

Introduction to Photography

ART 217

Tues/Thurs 11:00 am – 1:50 pm

Professor Amy Montali

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Course Description

This is a beginning course for students with little or no experience in photography. Our primary focus will be on skill-building and creative production, with additional emphasis on conceptual and critical development.

The course will introduce basic camera operation, processing, and printing. By the end of the semester you will be able to control exposure with a manual 35mm camera, develop your own black and white film, make contact sheets, and produce 8"×10" prints in the traditional (chemical) darkroom. You will be using these skills to develop your own vision and style. You will learn to consider and utilize lighting, composition, and tonal values in order to express your ideas and solve visual problems. You will also begin to think about your work in relation to historical and contemporary photography.

Art cannot be a monologue. Contrary to the current presumption, if there is any man who has no right to solitude it is the artist. – Albert Camus

Format

The class will meet for two 3-hour sessions each week. On Tuesdays we will be in the classroom for demonstrations, problem-solving, and critique of your work. We will also look at slides and discuss current ideas about photography. On Thursdays we will print in the black-and-white darkroom. This will be time for you to develop your printing skills with professional guidance and assistance. *Please note that shooting and film processing must be completed outside of classtime. In-class lab time will be for printing only. You must plan accordingly and bring appropriate materials each week.*

Requirements

You are required to attend all classes and lab sessions, complete a series of shooting assignments, participate in group discussions and critiques, and complete a final project which will include a portfolio of ten finished prints. You will also be expected to give a 10-minute in-class presentation on the work of one well-known photographer, and to complete up to three short writing assignments.

There will also be several short quizzes.

Photography demands energy and commitment. To do well in this class you will need to spend *at least* six hours a week outside of class photographing, developing your film, and making prints. You will not be able to successfully complete all of your work during in-class lab times. Each student is expected to shoot a **minimum** of twelve rolls of film by the end of the semester. You will submit contact sheets and prints from every roll of film, along with your final portfolio. *Keep this in mind as the semester progresses.*

Grades

Semester grades will be based on attendance, timely completion of assignments, class participation, and the strength of your portfolio at the end of the semester. Your level of commitment and progress throughout the term will factor considerably. Conceptual exploration will be as important as technical understanding. This means that I will be interested in what you think and say about your pictures, as well as how well you make them. I encourage you to take risks and push yourself!

*Please note that arriving late, leaving early, or missing classes will affect your grade negatively. Contact me **in advance** if you have a valid reason for any absence. Arriving more than 20 minutes late or leaving more than 20 minutes early without excuse will be considered an absence. This includes lab days!*

*Please also note that completing the minimum numbers of rolls and prints each week will be considered **average**, which corresponds to a grade of C. For a higher grade shoot more and print more.*

Approximate grading structure:

- 30% attendance and class participation
- 30% completion of assignments, on time and with genuine effort
- 40% final presentation of work (evaluation factors include: individual progress from beginning of class, craftsmanship, and originality/creativity in developing visual ideas)

Materials

*You should expect to spend at least \$150-200 on materials for this class **in addition to** the cost of a camera. You will be unable to complete the course successfully without these materials.*

You will need:

- a 35mm SLR *film* camera with **manual** exposure adjustments, a built-in light meter, and a **50mm** lens. (If you have an automatic camera it must have a manual mode option – this means you can manually adjust the film speed, shutter speed *and* aperture. *Ask if you are unsure. Do not purchase a fully automatic camera for this class! And sorry no digital.*)
- **one** roll of Ilford XP2 400 **or** Kodak BW400CN - only buy **one** roll of this! (this is black & white film that can be processed like color film at a regular store like CVS)
- approximately 12-15 rolls of Ilford HP5+ film **or** Kodak Tri-X, ASA 400, 36 exposures
- clear plastic sleeves to store negatives and make contact sheets
(Please make sure you get Print File 35-7B - ask the salesperson to help you find these.)
- a three-ring binder or negative storage box
- one can of Dust-Off (canned air) to clean negatives, or a static-free cloth or brush
- photo paper for darkroom printing (one 100-sheet box of 8"×10" resin-coated variable contrast paper: Ilford Multigrade RC Pearl or Kodak Polycontrast RC Semi-Matte. If you would like to try the Glossy surface I suggest you start with a 25-sheet package.)
!!DO NOT OPEN THIS PAPER PACKAGE IN THE LIGHT!!
- a small towel for the darkroom (this will get stained)
- a pair of rubber or vinyl gloves
- a Sharpee for marking your contact sheets (any color)

- **highly recommended:** a film developing tank and two reels, approx. \$20

Places to buy supplies

SBI (Hunt's Photo), 86 Point Street, Providence, across from Hess station • phone 401-751-5190

RISD Store, 30 North Main Street, Providence • phone 401 454-6464.

B&H Photo/Video, 420 Ninth Ave. New York (fast delivery, best prices)

call to order 800-947-7785, or go to www.bhphotvideo.com

Freestyle Photographic Supplies, Los Angeles

call to order 800-292-6137, or go to <http://www.freestylephoto.biz/>

(Arista.edu paper is cheaper than Kodak or Ilford - get variable contrast resin coated semi-matte)

Camera Repair

Midstate Camera Repair, 389 Warwick Ave., Warwick RI • phone 401-467-7390

Zack's Camera Repair, 791 Hope St., Providence • phone 401-273-7247

Recommended Textbooks

Photography by Barbara London and John Upton, Eighth or Ninth Edition

A Short Course in Photography by Barbara London and Jim Stone, Sixth Edition

Black and White Photography: A Basic Manual by Henry Horenstein

Other Suggested Reading

Ways of Seeing by John Berger

On Photography by Susan Sontag

Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes

The Photography Book edited by Phaidon

Magazines to Review

Aperture (available at RIC)

Blind Spot (available at RISD)

Afterimage (available at RIC)

Photo District News (PDN) (available at RIC)

