

JOUR3710 :: Advanced Photojournalism

Course Overview

This is an advanced course in visual communication. “Communication” is the key word for this class — all of the images that you create need to communicate an idea, event or moment to an audience outside of this classroom. Photographs and stories need to resonate with readers — this is not a class for artists, no fuzzy pictures of trees allowed. (Hurricane coverage, maybe, exempted from this rule.)

This course is designed to help you build upon the skills you already have and learn new ones. Content will be the most important factor, although we will spend time working on location lighting and exploiting technologies for the betterment of our readers.

Since the end result of your academic life should be the beginning of a successful professional career, this class will mirror many aspects of the working world. You will learn how to pitch your ideas and stories to editors through written proposals. You will learn to work with an editor and you will get a glimpse into the business side of the industry.

You will also spend a significant amount of time shooting and much of the class will be spent critiquing your work. Reading assignments will be given out from time to time and you are expected to read the Athens Banner-Herald and The Red & Black on a daily basis. A class blog has been created for you to check and contribute to.

There’s a strong argument to be made that the photograph is the most powerful of human creations. It packs information and emotion, it has the power to change lives and the ability to alter the current of history. It is a tool that must be wielded wisely and purposefully, and we will explore it thoroughly.

This can be a class of frustrations — there are a lot of things that can go wrong. And, to be honest, there are a lot of things that will go wrong. What separates the great photojournalists from the clerks at the one-hour photo counter is their professionalism and perseverance, their desire to tell a story.

Please leave your ego at the door — critiques will be constructive and strong. No one walks into this class with an A — if you knew everything already, you wouldn’t be here. You will be able to — and you should expect to — redo almost every assignment in this class. Learn to learn, that’s why you’re here.

Topics of Discussion

We will discuss a wide variety of topics and, depending on the needs and desires of the class, we may modify this listing:

- Lighting for need and effect
- The ethics of working in the industry: yesterday, today and tomorrow
- Philosophical approaches to photojournalism
- Social value of photographs
- The photo assignment
- The photo story
- Working in the newsroom, working outside of the newsroom
- The business of photojournalism
- Developing contacts in the industry

Technicalities

Deadlines are sacred. Therefore, any assignment not turned in by the assigned deadline will not be accepted and will be given a grade of zero. For assignments with electronic submissions, please budget your time accordingly.

The intent of an education is to learn, not to just earn a grade. Because of that, any assignment that is turned in on time can be redone for a different grade. Redos are due two weeks after the graded work is returned to the class. (The final portfolio is excepted from this policy.)

Grady College is a “professional” school and a high degree of professionalism is expected in this class. Attendance is mandatory, for as in the real world, work is done by those who show up. Not showing up for class will greatly affect your ability to succeed. Each unexcused absence will result in a one-half letter grade reduction in your final grade. Photojournalism takes commitment — commitment of time, commitment of mind. Nowhere is it written, or implied, that if you come to class and do the minimum amount of work, you will master the material.

Every image must have a caption attached to it. The majority of your assignments will be submitted electronically and those images need to have a full, AP style caption attached to it that includes contact information for you. Images with missing captions will not be accepted and will be treated as a missed deadline.

Grades will be based on a combination of factors.

A (90-100) — Professional quality work. Excellent technical execution — sharp, properly exposed and toned. Audio is clean and well layered. Excellent composition — visual hierarchy is well established, a reader will be able to differentiate the primary subject from foreground and background items. Content is of value to the target audience and hits on the ideals of historical, sociological, psychological and aesthetic standards discussed in class. Well controlled with excellent moments. Flawless captions.

B (80-89) — Journeyman photojournalism. Strong technical execution — sharp, well exposed and toned. Good composition that allows the reader to understand the given subject. Audio is clean and well edited. Competent storytelling image that is clean and controlled. Good moments that advance the story reported. Adequate captions.

C (70-79) — Entry level photojournalism. Adequate technical execution — sharp, some exposure issues. Problematic composition that struggles to communicate. A “record shot” that accompanies a story but does not offer any insight into the issue or event documented. Audio is not clean, does not add to the story. Problematic captions.

D (60-69) — Not publishable. Poor technical execution — not sharp, improperly exposed or poor toning. Unclear or unorganized composition. Content is not relevant to the target audience. Audio is inconsistent or of poor quality. Incomplete captions.

F (0-59) — Not acceptable, not publishable. Major technical issues. Unclear subject matter. Inaccurate or misspelled captions. Missed deadline.

Deviations from this syllabus may be necessary and will be announced in class.

Supplies & Equipment

You will be assigned a camera kit on the first day of class and additional equipment will be available for checkout throughout the semester. As this is a shooting class, you should bring your equipment every week. In-class exercises and shooting assignments will happen. Be prepared. You will need to purchase compact flash cards for use throughout the semester.

Recommendations will be made in class. It is not advisable to store anything on the lab computers — they are not backed-up and they are not protected. Take everything home with you, every night. You will need to have business cards made within the first four weeks of class. A set of over-the-ear headphones will be very helpful for the audio assignments, though ear buds will work.

We will use Kenneth Kobr’s *Photojournalism: The Professionals’ Approach* as a text book. It is also strongly recommended that you pick up Dave LaBelle’s *The Great Picture Hunt 2*. It contains a wealth of ideas on how to build contacts within communities and how to enterprise stories of value. Also recommended is Howard Chapnick’s *Truth Needs No Ally* — anyone serious about photojournalism must read this book.

Assignments

The Photo Request: You will be responsible for generating two photo requests each week. One of these requests should be event oriented, the other should be feature or documentary oriented. These will be due, typed, at the start of class on Tuesday, beginning on August 25, and contain all the information a photographer would need to complete the request, including date, time, location, directions and contact information. These should be requests that can still be shot, not for events that have already happened. Due: Weekly

Weekly Work: By 2 p.m. on Tuesdays you will need to post a photo package online for review. Some weeks topics for these images will be assigned (for instance, pictorial, sports, weather, etc.), some weeks will be open. The process of posting will be discussed in class. **Due:** Weekly

Documentary Photo Project: You will identify an on-going story, issue or theme to document throughout the semester. You will need to set up a web site or blog and post at least one image from this project each week. Wordpress.com has the easiest interface for dealing with photos and captions right now, so that's recommended. If you have your own site, you can use that, too. You should collect audio throughout the semester, as well, as an audio slide show will be part of your final portfolio. **Due:** Subject and site built, August 28; weekly updates to be posted by 5 p.m. every Friday

Bar Camp: Every Thursday the class will start with a 10 minute talk by one of you on anything photojournalism related you think would help your classmates. This can be technique, technical, aesthetic or even a look at someone's work you find inspiring. The goal is to open up everyone's mind to new ideas. **Due:** Whenever your name is drawn for

Blog Posts: You'll be invited to join the class blog and required to post something by 9 a.m. each Friday and comment on something by noon on Friday. Start a discussion, continue the discussion. Talk about stories.

Day in the Life of a Photojournalist: Your opportunity to learn about the business first-hand, you will spend at least a day with a working photojournalist, documenting their day and collecting images from their portfolio. You will then create a 5-7 minute audio slide show that you will narrate. The last portion of the show will be the photojournalist critiquing five of your images. Examples will be shown in class. **Due:** Notification by subject, September 15; Final project, November 17

Written Story Proposal: Larger photo projects need prior approval (and funding), so you will research and write a proposal for a long-term photo story. The framework for this will be based on the Alexia Foundation for World Peace and Cultural Understanding and, by the end of the semester, you will have both a proposal and portfolio to apply for a scholarship or grant from the foundation. **Due:** September 22

The Portrait Series: Every publication needs these and being able to do them at a high level will help you be more successful. Lighting techniques, taught in class, will help you create three different, on-location portraits: one executive style, one environmental style and one purely conceptual. **Due:** October 13, October 27 and December 1

Quizzes: There may be unannounced quizzes based on readings or current events.

The Intellectual Photographer Paper: This will be a short paper, due on the final day of classes, that reflects on what you believe is the most important photo ever made and why. **Due:** December 1

Final Portfolio: A final portfolio of images shot during this semester. The portfolio needs to contain at least 20 images and include spot news, general news, feature, sports, portraits and pictorial images in addition to an audio slideshow from your semester-long documentary project and your DITL project. Due: December 11, 5 p.m. SHARP

Other assignments may be added, including group projects, as needed.

Workshop

On Saturday, September 26, there will be a motorsports workshop at Road Atlanta, a race course in Brasleton, Ga. The American Le Mans Series will issue credentials to the class and visiting editors and we shall cover the eleventh running of the Petit Le Mans, a 10-hour long sports car endurance race. Details will be discussed in class.

Grading

Class participation and assignments 1, 3, 5, 9 and 10

10%

Assn. 2

20%

Assn. 3

15%

Assn. 4

5%

Assn. 6

15%

Assn. 7

5%

Assn. 8

10%

Assn. 11

20%

Academic Integrity

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Each student is responsible for informing themselves about these standards before performing any academic work.

The only reason readers continue to support newspapers is because they believe they are credible. All work done for this course must be your own and done this semester. If you are assisted during a shoot, it is advisable to note such help in your captions.

Special Needs Students

The Disability Resource Center provides academic services to eligible students who have a documented physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more life activities. Students with a disability or health-related issue who need a class accommodation should make an appointment to speak with the instructor as soon as possible.