

# 99-405 Digital Photographic Methods

Vincent Zeng, Instructor  
hdzeng@cmu.edu  
Office 2042  
<http://modigsear.cfa.cmu.edu/99-405>

Spring 2013

**Section W:** UTR 1400-1450 Room 1190

**Section X:** UTR 1500-1550 Room 1031

## 1 Overview

This course provides an introduction to producing photographs in a purely digital context. We will take an approach based from a fine art perspective to explore the methodology used in modern digital photography. A combination of lectures, labs, and class critiques will develop both the technical skills and aesthetic senses necessary to pursue photography. Lectures will present technical information, photographic concepts, and offer in-class discussion on relevant topics. Labs allow for development of practical skills covered in lecture. Class critiques are individual presentations of projects for group feedback.

Success in the course will depend highly on class attendance and participation. As developing photographers, learning to discuss work critically is crucial to making progress in your skills. Although the measurement of what makes a good photograph is highly subjective, individual visions can be strengthened in order to help you create your own metric for evaluation. Such growth will be promoted in this class through a process of looking at, talking about, and making photographs.

### Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should meet the following objectives:

#### Technical

- Perform basic digital camera operations to produce images that are correctly exposed and in focus.
- Use Adobe Photoshop to adjust size, cropping, exposure, and color qualities of photographs.

- Demonstrate knowledge of digital image formats and file management.

### **Aesthetic**

- Produce photographs with directed intent and sense of visual thinking.
- Discuss aspects of photography from both the perspective of the photographer and critical viewer.
- Engage with prompts to produce unique imagery that reflects thoughtful consideration.

## **2 Grading Breakdown**

Attendance/Participation: 10%

Attendance will be taken on all lecture and critique days. Please report anticipated absences to the instructor by email. Excuses will be granted at instructor discretion, and chronic absences will negatively impact your grade.

Participation will be judged based on timely attendance and contribution to in-class discussions and critiques. Excellent participation means making several thoughtful comments in discussion. Being asleep, using a laptop or mobile device for reasons that do not contribute to class activities, or being otherwise inattentive will result in poor marks in participation.

Labs: 40%

There will be a total of 14 lab sessions, worth three points each. You must be present during the lab period in order to earn points for completed labwork. Note that there are 42 lab points available; this gives you a slight point buffer in the event that you are absent. No makeup labs will be available.

Projects: 50%

There will be five projects total of increasing weight, including the final project.

## **3 Labs**

*Meet in room 2035*

Lab sessions occur every Tuesday, and are an opportunity to experiment with and demonstrate techniques in a hands-on environment. They will reflect concepts covered in preceding lectures, as well as skills needed to complete projects. Objectives will be outlined at the beginning of the lab period, and points awarded based on successful completion. Students must be present and complete the objectives within the lab period in order to receive credit.

## 4 Projects

Four projects occur during the semester, consisting of prompts that reflect skills and concepts covered in previous class sessions. These are assignments you will be expected to work on and complete outside of class. The final project will be a self-directed study, including a proposal of your intended project and presentation at the final critique. Projects will be graded on engagement with the prompt, technical merit, and presentation for critique.

Students will receive individual instructor feedback for projects prior to class critiques, and are encouraged to seek additional discussion in office hours if necessary. After handing in a project, students must also complete a class critique in order to receive a grade. Critique attendance for your own project is mandatory; missing your critique forfeits your grade for that project.

## 5 Critiques

Critiques occur on Thursdays, and each student will be assigned to a critique group. On critique days, each student belonging to the group scheduled to present will have approximately ten minutes to display work and engage in a class discussion about the project. Discussions involve peer comments, reactions, and questions, and are both for the benefit of the presenter in terms of receiving feedback and for the rest of the students to be exposed to a variety of work and perspectives.

In addition to making spoken comments, each student will make written remarks on each presentation, intended as additional feedback to the presenter. Written comments will be submitted to the instructor for review, and a copy will be provided to the presenter.

Quality feedback at critiques means considering both the technical and aesthetic aspects of student work. Does the work meet expectations of the prompt? Are there things about the work that seem surprising? What are suggestions you would make for change? Your goal in offering critique is to help your fellow photography students find strengths and weaknesses in their work.

## 6 Policies

### Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to Carnegie Mellon University's academic integrity policies. This policy can be found at <http://www.cmu.edu/policies> as well as in the back of the student handbook.

Specifically for this course, all work turned in must be of your own creation, produced during the assignment period specified. Appropriation of images must be properly sourced and cited, and may only be used with explicit instructor permission. Original camera files with intact EXIF data must be submitted with all projects. Confirmed cases of plagiarism or cheating will result in forfeiture

of credit on that assignment, as well as a report to the relevant parties as per the university's academic integrity policies.

When in doubt, please communicate questions regarding academic integrity to the instructor.

### **Hand-ins**

All projects will have a posted time and date as a hard deadline for submission. Project handin will be conducted through Dropbox, and handin directories will be checked immediately after the deadline. Submission within the 24 hour period following the deadline will result in a 10% reduction in grade; after that, projects will not be accepted.

Lab assignments must be completed by the end of the lab period; no extensions or make-ups will be granted.