

## **SYLLABUS FOR COMM 451**

### **Visual Communication and Social Change From Film to the Digital Age**

**Course COMM 451**

**USC Annenberg School for Communication**

**Instructor: Jim Hubbard**

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#### **Course Description**

**Photography has played a unique role in raising awareness and fostering significant social change. One of the goals for this course will examine the continued effectiveness of photography in the digital age. At a time in history when literally of billions of digital photos are being produced annually—in one year an estimated 250 billion digital photos were made and nearly a billion camera phones were said to be in use—developing both a theoretical and practical understanding of the history and current practices of visual communication and its storytelling capabilities,, principally through photography, video and film, is critical.**

**In this course, photography's evolution will be charted, analyzed and discussed, and we will explore ways to utilize this knowledge to devise new strategies for the use of the photographic image. In recent decades photographs and video have been integrated, of course in mass media usage, but also in an array of**

**interdisciplinary fields of study including sociology, anthropology, education, public health and medicine and of course art. Serious photo documentary work has and will continue to serve as a critical component in societal discussions and decision-making around global social issues, ie., war, famine, disease and poverty. There will be an ongoing analysis and exploration of the internet's use of images on blogs and web sites, such as and YouTube and Flickr, and Bag News Notes.**

### **Course Learning Objectives**

**Develop critical awareness of photographic uses in the digital age and image authenticity, manipulation and propaganda methods.**

**Explore citizen responsibility for assessing, conveying and purveying photographs for information, social awareness and social change.**

**Critically examine the emergence of citizen journalism and participatory photography and the impact on traditional journalism**

### **Integrated Documentary Project**

**Each student will create their own visual documentary project with a minimum of fifteen photographs from a film or digital camera accompanied by text that will**

**detail the project from its inception to its conclusion and that will be presented at the end of the course as a final project.**

**Each student will be responsible for production of the pictures and may be as small as 4X6 or 5X7 in size .The mission and scope of the individual documentary projects will be an integral part of the overall learning experience offered in this class and exhaustive discussions regarding each students project proposal and implementation will be a focus of the course even though the general topic should be about your life. Access to a digital or film camera for entire course is necessary.**

### **Academic Integrity**

**The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the Campus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled “University Sanction Guidelines.” These policies, procedures and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and**

**be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.**

### **Disability**

**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 me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213)740-0776.**

### **Grading**

**Class participation 10%**

**Photo Documentary Project 15%**

**Mid term paper 25%**

**Final paper and documentary project 50%**

### **Required Texts and Additional Reading**

**The course reading requirements will be a combination of assigned text material and article handouts (most accessible on the internet). Some additional reading requirements may be assigned throughout the course.**

**Required texts:**

~~ISBN: 978 0199752133~~

~~Title: ABOUT TO DIE: HOW IMAGES MOVE THE PUBLIC~~

~~Author: BARBIE ZELIZER~~

~~Publisher: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010~~

**Gross, Katz and Ruby (2003) Image Ethics in the Digital Age, (University of Minnesota Press) can be purchased at USC bookstore**

**Sontag, Susan, (1973) On Photography (Pan Books Limited) can be ordered from Amazon**

**Guest Speakers to be announced. Class may meet off campus no more than twice and only if logistics work for the entire class.**

**Week 1**

**Introductions**

**Review syllabus**

**Discuss class assignments and reading assignments**

**Read for week 2 Everyone is a Photographer by Jim Hubbard, will email article**

**Week 2**

**View documentary film To Render a Life**

**Class discussion about film  
Roland Bleiker and Amy Kay, Representing HIV/AIDS in  
Africa:Pluarlist  
Photography and Local Empowerment, International  
Studies Quarterly (227) 51  
pp.169-163 (will be handed out)**

**Week 3**

**Becker, H.S., Photography and Sociology, Studies in the  
Anthropology of Visual Communication,Chapter 1, 3-26  
<http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/becker.html>**

**Week 4**

**Becker,H.S., Visual Sociology,Documentary  
Photography,and  
Photojournalism:It's All a Matter of Context, Read entire  
article  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/visual.html>**

**Week 5**

**Courrent journal and academic articles will be emailed  
for reading assignment and discussion**

**Week 6**

**Sontag, Susan, On Photography, pp. 3-50  
Prepare five page mid term paper for next week along  
with five of the photos  
from your project**

**Week 7**

**Sontag, Susan, On Photography pp. 51-114  
Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age, read  
Intro and Chapter 1&2**

## **Week 8**

**Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age,  
Chapter 3&4**

**Sontag, Susan,On Photography pp.115-152**

## **Week 9**

**Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age,  
Chapter 5**

**Sontag, Susan, On Photography pp. 153-183**

## **Week 10**

**Ballerini, Julia, Photography as a Charitable  
Weapon:Poor Kids and Self-Representation, Radical  
History Review, Volume 69 Fall 1997, Will be handed  
out or found on internet**

**Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age,  
Chapter 7&8**

## **Week 11**

**Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age,  
Chapter 12**

**Ballerini, Julia, Flip:The Homeless Child as Auteur,from  
the Yale Journal of  
Criticism,8:2(1995:Fall) (will be handed out)**

## **Week 12**

**Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age,  
Chapter 13&14**

**Berger, John, About Looking, (1980)Pantheon Books,  
pp.1-47 (will hand out)**

## **Week 13**

**Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age,  
Chapter 15 and Afterword**

**Berger, John, About Looking, (1980)Pantheon Books, pp.  
48-63 (will be handed out)**

**Prepare and discuss final presentation to class**

#### **Week 14**

**Integrated documentary project pre edit and discussion  
with panel/group presentations and evaluations of  
edited work by the panels**

#### **Week 15 and Final Examination Period**

**Presentation of final papers and final presentation of  
edited images from photo documentary and preparing  
for Annenberg exhibit on internet and in gallery(USC  
or Venice Arts)**

**Detail Final paper/exam.**

**Computer use, texting and cell phones will only be used  
in class for class related issues, topics and research  
during class time and other uses are prohibited.**

**Final Exam Day and time per University Schedule of  
Final Examinations**