Course Title: Photography: Image, Order, and Idea (PGY 2441C)

Instructor: Alex Abair
Email: aabair@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Zoom meeting upon request
Recommended Textbook: Sontag, Susan. *On photography*. Vol. 48. Macmillan, 2001.

Course Description:

This dynamic digital photography course immerses students in the art of visual storytelling, emphasizing technical prowess, compositional techniques, and conceptual thinking. Through theoretical discussions, hands-on exercises, and critical analyses, participants will evolve their skills, understanding the pivotal role of images in shaping narratives. Encouraging individual exploration, students engage in projects ranging from conceptual photo essays to visual narratives. Ideal for those passionate about unlocking the creative potential of digital photography, this course navigates the intricate interplay between technology and storytelling in the visual realm.

Course Objective:

This course explores the multifaceted nature of digital photography as a visual language, emphasizing the importance of composition, storytelling, and conceptual thinking. Through theoretical discussions, hands-on exercises, and critical analysis, students will develop their technical skills while cultivating a deeper understanding of the role of images in shaping narratives and ideas. Additionally, students will have weekly discussions about readings that will be distributed as PDF's one week prior to the discussion. This course will culminate in a final semester project that encourages students to apply their knowledge in a meaningful and creative way. Students will come away from this course with a well-developed portfolio of powerful images that will serve their artistic path moving forward.

Required Materials:

Students are strongly encouraged to have access to their own digital cameras for the duration of the course to facilitate hands-on learning and creative exploration. The use of personal cameras allows for a deeper understanding of individual equipment and preferences. However, recognizing that not all students may have immediate access to their own cameras, a limited number of digital cameras will be available for rent from the department. These cameras are intended for short-term use during class sessions and projects. It is advisable for students to secure their own cameras to maximize their engagement with the course material and to have the flexibility to work on assignments outside of class hours. If you encounter any challenges in acquiring a camera, please reach out to the instructor for guidance and support. Photo paper will be provided for printing images for critiques, but you are welcome to purchase your own paper if you prefer a different type. Links to vendors will be provided in class.

Course Schedule (subject to change as the semester progresses):

Week 1: Introduction to Visual Language in Photography
- Overview of photography as a form of communication and expression

- Historical perspectives on photography
- The role of composition, framing, and perspective
- Introduction to critical analysis of photographs
- **Introduce Project 1: "Visual Language Exploration"**
  - Students create a series of images exploring the basic elements of visual language
  - Emphasis on composition and storytelling

Week 2: In the Weeds of Photography Technique
- Orienting ourselves in the Fawbush printing and computer lab.
- Exposure triangle
- "Making the image"
- Post processing
- Printing
- **Project 1: "Visual Language Exploration"**

Week 3-4: Conceptual Thinking in Photography
- Understanding the importance of ideas and concepts in photography
- Developing a personal vision and style
- Introduction to visual storytelling and thematic exploration
- Exploring the benefits and challenges of collaborating with AI
- **Project 2: "Conceptual Photo Essay"**
  - Students develop a photo essay that explores a specific concept or theme

Week 5-6: Order and Chaos in Photography
- Composition as a tool for creating order and emphasizing chaos
- Techniques for organizing visual elements in a photograph
- Introduction to experimental and abstract photography
- Field trip to Sweetwater Preserve (optional)
- **Project 3: "Order and Chaos in Frame"**
  - Students create images that explore the interplay between order and chaos

Week 7-8: Documentary and Narrative Photography
- The role of photography in storytelling and documentation
- Ethical considerations in documentary photography
- Visual narrative techniques and sequencing
- **Project 4: "Visual Narrative Exploration"**
  - Students work on a short documentary project, exploring a chosen subject or theme

Week 9-12: **Final Semester Project** - Photographic Series with Conceptual Depth
- Students conceptualize and execute a cohesive photographic series that demonstrates conceptual depth and narrative richness

- Individualized feedback and guidance provided during the process

Week 13-14: Portfolio Review and Critique
- Students compile their best work into a portfolio for peer review
- Constructive feedback session

Week 15 (Exam Week): Final Exhibition and Reflection
- Students showcase their final projects in a class exhibition
- Reflection on the learning journey and individual growth

Attendance:
Regular attendance is crucial for success in this course. Class sessions are designed to provide essential information, discussions, and hands-on activities that contribute to your learning experience. Absences may result in missing important content, announcements, or in-class activities that could impact your understanding of the material.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor in advance, when possible. Missed classwork, quizzes, or assignments due to absences are generally not eligible for make-up unless due to extenuating circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.). Arriving late disrupts the class and may result in a reduction of participation points. Persistent tardiness may be addressed as part of the attendance grade. Four unexcused absences will result in an automatic full letter grade deduction.

See the University of Florida's full policy here: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/

Assessment:

Projects 1-4: 40%
Final Semester Project: 30%
Portfolio Review and Critique: 15%
Class Participation and Engagement: 15%

Grading Rubric: Projects + Group Critique

1. Criteria: Photo Project (50 points)
   o Technical Skill Choices (20 points):
     ▪ Exposure and lighting (5)
     ▪ Focus and sharpness (5)
     ▪ Composition (5)
     ▪ Color and tone (5)
   o Conceptual and Creative Elements (20 points):
     ▪ Concept and message (10)

- Creativity and originality (10)
  - o Presentation and Execution (10 points):
    - Post-processing (5)
    - Print or digital display (5)

2. Criteria: Group Critique (50 points)
   - o Participation (20 points):
     - Actively engages in discussion (10)
     - Offers constructive feedback to peers (10)
   - o Critical Analysis (15 points):
     - Demonstrates insightful observations (10)
     - Identifies common themes or trends (5)
   - o Communication (15 points):
     - Clearly presents own work (5)
     - Effectively articulates feedback to others (10)

NOTE: Photos must be printed and already on display in the designated critique space by the start of the critique period. Students that have not set up or are still setting up at the start of the class will automatically lose 20% on their grade for that project and critique. Treat critiques like exams, and be mindful of strict deadlines.

This course operates in accordance with the University of Florida's grading policies: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

Disability Accommodations:
Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. Click on the following link to get started with the Disability Resource Center: https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/

It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Electronic Device Policy:
A note on cell phones, texting, and checking one's email during class: checking texts, emails, and messages is unprofessional and disrespectful to our class community. Please put your phones on vibrate, do not check email, social media etc. via devices during class; I will do so as well.

Uf Religious Holidays Policy:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#religiousholidaystext

To be approved for an incomplete:

Students must have completed the major portion of the class with a passing grade of C or better. The student is unable to complete course requirements because of documented circumstances beyond his or her control. The student and instructor have discussed the situation in writing prior to the final class (except under emergency conditions).

Student Conduct And Honesty Codes:
Students are expected to abide by the UF Academic Honesty Policy, which defines an academic honesty offense as "the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage." In the context of this class, this includes properly citing sources for any materials (both printed and online) used in completing course assignments. In addition, the work is original and completed by the student. https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/students/student-conduct-code/

Use of Generative AI:
In this course, students are encouraged to explore the potential of utilizing ChatGPT as a supplementary resource for coursework. While engaging with ChatGPT, it is crucial to adhere to ethical guidelines. Students should use the tool responsibly, recognizing that the generated content is a product of machine learning and may not always be entirely accurate or contextually appropriate. Collaboration and discussion are encouraged, but individual understanding and critical thinking should remain central to the learning process. When incorporating ChatGPT in assignments or projects, proper attribution must be provided, acknowledging the tool's assistance. Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is strictly prohibited. The emphasis is on leveraging ChatGPT as a tool for learning and exploration, while maintaining the integrity of one's work through ethical and responsible use. With that said, students may not use DALL·E or any other text-to-image software to create or modify images. Some use of AI post processing may be allowed (such as generative fill, noise reduction, and object removal), but all use of AI image manipulations must be pre-approved. Any unsanctioned use of AI image manipulation is grounds for a failing grade for the assignment.

Course Evaluations:
Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/ . Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/ . Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/ .

Health and Wellness:
U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress. https://umatter.ufl.edu/

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the CWC website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services. https://counseling.ufl.edu/

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website. https://shcc.ufl.edu/

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450. https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/