

## COMM 451: Visual Communication and Social Change

**Number of Units: 4.0**

**Summer 2021**

**Section: 20665R**

**Location: Online**

**MWF**

**9:30am-12:20pm**

**Instructor: Jim Hubbard**

**[jdhubbar@usc.edu](mailto:jdhubbar@usc.edu)**

**cell 310-386-1698**

### I. Course Description

Analysis of visual communication and photography's evolution and new strategies for the photographic image, photo documentary work and global social issues; analysis of images on blogs, web sites and social media.

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 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 of 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 YouTube, Flickr, and Twitter.

Journalism is at a time of incredible technological and economic disruption, leaving individual journalists with a great deal of professional uncertainty due to declining revenues, circulation, and public trust. While many journalists have lost their jobs over the past decade, those who remain are expected to do more with less, more quickly, on more platforms, with less oversight. Photojournalists have been especially hard hit, as the use of digital cameras by all journalists is expected (Anderson 2013; Associated Press 2013). We will take a hard look on honesty and ethics in this explosion of images

## **II. Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Develop critical awareness of photographic uses in the digital age and image authenticity, manipulation and propaganda, methods and ethics.
2. Explore citizen responsibility for assessing, conveying and purveying photographs for information, social awareness and social change.
3. Critically examine the emergence of citizen journalism, participatory photography (PP), photographic empowerment (PE) and their impact on traditional journalism. Analysis of ethical issues facing professional and amateur image makers.
4. Explore existential questions and visual communication being vital, and formative in shaping global citizens critical and personal worldviews. One student wrote in her final paper last year, "At the beginning of this class (Comm 451) I was not aware of what a world view was. As we went around the class and had to talk about our worldview, I was honestly just listening to what other people were saying and trying to form what I thought I believed. Nervously formulating what I was going to say in front of the class, I decided that I had a feeling what my worldview was. I think the world is messed up. Personally, I am religious so I would like to believe that there is faith in this world, however I think that we have a lot of work to do. Specifically, when it comes to visual communication, I feel as though it impacts my worldview in a negative way."

Additional learning outcome is derived from Individual Documentary Project. Students will create their own social change visual documentary project with a minimum of fifteen final photographs from a film or digital camera (iPhones) 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 images may be as small as 4X5 or 5X7 or larger 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 student's 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.

## **III. Course Notes**

Students should keep notes on their ongoing Individual Photo Documentary Projects and class discussions.

## **IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments**

Reading assignments will be sent to you in advance by email (Blackboard). To get the most out of this class, you must be here. While it is normal to miss a few times during the course of a semester, you cannot "take" this class without attending prepared to discuss and participate in our reading assignments and your interpretations. Each student in small groups, or individually, will be required to lead in some class discussions.

### **In-Class Work**

During both lecture and discussion classes, we will have a variety of participation activities including small group assignments. In class-work you may be assigned a role at any point during the class and will not be scheduled in advance but randomly designated throughout the semester. If you miss by arriving late or leaving early, or by being absent altogether, you will not have an opportunity to make up the work. Because we recognize that some absences and lateness are inevitable, three missing scores will not count against your in-class work grade.

### **V. Grading**

#### **a. Breakdown of Grade**

A “B” represents really good work. An “A” represents excellent work. If you are disappointed by a grade, bring your concerns to me and we will discuss your work and help you improve for the next assignment.

| <b>Assignments</b>  | <b>Points</b> | <b>% of Grade</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Class participation                                       | 100           | 10                |
| Photo Documentary Project                                 | 150           | 15                |
| Mid-term paper and 2-3 reaction papers to course readings | 250           | 25                |
| Final paper   | 500           | 50                |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |               | <b>100%</b>       |

#### **b. Grading Scale**

|                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 95% to 100%: A | 80% to 83%: B- | 67% to 69%: D+ |
| 90% to 94%: A- | 77% to 79%: C+ | 64% to 66%: D  |
| 87% to 89%: B+ | 74% to 76%: C  | 60% to 63%: D- |
| 84% to 86%: B  | 70% to 73%: C- | 0% to 59%: F   |

**c. Grading Standards** The grading scale for this class will be that an A is 94 or above; A- is 90-93; B+ is 87-89; B is 84-86; B- is 80-83, C+ is 77-79 and so on.

“A” assignments show an eloquent mastery of ideas and their application; are completely free of grammatical and logical errors; demonstrate creativity, rigor, and sophisticated thinking; speak to an audience in a clear and thoughtful manner; and represent the very best of the class’s work.

“B” assignments show a good use of concepts; employ relevant examples; contain some grammatical errors and logical problems; and represent work that adequately communicates a student’s point of view.

“C” assignments show a minimally adequate use of concepts; lack relevant examples; have many grammatical errors and serious logical limitations; and demonstrate work that is not well respected in professional or scholarly settings.

“D” assignments are barely adequate application of concepts; require excessive rewriting and lack compelling examples; have many errors and have significant flaws in logic; and represent work that requires significant improvement.

“F” assignments fail to meet the major assignment criteria, are late, rife with grammatical or logical errors, and generally do not meet the standards of quality USC Annenberg students are expected to meet.

**d. Grading Timeline** Assignments will be returned within 1 week after the date students are assigned.

## **VI. Assignment Rubrics**

The prompt for each paper will explain the assignment expectations, consistent with the “grading standards” section above.

You will be assigned a series of reaction papers. A reaction paper features your intellectual response to a visual communication topic covered in discussion/ lecture/ readings. The reaction papers will vary in length from 2 to 4 double-spaced, typed pages.

## **VII. Assignment Submission Policy**

For each reaction paper and midterm paper, students must submit **paper at beginning of class** the day the paper is due on Blackboard. Unless you have communicated with me **before** the paper’s due date and time, late penalties will be applied. The final paper is to be posted on Blackboard to me on date due listed below in class schedule.

**VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Academic Materials**

- 1/ Image Ethics in the Digital Age, Gross, Katz, Ruby; University of Minnesota Press, 2003,
- 2/ Bending the Frame, Fred Ritchin, Aperture, 2013.
- 3/ About to Die, Barbie Zelizer, Oxford University Press, 2010 .

Other reading assignments not from required textbooks will be sent via links. We will explore current use of the visual imagery (stills and video) on a regular basis related to news events. This will require critical thinking (analysis) about the use of imagery related to continuing and current global events that shape views and emotions, public/private beliefs, world views, and their capacity for social change. The National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking defines critical thinking as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action

**IX. Laptop Policy**

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the **Annenberg Digital Lounge** for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s **Information Technology Services** website.

**X.Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

*Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

|   | <b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>  | <b>Readings and Homework</b>   | <b>Deliverable/Due Dates</b>   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Week 1</b><br><b>Dates: 5/19, 5/21</b> | <p>Introductions, Review syllabus and emailed documents</p> <p>Discuss class assignments and reading assignments Read Everyone is a Photographer by Jim Hubbard.</p> <p>Discuss individual photo projects and write about those images that have had the most impact on you for personal and social change.</p> | <p>Read Everyone is a Photographer by Jim Hubbard and will be sent in an email with the reading attachment.</p> <p>Write one page, double spaced, paper describing your plan for the individual photo project and bring to class next week</p> | <p>Please note that the class will consist of at least five small groups consisting of 3 or 4 students in each group. Each small group will facilitate at least one class and report, question, others in class about their views and description of the week’s reading assignments.</p> |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p><b>Dates: 5/24, 5/26, 5/28</b></p>                        | <p>Discuss themes of Individual Documentary Projects and send one page description of your plan for the photo project.</p> | <p>Read Bending the Frame by Fred Ritchin, Aperture Foundation, 2013 Read Preface and Chapters 1 &amp;2</p> <p>Read Social Photograph</p> | <p>Class, small groups to implement your photo documentary projects if you have not already done so and the way in which you will present the images and text to the entire class toward the end of the course.</p> |
| <p><b>Week 3 Holiday, No Class on 5/31</b></p> <p><b>Class on 6/2 and 6/4</b></p> | <p>Read About to Die, by Barbie Zelizer, Oxford University Press (2010) Chapters 1&amp;2</p>                               | <p>Read, The visibility of disaster deaths in news images:A comparison of newspapers from 15countries</p> <p>2 page reaction paper</p>    |   |
| <p><b>Week 4</b></p> <p><b>Dates: 6/7, 6/9, 6/11</b></p>                          | <p>Watch film Born into Brothels</p>   | <p>Read preface and first two chapters of Image Ethics in the Digital Age</p>   | <p>Groups will present to entire class.</p> <p>Read Bending the Frame Chapters 5&amp;6</p>  |
| <p><b>Week 5</b></p> <p><b>Dates: 6/14, 6/16, 6/18</b></p>                        | <p>Mid term paper due. 4 double spaced pages</p>   | <p>Read Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age, Chapter 5</p> <p>Watch film Finding Vivian Maier in class</p>                   | <p>Ballerini, Julia, Flip:The Homeless Child as Auteur,from the Yale Journal of Criticism,8:2(1995:Fall)</p> <p>Will send link</p>  |
| <p><b>Week 6</b></p> <p><b>Dates: 6/21, 6/23, 6/25</b></p>                        | <p>Read Documentary Photography as a Tool of Social Change by Christine Hills</p>  | <p>Each student will show some of their project images on Blackboard from their computer</p>  | <p>Small Group discussions</p> <p>Prepare and submit your class and professor evaluations</p>   |
| <p><b>Week 7</b></p> <p><b>Dates: 6/28</b></p>                                    | <p>Read Gross,Katz,Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age, Chapter 12, &amp;13</p>  | <p>Prepare Final Paper</p> <p>Minimum six double spaced pages on the Impact of Visual Communication</p>                                   |   |

## **XI. Policies and Procedures**

### **Regular class attendance and completion of class assignments.**

#### **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

##### **a. Academic Conduct**

###### *Plagiarism*

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

###### *USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity*

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

##### **b. Support Systems**

*Counseling and Mental Health* - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP)* - (213) 740-9355(WELL),  
press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)*- (213) 740-5086 | *Title IX* – (213) 821-8298  
[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.



*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

**XII. About Your Instructor Bio---** In 2007, The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) announced that Jim Hubbard, award-winning photojournalist and Creative Director of Venice Arts, is among ten honorees of the 2007 Lewis Hine Award. Hubbard is just one of two recipients of the Distinguished Service Award, given to business leaders and individuals in the public eye who have made a positive impact on the welfare of the nation's children and youth.

A documentary photographer and photojournalist for 40 years, Hubbard was honored for using his camera, like Lewis Hine, to call attention to the plight of low-income, homeless, Native American, gang involved, and disabled children. The pioneer of "participant-produced photography," he also is being recognized for his work with Venice Arts and for his founding of Shooting Back. He is the first photographer receiving this award. Previous winners of the Lewis Hine award include such luminaries as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Oprah, Tipper Gore, Joan Ganz Cooney, and Charles Schulz.

In the late 1980s, while photographing the homeless in Washington, D.C., Jim gave homeless youth cameras to document their own life stories. This was the beginning of "Shooting Back," a photo/media program created by Jim, whose purpose was to empower homeless children by giving them a voice for their despair and to prompt lawmakers to create legislation to help them. Photos from Shooting Back have been exhibited nationally and internationally; Jim, the youth photographers, and their images have been the subject of a number of documentaries, as well as media coverage; and four books from Shooting Back have been published, including *Shooting*

*Back and Shooting Back from the Reservation*. Jim's photographs of American homelessness and poverty are found in his book, *American Refugees* and in 2013 he released *Shooting Back From the Heart*.

Jim has received numerous awards for his commitment to educating the public about homelessness including United States Congressional Recognition, the Leica Medal of Excellence Award, ARA Spirit of Service Award, and *Parent's Magazine's* "As They Grow Award for the Arts." Prior to focusing on homelessness, Hubbard traveled the world for United Press International, using his skills to show the world the horrors of the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre, 1979 Cambodian genocide by the Pol Pot regime, the death of 10,000 people during a Calcutta, India cyclone, the Wounded Knee siege in 1973 and his internationally acclaimed coverage of the 1967 Detroit riots. Over his long career, Hubbard has received over 100 photography awards and three Pulitzer Prize nominations.

Hubbard has been an adjunct professor in USC's Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism since 2008. He has four daughters and three grandchildren and resides in Los Angeles, CA with his partner Lynn Warshafsky.

(More academic and media attachments will be sent to you via email or Blackboard during the Summer semester)