

CHID 480E: Vision and Violence

Mon/Wed, 2.30-4.20, Savery 137

Instructor: Naraelle (Nara) Hohensee, naraelle@gmail.com

Course website: naraelle.net/visionandviolence

Course gradebook: canvas.uw.edu (look for CHID 480E under Courses)

Course description:

The medium of photography is almost two centuries old, and yet it is more present in our everyday lives today than ever before. Questions of photographic truth, representation, and power, explored by many thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are thus still crucial to our understanding of the world and our development as scholars, citizens, consumers and advocates for social change.

This course will explore the key ideas and debates concerning the power and politics of photography, through readings, images and students' own photographic practice. The notion of violence – not only the representation of violent acts, such as war and crime, but the violence of the photographic act itself – will provide a guiding thread for our investigation.

Learning Objectives:

The goals of the course are:

- to acquaint students with key texts on photography and violence
- to equip students with the vocabulary to read, critique and discuss photographic images
- to relate these skills and concepts to students' actual photographic practice

Equipment:

To complete the assignments, you will need access to some kind of camera with which you can take photographs that can be posted online every week. You can use any kind of camera you wish (iPhone, old Nokia cell phone, digital, analog, polaroid, pinhole, whatever ...) as long as you can get the photographs posted on the web in time for each week's assignment. You don't need any other special equipment.

No experience with photography is necessary for this class. Your photographic work will be evaluated on conceptual rather than technical or aesthetic quality.

Warning:

By staying enrolled in this course, you are committing to a deep engagement with some highly violent, sometimes disturbing images. You are also committing to pursuing practice-based research, which can be more time-consuming and difficult than academic writing. If these are not challenges you want to take on this quarter, that's okay – I understand.

Assignments & Grading:

Your grade will consist of the following elements:

- In-class participation (10%)
- Weekly responses to readings (55%)
- Midterm research paper (15%) and presentation (5%)
- Final project (15%)

In-class participation (10%)

Because this is a seminar-style course, your physical and mental presence in class is a crucial part of your and your fellow students' learning. Attendance, punctuality and respectful behavior (eg not texting, facebooking or checking your email during class) all count towards participation.

Weekly responses to readings (55%)

Each week, you'll create a **new, original** photograph or set of photographs that respond thoughtfully to your assigned reading. Post this (or these) along with a 150-200-word (10-15 sentence) explanation of how they relate to the reading on the course website by Sunday night at 6pm. (See the instructions on the course website for details on how to post your response.)

****NO LATE WORK will be accepted for this assignment. But, you must only complete 6 of the 8 required responses: you may skip or miss 2 responses and still receive full credit.**

Midterm, due 4/29 (15%)

For this project, you'll complete library research and image collection regarding either the work of one photographer or a body/genre of photographs. You'll present this research in a powerpoint presentation that you turn in online. A list of possible topics is on page 5.

You'll need to choose three possible topics from this list by Monday, April 8. If you have a topic in mind that's not on the list, you may suggest that as your first choice, but it needs to fit into one of the larger categories.

Presentation, due in the following weeks (5%)

The categories of topics correspond to the discussion themes for weeks 5-10. You'll present your midterm powerpoint in class during the appropriate week by helping me facilitate a ca. 20-minute discussion on your topic. **Being present for your presentation on that day is the only way to receive credit for this.**

Final, due 5/10 (15%)

Your final project will consist of a set of photographs that you create in response to the photographs you've researched for the midterm, plus a 3-5 page artist statement that explains how your photos relate to your research and to the themes discussed in class. You'll turn this in online in powerpoint format.

Schedule/Tentative Reading List:

NOTE that for most weeks, you are only required to complete ONE of the readings listed. All the readings are in pdf format on the course website.

Week 1: April 1 & 3 - Introduction to the course, vocabulary, and historical background

*POST YOUR INTRODUCTORY RESPONSE online by the beginning of class on Wednesday (instructions are on the website)

***GET STARTED on next week's reading** – your response to it is due on Sunday, 4/7!

Week 2: April 8 & 10 - Regarding the Pain of Others

*Reading response due by 6pm on Sunday, April 7

*PROJECT TOPIC preferences due in class on Monday, April 8

Reading (ONLY ONE CHOICE THIS WEEK):

-Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Chs. 1-4 and 8-9

Week 3: April 15 & 17 - Theorizing the Violence of the Photograph: Semiotics, Gender and Psychoanalysis

*Reading response due by 6pm on Sunday, April 14

Reading (PICK ONE):

- Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, excerpts

- Roland Barthes, *Image/Music/Text*, excerpts

- John Berger, "Appearances"

- John Berger, Chs. 3 & 7 from *Ways of Seeing*

- Storey, intro to Lacan & Mulvey and Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

Week 4: April 22 & 24- Theorizing the Violence of the Photograph: Orientalism and Identity

*Reading response due by 6pm on Sunday, April 21

Reading (PICK ONE):

- Emerling, intro to Said and Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order"

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

- Stuart Hall, *The Burden of Representation*, excerpts

- Judith Butler, Intro to *Frames of War*

Week 5: April 29 & May 1 - War, Part I

*Reading response due by 6pm on Sunday, April 28

*MIDTERM DUE on Monday, April 29

Reading (PICK ONE):

- Bernd Hüppauf, "Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation"

- Caroline Brothers, "Casualties and the Nature of Photographic Evidence"

- Anton Kaes, "The Cold Gaze: Notes on Mobilization and Modernity"

- Michael Griffin, "Media Images of War"

Week 6: May 6 & 8 - War, Part II

*Reading response due by 6pm on Sunday, May 5

Reading (REQUIRED):

- "The Shot That Nearly Killed Me" in the June 2011 Guardian

Reading (PICK ONE):

- Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" and Sontag, Ch. 7 of *Regarding*
- Caroline Brothers, "Vietnam, the Falklands, the Gulf: Photography in the Age of the Simulacral"
- Shahira Fahmy & Daekyung Kim, "Picturing the Iraq War"
- Slavoj Zizek, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real"
- Martha Rosler, "Image Simulations, Computer Manipulations: Some Considerations"

Week 7: May 13 & 15 - Photography, Victimhood and Social Change

*Reading response due by 6pm on Sunday, May 12

Reading (PICK ONE):

- Peter Hales, *Silver Cities*, excerpt
- Holly Edwards, "Pain in Public"
- Martha Rosler, "In, around and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)"

Week 8: May 20 & 22 - Investigating Others and Otherness

*Reading response due by 6pm on Sunday, May 19

Reading (PICK ONE):

- Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography*, introduction
- John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, excerpts
- Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Reconsidering Erotic Photography"
- Maria Pia di Bella, "Observing Executions: from Spectator to Witness"

Week 9: Wednesday, May 29 - Memory

(NO CLASS ON MONDAY - MEMORIAL DAY)

*Reading response due by 6pm on Tuesday, May 28

Reading (PICK ONE):

- Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory"
- Ulrich Baer, "To Give Memory a Place"
- Allen Feldman, "Ethnographic States of Emergency"
- Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, excerpt

Week 10: June 3 & 5 - Memory, continued

Wrap-Up discussions and conferences on final projects

Final projects due Monday, May 13 via online submission

Midterm/presentation topics

***NOTE that ALL midterms (10% of your grade) are due on the same day (Monday, 4/29). Only the *presentations* will take place during the weeks noted. You must be physically present for your presentation in order to receive credit for it (5% of your grade).**

War I (present during Week 5):

- photography in the Spanish-American War
- Frank Hurley's WWI photos
- Lee Miller
- W Eugene Smith
- Hiroshima photography
- Korean war photography

*Remember that you may suggest your own topic, but it must fit within one of the themes listed.

War II (present during Week 6):

- The "Bang Bang Club" (South Africa)
- Susan Meiselas
- photography of the Iraq/Afghanistan wars
- photography of the Balkan wars
- photography and the Dirty Wars/Disappeared
- photography of war ruins

Social change (present during Week 7):

- Sebastiao Salgado
- Bruce Davidson
- Mary Ellen Mark
- Steve McCurry ("Afghan Woman" especially)
- images of famine (you should pick a specific region)
- Robert Frank's *Americans*

Othering (present during Week 8):

- photographs of lynchings and/or executions
- Abu Ghraib photos/torture
- Pornography/prostitution
- Charcot's hospital
- colonial photography (you should pick a specific region)

Memory (present during Week 10):

- Japanese internment camps
- Khmer Rouge photos
- Christian Boltanski
- Rwandan genocide
- Truth & Reconciliation Commission and photography (South Africa)

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Policies/Expectations

I expect you to communicate with me promptly about any problems, questions or issues you might have, including any problems or errors you find on the syllabus, website, or assignments. I'm available to talk after class, or by appointment. I check my email frequently.

I expect you to consult the syllabus/course website before asking me a question about the class.

I expect you to check your email regularly and keep yourself informed of any changes in class assignments, readings or activities.

I expect you to be on time and both physically and mentally present in class. If you can't make it to class because of illness or an emergency, let me know as soon as possible.

I expect you to turn your midterm and final assignments in on time. If there is some reason you can't turn your work in on the due date, let me know so we can discuss it.

I expect that you will not plagiarize your work. You can find the UW policy on plagiarism here: <http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/plag.html>. Plagiarism in this class will be met with a zero-tolerance policy and lead to possible disciplinary action.

I expect you to treat the course material and your assignments (especially the photographs that you create) with sensitivity, gravity and respect.

*I have read and understand these expectations.

Your name (print)

Signature

Student Information

Your preferred email (if not your UW email address): _____

Your experience with photography (it's okay if you don't have any):

Why this class?