AHIS 469  CRITICAL APPROACHES TO PHOTOGRAPHY: PRODUCTION / REPRODUCTION

Spring 2017  Prof. Megan R. Luke
mluke@usc.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12–2pm (THH 326)
**Sign-up sheet on office door**

VKC 207, with one visit to LACMA (*)
Thursdays 2:00–4:50pm

Course Description & Learning Objectives

This seminar focuses on the history and theory of photography in Germany and Central Europe the 1920s and 1930s. Our discussions will focus on relationships between photography, film, and the visual arts, as well as the circulation and exhibition of photography in the popular press, books, and museums. Our investigations will build to a visit to the exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Moholy-Nagy: Future Present, which offers a comprehensive retrospective of the work of artist, teacher, and media theorist, László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946).

Over the entire course of the semester you will cultivate a research project dedicated to a discrete body of photographs considered through the lens of a key topic for the history of photography in the interwar period of the twentieth century. In addition to the texts listed on the syllabus, you will be responsible for readings that you identify for this project in dialogue with the professor.

In this course students will hone the following skills:

- Visual analysis and description
- Close reading of advanced scholarly and theoretical texts
- Independent library and museum research
- Critical thinking and argumentation about technological images and their display
- Sustained written argumentation and peer-review
- Verbal expression and oral presentation
Course Protocol

*Late work will not be accepted.* Exceptions in cases of medical or family emergency require documentation from your doctor and/or academic advisor.

*Electronics Policy.* To help us all stay focused, phones must be switched *off* prior to entering class (we will do this together at the beginning of each session) and laptops and tablets are not permitted. Please download and print out readings prior to class, and come prepared to take notes with pen/paper. For a helpful explanation of the benefits of this policy, see: [www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom](http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom)

*Preparation.* Come prepared to take notes (use pencil only at museums, please!) and always bring a copy of the week’s assigned readings with you to discuss them closely.

*Attendance is your responsibility.* If you miss class, you miss out; there are no “make-ups” for seminar sessions. Be on time for all museum visits; our meeting time will be adjusted to factor in travel.

*Academic honesty is a top priority.* If you plagiarize your writing, you will receive a failing grade in the class. If you have questions about what qualifies as plagiarism, please see me or your advisor prior to completing any assignment. (See *Statement on Academic Integrity*, p. 11.)

Assignments

*Seminar Participation (15%)*
Unbroken attendance in discussion sections, robust discussion and preparation, respect for professor and peers, timely completion of all assignments. This grade includes the assignment under “Identifying a Project Topic,” listed on January 19.

*Reading/Image Presentation (20%)*
You will use this presentation to introduce the week’s readings to the class through a selection of no more than three images. First, you will briefly identify the main argument of the assigned texts, summarize their key issues, and give examples of the kind of evidence each author uses to support their argument. You will then pose three questions to the group that will prompt us to think about the relationship between the assigned texts and the image(s) you have selected. Before turning the floor over to discussion, briefly discuss your choice of image(s).

Before we tackle your questions, we will collectively practice a visual analysis of at least one of your images to jumpstart seminar discussion. Bring handouts of your questions for the group and your images as a PowerPoint/Keynote presentation on a flash drive. *Keep your remarks to 10 minutes.*
Research Précis, Paper Outline, Bibliography (15%)  
These short assignments will help you prepare for your final research paper:

(a) The précis is 300 words and states the topic and proposed argument of your paper. You should have a clear thesis statement and you should identify specific photographic images that you investigate for your research. You should also raise specific questions that you want to answer with this project. You should also identify between 3–5 sources for your topic, of which at least two need to be books you find in the library, and state why they are important for your project. **You must meet with me at office hours before the deadline.**

(b) The outline (2 pages min.) will lay out the structure of your paper, making clear how the arc of your argument will unfold and what kinds of evidence you will use to support your claims. You should divide up the paper into shorter, discrete sections and identify those sections with topic sentences and/or guiding questions, followed by possible evidence you will use. The more specific you can be about this evidence, the better: list particular sources, pull useful quotations, identify specific images, etc. **You must meet with me at office hours before the deadline.**

(c) The bibliography will provide a list of sources that you will use to complete your paper. You should have no fewer than 10 different sources (books, articles, and archives), of which up to three may be texts on the syllabus. Your bibliography must be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style (see “Notes and Bibliography” format): [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

Full credit will be given for these assignments so long as they are completed by the deadlines.

Research Presentation (20%)  
15-minute oral presentation of research paper topic, sources, and thesis argument. Come prepared with a written text to read out loud and with a PowerPoint/Keynote presentation to project images. You will receive feedback and answer questions after you present. Part of your grade for this assignment will be based on your feedback to your peers, so come prepared to ask questions, too.

Research Paper (30%)  
This is your culminating project of the semester and requires you to conduct original research and make a historical argument. This paper will be 15 pages long and, in addition, it will include relevant illustrations, captions, and bibliography. Consult the USC Libraries Research Guide for Art History: [http://libguides.usc.edu/art](http://libguides.usc.edu/art).
Paper Formatting

For all written assignments, please use:

- Times New Roman
- 12-point font
- Double-spacing
- 1-inch margins

Number your pages and give your final paper a title. Include your name on the first page. Keep your illustrations one to a page at the end of the paper (do not embed in the text). Include full captions for each illustration.

Your bibliography and illustrations are not part of the paper page count.

Course Materials

PDFs
All readings will be available as PDFs for download from Dropbox. Sign up for a free Dropbox account with your USC email at www.dropbox.com. You will receive an invitation to a shared folder where I will upload all PDFs over the course of the term for you to download/print at your convenience.

Leavey Reserves
Books important for getting you started on your research projects will be place on reserve for our class at Leavey Library.

Museum Visit
We will hold one session at LACMA, where we will study original artworks and consider issues that affect their installation. Admission tickets will be provided. Unless otherwise announced, you are responsible for your own transit to/from campus. Note location on course plan (*) and be on time.

Online Resources

https://monoskop.org/Monoskop
Supplies links to PDFs of many historic publications, entries on avant-garde artists

https://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/#home
A useful interactive site featuring photographer bios, scholarly essays, and images
**Course Plan**

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<th>Jan 12</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<th>Jan 19</th>
<th>Identifying a Project Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>No class</td>
<td>During this time you will visit Leavey and consult the books placed on reserve to cultivate ideas for your research topic for the semester (<a href="http://www.reserves.usc.edu">www.reserves.usc.edu</a>). You may also look up books at the AFA Library and look through online resources. The objective is to look widely at a lot of photographs from the 1920s–30s and to start to give thought about what images excite/interest you. Make a note of these images and the photographers who took them. As you look, you should decide which of the following areas of study you would like to pursue:</td>
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<td>- The role of photography as a reproductive tool for other art forms</td>
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<td>- Photography as advertising, propaganda, or journalism</td>
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<td>- The genre of the photo-book or photo-essay</td>
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<td>- The use of photography in collage and graphic design</td>
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<td>- Photography as a technology (chemical, mechanical processes)</td>
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<td>- Photography as an avant-garde art</td>
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You are also asked to consult the photography collections at LACMA and the Getty Museum online and work with me to arrange appointments to view relevant photographs first-hand for your topic in their Study Centers: [www.getty.edu/art/collection](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection) (select “Photographs” before searching) [www.collections.lacma.org](http://www.collections.lacma.org)

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<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Email me two areas for your proposed paper topic with the photographer(s) you are interested in for each, the books you consulted, and a note which museum collection(s) will be relevant</th>
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<td><strong>Due January 23, by 5pm</strong></td>
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<td>Jan 26</td>
<td><strong>Theory of Photography as a Mass Medium</strong></td>
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<th>Feb 2</th>
<th><strong>Reproduction: Photography and the Copy</strong></th>
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<td>- László Moholy-Nagy, “Production-Reproduction [1922],” 79–82</td>
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| Presentation | _______________________________ |
Feb 9  Production: Photomontage and Photograms

Readings  Selections from Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era*, op. cit.:

- Franz Höllering, “Photomontage [1928],” 128–31  
- Raoul Hausmann, “Photomontage [1931],” 178–81  
- Durus (Alfred Kemény), “Photomontage as a Weapon in Class Struggle [1932],” 204–6


Presentation __________________________

Feb 16  Library Skills

Meet at the Architecture & Fine Arts Library  
Special session with Librarian Stacy R. Williams (*stacyw@usc.edu*)

Deadline  Research Précis

**Due in seminar** (hard copy)
**Feb 23  New Objectivity**


**Presentation ________________________________**

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**Mar 2  New Vision**


**Presentation ________________________________**
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| Mar 9*  | LACMA Visit                        | Meet at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (www.lacma.org)  
 **We will convene at the café tables behind the Urban Light sculpture at the Wilshire and Ogden entrance (https://goo.gl/maps/npKLKzSVc9q)**  
| Mar 16  | Spring Break [no class]            |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**Deadline**

Paper Outline  
**Due in seminar** (hard copy)

Presentation __________________________
### Mar 30  Photography and Media Exhibitions

**Readings**  Selections from Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era*, op. cit.:

- Paul Renner, “The Photograph [1930],” 164–169


### Apr 6  Photo-Legacies


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<td><strong>Due in seminar</strong></td>
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### Apr 13  Research Presentations

### Apr 20  Research Presentations

### Apr 27  Peer-Review & Writing Workshop

For our final session, you will bring in a hard copy of a draft of your **first five pages of your research paper** (i.e. the introduction and a little beyond). You will exchange your writing with others to practice refining and editing your prose, to raise questions for clarification, and to offer constructive feedback. We will also look at examples of paragraphs together as a group with an aim toward cultivate concrete strategies for improvement.

### Deadline  Research Paper

**Due in May 4** (via email)

### STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your TA **no later than your first section (January 20)**. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Please visit [http://dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu) for more information.
Contact: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu)

### STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook ([http://scampus.usc.edu](http://scampus.usc.edu)), contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS/COURSE CONTINUITY IN A CRISIS

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university’s site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness ([http://preparedness.usc.edu](http://preparedness.usc.edu)).