



## Digital Architectural Photography 421

**Units: Two**

**SPRING Semester 2025, Thursdays**

**Location:** WAH B2 (Photo Lab) (Basement Corner)

**Instructor: Stephen Schafer**

**Office:** WAH B2

**Office Hours:** Thursday 2:30-3:30 p.m.

(please make office appointments via email)

**Contact Info** [stephen.schafer@usc.edu](mailto:stephen.schafer@usc.edu)

**Phone:** 805-652-1000



**Prerequisite(s):** None

### Course Description

Perceiving and documenting the built environment through the two-dimensional perspective and frame of the digital camera. Mastering the basic principles of the digital image through an understanding of framing, light, exposure, color, and output.

This course will teach students to see architecture, create successful images of the built environment and explore the varied approaches to architectural photography from the strictly documentary in nature to the creatively enhanced. The student will become a highly competent, creative, digital photographic image creator. They will develop an understanding of accurate exposure, color management, resolution, perspective, composition and image editing. Students will successfully use digital tools to enhance their architectural images, correct distortion and control mixed lighting. Students will have higher visual standards and be able to utilize proper digital file management and photographic software in new ways to create a printed book of images for the final. Students will learn the secret to successful architectural photography: Knowing which 23.8 hours **NOT** to take the photograph.

### Learning Objectives

- Comprehensive understanding of how natural and artificial lighting strengthen architectural design.
- Heightened sensitivity to sunset, sunrise and weather and their effect on the built environment.
- Control of perspective and distortion inherent in architectural photographs.
- Understanding of photographic composition and previsualization of the final delivered image.
- Creation of exceptional images of significant architecture off campus in greater Los Angeles.
- Use of manual camera functions, including exposure, bracketing, depth, and color temperature.
- Use and knowledge of Lightroom Classic for color correction and post-processing.
- Understanding of tabletop architectural model lighting and photography.

## Course Notes

Weekly assignments will be delivered digitally in 'albums' on **FLICKR.com** online. Work will be graded and critiqued from these online albums. Students will be expected to create professional quality photographs and present them on FLICKR in an album format. The FLICKR albums will also be viewed in class as projected images for discussion and critique. Students will use Lightroom Classic to sort, edit and retouch their final selected photographs. Students will post finalized images through the publishing link in Lightroom to Flickr. Students will select 30 final images from class and design a Print-on-Demand book of their body of work in the Lightroom Classic Book Module as their final project. Plan to always bring your camera and laptop to class.

## Software Required

**Adobe Lightroom CLASSIC** monthly subscription. (\$10 per month) (Only CLASSIC will work)

**Flickr.com** (free). Uploading images, adding captions, adding photographs to albums and joining the class group. All class assignments are delivered via upload to **Flickr.com albums** and will be public.

## Hardware Required

1. Interchangeable-lens DSLR or mirrorless camera\* with manual mode. (Will discuss the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class).
2. Super-wide angle zoom lens. (Will discuss the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class).
3. \*\* Tripod. (Will discuss the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class).
4. Polarizing filter. (Will discuss the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class).
5. Camera SD card 16-32 GB. (Possibly an extra battery).
6. Smart phone with camera.
7. Laptop in class that runs Lightroom Classic (No tablet options.)

## Costs:

Camera + super-wide lens: \$500 to \$1000 unless you can borrow from parents/friends.

Tripod: borrow or \$75-150

Polarizing filter for super-wide lens: \$30

Adobe Lightroom CLASSIC software: ~ \$10 per month

Final book Blurb publishing: ~ \$40

Julius Shulman Visual Acoustics movie rental ~ \$20 or check with library.

Gas for trips to photo locations: \$ Varies

Entry fees for house tours: \$3 to \$20

You must have a camera and lens for 421 class. Cameras are called DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex) or newer mirrorless digital cameras. You can use a ten-year-old camera like a Canon Rebel (or Nikon/Pentax/Sony/Olympus/Fuji), but you'll need to add a super wide angle lens by the 2nd class session. Architectural lenses need to be very, very wide. This is confusing technical stuff, please contact me if you have a question, do not buy equipment unless you are very sure of camera/lens compatibility and size, please, please email me for advice.

You will need to use a tripod, there are 25 students and only 9 tripods to check out in the photo lab on an overnight basis. Tripods cost \$70-150 unless you can borrow one. You will have better luck with your own tripod ready when the light is perfect and you have time at sunset to drive to a location. We will talk about tripod options in class.

Unless you already have the ALL ADOBE APPS subscription, you will need to have an Adobe Lightroom **CLASSIC** (not LR cloud/tablet) subscription which will cost around \$10 per month (we will all subscribe together on the first day of class). Must be LR CLASSIC (LRC)

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required readings, videos, tutorials and webinars will be listed during the class.

## Optional Reading

Joseph Rosa and Esther McCoy, A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Schulman

## Grading Breakdown

There will be a photography assignment every class-week. Assignments are to be turned in (delivered) on the due date (usually by midnight the day before class). In this class, one grade level will be deducted for each class session (week) an assignment is late. Assignments may be redone for a better grade if originally posted on time. Extra credit work is encouraged, check with instructor.

**Table 1 Grading Breakdown**

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Active Participation/Attendance	20	10%
UPLOADED assignment presentations	120	60%
Final POD Book with 30 class images	60	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

## Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D+	67-69.9
D	63-66.9
D-	60-62.9
F	59.9 and below

## **Assignment Submission Policy**

Weekly presentation assignments are to be uploaded on (by midnight) the day before class. Assignments (deliverables) will be uploaded to Flickr as Jpegs in an album labeled with the assignment name. Final Print-On-Demand books will be created using thirty (or more) class photos in Lightroom Classic and uploaded to Blurb in April. Book will be brought to class in-person on Finals day for critique, evaluation and filming as your final project.

## **Participation and attendance**

Active participation and attendance – **10%**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. This is a small interactive class with field surveys around campus; your presence is necessary. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to get the assignment and obtain information (from another student.) If for some reason you find that you must be absent or late it is essential that you notify instructor in advance by email.

## **Course Specific Policies**

### **Assignments 60%**

Assignments must be turned in (uploaded to Flickr) on time. Some assignments are not graded on quality. These assignments are for your learning and practice of basic principles. All assignments will count toward your grade. You are expected to backup assignments and files/photos in case Flickr fails or your laptop gets hacked. You are expected to download and organize all your camera files and videos in case your camera breaks or is stolen. Photography assignments should not be captured in a location you live or work in (please no photos of your bedroom or workplace) – get out there IRL and solve problems.

### **Final Project – 30%** (Book cost should be approximately \$40.00)

You will create a Print-On-Demand (POD) book of thirty (or more) of your best photographs from the class. You can select many buildings or a single building. You can document a place, building or district. You could create a how-to book of before and after photographs showing how you initially approached each building and how, after taking the class, you chose to make the final images differently. You can explore light on many buildings and structures and create a book of HERO photographs. Or (with prior instructor approval) you can ideate a unique book that enhances or dovetails with your other USC architecture classes. You will need to consult with the instructor by the midterm class to conceptualize and plan the book topic and design.

## **Classroom norms**

Photography is a creative process where progress is slow and technical mistakes are easy. I see both failures and successes as critical milestones in the creative process, and both should be viewed as valuable. Photography, unlike architecture can be deleted at the touch of a button, and pixels are free, so the more you photograph, the better you will be. Class critiques will involve exploring your successes and failures. The small class size facilitates an open, workshop dialog. Bring gummy bears to the first class if you read this. A collaborative approach to exploring successes, failures, solutions and new ideas is desired. Lectures should be respectfully interrupted for clarity or to explore alternate viewpoints and ideas. Curiosity is a contagious asset, interaction with the instructor and fellow students is your responsibility. Not every topic will be posed

as a question; it is in your best interest to pose questions for the instructor during class to catalyze discussion. Part of your participation grade is based on in-class interaction. Bring examples and questions to class for discussion. Be respectful of fellow students when posing questions and responding to discussions.

## Course Schedule & Description and Assessment of Assignments

**Class 1: Architecture Photo Basics (sunrise 6:57am - sunset 5:08pm) |** Syllabus Review, Camera Specifications & Requirements. Architectural photography general lecture. Intro to Flickr. (Bring laptop)  
Assignment A-1 (due: one week): 3-Way smartphone photography of buildings on campus.

**Class 2: Architecture Photo Basics 2 |** Intro to composition, intro to the sun and what it does. Intro to Lightroom Classic. Front, side and backlighting demo. (Bring laptop)  
Assignment A-2 (due: one weeks): 3-Way smartphone photography of buildings off campus.

**Class 3: Manual Digital Camera Use intro (sunset 5:21pm) | On-Campus Demo:** Shaking Hands with a Building. Goal: Use of manual camera functions: bracketing, exposure, speed, and ISO. Lightroom Classic Modules. (Bring laptop)- Tripod Basics- Bring DSLR camera and lens.  
Assignment BRACKETING (due: one week): 5-Stop Bracket Assignment.

**Class 4: Artificial vs. Natural Light 1 |** Goal: Heightened sensitivity to light and how it strengthens architectural design. Lightroom Modules. (Bring Laptop)  
Assignment D (due: one week): Location photography under various artificial lighting types.

**Class 5: Lightroom Basics |** Goal: Use and knowledge of Adobe Lightroom for color management and processing. Goal: Control of Parallax to correct distortion and perspective. (Bring Laptop/camera)  
Assignment LR (due: one week): Post processing, transformation and enhancement with Lightroom.

**Class 6: HERO Twilight Photography • ON-CAMPUS DEMO (sunset 5:40pm) |** Goal: Creation of exceptional HERO images with light and architecture, including dusk imagery. *USC campus field work: Both 421 classes will convene at 4:40PM - 1 hour before sunset; bring a jacket.*  
Assignment HERO (due: TBD): Location photography at dusk.

**Class 7: Lighting for interiors |** Goal: Use and knowledge of multiple exposures to create interior images & understanding of natural and artificial architectural lighting.  
Assignment Interior (due: TBD): Photographic bracketing on a tripod for interiors.

**Class 8: Lightroom and Photoshop part-2 |** Goal: Use and knowledge of Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop for color management and processing. Goal: Control of Parallax to correct distortion and perspective. Lightroom Modules. (Bring Laptop) Assignment LR (due: one week): Post processing, transformation, manipulation and enhancement with Lightroom.

**Daylight Savings time begins March 9<sup>th</sup>.**

**Class 9: Final Project Location Photography (sunrise 7:10am - sunset 6:56pm) |** Goal: Honing of skills, understanding composition, natural and artificial architectural lighting.  
Assignment A-2 (due: two weeks): Advanced location photography of buildings in greater L.A. area.

**Spring Break March 16-22 – No class.**

**Class 10: Visual Acoustics Movie Report** | Goal: Heightened sensitivity to light and how it strengthens architectural design, view movie about Julius Shulman on streaming service, search GCI archive and write report.

Assignment MR (due: one week): 1-page report on VA movie plus Shulman photo GCI Archive search.

**Class 11: Architecture on location critique and review. (sunset 7:15)** | Print on Demand Book Lecture. Project discussion, image selection and suggested editing. Lightroom Modules. (Bring Laptop)

Assignment: Seek location photos to infill your book and work on book design to 40%

**Class 12: Architecture on location critique and review** | Final project reviews, image selection, book tips, Book workshopping studio/lab.

Assignment: Last photos to infill your book and work on book selections and design to 90%

**Class 13:** Book workshop/lab, final book work to 100% for upload to Blurb.

Assignment: FINAL BOOK WITH 30 PHOTOS UPLOAD TO BLURB (upload on April 17):

**Class 14:** Advanced architectural photography concepts lecture. (no assignment)

**Class 15:** Architectural model studio lab, studio workshop. (no assignment)

**Class 16 Final TBD:** Final books due in-class, in-person to be filmed.

Assignments are due weekly on or before midnight before the next the class session.

### **Academic Integrity**

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage. Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### **Policy for the use of AI Generators in this course**

In this course, ONLY the AI PHOTO GENERATION assignment will require use an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered program(s) for creation of the deliverable. You must cite the AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work, and provide the prompts used to generate the content.

For all other assignments (deliverables) in this course, this course aims to develop creative, analytical, and critical thinking and image making skills. Therefore, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated text, code, or other content is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an “F” grade on the assignment, exam, or in the course.

## **Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies**

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor’s permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

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

### **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](#). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### **Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:**

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate](#)- and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

### **Support Systems:**

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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) 740-2500

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

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

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

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.