



EAST TEXAS A&M

UNIVERSITY

PHO 1301: Photography Appreciation

COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Leigh Merrill, Professor of Art

Office Location: Wathena Fine Art Building, Room 223

Office Hours: 10:00 – 10:50am Tuesday and Thursday
(and by appointment via zoom)

University Email Address: leigh.merrill@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: email

Communication Response Time: 24 – 48 hours during weekdays

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Photography Changes Everything, Marvin Heiferman, Aperture/Smithsonian Institute, 2012

Additional Readings will be provided during the semester.

Course Description

This course examines the relationship between photography and contemporary culture. Special attention is given to photography's influence in a range of disciplines from visual art to pop culture to social issues. Three semester hours

Student Learning

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

1. Students will be able to understand the varied uses of photography in contemporary culture.
2. Students will be able to critically analyze and evaluate of photographic images.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

3. Students will be able to effectively develop and understanding how ideas are expressed through photographic images.
4. Students will have a greater understanding of the ways photographic images engage in global communities and affect social issues and change.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

TAMUC's d2L Brightspace learning management system, text editing software, basic internet skills such as browser navigation and searching.

Instructional Methods

This course will consist of a series of lectures, readings, group discussions and assignments to assist you in achieving the objectives of this course. Each week's activities will consist of a combination of some or all of the following activities:

- Video Lectures
- Readings
- Discussions
- Individual assignments and project
- Quizzes

Assignments, Discussions, and Quizzes:

The Following Assignments will be used for students to gain a foundation of knowledge within the core curriculum components of **Critical Thinking skills** (through analysis of ideas from readings, lectures, and discussions), **Communication skills** (through interpretation and expression of ideas in the group discussions and essay), **Teamwork** (through group discussion), and **Social Responsibility** (through readings about photography's relationship to social issues across cultures and countries).

40% Assignments, Quizzes, Self-Assessment: Students will participate in weekly assignments and quizzes about key points from the readings and lectures. The class final will be a self-assessment of the student's experiences throughout the semester.

20% Photo of the Week: Students will analyze a photo each week.

20% Discussions: Students will participate in group online discussions about key points from the readings and lectures.

10% Research Assignment: Students will select and research one photographer.

10% Mid-term: Mid-term will cover reading topics and lectures and may include multiple choice questions, fill in the blank questions, and written responses.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

Active class participation is critical to your success in this course. This course has weekly readings, lectures, videos, discussions, quizzes, and assignments. Weekly material and coursework will be available at 12:01am on Mondays and (unless otherwise noted), will be due the following Sunday at 11:59pm. It is essential to schedule time to engage in the course material before participating in the assignments and discussions. Regularly logging into D2L will be necessary to complete this course.

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

Discussions: 20%
Quizzes, Assignments, Self-Assessment: 40%
Photo of the Week Project 20%
Research Assignment: 10%
Mid-term: 10%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce 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

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

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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@etamu.edu

Office Hours: 10:00 – 10:50 am Tuesday and Thursday (and by appointment via zoom)

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

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.

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Exams: Exams will be made available for several days for students to complete. Please note that exams will not be accepted late.

AI usage: In this course, you are expected to develop and express your own ideas about photography through writing and discussion. The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc) to generate or draft your written work or discussion posts is not accepted. You may use (and are encouraged to use) spell-check and grammar-check. If you are unsure whether a tool or resource is permitted, ask before using it. Unauthorized use of AI will be considered academic dishonesty.

Attendance: PHO 1301 is an asynchronous online course. It is essential to log into this course regularly to complete assignments and access course materials. If you do not log in to d2L (or submit assignments) for three or more consecutive weeks, this absence will impact your grade, and you may be dropped from the course.

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).
<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](http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx).

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

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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.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, 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

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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 d2L and/or email.

Module I: What is Photography?

Week 1

Lecture/Video: Intro to Photography Appreciation

Introduction: Photo of the Week project (Due weekly from week 1 – week 13)

Discussion Group: Introduce yourself

Due: Photo of the Week

Week 2

Lecture: Photographic vocabulary

Assignment: Making photographs based on new vocabulary

Quiz: Photographic Vocabulary

Due: Photo of the Week

Week 3

Lecture: Historic and contemporary photographic processes

Discussion: Photographic Processes

Quiz: Photographic processes quiz

Due: Photo of the Week

Week 4

Lecture: The Nature of Photographs

Due: Photo of the Week

Week 5

Lecture: Intention Matters, Photographic Approaches

Assignment: Making photographs - photographic approaches

Due: Photo of the Week

Week Module II: Photography and Reality

Week 6

Lecture: Photography and Truth

Readings:

Photography Changes What We Are Willing to Believe, Hany Farid, 32-33

Photography Changes What We Expect "Reality" Will Look Like, Jos Stam, 52- 55

Assignment: Compare and Contrast photographs

Due: Photo of the Week

Week 7

Lecture: Constructed Realities in Contemporary Art

Assignment: Making constructed images

Due: Photo of the Week

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Week 8

Exam: Mid-term

Module III: Photography and the Document

Week 9

Lecture: Photojournalism

Readings:

Photojournalism from Photography After Frank, Philip Geffer

Photography Changes Our Awareness of Poverty, Bonnie Yochelson, 105-107

Photography Changes How News is Reported, Fred Ritchin, 177 – 178

Assignment: Photographic icons

Due: Photo of the Week

Week 10

Lecture: The Personal Document

Readings:

Photography Changes How Cultural History is Told, Lonnie Bunch, 115 – 117

Photography Changes How We Record and Respond to Social Issues, Frank H Goodyear, III, 160 – 162

Discussion: Photography and the Personal Document

Due: Photo of the Week

Week 11

Lecture: The Personal Document

Readings: *Photography Changes Our Life Stories*, Marvin Heiferman, 127 – 129

“You’re Pointing Your Camera the Wrong Way”, New York Times, Margaret Renkl

Assignment: Making Photographs, Documenting our Lives

Due: Photo of the Week

Module IV: Photography and Time

Week 12

Lecture: Photography, Time and Science

Discussion: Photography and Time

Introduction: Research assignment

Module V: Photography and Science

Week 13

Lecture: Photography and Science

Readings:

Photography Changes Our Relationship to Our Planet, Steward Brand, 67-68

Photography Changes Medical Diagnosis and Treatment, Michael P. Kelly, 81-83

Photography Changes Natural Phenomena into Iconic Images, Kenneth G. Libbrecht, 84-86

Photography Changes What We Can See in the Universe, Giovanni G. Fazio, 71 – 72

Quiz: Photography and Science

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Finale

Week 14: Work: Research assignment

Extra Credit: Drawing with light

Week 15: Research assignment due

Week 16: Self-Assessment