

**AHIS 469 CRITICAL APPROACHES TO PHOTOGRAPHY:  
PRODUCTION / REPRODUCTION**

Spring 2017 Prof. Megan R. Luke

[mluke@usc.edu](mailto: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**

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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

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*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

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*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>.

## **Paper Formatting**

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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**

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### *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](http://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 placed 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****Jan 12 Introduction**

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Readings Christopher Phillips, “Resurrecting Vision: The New Photography in Europe Between the Wars,” in *The New Vision: Photography Between the World Wars*, eds. Maria Morris Hambourg and Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 65–108; 285–90 (notes).

Selections from Jean-Claude Lemagny and André Rouillé, eds., *A History of Photography: Social and Cultural Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 76–81, 104–23, 141–57.

**Jan 19 Identifying a Project Topic**

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**No class** During this time you will visit Leavey and consult the **books** placed on reserve to cultivate ideas for your research topic for the semester ([www.reserves.usc.edu](http://www.reserves.usc.edu)). 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:

- The role of photography as a reproductive tool for other art forms
- Photography as advertising, propaganda, or journalism
- The genre of the photo-book or photo-essay
- The use of photography in collage and graphic design
- Photography as a technology (chemical, mechanical processes)
- Photography as an avant-garde art

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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| <b>Deadline</b> | 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 |
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**Due January 23, by 5pm**

**Jan 26      Theory of Photography as a Mass Medium**

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Readings      Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography [1931]," in *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927–1934*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard UP, 1999), 507–30.

Herbert Molderings, "Photographic History in the Spirit of Constructivism: Reflections on Walter Benjamin's 'Little History of Photography,'" trans. John Brogden, *Art in Translation* 6, no. 3 (2014): 317–44.

**Feb 2      Reproduction: Photography and the Copy**

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Readings      Selections from Christopher Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989):

- László Moholy-Nagy, "Production-Reproduction [1922]," 79–82
- Ernő Kallai, et al., "Painting and Photography [1927]," 94–103
- Kurt Karl Eberlein, "On the Question: Original or Facsimile Reproduction? [1929]," 145–50
- Alexander Dorner, "Original and Facsimile [1930]," 151–154

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version) [1935–36]," in *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard UP, 2002), 101–33.

Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

**Feb 9      Production: Photomontage and Photograms**

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- Readings      Selections from Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era*, op. cit.:
- László Moholy-Nagy, “Unprecedented Photography [1927],” 83–85
  - Franz Höllering, “Photomontage [1928],” 128–31
  - Raoul Hausmann, “Photomontage [1931],” 178–81
  - Durus (Alfred Kemény), “Photomontage, Photogram [1931],” 182–85
  - Durus (Alfred Kemény), “Photomontage as a Weapon in Class Struggle [1932],” 204–6

Herbert Molderings, “Light Years of a Life: The Photogram in the Aesthetic of László Moholy-Nagy,” in *Moholy-Nagy: The Photograms*, eds. Renate Heyne and Floris M. Neusüss (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 14–25.

Sabine T. Kriebel, “Photomontage in the Age of Technological Reproducibility,” in *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 64–103; 277–82 (notes).

Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

**Feb 16      Library Skills**

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

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| <b>Deadline</b> | Research Précis                   |
|                 | <b>Due in seminar</b> (hard copy) |

**Feb 23      New Objectivity**

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- Readings      Herbert Molderings, “Urbanism and Technological Utopianism: Thoughts on the Photography of Neue Sachlichkeit and the Bauhaus,” in *Germany: The New Photography, 1927–33*, ed. David Mellor (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 87–94.
- Ute Eskildsen, “Photography and the Neue Sachlichkeit Movement,” in *Germany: The New Photography*, op. cit., 100–12.
- Matthew Simms, “Just Photography: Albert Renger-Patzsch’s Die Welt ist schön,” *History of Photography* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 197–204.
- Megan R. Luke, “Still Lives and Commodities,” in *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933* (Los Angeles: LACMA, 2015), 228–57 [includes plates].

Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

**Mar 2      New Vision**

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- Readings      László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film*, trans. Janet Seligman (1925; rev. ed. 1927; London: Lund Humphries, 1969), 7–45; also study the plates and captions!!
- Pepper Stetler, “Introduction: How to Read a Photographic Book” and “Visualizing the Book: László Moholy-Nagy’s *Malerei Photographie Film*,” in *Stop Reading! Look! Modern Vision and the Weimar Photographic Book* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 1–58; 191–99 (notes).

Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

**Mar 9\* LACMA Visit**

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Meet at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art ([www.lacma.org](http://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>)\*\*

Readings Matthew S. Witkovsky, Carol S. Eliel, and Karole P. B. Vail, eds., *Moholy-Nagy: Future Present* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2016).  
 [read the essays by Witkovsky, D’Alessandro, Lugon, and King]

**Mar 16 Spring Break [no class]**

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**Mar 23 Photo-Essays and Photo-Books**

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Readings Michael Jennings, “Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic,” *October* 93 (Summer 2000): 23–56.

Olivier Lugon, “‘Photo-Inflation’: Image Profusion in German Photography, 1925–1945,” *History of Photography* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 2008): 219–34.

Daniel H. Magilow, “The Illustrated Press and the Photo Essay,” in *The Photography of Crisis: The Photo Essays of Weimar Germany* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2012), 34–62; 154–56 (notes).

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| <b>Deadline</b> | Paper Outline                     |
|                 | <b>Due in seminar</b> (hard copy) |

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**Mar 30      Photography and Media Exhibitions**

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

- Franz Roh, “The Value of Photography [1930],” 160–63
- Paul Renner, “The Photograph [1930],” 164–169

Noam M. Elcott, “Rooms of Our Time: László Moholy-Nagy and the Stillbirth of Multi-Media Museums,” in *Screen/Space: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art*, ed. Tamara Trodd (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2011), 25–52.

Olivier Lugon, “Photography and Exhibition in Germany around 1930,” in *Object:Photo. Modern Photographs 1909–1949. The Thomas Walther Collection at The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014), pp#.

Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

**Apr 6      Photo-Legacies**

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Readings      Ernst Jünger, “Photography and the ‘Second Consciousness,’” in *Photography in the Modern Era*, op. cit., 207–10.

Joyce Tsai, “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: László Moholy-Nagy and His Light Prop for an Electrical Stage,” in *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork: On Borders and Fragments*, eds. Anke Finger and Danielle Follett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 277–304.

Robin Schuldenfrei, “Images in Exile: Lucia Moholy’s Bauhaus Negatives and the Construction of the Bauhaus Legacy,” *History of Photography* 37, no. 2 (May 2013): 182–203.

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| <b>Deadline</b> Paper Bibliography |
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| <b>Due in seminar</b> (hard copy) |
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**Apr 13      Research Presentations**

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**Apr 20      Research Presentations**

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**Apr 27      Peer-Review & Writing Workshop**

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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 cultivating concrete strategies for improvement.

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| <b>Deadline</b> | Research Paper                  |
|                 | <b>Due in May 4</b> (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> 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>), 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>).