

# SM3739: DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Documentary Photography

### Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

### Course Number

3739

### 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

SM3721 Theories of Photography & Imaging

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course aims to introduce the basic concepts and knowledge of documentary photography. Students are encouraged to engage in the way of thinking the documentary photography as a media to link with the social issues and personality feeling.

Through the works of western photographers and Hong Kong photographers, the student will understand the possibilities and visions of photography under different culture background. A historical overview on China and Hong Kong photography is outlined in the course. Students are inspired to produce photographic images related to their identity and social culture. We will focus on the photographic aesthetics, passion on social issue, individual creativity and independent vision which are the principle rules in documentary photography. Students are expected to manipulate their camera with creative techniques to take the experimental photo essay as the final assessment.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

| CILOs |                                                                                     | Weighting (if app.) | DEC-A1 | DEC-A2 | DEC-A3 |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1     | Develop a competent visual judgement on social issue.                               |                     | x      | x      |        |
| 2     | Analyse the complete work of master documentary photographers comprehensively.      |                     |        | x      |        |
| 3     | Establish the social awareness through critical eyes.                               |                     | x      | x      |        |
| 4     | Produce visual presentation in magazine format.                                     |                     |        | x      | x      |
| 5     | Contribute to class discussion with reference to additional reading materials found |                     |        | x      | x      |
| 6     | Develop sustainable professional connection to the industry                         |                     | 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    | Lecture              | Presentation of the photo portfolio of Master photographers and Art Movement | 1, 2     | 2hrs/wk                    |
| 2    | Workshop             | Outdoor shooting on field trip.                                              | 2        | 3hrs                       |
| 3    | Student presentation | Classroom presentation and critique.                                         | 3, 5     | 30mins/wk                  |

|   |          |                                                                                    |      |           |
|---|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------|
| 4 | workshop | Photographic assignments using different techniques to present the personal style. | 4, 6 | 30mins/wk |
|---|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------|

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

|   | ATs                                                                                              | CILO No. | Weighting (%) | Remarks ("- " for nil entry) | Allow Use of GenAI? |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Assignment 1: Photo study of a personality in social issue.                                      | 1, 5     | 25            | -                            | No                  |
| 2 | Assignment 2: Photo study in selected Hong Kong districts through people' s interview.           | 2, 5     | 25            | -                            | No                  |
| 3 | Assignment 3: Prepare a comprehensive photo-essay with in-depth understanding on special topics. | 3, 5     | 25            | -                            | No                  |
| 4 | Assignment 4: A photo reportage for magazine.                                                    | 4, 5, 6  | 25            | -                            | No                  |

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Examination (%)**

0

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

## 1. Photo Study

**Criterion**

This assessment will grade on rationality, clarity and fluency of argument and comment. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lies in a student’ s ability to negotiate a position that is informed, defensible, and standing on personal insight.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Rich content, excellent ability to interpret and integrate various resources
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition
- Precision in argument, well defined and reasoned points of view grounded in insightful interpretation of existing literature
- Readiness to respond to peer opinion and other views initiated in class discussion
- Discussion shed light on new dimensions of the issue

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand

- Reasonable organization with balanced structure and composition
- Clear elaboration of ideas that sticks to the point, with clearly differentiated issues, ability to interpret opinions independently
- Sufficient responses to peer comments to sustain a discussion

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Fair organization with adequate structure and composition
- Relevant points made to the subject matter in question
- Ability to respond to other statements and engage in class discussion

**Marginal (D)**

- Weak content, limited use of resources
- Poor organization, structure and composition
- Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions
- Ability to respond to other comments in simple terms

**Failure (F)**

- Inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources
- No organization, structure or/and composition
- Irrelevant points to the subject matter, no ability to interpret opinions
- Fail to respond to other comments

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**Assessment Task**

2. Photo Essay

**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**

#### **3. Photo Reportage**

#### **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

**Theory:** A selection of the masters and their technique will be covered in lectures:

Photographers: John Thomson, M. Miller, Fr. Leone Nani, Lewis Hine, W. Eugene Smith, Dorothea Lange, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, William Klein, Marc Riboud, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Liu Heung Shing, 新中國照相冊, Li Zhensheng, Yau Leung, Chen Giu, Chen Jick, Chung Man Leung, Wong Kan Tai, Simon Go, Vincent Yu, Ko Chi Keung

### Reading List

#### Compulsory Readings

| Title |                                                                                 |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Photojournalism . LIFE LIBRARY OF PHOTOGRAPHY . Revised Edition 1983            |
| 2     | Frank, Robert. The Americans. 1959. First Scalo Edition, 1993                   |
| 3     | Heung Shing, Liu. China After Mao, Penguin Books, 1983                          |
| 4     | Koudelka, Josef. GYPSIES, APERTURE, 1975                                        |
| 5     | Koudelka, Josef. Prague, 1968. Photo Notes, 1985                                |
| 6     | Klein William. William Klein. Photo Notes, 1985                                 |
| 7     | W. Hine, Lewis. Lewis W. Hine. Photo Notes, 1992                                |
| 8     | Riboud, Marc. Marc Riboud. Thames and Hudson, 1991                              |
| 9     | Zhensheng, Li. RED COLOR NEWS SOLDIER, Phaidon, 2003                            |
| 10    | WEEGEE. WEEGEE, Aperture Master of Photography. Konemann. 1997                  |
| 11    | Cartier-Bresson Henri. Henri Cartier-Bresson. Photo Poche, 1982                 |
| 12    | 翁維銓, Yung, Peter. 總站, 終結。The Fermination, 水墨出版社, 1980                           |
| 13    | 侯杰主編, 新中國照相冊, 1949-1999。三聯書店, 1999                                              |
| 14    | Hong Kong Photographers, GOHO, 2006                                             |
| 15    | In The eyes of the Press.瞬息、訊息 Hong Kong Press Photographers Association, 1992  |
| 16    | 鍾文略·歲月留痕·鍾文略—攝影五十載·利文出版社, 1999                                                  |
| 17    | Arbus, Diane. Diane Arbus. Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd, 1972                      |
| 18    | Smith, W. Eugene. W. Eugene Smith. Photofile, Thames and Hudson, 1983           |
| 19    | 籠民·Cage People. SoCO, 1994                                                      |
| 20    | GO, Simon. People With No Money, Simongo c 1997                                 |
| 21    | Yan Leung. Photo Hong Kong . 1950' s-1970' s. Joint Publishing(HK)co. Ltd. 1999 |
| 22    | Kan-Tai, Wong. Tiannman 89' 廣場上的日子, 黎民出版社, 1990                                 |
| 23    | 攝影中國, 1860-1912年的中國, 雄獅圖書, 1979                                                 |

#### Additional Readings

| Title |     |
|-------|-----|
| 1     | Nil |