

COMM 230, Basic Photography for the Mass Media

Department of Communication
North Dakota State University, Fargo

Spring 2013
3 credits

Instructor: Ross F. Collins, Ph.D., 202 Ehly Hall; 231-7295;
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Instructor's qualifications: The instructor is a former newspaper photographer and freelance photojournalist. More than 400 of his photos have been published in a wide variety of local and national publications, including the New York Times. He has exhibited his work in 29 exhibits and juried shows.

Office hours: 9:30-11 Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Required text: *Langford's Basic Photography*, 9th ed., 2010.

Recommended texts: *Photoshop for Dummies*, or *Photoshop Quick Start Guide*.

Bulletin description

An introduction to digital photography techniques for students who plan to specialize in preparing visual images for print and online mass media.

Course objectives

The goal of this three-credit course is to provide a good grounding in basic digital photography, and basic photo preparation skills using Photoshop software. It is aimed at students whose intention is to prepare visual images for mass media, either in print or online, but techniques covered in class should be helpful to any student who wants to be a better photographer.

Required student resources

Access to a digital camera is required. A digital SLR is highly recommended; a "hybrid" camera is acceptable. An amateur-level point-and-shoot camera is not recommended, and a cellphone camera is not acceptable. Students who have these basic point-and-shoot style cameras will find it quite difficult to complete these assignments, and will not learn as much about basic camera principles.

Most students who will eventually work in media-related professions will find they are expected to own or know how to use a DSLR. It's a worthwhile investment.

Note: A few DSLRs are usually available for student loan at the IACC Help Desk.

Students must use Photoshop software to prepare all assignments. This software is available at all university computer clusters; students who choose to do their work at home will need to purchase Photoshop or Photoshop Elements. Student discounts are available at the bookstore.

The class will be managed through the university's Blackboard Web-based class management system. Students will be asked to submit assignments through Blackboard.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on four photography assignments, four Photoshop assignments, a number of exercises, a midterm and a final examination. Quizzes or in-class exercises may be given with or without prior class notification. See attendance policy below.

Grading

Tentative point totals are as indicated. These may change slightly during the semester, depending on number of other assignments and quizzes.

Assignment One, 40 pts.

Assignment Two, 50 pts.

Assignment Three, 60 pts.

Assignment Four, 75 pts.

Photoshop exercises, 10 pts. each, 40 pts. total.

Quizzes and other assignments: 110 pts.

Midterm exam: 75 pts.

Final exam, 125 pts.

Total: 575 pts.

Letter grade percentages:

90-100 percent=A; 80-89.9 percent=B; 70-79.9 percent=C; 60-69.9 percent=D; below 60 percent=F.

Class attendance

Attendance is expected. While the instructor will not grade on class attendance, quizzes or other in-class activities cannot be made up. The instructor realizes students may need to miss a class now and then for a variety of reasons. To offer students some flexibility, he will grant one “free skip day.” Points missed for assignments done in class during that day, if any, will be dropped from final grade calculation. The instructor recommends students keep this free day available in case of emergencies, but students may choose to use it for any reason. Beyond this free day, missed in-class assignments can't be made up, unless the student can show documentation of military service, health emergency, or similar extenuating circumstances.

Tentative class schedule Spring 2013

Readings indicated in addition to the textbook, along with the Photoshop exercises, may be found on the instructor's website, rossfcollins.com. Choose the Classes option, scroll to COMM 230 and 330, choose Resources. These readings will also be linked to the class Blackboard site as needed. Note some exercises as described on the instructor's website may be updated before assigning.

Week One, Jan. 7-11: Introduction, “What is Photography?” Chapter 1; Lecture Synopsis 1.

Week Two, Jan. 14-18: Qualities of light. Chapter 2; Lecture Synopsis 2 and 4, “Light.” Also reading entitled “Qualities of Light Illustrated.”

Week Three, Jan. 21-25 (No class Monday, Jan. 14, Martin Luther King Day): Lenses. Chapter 3; Lecture Synopsis 3 and 5. Assignment One due 5 p.m. Friday.

Week Four, Jan. 28-Feb. 1: Cameras. Chapter 6. Lecture Synopsis 4, “Writing Outlines.” Photoshop Lesson One due 5 p.m. Friday.

Week Five, Feb. 4-8: Focal length. Chapter 5.

Week Six, Feb. 11-15: Lighting principles and equipment. Chapter 7. Photoshop Lesson Two due 5 p.m. Friday.

Week Seven, Feb. 18-22: Composition. Chapter 8. Assignment Two due 5 p.m. Friday.

Week Eight, Feb. 25-March 1: Exposure. Chapter 10. **Midterm exam is Friday, March 1.**

Week Nine, March 4-8 : Post-production. Chapter 14. Photoshop Lesson Three due 5 p.m. Friday.

Week 10, March 18-22 (March 11-15 is spring break week): Photo critique. Lecture Synopsis 7, and reading entitled “Handy Concepts of Composition Illustrated.”

Week 11, March 25-29 (Friday, March 29, and Monday April 1, is Easter Break, no class): Special topic No. 1. Assignment Three due 5 p.m. Wednesday.

Week 12, April 1-5: Photo history. Readings as assigned.

Week 13, April 8-12: Special topic No. 2. Photoshop Lesson Four due 5 p.m. Friday.

Week 14, April 15-19: Documentary photography. Assignment Four due 5 p.m. Friday.

Week 15, April 22-26: Wrap up, prepare documentary project.

Week 16, April 29-May 3: Final class exercises, Review for final exam.

Final exam date: As indicated in NDSU course schedule, 3:15-5:15 p.m. Thursday, May 9.

Note: assignments must be submitted by their due dates. Grades for late assignments will be reduced by the equivalent of one letter grade. **Assignments more than two weeks late will not be accepted.**

Official university notifications

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. NDSU Policy 335, Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct, applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the Office of Registration and Records. Informational resources about academic

honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty.

Note: If you need special accommodations for learning, please let the instructor know as soon as possible.

Tentative photo assignments

Note: Be sure to submit assignments as jpgs, not as RAW files. You may choose to photograph your work as RAW files, however.

Assignment One: Dramatic angles.

Shoot about 40 frames of people or scenes around campus from unusual angles. You might shoot down from the top of a stair. Or shoot up lying on your back. Or shoot someone framed by something else. Or really close in on something. Or shoot a seldom-seen view of something. Use your creativity, as long as: 1) it's not the common viewpoint; 2) at least half your photos have people in them. Submit for critique at least three unusual angles. I suppose I don't need to tell you not to try anything dumb like lying on the railroad tracks or shooting down the campus smokestack? Hey, it's been done.

Assignment Two: Light fantastic.

Shoot photos relying on a variety of common qualities of light. Include examples from these options:

- strong natural light, dramatic shadows and highlights. May be sunlight, strong window light.
- flash on camera, pointed directly at subject. If you don't have a flash, try setting up a spotlight or lamp.
- flash off camera, bounced off a ceiling or wall. If your flash won't bounce, try a white hankie or Kleenex to diffuse the light.
- diffused light, cloudy day, classroom, filtered through window.
- colored light: incandescent, fluorescent, candle. NO FLASH--turn off flash, if automatic.

Submit at least three examples; include properly written journalism-style cutlines describing the light and subject.

Assignment Three: Compose yourself.

Identify elements of photo composition from the class lectures, readings or text, and compose them in a way you believe produces a more dynamic photograph. Try to emphasize a single element you think dominates more than any other. Shoot a few frames you know to be considered “composition mistakes,” to compare differences. Submit at least four examples, including one composition “mistake,” and include cutlines describing the compositional element emphasized, or the mistake depicted.

Note: Photos for assignments three and four should be carefully adjusted in Photoshop for cropping, levels/curves, color correction, sharpness, and whatever else might be necessary. Grade on these will reflect both quality of original image and quality of work in Photoshop.

Assignment Four: A final project.

Campus documentary project. Find images that you think best reflect student life. They will probably be on campus, but they may be off campus, including apartments, entertainment, workplace, or other places. Submit at least four images, with cutlines.