pictures by assembling and constructing meaning across chosen and arranged moments. This activity has become so pervasive and consequential that the photographic still life, over the last decade, has been transformed and reinvigorated. A format previously dismissed as decorative, artificial and vapid is now seen to be complex, imaginative, and a rich and potent means of expression. Still life has become a way for photographers to *paint* a picture, to fully fabricate a vision and give form to a sensibility. **AFTER CONSIDERING THE IMPACT OF LIGHT, ENVIRONMENT, PERSPECTIVE, CLARITY, AND COLOR ON YOUR CHOSEN AND/OR CONFIGURED OBJECT(S), EXPLORE THOSE EMOTIONS OR IDEAS OR INTERESTS YOU FEEL REALIZABLE THROUGH THIS FORMAT.**

Additional work by the following artists will also be shown in class to help define and illuminate the still-life assignment:

Andy **GOLDSWORTHY** (invented landscape forms)  
 Jan **GROOVER** (uncommon beauty from simple things)  
 Eva **HESSE** (sculpture as drawing)  
 Barbara **KASTEN** (vivid fabrications)  
 Laura **LETINSKY** (dining debris becomes art)  
**The Reichstag Graffiti** (historical and fragile commonplaces)

**Class 5 / SATURDAY, MAY 19<sup>TH</sup>**

Presentation of photographs from **ASSIGNMENT #4**

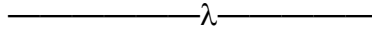
Submission of final papers.

**ASSIGNMENT #4: LANDSCAPE (URBAN / RURAL)**

The landscape has been a vehicle upon which artists, politicians, visionaries, scientists, and intellectuals have built dreams and theories about life, love, and metaphysics. The landscape has been variously seen as sublime, prosaic, dramatic, and exhausted, a repository of visions or a place to walk or dig. Some landscape work is felt to be direct, understandable, and the fulcrum for romance of a global or personal kind while other work is perceived as metaphoric, rarefied, and coolly conceptual. The local landscape image (natural and/or urban) is familiar and is therefore filled with the signs and symbols of cultural meaning. With that awareness, **GENERATE A GROUP OF PHOTOGRAPHS THAT USES THE NATURAL OR CONSTRUCTED LANDSCAPE TO CONVEY YOUR BELIEFS, ATTITUDES OR FEELINGS ABOUT AN ASPECT OF LIFE.**

Additional work by the following artists will also be shown in class to help define and illuminate the landscape assignment:

Eugene **ATGET** (data and detail in late 19th century Paris)  
William **EGGLESTON** (small details in the Southern landscape)  
TERRY **EVANS** (the Joliet arsenal and the city of Chicago)  
Richard **LONG** (conceptualized and intellectualized landscapes)  
Richard **MISRACH** (the landscape politicized)  
Bob **THALL** (the universal city)



## **EVALUATION AND GRADING**

All competencies require the creation and in-class presentation of pictures as defined by the four assignments as well as participation in the class discussions and the critiques of work. Additionally, each competence below requires a **researched, written** essay that adheres *unequivocally* to the University's guidelines on academic integrity as well as the guidelines and standards in the new SNL / DePaul writing assessment form. This essay should be submitted at or soon after the final class session *or else*.

**A-1-C / AL3** An essay that links specific works or bodies of works by accomplished photographers through an analysis of form, content and style of those works.

**A-1-X** A contextual essay that links specific works or bodies of works by accomplished photographers through the culture the works were created in.

**A-2-A / AL2** The creation of a series of ten or more Polaroid photographs accompanied by a descriptive essay that explores the decisions and sensibilities that guided you in making **and** selecting the work presented.

**ALE** An essay that explores the vision of the popular of folk arts in the transmission of culture and values.

**A-5** An essay that explores, defines and analyzes the creative process.