

Introduction to Photojournalism

JOUR 3610

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Course Overview

This is an introductory course in visual communication. “Communication” is the key word here as the skills you will learn are designed to help you be better communicators. This is not an introduction to photography course. Though we will be using photography as a tool, our end goal is not to become “photographers” but “photojournalists” – professionals who tell stories through images. It’s a fine line, but one we will explore and discuss at length over the coming weeks.

A photograph is an immensely powerful thing. Momentous events in history – and our lives – are noted by the photographs of those times. The street side execution of a Viet Cong soldier. A lone student stopping a line of tanks in Beijing. The break-up of the shuttle Columbia. A Cuban boy being taken from his relative’s home. The words conjure these images, the images help to tell the story of these events.

Advances in technology have made some aspects of photojournalism more accessible to the ordinary person. Television news programs now encourage “citizen journalists” to cover events and send in their images. The technical side of photography is easier than ever.

But the hard part is still the hard part – where to point the camera, when to push the button. All the acronyms in the world slathered across the packaging of the latest and greatest the camera companies can produce won’t help with those two things.

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.

Over the next few months, we will examine the technical side of photojournalism to the extent that it will become second nature. And as that knowledge seeps in, we’ll also explore what makes a great photograph, how photographs resonate with viewers and our roles as visual communicators.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Topics of Discussion

We will cover a wide array of techniques, issues and ideas. This listing is by no means exhaustive, but it’s the basic framework we’ll work from.

- Exposure – apertures, shutter speeds and sensitivities
- Control
- The types of images used in publications
- Digital imaging
- The effect of lens selection
- Great photographs
- Captioning

- Deadlines
- Teamwork in the newsroom
- Law, ethics and censorship
- Process vs. Essence
- Building a career

Technicalities

Deadlines are sacred in the news business. Therefore, any assignment not turned in by the assigned deadline will not be accepted. 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 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.

Grades will be based on a combination of factors.

A – Professional quality work. Excellent technical execution – sharp, properly exposed and toned. 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 – Journeyman photojournalism. Strong technical execution – sharp, well exposed and toned. Good composition that allows the reader to understand the given subject. Competent storytelling image that is clean and controlled. Good moments that advance the story reported. Adequate captions.

C – 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. Problematic captions.

D – Not publishable. Poor technical execution – not sharp, improperly exposed or poor toning. Unclear or unorganized composition. Content is not relevant to the target audience. Incomplete captions.

F – Not acceptable, not publishable. Major technical issues. Unclear subject matter. Inaccurate or misspelled captions. Missed deadline.

Do not ever try to surprise an editor or instructor – if you have a question, ask. If you are unsure, ask. You have multiple ways of contacting me – take advantage of them.

Supplies & Equipment

You will have the opportunity to borrow a digital camera kit for the semester. Each student will be fully responsible for any equipment checked out from the college. We will go over the procedures and requirements in class.

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.

We will use the *National Geographic Photography Field Guide*, by Peter K. Burian and Robert Caputo, for our textbook.

As this is a shooting class, you must bring your equipment every week. In-class exercises and shooting assignments will happen. Be prepared.

Assignments

Due dates and assignments are tentative and may move, depending on the needs of the class.

1. Clip File – To make good photos, you need to know good photos. Each week you'll need to bring in three recently published images – one strong photo, one weak photo and one other image to be discussed in class. (*Due: Every Wednesday*)

2. 36 Faces – Shy? This will help you get over it. As photojournalists we constantly have to approach strangers, here's your chance to practice. (*Due: Wednesday, January 23*)

3. Depth of Field and Lens Selection – Four images of the same scene using the extremes of focal length and aperture possibilities. (*Due: Monday, February 4*)

4. Long, Medium and Close-Up – A series of images from one setting. (*Due: Monday, February 11*)

5. Light – See it, believe it, use it. (*Due: Monday, February 25*)

6. Campus Scene – Students in their environment doing what students do. (*Due: Monday, March 3*)

7. Environmental Portraits/Personality Portraits – Show us who someone is. (*Due: Monday, March 17*)

8. The Multimedia Essay (Pt. 1) – Getting to know your subjects and sharing parts of their lives with us. (*Due: Monday, March 24*)

9. Stop, Pan and Blur – Three action photos that use different shutter speeds to convey different effects. (*Due: Monday, March 31*)

10. Events – How to cover them, how to explain them. (*Due: Monday, April 7*)

11. The Multimedia Essay (Pt. 2) – Going back for more depth. (*Due: Wednesday, April 16*)

12. Blog Posts – You'll be required to read (daily) and post (weekly) to the class blog.

13. Quizzes – There may be unannounced quizzes on the readings or lecture notes

14. The Portfolio – A final portfolio of 10 images and your multimedia essay. (*Due: Friday, May 2, 5 p.m. SHARP*)

Grading

Class Participation and Assn. 1, 12 & 13	10%
Assn. 2, 3 & 9	10%
Assn. 4, 5 & 6	20%
Assn. 7 & 10	20%
Assn. 8 & 11	20%
Assn. 14	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. (See http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/culture_honesty.htm.)

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

Disability Services provides academic services to eligible students who have a documented physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more life activities.



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE by Lynn Johnston