

VM265-04: Introduction to Photography (4 cr.)

Emerson College – Syllabus: Spring 2025 (last revised on **01/15/2025**)

Class sessions: In-person on Wednesdays, 10 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Locations: 180 Tremont Street, Ansin Bldg. #206 (Classroom), #504 (Darkroom), #703 (Photo Electronic Lab)

Professor: Camilo Ramirez

Camilo_Ramirez@emerson.edu

www.camramirez.com/teaching.html (Syllabus, some readings, project worksheets, public resources)

[Shared Google Drive Repository](#) (Delivering your work, project evals & grades, additional resources)

Office & Hrs: 180 Tremont St. (Ansin Building) #911. Mailbox is also on the 9th floor of the Ansin bldg.

In-person office hrs on Mon, Tue, & Wed: 8:50am–9:50am, or schedule an appointment via email.

Course Description:

Introduces the fundamentals of black-and-white photography by combining darkroom techniques with the latest digital processes. Essential comparisons between the two methods are explored by learning camera controls, film development to darkroom printing, digital capture to print workflow, and through the hybrid combination of these techniques. Critiques of student work develop an aesthetic and conceptual understanding of the creative process. Students must use cameras with manually adjustable speed and aperture.

Student Learning Objectives:

The objective of this course is to provide each student with a fundamental understanding of black & white photography by introducing traditional darkroom and digital photography. In addition, the course will provide students with a grounding in the basic history of black & white photography as an artistic practice through classroom slide lectures. Critique sessions will stimulate dialogue and critical thinking regarding the visual language of photography in its present and rapidly evolving forms. The methods and skills learned in this course will provide a foundation from which students can continue their photographic endeavors.

Course Requirements:

The content of this course requires in-person, physical presence by students. We will be critiquing prints in person and using equipment that is specific to our digital and darkroom labs. There will be no remote attendance unless it is planned by me in advance for the entire class, and cleared by our department. Whenever possible inform me in advance if you will be missing class. Missing three or more of our 4-hour class sessions means that you will have not had sufficient exposure to the course material and will result in failing the course. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to follow up in order to mitigate your absences & any missed work.

Students are required to complete all assignments on time. This means regularly shooting & printing new pictures and attending each critique. Scheduled lab-work time means coming prepared with new pictures to edit or print. Students should expect to spend time outside of class for shooting, editing and printing new photographs. Active participation during critiques is required. Each student is responsible for having and bringing all supplies required of this course to every class. Students must also follow all lab rules.

I will notify you of any updates or changes to the course/schedule during the semester via email, so you are expected to check it frequently.

Class Recording Policy:

No one may record any part of this class unless the instructor has given them express permission to do so. This class is considered a private environment and it is a setting in which copyrighted materials, creative works and educational records may be displayed. Audio, voice, or video recording, photographing, transmitting, or publishing the images of those materials or educational records without expressed consent is strictly prohibited. Any student who records a class without the faculty's permission without a registered accommodation will be referred to the Office of Community Standards. Accommodations for recording a class will be honored by your instructor. Students who require that a class be recorded due to a disability should work with Student Accessibility Service (SAS) to receive an accommodation for that recording.

Mobile Device Policy:

- The use of mobile devices in class is strictly prohibited unless otherwise instructed.
- Under no circumstances should you ever make or answer phone calls during class.
- Text messaging, web browsing, even checking the screen on your device is also prohibited.
- Your phone should be turned off and put away when you enter the classroom.

Textbooks:

Black & White Photography: A Basic Manual by Henry Horenstein, ISBN: 978-0316373050 (Recommended)
Looking at Photographs by John Szarkowski, ISBN: 978-0870705151 (Recommended)
On Photography by Susan Sontag, ISBN: 978-0312420093 (Recommended)
Why People Photograph by Robert Adams, ISBN: 978-0893816032 (Recommended)
A World History of Photography by Naomi Rosenblum, ISBN: 978-0789209375 (Recommended)

Supplies and Materials:

Required Supplies and Materials:

- An email address that you regularly check
- 35 mm Camera with manual aperture and shutter speed controls ([available for checkout at the EDC](#))
- 14 Rolls of 35 mm Film: Kodak Tri-X 400, 36 exposures per roll
- 3-ring Negative Box
- Negative Sleeves - PrintFile brand, Model #: 35-7B, 25 sleeves for your 35mm film (7 rows of 5 frames)
- Anti-Static Orange cloth for negatives
- Ilford Multigrade Contrast Filters: 6"x6" (Available for checkout in the Darkroom)
- Photographic Paper - **CAUTION:** DO NOT EXPOSE YOUR NEW PAPER TO LIGHT BY OPENING THE BOX!
Minimum 100 sheets of 8"x10" Ilford Multigrade IV B&W photographic paper - RC Pearl Surface
- Inkjet Paper: for final digital prints - Minimum 50 of sheets of 8.5"x11" Epson Ultra Premium Luster Photo Paper
- Any form of portable digital media that you can use to easily store and retrieve your work
- Journal/Notebook for use as an Exposure/Printing Log, class notes, jotting ideas and thoughts
- Nitrile Gloves for film developing (provided in the Darkroom)

Recommended Supplies and Materials:

- Digital-SLR camera with manual aperture and shutter speed controls ([available for checkout at the EDC](#))
- Inkjet Paper: for digital contact sheets - 8.5"x11" Epson Ultra Premium Presentation Paper MATTE
- Lock (for darkroom lockers if you [request one ahead of time](#))
- Tripod & mechanical cable release for 35mm cameras
- 8x10" Negative Sleeves for contact sheets - PrintFile brand, Model: 810-1HB, 25pack
- Compressed Air (available in the Darkroom)
- Can Opener & Scissors (available in the Darkroom)
- Self Timer
- Goggles, Hand Towels, Apron (available in the Darkroom)

Getting your Supplies and Color Film Processing:

Equipment: The cheapest way to buy film and supplies is online through stores such as B&H (www.bhphotovideo.com) and Adorama (www.adorama.com). In town, you can go to, Hunt's (www.huntsphotoandvideo.com) in Cambridge and Kenmore Square, and Newtonville Camera (newtonville.camera) in Waltham. For analog cameras I recommend Joe & Karen's Cameras (617- 770-3446) in Quincy, they have excellent prices. Emerson provides students with the Adobe Suite and student pricing on computers, for more info visit (support.emerson.edu). Always remember to ask for a student discount when buying any supplies.

Digital Camera Review Sites: These sites are a good start when shopping for digital equipment, especially cameras.
<http://www.dpreview.com/> & <https://www.imaging-resource.com/> & <https://www.cameralabs.com/>

Access to Emerson Photo Facilities & Equipment:

As part of your first project you'll need to complete the following **three items for credit (1 point each)**:

1. Learn about photo facilities, see open lab hours, sign the Post Production contract, and take the hazmat quiz:
<https://support.emerson.edu/hc/en-us/articles/21709025428123-Guide-to-Darkroom-and-Photo-Facilities-Access>
<https://support.emerson.edu/hc/en-us/articles/21709169584155-Post-Production-Lab-Contract>
2. Learn about equipment access at the EDC, terms of usage, safety, and sign the usage contract:
<https://support.emerson.edu/hc/en-us/categories/20490318764955-Equipment-Distribution-Center/>
3. VMA's safety form and procedure is required as part of all equipment reservations as per VMA department policy:
 - A. [Sign the Safety Production Guidelines Agreement](#) (once per semester, and for credit)
 - B. Get an [Approved Location Safety Form](#) (per reservation)
 - C. Make an equipment RESERVATION via the "[Patron Portal](#)"(per reservation)

Grading and Standards:

Grades will be earned in points throughout the semester by completing assignments, critiques and their deliverables. The total points possible and all grading criteria are specified in each Project Description sheet. The

COURSE GRADE SCALE

A	93% - 100%	C+	77% - 79%
A-	90% - 92%	C	73% - 76%
B+	87% - 89% *	C-	70% - 72%
B	83% - 86%	D	60% - 69%
B-	80% - 82%	F	59% and under *

four Project Critiques are weighed with the highest values. The total points earned throughout the term are factored against total possible points into a percentage which determines the Final Course Grade according to this scale:

Apart from assignment grading: absences, tardies, leaving class early, and being unprepared can also negatively affect your Course Grade as stated in the following Attendance Policy section.*

Attendance Policy:

- In person attendance is absolutely critical to this course. There will be no remote attendance.
- Late work is unacceptable and may only be accepted/graded at my discretion.
- If absent, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to deliver your work on or before the due date.
- If absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you've missed and make arrangements to turn in pending work.

TARDIES, etc.	COUNT AS:
1 Tardy	½ of an Absence
1 Early Class Departure	½ of an Absence
Coming to Class Unprepared	½ of an Absence

ABSENCES	COUNT AS:
1 Absence	Course Grade not affected
2 Absences *	Course Grade is no greater than B+
3 Absences *	Automatic F (Course Failure)

- If absent, it is your responsibility to find out if the Course Calendar/Schedule has been updated.
- Poor attendance can negatively affect your Course Grade as described in the following tables.*

If you have a religious observance or practice that impacts our course calendar, please see me as soon as possible to discuss how we may make appropriate arrangements. For additional information on attendance, see Emerson's general [Attendance Policy](#) guidelines.

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) Policy

Using A.I. technology for any written assignment or deliverable critique is prohibited. Except for pre-authorized uses in our assignments or if a student provides prior justification for their project, submitting an assignment utilizing A.I., without the instructor's knowledge in this course is considered [Academic Misconduct](#).

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct:

It is the responsibility of all Emerson students to know and adhere to the [College's policy on plagiarism](#), which can be found at emerson.edu/policies/plagiarism. Students can also view the college's [Academic Misconduct Policy](#). If you have any questions concerning the Emerson plagiarism policy or about documentation of sources in work you produce in this course, speak to your instructor. Additionally, The Working with Research and Avoiding Plagiarism (WRAP) Quiz is available to all students through the [Writing and Academic Resource Center's](#) self-enrollment Canvas course ([WRAP quiz](#)). One-on-one consultations are available (emerson.mywconline.com).

Support for Students with Accessibility Needs:

Emerson is committed to providing equal access and support to students with disabilities, through the provision of reasonable accommodations, to allow them to fully participate in Emerson programs and activities. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS@emerson.edu\)](mailto:SAS@emerson.edu); 617-824- 8592) to make an appointment with an SAS staff member.

Students are encouraged to contact SAS early in the semester. Please be aware that accommodations are not applied retroactively.

Support for Individuals Impacted by Discrimination, Harassment, or Sexual Violence:

If you have been impacted by discrimination, harassment, or sexual violence, the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#) (oeo@emerson.edu; 617-824-8999) is available to meet with you and discuss options to address concerns and to provide you with support resources. **Please note that because the instructor is an Emerson employee, any information shared related to discrimination, harassment, or sexual violence will also be shared with the Office of Equal Opportunity.** If you would like to connect with a confidential resource, please contact the [Healing & Advocacy Collective](#) (advocate@emerson.edu, 617-824-8857), the [Emerson Wellness Center](#) (emersonwellnesscenter@emerson.edu, 617-824-8666), the [Center for Spiritual Life](#) (spiritual_life@emerson.edu, 617-824-8036), or [Student Care & Support](#) (care@emerson.edu).

Equity, Access, and Social Justice:

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Students will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, socio-economic status, or national identity. Issues of diversity may be a part of class discussions, assigned material, and projects. The instructor will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students.

If you have concerns or general comments about what Emerson can do to create more inclusive classroom environments, you may share your suggestions with Dr. Tuesda Roberts, Director for Faculty Development and Diversity (tuesda_roberts@emerson.edu).

If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving how Emerson approaches equity, access, and social justice as an institution, please do not hesitate to contact the Social Justice Collaborative (sjc@emerson.edu, 617-824-8528).

VMA Safety Statement & Working with Minors Statement:

In order to make equipment reservations you must have an Approved Safety Form. To submit a location safety form visit the VMA Production Portal by visiting: <https://emerson.edu/academics/academic-departments/visual-media-arts/student-production-safety/safety-policies-0>

All Students will familiarize themselves with the VMA's [policies on minors](#). At no time is a student to be one-on-one with a minor without a guardian present. For more information on Production Safety, Working with Minors, forms and other production resources visit:

<https://emerson.edu/academics/academic-departments/visual-media-arts/student-production-safety>.

VMA Photography BFA Option:

This course is part of a sequence of courses that are required to complete [VMA's optional Photography BFA](#). For VMA students who are interested and meet the requirements, it is highly recommended that you meet with your academic advisor as early as possible to map out your trajectory over several semesters.

VMA students have a choice to apply to the Photography BFA Option as part of the existing BFA in Media Arts Production. This offering has all the same requirements as the traditional BFA with the main difference being that students accepted into this program will be required to enroll in two consecutive semesters of VM 492 Photo Practicum for their capstone experience rather than the traditional BFA Production Workshop. BFA seats are limited, so applications into the program will be reviewed by committee and selected based on the merit of the highest quality work/proposals. Accepted students will have the opportunity to concentrate on a single photographically based project over the course of an entire academic year.

To view all requirements, deadlines, and to learn about the application process, visit the [Photography BFA Option](#) page.

Course Calendar:

- **The following schedule is subject to change at my discretion.**
- Late work is unacceptable and may only be accepted/graded at my discretion.
- If absent, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to deliver your work on the due date.
- If absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you've missed and turn in any pending work.
- If absent, it is your responsibility to find out if the Course Calendar/Schedule has been updated.

Class	Date	Lesson Topics this week	Due this class	Due next class
#1	1/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the course • Review syllabus • EDC, Facilities, & Safety Contracts • Email Communication Test • The technical roots of photography • Intro to Film Camera, loading, and exposure controls. • Introduce Project #1 “Sight versus Vision” 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-mail test • Complete Hazmat Quiz, EDC Contract, Safety Production Guidelines Agreement • Sign up for a locker • Read: Horenstein, pg. 2–15 (Basics), 22–27 (Film), 32–44 (Lenses), 49–55 (D.O.F.), Ch 5 (The Shutter), Ch 6 (Film Exposure) • Read worksheet for Project #1 “Sight versus Vision”. • Bring 2 bracketed, shot but undeveloped rolls to class next week. • Purchase all needed supplies and bring to class.
#2	1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Photography Presentation • Film Processing Primer, Lab/Cage tour. • Introduction to film processing and darkroom demo • Discuss Bracket WorkSheet • Process one roll of film with a partner (DRK) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email test due by Sunday • Complete Hazmat Quiz, EDC Contract, Safety Production Guidelines Agreement • Sign up for a locker. • Reading - Horenstein • Read Project 1 Description Sheet • Two bracketed rolls • Bracket worksheet completed • Bring all required course supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Horenstein, Ch. 9 (Developing Film), pg. 215–218 (Photograms) • Read: <i>The Creative Process</i> by James Baldwin and <i>Understanding a Photograph</i>, by John Berger, write a 1pg response paper • Process your second bracketed roll of film on your own. • Shoot min. 2 new rolls of film and develop them on your own. • Bring object(s) for photogram experiments, 4 cut/sleeved rolls & printing supplies.
#3	1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Discussion • Darkroom demo & etiquette • Contact Sheets & Photograms (DRK) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading - Horenstein • 1pg Response Paper to Baldwin & Berger Reading • So far, total 4 rolls of film shot, developed and sleeved • bring objects for photogram experiments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring all darkroom materials to class • Contact sheets for all previous rolls • Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film • Make 3 photograms
#4	2/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show & share Contact Sheets • Darkroom Enlargements, Filters, Templates, Easels, Grain Finders, Using a Log. (DRK) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring all darkroom materials to class • Contact sheets for all previous rolls • Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film • Make 3 photograms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min. 4 Good Prints (Enlargements) • Min. 3 Photograms • Min. 6 Rolls & Contact Sheets • Be ready to discuss your work in class
#5	2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique for Project #1 • Introduction to Project #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min. 4 Good Prints (Enlargements) • Min. 3 Photograms • Min. 6 Rolls & Contact Sheets • Be ready to discuss your work in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading — Adams & Vitale • Read worksheet for Project #2 • Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film • min. 2 new darkroom prints

Class	Date	Lesson Topics this week	Due this class	Due next class
#6	2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Discussion — Adams & Vitale Split Filter Printing Individual meetings / Print (DRK) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading — Adams & Vitale Read worksheet for Project #2 Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film min. 2 new darkroom prints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film min. 2 new darkroom prints Bring all Proj2 contact sheets
#7	2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show & share Contact Sheets See work of various photographers Film Scanning Dodging and Burning Individual meetings / Print (DRK) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film min. 2 new darkroom prints Bring all Proj2 contact sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring your D-SLR, fully charged Bring Digital Printing Supplies Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film min. 2 new darkroom prints
#8	3/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting Artist Presentation Long Exposures D-SLR Camera controls and settings Pixels, Megapixels, File Formats (PEL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring your D-SLR, fully charged Bring Digital Printing Supplies Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film min. 2 new darkroom prints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film Min. 8 Great Prints (Enlargements) Min. 8 Rolls & Contact Sheets Be ready to discuss your work in class
➤	3/12	No class - Spring Break	• See Below	• See Above
#9	3/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critique for Project #2 Introduction to Project #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film Min. 8 Great Prints (Enlargements) Min. 8 Rolls & Contact Sheets Be ready to discuss your work in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read worksheet for Project #3 1 pg Project Proposal upload as PDF Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive Contact sheets for all new images. min. 1 new (digital) print Bring your Digital Printing Supplies
#10	3/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAW workflow for B/W Diagnosing Exposures. Adjustment Layers. Grayscale Digital Printing Making Digital Contact Sheets Individual meetings / Print (PEL). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read worksheet for Project #3 1 pg Project Proposal upload as PDF Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive Contact sheets for all new images. min. 1 new (digital) print Bring your Digital Printing Supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading — TBA Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive min. 1 new (digital) print All digital contact sheets so far Be prepared for the field trip
#11	4/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field Trip – TBA Questions in Art Criticism Worksheet Individual meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading — TBA Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive min. 1 new (digital) print All digital contact sheets so far Be prepared for the field trip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive min. 2 new prints (digital or analog) Bring Digital Printing Supplies All prints and contact sheets so far Questions in Art Criticism Worksheet & 1pg Critical Response
#12	4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed anatomy of an image, Color Modes, Profiles, Levels 4 Up Print Tests Digital Negatives Open Discussion and Q&A Individual meetings / Print (PEL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive min. 2 new prints (digital or analog) Bring Digital Printing Supplies All prints and contact sheets so far Questions in Art Criticism Worksheet & 1pg Critical Response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive min. 2 new prints (digital or analog) Bring Digital Printing Supplies All prints and contact sheets so far

Class	Date	Lesson Topics this week	Due this class	Due next class
#13	4/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show & share Contact Sheets • Final Digital Printing Techniques • Open Discussion and Q&A • Individual meetings / Print (PEL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent) • Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive • min. 2 new prints (digital or analog) • Bring Digital Printing Supplies • All prints and contact sheets so far 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Total Min. 10 Perfect Prints</i> • <i>Total min. 400 new RAW images (or 10 film roll equivalent)</i> • <i>Contact Sheets for 400 RAW (or 8 roll equivalent)</i> • <i>Be ready to discuss your work in class</i>
➤	4/23	No class - Monday Schedule Observed	• <i>See Below</i>	• <i>See Above</i>
#14	4/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique for Project #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Total Min. 10 Perfect Prints</i> • <i>Total min. 400 new RAW images (or 10 film roll equivalent)</i> • <i>Contact Sheets for 400 RAW (or 8 roll equivalent)</i> • <i>Be ready to discuss your work in class</i> 	—