



EAST TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

PHO 2357, Basic Photography

COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2025

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Leigh Merrill, Professor of Art

Office Location: Wathena Fine Art Building, Room 223

Office Hours: 10:00 – 10:50am T&R (and by appointment via zoom)

University Email Address: leigh.merrill@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: email

Communication Response Time: 24 – 48 hours during weekdays

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

There is no mandatory text. Supplementary readings may be assigned throughout the semester

Course Description

Students learn elements of photography through an investigation of digital photography's basic techniques and aesthetics, emphasizing the creative use of DSLR and mirrorless camera controls, raw file processing, digital imaging software, digital archiving, and an awareness of the critical issues in contemporary photography.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course students should be able to demonstrate competence in the following:

1. an understanding of the anatomy of a camera.

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2. an understanding of aperture/shutter/ISO relationships and their effect on the photographic image.
3. how to process RAW files
4. how to organize and archive files with Lightroom Classic.
5. how to make color correct inkjet prints using Lightroom Classic to control color, contrast, etc.
6. effectiveness in critiques by participation in critical evaluation regarding their own work and the work of others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Students should be familiar with ETAMU's d2L Brightspace learning management system.

Instructional Methods

This course will consist of lectures, demonstrations, in-class assignments, and independent outside-of-class assignments to assist the student in achieving the objectives of this course. Each week students will work on a combination of making photographs, post-production, printing photographs, in-class assignments, participating in critiques, participating in discussions of readings, and quizzes.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

Active class participation is critical to your success in this course. **This course will meet face-to-face but will utilize ETAMU's d2L Brightspace to share information about the course and for students to submit assignments.** Grades will be posted to d2L. Students should regularly log into D2L for this course.

Students are expected to schedule work time outside of class meeting times to work on class projects. It is recommended to schedule at least 3 hours outside of meeting times to complete work.

Students will have access to computer labs with software needed to complete photographic assignments and exercises. Students will need to schedule time to work in the lab outside of class meeting times to access the university's software.

Students will need to provide the following:

- **DSLR or mirrorless camera.** Cameras are available from the 2nd floor check out in the Wathena Fine Art Building on the Commerce campus. Note: *Find the instruction manual and read it / make sure that the camera is in good working order.*
- **SD card.** Class 10 card with a minimum of 64gb capacity. I have had very good luck with SanDisk SD cards.

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- **An external hard drive.** This should be mac compatible. If you work with a windows computer outside of class, you should find a hard drive that will work with both OS. Ideally your hard drive will have 1 to 2 TB of space.
- **Printing Costs.** The university charges for the cost of ink.
- **Red River Ultra-Pro Satin Printing Paper.** 11 x 17 inch
- **Tripod.** This will be helpful to have for some of the assignments. If you do not own one, you can check out a tripod from the Wathena Fine Art 2nd floor check out.
- **Materials/Props for assignments.** Optional. You may choose to purchase or bring materials and props from home for certain assignments.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100%. B = 80%-89%. C = 70%-79%. D = 60%-69%. F = 59% or Below

Assessments

In Class Assignments, Quizzes, and Self-Assessment: 40%

There will be between 8 – 10 total assignments and quizzes.

Projects 60%

Controlled Color Project 25%

Inspiration Project 25%

Presentation Project 10%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

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ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

Please contact me through email.

Email: leigh.merrill@tamuc.edu

Office Hours: 10:00 – 10:50 am T&R (and by appointment)

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Attendance:

Attendance is required and is recorded at all class meetings.

Arriving to class 15 minutes late or leaving early may result in an absence. Being more than 10 minutes late on a critique day will result a late grade for the project being critiqued. Please note that working in the print lab while critique is being held in the computer lab will result in both an absence and a late grade.

A total of 4 absences from any class meetings will result in a one-letter grade reduction and may result in a failing grade ("F") for the course. Excused

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absences are listed under Class Attendance (A13.02) in the A&M-Commerce Procedures. Verifiable excuses for absences must be turned in to the instructor.

Due Dates: All assignments, discussion, and projects are due on the date and time given by the instructor. Any work that is late will be reduced by one full-letter grade. Assignments will not be accepted if they are more than one week late.

Coursework: All work must be completed during this semester for this course only.

AI usage: Although AI has valid and important contemporary uses, the use of AI in this course will not be permitted to complete coursework without the instructor's permission. Any use of AI should be discussed with the instructor in advance and will be determined on a case-by-case basis if there is an important rationale for its use to complete coursework. If AI is utilized without the instructor's express permission, it will be considered academic dishonesty.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

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Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or

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veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

ETAMU Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at ETAMU, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

AI Use in Courses (Draft)

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

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In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty
13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Module I: Photographic Perception

- Week 1** 1/14 **Introductions, Review of Syllabus**
Photographic Observation in class workshop
- 1/16 **Bring your cameras and SD cards**
Demo: DSLR Basics
Technical Assignment #1 (Due 1/22 at midnight – upload to d2L): Composition. Familiarize yourself with your camera and the basics of exposure. Utilize 8 different compositional strategies to strengthen your skills in composing photographic images.
- Week 2** 1/21 **Bring your SD cards and Hard drives.**
Review: DSLR Basics
Demo: Lightroom Basics (workspace, catalog set-up, importing, file organization, exporting, creating contact sheets)
In-class assignment: Familiarize yourself with Lightroom. Set up your new Lightroom catalog. Import photographs. Organize, keyword, rate your images
- 1/23 **Group Review:** Tech Assignment #1
In-Class Tech Assignment: Lightroom catalog. Demonstrate your catalog is set up correctly by opening it up on at least 2 different computers.
Technical Assignment #2 (Due 1/29 at midnight – upload to d2L): Focus. Control what is in and out of focus to create a composition.
Demo: Lightroom Continued (Develop Module)
In Class: Working with Lightroom and shooting for TA #2

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- Week 3** 1/28 **Demo:** Lightroom Continued (Develop Module)
In Class: Working with Lightroom and shooting for TA #2
- 1/30 **Technical Assignment #3 (Due Mon 2/5 at midnight – upload to d2L):** Time & Motion. Control your composition through shutter speed and motion. Use a slow shutter speed to blur movement. Use a slow shutter speed in a darkened space to create a composition with light. Use a fast shutter speed to freeze motion. Move the camera alongside a moving object to create a panning image.
- Week 4** 2/4 **In Class:** Photographing, post-processing in Lightroom
Review: Review of DSLR topics, Lightroom
- 2/6 **Group Review:** Technical Assignment #3
Introduce Module 1 Final (Due 2/12 at midnight – uploaded to d2L): Bringing it all together. Make 5 well-exposed photographs with controlled, deliberate use of shutter speed, aperture, ISO that are well composed and edited. Each photograph will be accompanied by a short paragraph explaining the exposure and composition choices.
- Week 5** 2/11 **Quiz** (topics covered in module 1)
In Class: Photographing, post-processing
- 2/13 **Critique:** Final Module 1
Introduce: Controlling Color Project

Module 2: Controlling Color and Light, and Printing

- Week 6** 2/18 **Introduce:** Controlling Color Project
Demo: Continuous Lighting, Lighting Studio, Product Tent, Custom White Balance
Group Technical Assignment #4 (due at the end of class on 2/20): Small Group lighting exercise. Working with light in the studio and outdoors.
- 2/20 **Group Technical Assignment #4 Continued (due at the end of class today):** Small Group lighting exercise.
- Week 7** 2/25 **Demo:** Print Lab (half the class in the print studio)
In Class: Lighting Studio (half the class in the lighting studio)
Technical Assignment #5 (due at the end of class): printing

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2/27 **Demo:** Print Lab (half the class in the print studio)
In Class: Lighting Studio (half the class in the lighting studio)
Technical Assignment #5 (due at the end of class): printing

Week 8 3/4 **Demo:** Contact Sheets
Review: Printing, Lighting
In Class: Printing Lab

3/6 **Quiz (d2L)**
In Class: Printing Lab

Spring Break – March 10 - 14

Week 9 3/18 **In Class:** Printing Lab

3/20 **Critique:** Controlling Color and Light (prints, contact sheets and digital files due)

Module 3: Inspiration Project

Week 10 3/25 **Introduction:** Inspiration Project. Work in the style of another artist. Consider both the formal and conceptual aspects of a photographer's work and use that as a guide to create 5 - 10 printed photographs.
Hallway exhibition installation
In Class: Tech Assignment #6

3/27 **Demo:** Lenses
In Class: Tech Assignment #6
Due 10/27 at midnight: Inspiration proposal uploaded to d2L.

Week 11 4/1 **In Class:** Photographing, post-processing
In Class: Printing Lab

4/3 **Due: In Progress Peer review towards Project #3**
In Class: Photographing, post-processing
In Class: Printing Lab

Week 12 4/8 **Quiz (d2L)**
In Class: Photographing, post-processing
In Class: Printing Lab

4/10 **Critique:** Inspiration project
(prints, contact sheets and digital files due)

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Module 4: Presentation

Week 13	4/15	Introduction: Presentation. Print and matt two photographs. Create a zine. Demo: Matting prints
	4/17	Demo: Zines In Class: Printing and matting
Week 14	4/22	In Class: Printing and matting
	4/24	In Class: Printing and matting
Week 15	4/29	In Class: Printing and matting
	5/1	Critique: Share your matted prints and zines!
Week 16	5/6	Self-assessment

A FEW RESOURCES

Camera Resources:

B&H Photo Video, <http://www.bhphotovideo.com>

KEH Camera, <https://www.keh.com/> (excellent resource for used equipment)

General Photograph Resource:

<https://www.aclu.org/free-speech/know-your-rights-photographers>

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