

PH 300X: Introduction to Digital Imaging

Mass. College of Art – Syllabus: Fall 2006 (revised 9/9/06)

Class sessions: Fridays 9:10am –12:00pm

Room: T-308 / K-617

Camilo Ramirez: camilo.ramirez@massart.edu
www.camramirez.com/teaching.htm

Office Hours: Fridays 12:00pm – 1:00pm, or by appointment

Course Description:

This course is designed to be an introduction to the digital darkroom. We will be covering a wide array of topics, but an emphasis will be placed on the use of the computer as a parallel tool to traditional photographic processes. Digital capture, film scanning, retouching, burning, dodging, color correction, and printing will be the technical focus. Students will emerge from this class with a solid foundation in digital imaging skills. We will also discuss and evaluate the role of the computer in contemporary photography and wrestle with the set of critical issues that have emerged with the new technologies. Emphasis of this course is both on completion of projects and class participation.

Class will be held in both the 6th floor of Kennedy photo area and the computer lab on the 3rd floor of the Tower building. Please be sure to check the syllabus each week so you know where to go. Bring a notebook and folder to every class. You should be regularly taking notes and keeping all the handouts together. Check the website and your email regularly. I will be emailing you any updates.

Expectations:

You will be required to complete all assignments. Assignments will come in several forms. You will be given several in-class assignments designed to increase your familiarity with the tools. If you do not complete these during class time, you will need to have them finished before the start of the next class. You are also expected to be photographing regularly. Be sure to bring blank CD's, DVD's, or a FireWire drive to every class, and make regular backups of your work.

Grading is based on the following:

Attendance: Class attendance is absolutely required. Three absences will result in automatic failure. Punctuality counts. If you are over 10 min. late, you will be marked late. Two lates equals an absence.

30% Slide Presentation: You will be required to give a short (10 minute) presentation on an artist or issue in digital photography that interests you. Details will be given in a project sheet.

50% Production & Quality: A steady output of new work culminating in a final portfolio of 12 high quality ink jet prints. Successful completion of all in class and take home assignments.

20% Participation: Active participation in all critiques and class discussions is expected. This includes completion of all the reading assignments.

*Please Note: The following schedule is subject to change at my discretion. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out from your classmates what, if any, changes to the schedule have been made. Unless you receive an exemption from me, you will be responsible upon returning to class for both the current weeks assignments, as well as the assignments for the week you missed.

Week 1: September 8th - MEET IN TOWER

Introductions and logistics. Image essentials. Film grain vs. pixels. Resolution. Digital files & formats. Ways of capturing. In-class reading discussion.

Assignments:

- Purchase materials on supply list.
 - Bring at least four of your best prints to the next class.
 - Bring your digital camera (if you have one), along with any cables and manuals.
 - Bring your firewire drive with any cables and manuals
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Week 2: September 15th - MEET IN TOWER

Digital capture. If you have a digital camera bring it to class. Features of a digital camera. Importing images into a computer. Camera Raw Import. Firewire drive management. CD, DVD Burning.

Assignments:

- Using the techniques we went over in class, make 30+ exposures with a digital camera. Edit out the bad pictures and mistakes on the camera. Think about how the pictures relate to one another. Try making connections between seemingly unrelated images. We will be arranging these pictures next class.
 - Download your images to a computer and burn a CD or copy them to your drive. Bring the files to the next class.
 - If you have any questions about your camera, bring them to the next class.
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Week 3: September 22nd - MEET IN TOWER

Intro to computer basics and the Macintosh operating system. Configuring Photoshop. Photoshop interface. Image size and resolution. Making digital contact sheets. Review paper options.

Assignments:

- **Color Equivalents:** Make 30+ exposures with a digital camera in response to the slides we saw in class. Edit out the bad pictures and mistakes. Make a series of images that are related through color. Look for bright, vivid, saturated colors and/or neutral and unusual color relationships that emerge from everyday experience. You can construct some of the images with props, models, etc. Make every effort to “draw” your pictures with color.
 - Download your images to a computer and make digital contact sheets and save the file as cs_color_lastname.tif. Digital contact sheets should be 8x10 inches at 240dpi.
 - Burn a CD or copy them to your drive. Bring the files to the next class.
 - Bring your paper to the next class
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Week 4: September 29th - MEET IN KENNEDY

Image adjustments. Basic tone and color corrections. Intro to levels and curves. Basic retouching. Understanding the info palette. Intro to profiles. Introduction to printing with Epson printers

Assignments:

- **Portraits:** Make 30+ portraits with a **digital SLR camera**. There are 3 Nikon D70's and a Nikon D200 you can check out from the photo cage. Be sure to photograph at least three different people. Take some that are close up so that the subject's head fills the frame. Photograph as many people as possible. Use natural light, flash and ambient light. We will be watching to see how your digital camera renders skin tones. Edit out the bad pictures and mistakes.
- Make digital contact sheets (8"x10" at 240dpi) and save the file as cs_portraits_lastname.tif
- Open the best 5 images in Photoshop and fix levels and curves for each, then print 8x10's of each.
- Save each corrected file as imagename_CORRECTED.tif
- Burn a CD (or copy to your drive) both the corrected file and the unaltered RAW. Bring them to the next class.

Week 5: October 6th - MEET IN KENNEDY

Group critique of everything so far. Bring all the prints you have made thus far and all contact sheets. Dye Ink vs. Pigment Ink. Printer Generations. Sharpening. How to find paper profiles. Review of workflow. Exporting for the web.

Assignments:

- In addition to your in-class printing assignment, make 8 inkjet prints from the Portraits and Color Equivalent assignments (4 from each) on an Epson Ultrachrome printer (R800 or 2200). Be sure all your files are corrected and retouched before printing. For one image, make a print directly from the untouched RAW file, and one from the corrected work file so we can compare.
 - **Narrative:** For this assignment, you will be expected to tell a story without words using multiple pictures. Think about how to communicate a narrative visually in a clear and concise way. The narrative can have some ambiguity, but above all make it compelling. Your final edit for this assignment will need to be at least 8 images. This assignment must be shot **entirely on film**. Shoot at least 2 roll of 35mm, 3 rolls of 120, OR 12 sheets of 4x5 color or b&w NEGATIVE film for the assignment.
 - Process your film (b+w), or have it processed (color) and make contact sheets in the darkroom.
 - Bring the negatives and contact sheets to the next class.
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Week 6: October 13th - MEET IN KENNEDY

Introduction to scanning. Flatbed and medium format scanners. Retouching for dust. Review of histograms, resolution and file formats. File Versioning.

Assignments:

- Scan at least 8 of your narrative negatives using the techniques we went over in class. Save the unaltered scans as 'raw' TIFF files.
 - Retouch and color correct your scans. Save the corrected scans as 'work' TIFF files.
 - Make digital contact sheets (8"x10" at 300dpi) of the corrected tiffs and save the file as cs_narrative_lastname.tif
 - Burn a CD (or copy to your drive) both the 'raw' and 'work' TIFFs. Bring them to the next class.
 - Think about your slide presentation topic. Refer to the project sheet for more information about it. Your topic will need to be approved by me next week.
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Week 7: October 20th - MEET IN TOWER

Adjusting and printing from scans. Review of retouching and printing workflow. Printing on different paper surfaces. Monitor Calibration basics. **PRESENTATION TOPIC DUE**

Assignment:

- Print your 8 narrative pictures on an Epson Ultrachrome printer. Your prints should be well corrected and have consistent color balance and density throughout the series.
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Week 8: October 27th - MEET IN KENNEDY

Group critique of 'Narrative' project. Bring your narrative prints to class. Optimizing images for digital projection. PowerPoint tutorial. Prepping files for 35mm slide output. Automated tasks.

Assignments:

- Finish your presentation and paper.
- **In the style of:** For this assignment, you will make a series of 6 images that are made in the style of the artist you chose to present next week. Shoot as much film as you need to in order to make 10 excellent prints that will make your artist, myself and your parents proud. Scan the negatives, correct them and bring the finished prints to class in two weeks. **This assignment must be shot entirely on film.**

Week 9: November 3rd - MEET IN KENNEDY

Slide Presentations.

Assignments:

- Finish your 'in the style of' project. Bring the prints and contact sheets to the next class critique.
 - **Collage part 1:** Shoot a series of images or scenes with the intent to 'stitch' them together in Photoshop later. They do not need to be seamless unless that is your intent. Be aware of your focal length, distances, and lighting conditions as you shoot. You will end up making 4 finished collages later, so shoot at least 3 rolls of 35mm, 5 rolls of 120, OR 16 sheets of 4x5 color or b&w NEGATIVE film each week.
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Week 10: November 10th – NO CLASS (Veterans Day Observed)

Week 11: November 17th - CLASS MEETS IN KENNEDY

Group critique of 'in the style of' project. Introduction to masks. Stitching panoramas. Adjustment layers and compositing.

Assignments:

- **Collage part 2:** Using layers and the compositing techniques we went over in class, make four digital collages from new or existing scans. These can be seamless, as in the case of Jeff Wall or apparent as in the case of early constructivism. Take great care in making them though and think about what new meanings you are producing in the juxtaposition of the different fragments. You will have to take care to match the color of the individual pieces.
 - Make high quality prints of each of these four collages.
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Week 12: November 24th – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

Assignment:

- **Begin Shooting and scanning for your final portfolio.** You will take your 6 best images from the semester up until now and add 6 new images taken and worked on from this point forward for a total of 12 final images. Shoot at least 2 rolls of 35mm, 4 rolls of 120, OR 12 sheets of 4x5 color or b&w NEGATIVE film each week.
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Week 13: December 1st - MEET IN KENNEDY

Group Critique of 'Collage' project. Introduction to iPhoto. Selecting and masking. Layer techniques and compositing

Assignment:

- Continue working on your final portfolio
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Week 14: December 8th - CLASS MEETS IN TOWER

Quickmask. Combining basic techniques for advanced results.

Assignment:

- Make beautiful final prints of your twelve best images from the semester.
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Week 15: December 15th - CLASS MEETS IN KENNEDY

Final Critique. Bring your final portfolio of 12 excellent prints, some doughnuts and coffee.

Supplies and Resources

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Required Supplies:

Firewire drive: I recommend one of these drives as they are reliable at a reasonable cost, however feel free to shop around if you want something physically smaller and/or with greater capacity. The 160GB Firewire400/USB2.0 is pretty good for \$137.99
<http://eshop.macsales.com/shop/firewire/usb/eliteclassic>

Film: Depending on the camera you have, get the appropriate size color negative film. Be sure to get enough to shoot at least 2 rolls of 35mm, 4 rolls of 120, OR 12 sheets of 4x5 per week, starting from Week 5. You should also get a few rolls or sheets of black-and-white film as well. Compare the following for pricing and availability:

<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/>

<http://www.calumetphoto.com/>

<http://www.adorama.com/>

<http://www.wolfcamera.com/>

Paper: You will need very little “wet-process” traditional darkroom paper. A small box of b/w and color 8x10 will be enough to make the few darkroom contact sheets required for class. Feel free to split each box with another student if it makes more sense. You will also need to purchase several boxes of inkjet paper. We will discuss paper choices and quantity in week 3, so hold off on any inkjet paper purchases until then, but please be ready to make the order. See the websites above for both types of papers as well but also try these for inkjet only:

<http://www.atlex.com/>

<http://www.inkjetmall.com/>

Suggested but not Required Supplies:

Digital SLR Camera: Although we have four D-SLR's available for checkout. Having your own will help you avoid the bottle-neck at the cage and will last beyond this class. I won't recommend any single camera since there are new models coming out all the time and prices can vary, but I suggest looking for at least a 6MP resolution from a reputable company such as Nikon or Canon. For a decent D-SLR, you're looking at a starting range of about \$800-\$1500. The following sites have good reviews on most of the newer digital cameras, so compare first before you buy.

<http://www.steves-digicams.com/>

<http://www.dpreview.com/>

Display Calibrator: Using this is a key part of any digital photo process. If you are really serious about making good digital prints at home, having your monitor profiled will ensure that what you see on the screen is very close to your printed output. Our monitors at school should be regularly profiled with a calibrator, but for home use this will actually save you time and money in the long run. Prices are in the \$200-\$250 range. These are my two favorites. Again, shop around.

<http://www.flexoexchange.com/flexodepot/html/gretag-eyeone-display21.html>

<http://www.flexoexchange.com/flexodepot/html/spyder2-pro.html>

Suggested but not Required Textbooks:

- Adobe Photoshop CS2 for Photographers by Martin Evening
- Real World Camera Raw with Adobe Photoshop CS2 (Real World) by Bruce Fraser
- Mastering Digital Printing, Second Edition (Digital Process and Print) by Harald Johnson
- Real World Color Management, Second Edition by Bruce Fraser
- Real World Adobe Photoshop CS2 by Bruce Fraser, David Blatner
- The Photograph as Contemporary Art by Charlotte Cotton