

## **Research Through the Lens: Photographic Methods in Social Sciences**

MA level course, 2 US Credits / 4 ECTS Credits

Winter Term 2023/24

Lecturer: Daniel Halasz

Schedule: Mondays 13:30 – 15:10

Office hours: by appointment

Email: [halaszd@ceu.edu](mailto:halaszd@ceu.edu)

### Course Description

The course delves into using documentary photography as a research tool in the field of social sciences. Designed with a hybrid structure, combining learning about photographic technique, exploring relevant projects and developing personal work, it aims to equip participants with the skills and knowledge to integrate visual methodologies into their academic pursuits. Historic and contemporary photographic practices will be explored and compared focusing on the role of artists/researchers in addressing societal, political, historical issues and personal experiences. Besides examining the work of various photographers, participants will gradually and continuously develop their own projects that reflect on the pressing issues of our time, ideally related to their own research interests, while learning about the ethical considerations and implications of their practice, fostering a sense of responsibility towards their subjects, audiences, and the medium itself.

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this module, students will be able to:

- understand basic photographic technique and post-production software tools;
- develop a personal visual project from idea conception to final presentation;
- critically articulate how current issues can be addressed through visual media;
- address the technical, aesthetic and ethical implications of photo projects;
- engage in ethical, collaborative relationships with subjects and audiences;
- describe recent trends and practices in the genre.

### Course Requirements and Assessment

#### *- Project Pitch & Proposal (10%):*

The pitch is a concise, timed presentation using reference images and lasting 60 seconds, proposing the idea of your project to the class, clearly explaining the story. It is followed by a timed, 4-minute group critique. The proposal is a 2 page document based on the feedback from the pitch, describing the project in detail (why/what/how), a production schedule and at least 4 photography projects as visual references.

#### *- Photo Exercises (30%):*

Six small exercises, aimed at helping to develop the personal project, completed outside of class time. Each week there is a blind vote, whose winner can skip an exercise during the term. Exercises will be briefly critiqued in class, time permitting, or during appointments scheduled with the lecturer outside of class time.

*- Pair presentation (10%):*

Participants will pair up for a 8 to 10-minute presentation of a photographer. The presenters should email a brief plan for the presentation by 13:00 the day before the presentation.

*- Final Project (30%):*

A gradually and continuously developed, personal photography series on a topic of your choice that is directly relevant to the theme of the course. The work should have around 6 – 12 images presented in a tangible, physical form as an installation plan, interactive story, zine or other form after instructor approval. A digital, PDF presentation of the final work is also required for backup and archival purposes.

*- Participation in critiques and class discussions (20%):*

Active participation and constructive feedback is expected from all members during class discussions and critiques.

### Course Schedule

- Week 01:** Introduction, origins & early practitioners
- Week 02:** Theory: Social injustice & activism  
Practice: cameras & lenses  
Exercise 1 due
- Week 03:** Student presentation 1 & 2  
Theory: Substance abuse  
Practice: exposure triangle  
Exercise 2 due
- Week 04:** Off-campus photography workshop / My Ankerbrot
- Week 05:** Student presentation 3 & 4  
Theory: Mundane everyday life  
Exercise 3 due
- Week 06:** Assignment due: personal project pitch
- Week 07:** Student presentation 5 & 6  
Theory: Exploration vs exploitation  
Practice: photo cataloging  
Assignment due: project proposal  
Exercise 4 due
- Week 08:** Theory: Socio-political critique & media  
Exercise 5 due
- Week 09:** Student presentation 7 & 8  
Theory: Globalization & surveillance  
Practice: photo editing  
Exercise 6 due

**Week 10:** Rough edit presentations

**Week 11:** Theory: Gender & reproductive rights  
Practice: print production

**Week 12:** Final presentations

**\*Note\***

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any updates will be communicated to students promptly.

## Rubric for Photography Assignments

Criteria include:

### *Technical Knowledge and Application (40%)*

Composition and framing (rule of thirds, leading lines, balance)  
Focus and exposure  
Aperture, shutter speed, and ISO settings  
Depth of field and bokeh  
White balance and color correction  
Effective use of lighting and shadows  
Editing and post-processing  
Demonstration of knowledge about camera settings and functions  
Ability to apply technical skills to achieve desired results

### *Creativity and Vision (40%)*

Relevant research on chosen topic with historic/contemporary visual references  
Originality and unique perspective  
Conceptual depth, interpretation of the theme or assignment  
Emotion and storytelling  
Visual impact and aesthetic appeal  
Experimentation and exploration of different techniques

### *Presentation and Quality (20%)*

Cropping and resizing  
File format and resolution  
Presentation style and format (e.g., prints, zine, online gallery)  
Professionalism and attention to detail  
Effort and commitment