Advanced Photography: Narrative Strategies

Professor
Jennifer Garza-Cuen

Logistics
Texas A&M Corpus Christi
Course: ARTS 4365 W01
Fall 2020 - On-Line

Office & Hours
WebEx Hrs: TBD and by Appointment
https://tamucc.webex.com/meet/jgarzacuen

Readings
Provided
course website
narrativephotographyjgc.blogspot.com

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"We tell stories to ourselves: of our journey from birth to death, friends, families, who we are and who we want to be. Or public stories about history and politics, about our country, our race, our religion. At each moment of our lives these stories place us in space and time. They console us, making our lives meaningful by placing us in something bigger than ourselves. Maybe the story is just that we are in love, that we have to feed the cat or educate the children. Or maybe it’s a lifelong struggle for salvation or liberation. Either way – however large or small the story – the human impulse is to make sense of each moment by referring it to a larger narrative. We need to live in a world not of our own making."

~ Bryan Appleyard, Sunday Times Magazine, 7 February, 1999:39

Course Description
What does it mean to tell a story in still images? In this class, we will explore that question and raise others through making narrative photographs and discussing the role of storytelling within the context of photographic history. We will examine different types of photographic narrative, including the archive, the family photograph, photojournalism as well as personal mythology. Through weekly assignments designed to tease out and develop personal language, we will focus on pacing, sequencing, linear vs. nonlinear narrative and how text functions with image. Students will be asked to keep a visual journal of images and ideas for use in developing a long-term project. This class is aimed at students who already have a working knowledge of camera functions, digital processes, black and white film, and printing techniques. While we will hone our technical practice, emphasis will be placed on developing personal vision and content. As the class evolves, students are encouraged to experiment with new camera formats and to bridge media, using photography as part of a broad vocabulary of image-making processes.

Course Objectives
- Explore how narrative strategies can expand your visual language
- Consider how storytelling has been employed within the history of photography
- Discuss and identify how narrative functions in a given image
- Demonstrate technical excellence in making color photographs
- Experiment with narrative strategies; incorporate other mediums into photographic process
- Express confidence experimenting with the camera and in the digital lightroom
- Participate in thoughtful, critical discourse
- Engage in critical dialog; respond thoughtfully to the work of others
- Be able to articulate the content of your own work as well as others
open studio

This is a studio-based art course and ample time will be allotted to production and creative output; however students are expected to work at least five hours a week outside of class time. Regarding the studio time built into this class: this is time for you to work under supervision in the studio. This is the best time to ask me specific questions about your work and get feedback on your work in progress. It is expected that you will have enough work to occupy the full class period. It is also expected that students put in the adequate work time outside of class in order to ensure the quality outcome of their work.

assessment

attendance

Attendance is highly encouraged for in-person and scheduled WebEx class sessions. While it is expected that students will make every effort to attend classes, it is recognized that personal circumstances such as illness may arise which preclude class attendance. Please do not come to campus if you are ill (see below). In such circumstances, the student is responsible for making up missed work and communicating with their instructor.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, stay home when you are sick. It is critical that students do not report to campus while they are experiencing respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. If you need to miss class due to illness, communicate with your instructor.

participation

Taking part in discussions and critiques is vital to developing as an artist - please voice what you are thinking!

sketchbook

This is a place for you to brainstorm and plan your ideas for assignments, collect inspirational visual imagery and write your thoughts on readings - or your ideas in general. It is meant to be a resource that you can draw from in the making of your final, self-directed project. It will be turned in at the end of the class and returned to you.

homework

Exhibition ready images (or prints) according to the assignment are due for scheduled critiques.

Late work drops one full letter grade per week.

final project

A self-directed portfolio project is due at your final critique on the last day of class. I encourage you to put yourself into the work, this is your opportunity to create something uniquely yours. 12-16 images minimum.

grading rubric

100- 90 = A 89-80 = B 79-70 = C 69-60 = D 60 and Below = F

20% Participation and Professionalism
30% Assignments
50% Final Portfolio & Critique

subjectivity & art

In Art, there is no simple formula for success. Unlike Math and Science courses there is no right answer. Simply following instructions and feeding back information provided in the correct manner is important for establishing the basics of the technique of photography however, it will not help much as we move further into the creative process. In the end, it will be the inventive process that is paramount. Artists are seekers, they ask probing questions, seek out unusual perspectives, take risks, experiment, and find visual solutions to conceptual problems; it is that seeking process that forms the basis of what it means to be an artist. In this course you will be expected to learn that process and to use it to create striking, conceptually strong images; your ability to do so will make up the majority of your grade this term.
rules, regulations &
academic integrity
This is a college classroom; you are all adults and are expected to act accordingly.
Please show respect to yourself and others at all times.
Absolutely NO mobile phone use in the classroom.
No surfing the internet, checking email, or watching YouTube during class.
Leave the classroom as clean or cleaner than you found it.

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one's own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade on the assignment or in the class and may also result in further action by the college.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

grade appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean's office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.c0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf.

academic advising
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

academic advising
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 believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.
dropping a class

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

required materials list

- Journal or sketchbook & folio for handouts
- Capture
  - *Digital Camera DSLR with manual functions
  - Lens with cap
  - UV protective filter
  - Lens wipes and cleaning solution
  - Memory card, batteries & charger
- Processing
  - *Portable external hard drive for image storage and transfer
- Printing & presentation (optional for online classes)
  - Epson Photo Paper to complete assignments (will discuss further in class)
  - Portfolio Box (size 8.5”x11”)

Note: Photo Printing Ink is provided.

resources for materials

The Camera Exchange, San Antonio is a good semi-local resource – www.camerax.com
6635 San Pedro Ave. San Antonio, TX 78216
Tel: 210.349.4400
Hours: M-F 9:30-6pm
          Saturday 9:30-5pm

online resources:

B&H (they deliver via mail from New York) – www.bhphotovideo.com
Adorama (they deliver via mail from New York) – www.adorama.com
Freestyle Photographic (they deliver via mail from Los Angeles) – www.freestylephoto.biz

care of equipment

The use of departmental equipment is a privilege, subject at all times to the instructor’s approval. ‘If you break it, you buy it!’

Students must replace damaged equipment with an equivalent model in similar or better condition. Safe and cooperative use of the darkroom and graduate lab equipment by students enrolled in this class is expected. Only students enrolled in a class may have access to departmental equipment. Because art studios use materials and tools that can be dangerous, safe and cooperative behavior by students is absolutely necessary. Uncooperative and/or unsafe behavior will result in your being withdrawn from the class.

I am looking forward to an exciting and mutually rewarding semester!
class overview & schedule ~ fall 2020

This schedule serves as a guide and is Subject to Change

week 1
Introduction:
- Getting Acquainted: Aims, objectives and expectations of the class.

Lecture:
- Narrative Strategies Review: Steve McCurry, Toufic Araman, Amy Lovera, Karl Blossfeldt, August Sander, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Mike Mergan, James Reynolds, Jeff Wall & Gregory Crewdson.
- Check in with instructor and make sure you have all necessary equipment for the course.
- Reacquaint yourselves with the camera

Read & Respond:
  - Upload a one-page summary response to the reading:
    How visually literate are you? What tools do you have to articulate your reading of photographs?
    Fact vs. Fiction in photography, is there a difference? If so, what is it?

week 2
The Aesthetics of Truth

Lecture:
- Documentary & Conceptual Journalism introducing: Peter Beard, Alec Soth, Sophie Calle, Nicki Lee

Homework:
Assignment 1: The Document

week 3
The Art of Sequencing and Sequencing for Narrative Effect

Lecture:
- Sequencing: How does the sequence of images effect our reading of their content?

Review Lectures:
- Re-introduction to photography as medium, aperture and shutter speed review.
- Brief review lecture and discussion on how we read composition.

Homework:
- Finish images for Assignment #1
- Editing and sequencing images to emphasize your narrative
- Upload assignment folder (A1_FirstName_LastName) via DropBox or WeTrasfer by Midnight Sunday.

symbolism & the construction of meaning

week 4
Engaging the Archive

Read & Respond:

Homework:
- Upload a one-page summary response to the reading (due: Midnight Sunday):
  Critical analysis of archives: what story is told, how is it told, who gets to tell the story?

Lecture:

Homework:
Assignment 2: Archive
week 5
- Finish images for Assignment #2
- Editing and sequencing images to emphasis your narrative
- Upload assignment folder (A2_FirstName_LastName) via DropBox or WeTrasfer by Midnight Sunday

week 6
Read & Respond:  
- Victor Burgin, Looking at Photographs

Lecture:  
- Allegory & Tableaux
  - Class discussion of Burgin essay, how is meaning constructed?

Homework
- Assignment 3 & 4: A Letter in Images & Tableaux

week 7
- Finish making, selecting, editing, and uploading images for Assignment #3

week 8
- Finish making, selecting, editing, and uploading images for Assignment #4

week 9
- Mid-Semester Critique
  - All Assignments Uploaded by Monday 8 am. Critique responses due by Sunday 12 Midnight.

personal mythologies

weeks 10
- Artist Mythologies & Origin Stories ~ Considering our own Symbolism

Viewing:
- Film Viewing: Chris Marker’s La Jetée
- Film Viewing: Fur about photographer Diane Arbus

Read & Respond:
- Juice or Gravy, Philip Roth for discussion next class.

Homework:
- Assignment 5: Thinking about your Final Project
  - Now is your time to take all that we have discussed in this course and create your own conceptual narrative.
  - Prepare files for individual critique with the professor
  - Free write in your sketchbooks on each of the images you have chosen
  - Brainstorm and research ideas for final project

week 11
- Focusing our narratives
  - Individual Meetings on Final Portfolios (all students)

Homework:
- Assignment #6: Final Project

week 12
- The Statement and The Work
  - The importance of the Written Word
  - Individual Meetings on Final Portfolios (as needed)

week 13
- Portfolio Preparation: Finish printing images and polishing artist statement for Final Critique.
  - Individual meetings to finalize Portfolio, Bios, and Artist Statements

week 14
- final por tfolio
  - Upload final portfolio: 12-18 exhibition ready images, with a well-written bio and artist statement
  - Final Portfolio uploaded by Monday 8 am. Critique responses due by Sunday 12 Midnight
  - Signed agreement with contact information for those willing to have work featured

online por tfolios due
- Final Portfolios must be uploaded to Behance with a short Bio and Artist Statement by December 1st
the document

Reading: Philip Gefter, Photographic Icons

Requirements:
- Make 50-100 exposures, RAW processed and edited
- Upload Series of 6-9 final images, layered print ready (SO) files
  (Note: File management, titles and Meta Data must be complete)

Assume the role of a photojournalist, investigator or spy to document a particular subject in detail. You decide what type of photography you would like to be – will you ask permission of your subjects to photograph them or will you sneak about incognito? Consider what documentary means to you – how far are you willing to go to get your point across – how objective or subjective are you?

Also consider the power of position: In this assignment, I want you to pay close attention to the language of sequencing when you present. We read images. So what does the order of those images tell us?

Context as well as content ascribes meaning.
assignment: 2

professor
Jennifer Garza-Cuen

Larry Sultan,  
Untitled Home Movie Still

engaging the archive

Readings: Ulrich Baer, “Deep in the Archive”  
Jorinde Seijdel, “Cold Storage: Bill Gates’s Image Archive”  

Requirements:

• Make 50-100 exposures, RAW processed and edited
• Archive Materials
• Series of 8-15 final images (archive and original), layered print ready (SO) files  
  (Note: File management, titles and Meta Data must be complete)

Create a narrative in the form of an archive. You can create all your own imagery or use found photographs (family photos, photos from antique stores, etc.) selecting the images to make new meanings, new stories. Create your own images to add to the archive. You may also use found or created documents, objects, etc.

Think about the story you want to tell – who you are as author? What is your point of view? What are your motives for collecting this information and organizing it in this way? Are you trying to be objective as possible, or is it a superficial collection that disguises the ugly truth?

Remember that an archive is a collection of information about anything: a family history, a place, the history of a species of tree, etcetera, and that it can be factual or fictional.
jeff wall,

After "Invisible Man" by Ralph Emerson,
The Prologue, 2001

**allelory - letter in images**

**Reading:** Victor Burgin, Looking At Photographs

**Requirements:**
- Make 50-100 exposures, RAW processed and edited
- Upload 8-10 final images, layered print ready (SO) files
- Do not include text and give serious thought to sequencing for narrative effect
  (Note: File management, titles and Meta Data must be complete)

Think about a person you wish to communicate with – make a series of images that are, in essence, a letter to that person. The images should be strong images in and of themselves, considering form and composition but must act as a sequence, the meaning of the series adding up to a sum greater than its parts.

**tableaux**

**Requirements:**
- 15-25 Exposures (variations on a single scene/concept)
- Choose a text, a popular story, poem, newspaper article, your own writings, etc
- Make a single photograph which relates to this text allegorically
- You must use a tripod and experiment with lighting for this assignment
- Prepare at least 4 variations of the same scene/concept
- Upload 8-10 final images, layered print ready (SO) files.
  (Note: File management, titles and Meta Data must be complete)

**midterm critique**

**Class Feedback on Assignments#: 1 - 4**
assignment: 5 & 6

final portfolio preparation

Reading:
- Philip Roth, Juice or Gravy? How I Met My Fate in a Cafeteria

Requirements:
- Explore two different narrative strategies using approximately 250 exposures.
- Images for both projects, edited for individual meeting with professor in preparation for final portfolio project.

final portfolio with bio and artist statement

Requirements:
- A series of 12-15 exhibition ready images (prints) with a clear unifying concept
- Short Bio (50-100 words)
- Artist Statement (series specific)
- Digital folder with Final Project 'Smart Objects'
- File management and Meta Data must be complete
- Final Portfolios must be uploaded to Behance with a short Bio and Artist Statement by December 1st
To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University has adopted policies and practices for the Fall 2020 academic term to limit virus transmission. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses and course-related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.):

- **Self-monitoring**—Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. **Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely and should not participate in face-to-face instruction.**
- **Face Coverings**—**Face coverings** (cloth face covering, surgical mask, etc.) must be properly worn in all non-private spaces including classrooms, teaching laboratories, common spaces such as lobbies and hallways, public study spaces, libraries, academic resource and support offices, and outdoor spaces where 6 feet of physical distancing is difficult to reliably maintain. Description of face coverings and additional guidance are provided in the Face Covering policy and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) available on the Provost website.
- **Physical Distancing**—Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in course and course-related activities.
- **Classroom Ingress/Egress**—Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.
- To attend a face-to-face class, students must wear a face covering (or a face shield if they have an exemption letter). If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the **Student Conduct office** for sanctions. Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day’s class remotely for all students.

**TAMU-CC Face Coverings**

TAMUCC Face Coverings Policy and FAQs: [https://www.tamucc.edu/fall-2020/face-coverings-faq/](https://www.tamucc.edu/fall-2020/face-coverings-faq/)

Rule and Procedure: [https://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/34.99.99.c0.02_use_of_face_coverings.pdf](https://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/34.99.99.c0.02_use_of_face_coverings.pdf)