

SM2720: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Black and White Photography

Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

Course Number

2720

Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

SM1013 Introduction to Photography or GE1129 Creative Photography

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

While digital photography has become ubiquitous from personal entertainment to commercial application for its convenient and accessible technology, traditional darkroom practice has evolved to a new stage for its unprecedented

artistic value, its process as performance and its outcome as object of art. Just like the invention of photography 170 years ago which prompted an immediate emancipation of the representational mode of painting, the domination of digital imaging drives us to contemplate the essence of traditional photography which, bridging up the gap between now and then with the tactility of the photo emulsion that reacted with the light ray of the past, contributes significantly to the object history of contemporary art. And it is this physical nature which allows us to explore the artistic value that cannot be achieved by digital photography.

Black and white photography has developed its aesthetics and language for its own right alongside with colour photography, despite the common perception of it as the predecessor of the latter. It frees us the obligation to follow the colours of reality while offering a powerful vocabulary of greyscale, contrast, form and shape.

This course aims to explore the art of black and white photography with high-calibre camera work and advanced darkroom practice from film to print processing. Besides developing their aesthetic sense, students are expected to master the language of black and white photography with an adequate knowledge of various photographic materials and equipment.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 app.)		DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Master the skills of shooting in black and white media.			x	x
2	Operate cameras of larger formats confidently.		x	x	
3	Process various types of film adequately.			x	
4	Produce high quality black and white prints			x	
5	Develop an aesthetic sense in black & white photo media.		x	x	
6	Associate, combine and integrate practical knowledge of optics and chemistry into course assignments			x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Slide lectures	On the art of black and white photography and its technical issues	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	
2	Classroom presentation	Work of contemporary photographers	1, 5	
3	Workshops	Film processing and print making	1, 3, 4	
4	Workshops	Larger-formats camera	1, 2	

5	Workshops	Presentation of prints	1, 4, 5	
6	Critiques	Discussion of students' work	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Assignments	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	30	-	No
2	Presentation	1, 5	20	-	Yes
3	Class participation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	10	-	Yes
4	Print portfolio	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	40	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Assignment

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, build up argument and analysis. The threshold of 'discovery' lied in a student's self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Excellent grasp of research material, able to explain key concepts, assumptions and debates
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, distinct thesis, properly argued with strong narrative
- Insightful interpretation of the subject matter with distinct themes and thesis
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize
- Ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools
- Strong bibliography suggesting breadth and depth of coverage and informed insights

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Firm grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts and assumptions
- Reasonable organization, balanced structure, adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Clear ideas which keep to the point, clear-cut subject, ability to interpret opinions independently
- Organized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts
- Fair organization, weak structure, adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Relevant points to the subject matter, fair ability to interpret opinions
- Unorganized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic

Marginal (D)

- Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key concepts
- Poor organization and structure, weak content, limited use of resources
- Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions
- Insufficient and/or unorganized bibliography

Failure (F)

- Poor grasp of materials
- No organization and structure, inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources
- Irrelevant points to the subject matter, minimal ability to interpret opinions
- Irrelevant bibliography

Assessment Task**2. Presentation****Criterion**

This assessment will grade on content and fluency of presentation. Students should show their co-operation to conduct a well-organized presentation with their own argument and evidence from readings and notes. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lied in a student’ s self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative
- Superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter
- Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition
- Good verbal communication: comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge of the subject matter
- Fair organization, weak structure and composition
- Fair presentation skills: acceptable pronunciation, expression and diction, fair time-management

Marginal (D)

- Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter
- Poor organization, structure and composition
- Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time-management

Failure (F)

- Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter
- No organization, structure or/and composition
- Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management

Assessment Task**3. Class Participation****Criterion**

This assessment task reviews students’ participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of ‘negotiation’ , the sign of discovery, lies in students’ pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points

- In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate
- Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views
- Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points
- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret opinions effectively

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing
- Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Fair ability in interpreting opinions

Marginal (D)

- Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views
- Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Poor ability in interpreting opinions

Failure (F)

- Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher
- No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Minimal ability in interpreting opinions

Assessment Task

4. Print Portfolio

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature
- Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production
- Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter-disciplinary project
- Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Limited ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Marginal (D)

- Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Marginal ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Failure (F)

- No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium
- Fail to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Additional Information for AR

All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Referenced artists for study and presentation:

Eugène Atget, Judith Joy Ross, Nicholas Nixon, Frank Gohlke, Joan Fontcuberta, Robert Adams, Josef Koudelka, Chris Killip, Ray K Metzker, Robert Cumming, Zeke Berman, Hilda & Bernd Becher, Diane Arbus, Daido Moriyama, Bill Brandt, Stephen Shore, Thomas Struth, Gabriele Basilico, Lee Friedlander, Sally Mann, Abelardo Morell, Samuel Fosso, Matthew Pillsbury, Jed Devine, Marcus Leatherdale, Kenneth Josephson, Dag Alveng, Mari Mahr & etc.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Adams, Robert, Why People Photograph, New York: Aperture, 1994.
2	Garrett, John, The Art of Black and White Photography, London: Octopus, 1990.
3	Shore, Stephen, The Nature of Photographs, Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
4	Szarkowski, John, The Photographer's Eye, New York: MoMA, 1966.
5	Rand, Glenn & David Litschel, Black & white photography. Australia; Albany: Delmar Thomson Learning, c2002. TR146 .R35 2002
6	Stone, Jim, A user's guide to the view camera. [S.l.]: HarperCollins Pub., c1987. TR258 .S67 1987
7	Schaefer, John Paul, The Ansel Adams guide: basic techniques of photography. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1999. TR146 .S374 1999

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Photographers/artists for study: Robert Adams, Dag Alveng, Nobuyoshi Araki, Diane Arbus, Eugène Atget, Gabriele Basilico, Hilda & Bernd Becher, Zeke Berman, Bill Brandt, Robert Cumming, Jed Devine, Joan Fontcuberta, Samuel Fosso, Lee Friedlander, Frank Gohlke, Guido Guidi, Chris Killip, Josef Koudelka, Kenneth Josephson, Marcus Leatherdale, Sally Mann, Abelardo Morell, Nicholas Nixon, Matthew Pillsbury, Judith Joy Ross, Mari Mahr, Ray K Metzker, Daido Moriyama, Thomas Struth, Minor White & etc.