

# Introductory Digital Photography

Yale University Summer Session 2025 ART S138

Art S138 Introduction to Digital Photography

Lisa Kereszi

YSS 2025 Session A

The focus of this online class is the digital making of still color photographs from anywhere in the world with particular emphasis on the potential meaning of images and on making them in a photo-saturated world. Through intensive independent picture-making, students develop a personal visual syntax using color and composition for effect, meaning, psychology and narrative possibility. Students produce original work using a required digital camera and receive critical feedback. Introduction to a range of tools including color correction and fine-tuning exposure. Assignments include prompts, regular critiques with active participation and a final critique. Lectures examine the progression of photography as fine art medium and the tradition of handheld, natural-light photography through the 20th century and into contemporary practices in the 21st, focusing on a range of influences and voices.

Images are discussed and critiqued while projected onscreen, and the focus is on the image as an end to itself as well as how it functions in a sequence and in various environments. Photographs are discussed as stand-alone visual statements, as well as in context, and concentration is on the conception of and making of a picture rather than on the print as object, as students will not learn inkjet printing or have class or lab access in this course. Students must have access to a digital camera (DSLR, point-and-shoot or smartphone). Readings and online videos and specific shooting assignments will be assigned over the course of the session. Attendance is mandatory, and no absences are allowed.

Grades are based on: 50% creative work shown in final critique, 25% work shown in prior critiques, & 25% participation. The beauty of this class is in the image-making, inspiration, and influence that is possible not just locally sourced in New Haven, but from anywhere around the globe.

## **Week 1:**

M: Introductions: Intro to the course and lecture on optics and the beginnings of photography in the 19th century & your individual introductions to the group – students should screenshare one representative image to show and discuss with the class.

Assignment: make 25 exposures between now and next class inspired by the earliest photographic images you saw today. Watch: 30 min video from Eastman House Museum under Pages.

W: Lecture: How to move your pictures onto your computer, and how a camera works, building on the photo history lecture and digging in to the ways a camera's tools control

the way a picture looks, such as using depth-of-field for more or less sharpness in foreground/background and shutter speed for motion blur. Basics of file types and using an in-camera light meter and tips on using Preview, (or Bridge, time permitting) to view your pictures as a contact sheet.

Assignment: Reading TBD, video, find and read your camera manual, make 100+ exposures/images making use of techniques discussed in class, and edit down to 10 best on your own. Continue to be inspired by those 19th century pictures shared. If in New Haven, view the photo history exhibit I curated in the study gallery of the 1st floor (rear) of the Peabody Museum, taking time to read all of the wall and object labels AND also visit the show, Photographic Storytelling, at YUAG on the 4th floor, the latter of which closes June 2!

## Week 2:

M: More on contact sheets and viewing photos. Share your 10 best images from this week with the class for intensive feedback/discussion/conversation. What makes a good picture? Where to stand? These questions, and more, will be discussed in the course of the critique and discussion. Assignment: make 25 exposures between now and next class, taking points raised in today's class into consideration.

W: Lecture on some of the high points of 20th century analog photography, the move from B&W into

color as fine art, including Robert Frank, Diane Arbus, Nan Goldin, Roy DeCarava and many

more, plus tips on exposure and editing tools.

Assignment: **Reading:** first 45 pp of CC & handouts 1-4 (under *Files*); **visit** any local art/photography exhibition on your own and select one picture from it to present next week. Thinking about the individual voices of the photographers shared this week; **shoot:** make 100+ exposures/images in response - some that only you could make, and some in emulation of something you saw in the lecture, and edit down to your 10 best. Think about work made in the private vs. the public sphere. **Watch:** one or more of the videos from the MFA Pop-up lecture series under Pages. **View:** Street Photography Powerpoint (#11 under Files) & Read Garry Winogrand chapters of CC a week early, if desired.

## Week 3

M: Share your 10 best images (and one chosen visited exhibition image w/ short, 2 minute exposition on what you saw, if visited already) with the class for intensive feedback/discussion/conversation. Feedback will deepen and dig into the why of what you are each doing when you press the shutter and select an image to present.

Assignment: make 25 exposures between now and next class. View: Out in the world, keep your eyes peeled for public art (murals, sculptures, graffiti, wheat-pasted flyers, etc.)

W: Lecture/demo on Photoshop editing and color correction techniques. Resizing, sharpening.

Assignment: Reading: 45 more pp of CC, plus handouts 5-8, make 100+ exposures/images about the specific place you are currently living, thinking about it in

terms of whether it is transitory/visiting or "home"/the idea of home, and edit down to 10 best on your own. **Watch:** one or more of the videos from the MFA Pop-up lecture series under Pages. **View:** Robert Frank The Americans Powerpoint and Kerouac intro under Files, and link for more info on the work under Pages & read Robert Frank and Walker Evans essay in CC early, if desired.

#### **Week 4:**

M: Share your 10 best images with the class for intensive feedback/discussion/conversation *and* if you have not already shared your visited exhibition, share an image and 2 minute presentation on the exhibition you chose to visit. Assignment: make 25 exposures between now and next class.

W: Lecture on RAW sliders and other Photoshop tools. Lecture on contemporary photography, discussion on public art and the work of Zoe Strauss and a Yale MFA photography survey.

Assignment: **Reading:** 45 more pp of CC; Make 50+ exposures/images to round out your body of work, inspired by the contemporary voices, and put what you learned about Photoshop editing into practice to color-correct and make the best version you can of your 15 strongest images, *and* make one small, quick print at home, Staples, Tyco, etc and **install** it out in the world somewhere to leave your mark on the place you are inhabiting now. Snap a picture of it in situ to share next week. **Watch:** one or more of the videos from the MFA Pop-up lecture series under Pages.

#### **Week 5:**

M: Final Critique – longer critique and discussion with 15 best images from the semester from Group A (7 students, 1st half of alphabet), including snapshot of your one print left out in the world. Assignment: Read last 45 pp of CC.

W: Final Critique – longer critique and discussion with 15 best images from the semester from Group B (7 students, 2nd half of alphabet), including snapshot of your one print left out in the world. Wrap-up and conclusion.

I am looking forward to working with you in this intensive and fun art course!