

VM265-01: Introduction to Photography (4 cr.)

Emerson College – Syllabus: Fall 2026 (last revised on 09/09/2025)

Class sessions: In-person on **Mondays**, 2 p.m. – 5:45 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, project worksheets, some readings, public resources)

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

Office & Hrs: 180 Tremont St. (Ansin Building) #911. Mailbox is also on the 9th floor of the Ansin bldg.
In-person on Mon & Wed: 12:45pm–1:45pm and Fri: 8:50am–9:50am, or by appointment.

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 Outcomes:

The objective of this course is to provide each student with a fundamental understanding of black & white photography as a prerequisite for intermediate and advanced photography courses. After successful completion of this course, students will be able to create photographic works in by learning basic workflows for black & white darkroom and digital photographic printing. Students will develop a critical framework for evaluating their own photographs and those of their peers by way of regular group critique discussions. Students will interpret historical photographic approaches, and the work of other photographers by way of participating in reading discussions, and discussions of class presentations. Students will be able to synthesize their technical, creative, and historical understanding of photography to create cohesive photographic projects.

Course Requirements:

The content of this course requires in-person, physical presence by students. Attending in person assignments, technical demos, in-class lab time, group critiques of photo projects is essential for learning and safety. Using equipment that is specific to our digital and darkroom photo labs is required, and thus there will be no remote attendance for individual students. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to follow up in order to mitigate your absences & any missed work. Whenever possible, inform me in advance if you will be missing class. See the course Attendance Policy below for details, since poor attendance can negatively affect your course grade.

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 are required to spend time outside of class for shooting, editing and printing new photographs, finishing class readings and completing short writing assignments on occasion. Active participation during critiques is required. Each student is responsible for having and bringing all supplies required of this course to each class. Students must also follow all lab rules. Project Description Sheets will detail project requirements and items to be graded during the progression of each project.

Using an [Emerson Drive Log-In](#) & [Emerson Email Address](#), and checking them frequently, is a requirement for this course. You will use the Emerson Drive Log-In to access some course materials, and to view evaluations/grades and for each project. We will use Emerson Email for course communications, and I will notify you of any schedule changes, updates, and announcements for this course via email.

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 prohibited during class.
- Your phone should be turned off and put away when you enter the classroom.

Class Recording Policy:

No one may record any part of this class unless the faculty member has given them express permission to do so. 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. 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 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.

Textbooks (Recommended):

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 Emerson email address that you regularly check
- 35 mm Camera with manual aperture and shutter speed controls ([available at the EDC](#))
- 15 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: Final Digital Prints - Minimum 50 of sheets of 8.5"x11" Epson Ultra Premium Luster Photo Paper
- Inkjet Paper: Digital Contact Sheets - Minimum 50 of sheets of 8.5"x11", Any inexpensive INKJET PHOTO paper
- Any form of physical portable digital media that you can use to easily store, backup, and retrieve your work
- Paper Journal/Notebook for use as a darkroom 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 at the EDC](#))
- 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)
- Adobe Suite ([Provided by Emerson to Full-time students](#))

Getting your Supplies:

Equipment & Supplies: 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, Kenmore Square and various locations around Boston. For analog cameras I recommend Joe & Karen's Cameras (617- 770-3446) in Quincy. Emerson provides students with the Adobe Suite and student pricing on computers, for more info visit (support.emerson.edu). Always ask for a student discount when buying any equipment and 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:

[Hours of Operation](#) & [Facilities Contacts](#)

[How to Make a Post-Production Reservation via the Patron Portal](#)

[Sign the Post Production Lab Contract and take the Hazmat Quiz](#)

2. Learn about equipment access at the EDC, terms of usage, safety, and sign the usage contract:

[Review the EDC Terms of Use & sign the Usage Contract](#)

3. The School of Film, Television and Media Arts' safety form is required as part of all equipment reservations:

[Review the SoF procedures for using the use of Safety Forms & the Production Portal](#)

[Enroll in the Production Safety and Resource Center Course, and review the course info](#)

[Review & Sign the Production Safety Guidelines & Agreement](#)

Grading and Standards:

Grades will be earned in points throughout the semester by completing assignments, critiques, and deliverables. The total points possible and all grading criteria are specified in each Project Description Sheet. The three Project Critiques are weighed with the highest values. Your 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:

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 *

Because we work with physical materials and sensitive equipment/facilities, in a collaborative group environment, poor attendance can also negatively override your Course Grade as stated below in the Course Attendance Policy.*

Course Attendance Policy:

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. Apart from assignment grading: absences, tardies, leaving class early, and being unprepared can also negatively affect and override your Course Grade as follows:*

- In person attendance is absolutely critical to this course. There will be no remote attendance.
- Late work is even when due to absences, 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.
- If absent, it is your responsibility to find out if the Course Calendar/Schedule has been updated.
- Poor attendance can negatively affect and override your Course Grade as described in the tables below.*
- You can read more at length about [Emerson's Academic Policies](#) & [Emerson's Attendance Policy](#).

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)

Religious Accommodations:

Students who may have a conflict with a course requirement due to a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance, should work with the instructor as soon as possible to identify an accommodation that satisfies the specific need of the student while maintaining the necessary academic requirements. The student will then work with their instructor to find a mutually acceptable way to make up any missed coursework and/or assignments. Any student absence for a religious observance will count toward the total number of absences permitted in the course under the instructor's written attendance policy. For more information see the [Student Religious Accommodation Policy](#).

Support for Students with Disabilities:

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 \(SAS@emerson.edu; 617-824- 8592\)](#) 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. **Your instructor is another resource, but please note that as an Emerson employee, they must share information related to discrimination, harassment, or sexual violence 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 \(spiritual_life@emerson.edu, 617-824-8036\)](#).

General Support for Students:

Students may face a variety of challenges during the semester that can impact their well-being and academic performance. These may include but are not limited to: general wellbeing concerns, significant medical or mental health issues, academic pressure or burnout, or major family responsibilities such as caregiving or loss. If you are experiencing difficulties, please know that support is available.

You are encouraged to explore Emerson's ConcernCenter ([emerson.concerncenter.com](#)) an interactive tool that connects you with campus resources based on your specific concerns. You may also reach out to the Office of Student Care and Support at [care@emerson.edu](#) to help you navigate your situation and resources, or talk with me if you need help identifying next steps.

Community, Culture, and Belonging:

Among the College's Strategic Plan goals is to "Support a vibrant community culture and experience that fosters creativity, curiosity, belonging, accessibility, and well-being." Diversity of identity, heritage, thought, lived experience, languages, and perspective is valued in our community, and we are committed to cultivating productive learning environments that respect and celebrate our differences. 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 increase innovation, curiosity, creativity, or create more inclusive classroom environments, you may share your suggestions with Dr. Tuesda Evans in the Iwasaki Library. Her email is [tuesda.evans@emerson.edu](#).

If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving how Emerson approaches its culture or community-building efforts as an institution, please do not hesitate to contact the [Community, Culture, and Belonging Division](#). Their email is [ccb@emerson.edu](#).

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. 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](#). One-on-one consultations are available (emerson.mywconline.com).

Students should also familiarize themselves with the college's [Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) Policy:

This course is oriented around you learning to make decisions at every step of the creative process, from technical choices to conceptual development, and through the critical analysis of photographic work & related writing. In order to develop your own voice, work ethic, and skills, the use of A.I. technology for generating any image based work and for reading/writing assignments is prohibited in this course.

When learning digital photo workflows we will use the Adobe suite, and recent versions of Photoshop, Lightroom, etc. integrate AI tools automatically, and I will introduce some of these tools so that you are aware of their existence and learn how they work and introduce some nuanced distinctions. So there may be some specific permitted uses, but only when instructed to do so by me, during our class.

Regardless of the software, there is a difference between delivering AI work as your own (prohibited use), and using AI tools during demos and for in-class exercises (permitted use). Likewise using digital tools for image generation (i.e.- generating image content in-whole or in-part) is prohibited, but using AI for workflow automation (i.e.- making selections, or image library management) is permitted. To be clear...

Prohibited Uses:

- Do not submit AI-generated images or use generative tools for any photo works in progress, or for final works.
- Do not submit AI-generated writing for response papers, project proposals, or any graded writing work.
- Do not use AI to brainstorm, outline, or explore research directions.
- Do not use AI to summarize or synthesize responses to class readings or assignment prompts.
- Do not use AI to fabricate sources, citations, or quotations in your writing or creative work.
- Do not use AI to generate the substantive [analysis / argument / creative work] you submit in this course.

Permitted Uses:

- If AI tools are built into Adobe suite and do not generate image content in-whole, or in-part.
- If AI tools are built into Adobe suite and assist with workflow automation (selections, image library sorting, etc).
- When instructed for in-class demos/exercises by me, but this use never extends to any of your delivered work.
- For advanced work in upper level photo courses, as specified in a Project Description Sheet for an assignment.

Disclosure:

If you have a doubt about an AI tool or a prohibited use listed above, then you should disclose how you used it by answering these questions and [e-mailing me with your answers](#) **before** the due date of the assignment:

1. **Which tool did you use?**
2. **What did you use it for?**
3. **At what stage of your work?**
4. **How did you evaluate or modify what it produced?**

Disclosure for any potential prohibited use of AI is part of every assignment. Submitting an assignment where you used AI without the instructor's knowledge, and/or having a missing or false disclosure may be treated as a violation of academic integrity and is considered [Academic Misconduct](#), and will be addressed under [Emerson's Academic Misconduct Procedures](#).

SoF Photography Capstone and Photo Minors:

For students looking to concentrate in photography, this course is part of track of photography courses that are required to as you make your way to eventually take the **VM492 Photo Practicum** course. For students who are interested in intermediate and advanced photo courses, it is highly recommended that you meet with your academic advisor as early as possible to map out your trajectory over several semesters.

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	WED 9/9	• 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"	—	• 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	9/14	• 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)	• 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	• 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	9/21	• Reading Discussion • Darkroom demo & etiquette • Contact Sheets & Photograms (DRK)	• 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	• 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	9/28	• Show & share Contact Sheets • Darkroom Enlargements, Filters, Templates, Easels, Grain Finders, Using a Log. (DRK)	• 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	• Min. 4 Good Prints (Enlargements) • Min. 3 Photograms • Min. 6 Rolls & Contact Sheets • Be ready to discuss your work in class
#5	10/5	• Critique for Project #1 • Introduction to Project #2	• Min. 4 Good Prints (Enlargements) • Min. 3 Photograms • Min. 6 Rolls & Contact Sheets • Be ready to discuss your work in class	• Reading — Adams & Vitale • Read worksheet for Project #2 • Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film • min. 1 new darkroom prints

Class	Date	Lesson Topics this week	Due this class	Due next class
➤	10/12	No class - Indigenous People's Day	• See Below	• See Above
#6	10/19	• Reading Discussion — Adams & Vitale • Split Filter Printing • Individual meetings / Print (DRK)	• Reading — Adams & Vitale • Read worksheet for Project #2 • Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 2 new rolls of film • min. 1 new darkroom prints	• Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 4 new rolls of film • min. 2 new darkroom prints • Bring all contact sheets
#7	10/26	• See work of various photographers • Show & share Contact Sheets • Film Scanning • Dodging and Burning • Individual meetings / Print (DRK)	• Shoot, process, sleeve & print contact sheets: min. 4 new rolls of film • min. 2 new darkroom prints • Bring all contact sheets	• 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	11/2	• Visiting Artist Presentation • D-SLR Camera controls and settings • Pixels, Megapixels, File Formats • Long Exposures • (PEL)	• 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	• Min. 8 Great Prints (Enlargements) • Min. 8 Rolls & Contact Sheets • Be ready to discuss your work in class
#9	11/9	• Critique for Project #2 • Introduction to Project #3	• Min. 8 Great Prints (Enlargements) • Min. 8 Rolls & Contact Sheets • Be ready to discuss your work in class	• 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	11/16	• RAW workflow for B/W • Diagnosing Exposures. • Adjustment Layers. • Grayscale Digital Printing • Making Digital Contact Sheets • Individual meetings / Print (PEL).	• 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	• 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	11/23	• Field Trip – TBA • Questions in Art Criticism Worksheet • Individual meetings	• 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	• 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

Class	Date	Lesson Topics this week	Due this class	Due next class
#12	11/30	- Detailed anatomy of an image, Color Modes, Profiles, Levels 4 Up Print Tests - Digital Negatives - Open Discussion and Q&A - Individual meetings / Print (PEL)	- 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	<i>Shoot min. 100 new RAW images (or 2 film roll equivalent)</i> <i>Import all RAW digital images to your external hard-drive</i> <i>min. 2 new prints (digital or analog)</i> <i>Bring Digital Printing Supplies</i> <i>All prints and contact sheets so far</i>
#13	12/7	- Show & share Contact Sheets - Final Digital Printing Techniques - Open Discussion and Q&A - Individual meetings / Print (PEL)	- 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	<i>Total Min. 10 Perfect Prints</i> <i>Total min. 400 new RAW images (or 8 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>
#14	12/14	<u>Critique for Project #3</u>	- Total Min. 10 Perfect Prints - Total min. 400 new RAW images (or 8 film roll equivalent) - Contact Sheets for 400 RAW (or 8 roll equivalent) - Be ready to discuss your work in class	—