

VCA 120 T
Documentary and Street Photography on Location
Fall 2018



1. Course Information

Professor Johanna Fassel

Email: jfassl@fus.edu

Office Hours: MON 17.30-19.30 and by appointment / LAC 14

Class meeting times: MON/THU 16-17.15

Class location: LAC 5

2. Course Description

Documentary and Street Photography on Location will investigate the particularities of both documentary and street photography through readings and studio/field projects. It will shed light on the history of photography; how the visual world communicates, studying the interaction of photography with other visual media; and it will pay specific attention to the semiotic potential and challenges of photography. Students will engage in a project that relates to the location of the travel component of the class, Berlin and Munich in fall 2017, documenting a specific subject on location. The principal topic of the course this semester is "Visual Story Telling." We will look at documentary stories, personal stories, shorthand stories, dreams and the science fiction world in order to understand the specifics in each context and how different stories can be translated and told in the visual world. We will use smartphone cameras, digital SRL cameras, and polaroid cameras to experiment with photography, video, time lapse photography, and digital manipulation.

Make sure to bring your camera(s) to each class!

3. Rationale

With its interdisciplinary mandate, the course fits into the overall Visual Communication Arts major as a hybrid course that studies theoretical issues about photography and aesthetics, which then are put to practice in studio and field exercises. In this manner, students will get a twofold perspective that prepares them to both do and write about photography and understand theories pertaining to it.

4. Course Goals

The goals of this course include the following:

- to acquire visual literacy to be able to read and interpret the visual world with respect to signs, structures, colors
- to understand how meaning is produced in the visual world and especially in photography
- to understand the involvement of cultural codes in the reading of the visual world, especially in photographs
- to develop critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills
- to critically synthesize information from classroom discussions, readings and further research
- to present these connections in a variety of formats, including class discussions, oral presentations, and in written assignments
- to acquire study and research skills to be applied in other subjects, classes and semesters
- be familiar with the methods of art history and visual communication
- understand how to analyze the visual world within an interdisciplinary model
- write analytically and critically on the visual world
- present ideas in a critical and analytical manner
- be able to use library, university, and electronic resources to complete papers and presentations

5. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- have acquired the visual literacy in order to read the visual world in terms of its formal organization and symbolic content
- be able to discuss and explain how cultures and cultural codes intersect in the production of symbols and meaning
- understand the role of signs and symbols in art and photography
- to acquire skills on how to document a subject visually
- be able to do empirical research in the visual world
- be able to analyze their empirical research and to structure and work it into coherent arguments
- to understand the difference between various types of photography (street photography, fashion photography, art photography, documentary photography) and to apply the differences in creative work

Travel Learning Component

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- understand how to travel respectfully, responsibly, and sustainably
- be able to have gained a first understanding of German culture
- be able to travel in a group and respect the needs of all participants

6. Required Texts and Materials

Course texts are on the moodle website for this course.

7. Assessment Overview

Course requirements and grade composition:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| ➤ Attendance, reading notes, course contributions presentations | 15% |
| ➤ In class exercises | 15% |
| ➤ Documentary photo project: "The Symposium" | 15% |
| ➤ Exam | 15% |
| ➤ Documentary photography project "Smart City" including 5-page paper, oral presentation, and travel blog | 20% |
| ➤ Visual story telling "My Story/My Wish" | 20% |

Grade scale for assignments:

A	100-92	B	80-83	C	73-68	D	59-58
A-	91-88	B-	79-78	C-	67-64	F	57-0
B+	87-84	C+	77-74	D+	63-60		

8. How to do well in this course

Attendance and tardiness: It is essential that you come to every class session and that you participate in the discussions. This requires to have done the readings and to have uploaded your reading notes before class and to come with questions on the visual and written material. Up to two unexplained absences are allowed without affecting your final grade. After two absences, 5 points will be subtracted for each absence from the total of 100 points for your attendance grade. If you come to class after attendance has been taken, it will be counted as one-half of an unexplained absence. That is, two incidents of tardiness will be counted as one unexplained absence. Please be aware that missing classes also mean that you will not be contributing to class discussion/activities. If you are absent from illness and turn in a medical note indicating the exact dates under medical care, we will discuss appropriate arrangements regarding how you can make up for the missed classes. Please also note that you will not be able to pass the course if you miss more than 8 class meetings regardless of your performance in other assignments. Please remember that on campus each session counts as two classes.

Deadlines: Hand in all your assignments on time, deadlines are indicated on the syllabus. Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are to be handed in as WORD documents, uploaded to the portals on the moodle website (by midnight of the due date). For every day your assignment is late without a valid excuse (such as a doctor's note), the letter grade of your assignment will drop by one (i.e. from "A" to "B" to "C"). If you need an extension, please communicate so in writing via email before the due day of the assignment.

Academic Support: If you have any questions regarding the course contents, discussion, or your assignments, please stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment. I am happy to help you in any way I can, I want everybody to do well in this course! Make sure to understand all course requirements and make a step-by-step plan how you can fulfill them. It is also essential to know how you work best and what kind of a researcher and writer you are. Also remember to use the Fowler Learning Commons in the LAC, make an appointment with Professor Gardiner (agardiner@fc.edu), or the students working in the WLC for further help.

Professional Behavior: Please treat this class as if you were in the professional world!

A Note on Field Study: This course might be different from the typical classroom situation, as it takes root in the premises of experiential student learning. This means that we will walk the sites of Lugano or on travel not only to study its monuments and art, but also to explore our own reactions to the cities and our thinking and emotions. As such, you will be expected to intellectually react to, but also creatively interact with the concepts presented in the course during the semester, the assigned text, and the explorations in the “field.” The success of this travel, individual and collective, relies on your maturity, sense of responsibility, and ability to work as a group outside the structures normally given on campus. Please remember, when traveling, you are ambassadors of your own culture and that of Franklin University Switzerland. Inappropriate behavior will have consequences.

Field Study: In your explorations on travel, you will become a street photographer/writer/recorder and filmmaker. This means that you will engage with the visual culture on location from many different perspectives. One day you may document a certain topic with your camera, the next just stroll and randomly your impressions with your camera or in writing or recording sounds. In addition, you will embark on a documentary photography project for which you will have to do academic research prior to our departure and field research while on travel.

9. Academic Integrity and Professional Behavior

Please refer to Franklin University’s Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism in the Academic Catalog for the full version, but to summarize here: you are to do your own work. Behaviors such as copying the work of others, using third-party services, or any other circumvention of doing your own work are dishonest and not acceptable in this class or at this institution. For papers and presentations, this includes proper use of references and citations. Copying text without the use of quotations or paraphrasing the ideas of others without proper citations are both examples of plagiarism and thus unacceptable. For testing situations, this includes the use of notes, talking to others, or copying off of the exam of others. The first case of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic grade of a zero on the assignment and a report to the Dean. The second case will result in immediate failure of the course and recommendation to the Dean for expulsion from the university.

10. (Tentative) Course Schedule (subject to change)

Part I: On Campus Seminars and Workshops

- August 27 **no class** – work on “selfie without the self”
Class will be made up with a visit to the exhibition *Balthasar Burkhard*
- August 30 **COURSE INTRODUCTIONS: CONSTRUCTING OUR VISUAL WORLD**
Presentations: “The selfie without the self”
in|class discussion: short history of photography
- September 3 **OBSERVING / INVESTIGATING / DOCUMENTING / CREATING**
in|class workshop: documenting FUS campus
Reading: Graham Clarke. *The Photograph*. Oxford, 1997. Chapter 8:
“Documentary Photography.”
- September 6 Discussion of Swiss/World Press Photo Awards
Workshop on assignment “The Symposium”
- September 10 Discussion of “The Symposium”
in|class workshop: portrait photography
Reading: G. Clarke. *The Photograph*. Chapter 6: “The Portrait in Photography.”
- September 13 Peer review of paper “The Symposium”
September 14 Paper due “The Symposium”
- September 17 in|class workshop: fashion photography
- September 20 project work: fashion photography
- September 24 in|class presentations: fashion photography
Reading: G. Clarke. *The Photograph*. Chapter 5: “The City in Photography.”
- September 27 in|class workshop: architecture vs. street photography
Reading: Clive Scott. *Street Photography from Atget to Cartier-Bresson*. New York, 2007. “Introduction.”
- October 1 Visual Ethnography and the Ethics of Photography
Reading: Douglas Harper. *Visual Sociology*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
Chapter 1: “Visual Ethnography.”
- October 4 no class – study for exam
- October 8 Exam review Q&A
- October 11 **Exam!**
- October 15 Discussion of group travel projects
- October 18 Presentations of group travel project outlines

Preparatory Readings for Berlin and Munich

1. Andrea Schulte-Peevers. *Berlin*. Lonely Planet, 2015. “Understand Berlin.”
2. Marc di Ducan and Kerry Christiani. *Munich, Bavaria and the Black Forest*. Lonely Planet, 2013. “Introduction.”

Part II: Travel component / TENTATIVE schedule

- October 22** **Departure for Berlin**
Monday Exploration of K'damm area
 welcome group dinner
- October 23** City Tour
Tuesday group lunch
 visual analysis workshop | story telling at East Side Gallery
- October 24** Mauerpark: tour of Berlin wall remnants
Wednesday group lunch
 evening visit to Reichstag (tentative)
- October 25** Museum for Photography/Helmut Newton Foundation
Thursday visual analysis workshop | the photography of HN
 discussion of work in progress on documentary projects
- October 26** **Travel to Munich**
Friday City tour and group dinner
- October 27** Individual field study day / work on your documentary projects
Saturday
- October 28** Visit to Pinakothek der Moderne & Museum Brandhorst
Sunday group Lunch at Tegernseer im Tal
 photography and drawing workshops | portraiture and fashion
- October 29** Visit to Haus der Kunst and MUCA exhibitions
Monday photography workshops | architecture
- October 30** Deutsches Museum tour
Tuesday photography workshop | technology in action
 farewell dinner
- October 31** **Return to Lugano**
Wednesday

Part III: On Campus Workshops and Project Work

November 5 **no class - work on travel projects**

November 7/8 Individual appointments to review travel group projects

November 12 Presentations of group travel projects

November 15 Presentations of group travel projects

November 16 Travel projects due!

November 19 in | class workshop: final story telling projects

November 22 No class (work on story telling projects)

November 26 Group and individual feedback on final story telling projects

November 29 Group and individual feedback on final story telling projects

December 3 Presentations of final projects

December 6 Presentations of final projects

December 9 Final projects due on moodle

December 10 Final discussion

16-18.00

11. Available Resources

Make sure to make good use of all available resources on campus: the Grace library (make an appointment with Clélie Riat if you need assistance in your research), the Writing and Learning Center in LAC, the available electronic search engines and resources through the library web. For specialized material, you can also try the library at USI or, for books on architecture, the Architecture School in Mendrisio. I am happy to assist you, if you would like to venture off campus.

12. Assignment Outlines

Please refer to the following pages for detailed descriptions of all assignments.

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Short Documentary Photography Project: “The Symposium”

Grade percentage:	15%
Discussion / peer review:	13 September
Short Paper due:	14 September

Get together in groups of 4-5 people and plan a theme dinner, or “Symposium”, to which you can also invite family or friends who are not in the course. With your cameras document everything that is part of the event and then write a short, ca. 3-page paper assessing the experience.

Document the following:

Food and its Presentation

- deciding on the theme
- the labor that led to the dinner, including the planning of the meal, shopping for food, organizing and cleaning of the dining room/house
- division of labor in the group
- buying the beverages
- setting the table, making decorations
- cooking the various dishes
- serving the food
- removing and storing left-over food
- cleaning the kitchen during and after the dinner
- etc.

Symbolic Dimensions

- layout of the table: head of the table, who serves the food, etc.
- order of serving
- specific beverages with specific food
- rituals (prayer, carving of meat, etc.)
- specific clothes worn for the occasion
- stories being told
- order of dishes served (and their violation, what is someone requests desert before the main course....?)

What else is relevant?

Short Paper, assessing the experience:

In your short, ca. 3-page paper, discuss the following points:

1. Project description, the event

What did your project entail and how was it approached?

Who participated? Who was part of the project and who came as guests?

2. Documentation

How did you document the event? (what camera(s) did you use? How many pictures did you take? Etc.

3. Successes and Challenges

What presented a particular challenge in the documentation of the event? What was easy?

4. Visual communication and presentation

Taking a critical look at your pictures, do they tell the story effectively for you? Where do they relate the event particularly well and what is missing? What could be improved?

The purpose of this assignment/paper is not to present yourself and your pictures in the best way but to assess critically what the challenges are in documenting an event. Critical self-reflection on the event but mostly on your photography will make you a better visual recorder and your next assignments in this class will benefit from this reflection.

Make sure to have fun as well

Bon appétit!



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Documentary and Street Photography on Location

Group Documentary Project

Smart City | Surveillance State | Innovation | Terror

Grade Percentage: 20%

Due Dates: 15 & 18 October - Presentations of project outline

12 & 15 November - Presentations in class

16 November - Projects due

Situation and Project:

Urbanization: According to the United Nations, by the year of 2050, 70% of the world's population will be living in urban areas. So what will the city of the future look like? These are some of the questions that dominate our conception of "[The City 2.0](#)": *How will we transport ourselves? Where will we grow our food? How will we power our homes, our offices, our grids? What will happen to the natural world?*

Terror: Since 9/11, terrorist attacks continue to threaten the urban environment and the "walkability" of cities. Hours after a van mowed down on Barcelona's Las Ramblas, Madrid installed massive plant pots at Puerta del Sol and Milan blocked the entrance to the Galleria Emmanuele. Berlin itself was the target in December 2016, when a terrorist attack with a truck hit the annual Christmas market near the Gedächtniskirche.

Imagine you are a team of individual consultants in a big consulting company that is specialized on improving cities to become smart and safe cities. Both German centers Berlin and Munich have just put out a competition for a project to improve life in each city to become a smarter and safer living space and city. Your team absolutely wants to win the competition but you obviously cannot address all needs of the city. At the same time, both cities and your companies are under surveillance from the activist group "The Surveillance Camera Players" for creating surveillance states and projects with your consulting projects, infringing on privacy and the liberty of movement. You have a problem: you want to win the competition but also don't want to get under fire by the activists, as that would not get you the project. Both cities are funding your initial research travel to Berlin and Munich and you will have to submit a report once you are back from travel.

How would you tackle the project?

Project steps:

A. Pre-travel Concept due 18 October

1. Team and Concept
Build your team and state which consulting firm you belong to (cannot be fictional)
Define what the smart and safe city means to your company and team and what your area of expertise is (green spaces, waste management, traffic flow, energy saving architecture/transportation, technologies and software that improve life, “livable barriers” to ensure greater safety, etc.)
2. Identify what already exists in the cities of Berlin and Munich in your area of expertise. In which points are the cities strong and where are they weak? What has been done in other European and international cities?

B. Refined Concept and Research Plan while on Travel 26 October

3. Where will you investigate while on travel? Put together an itinerary
4. What kind of investigation will you conduct?
(i.e. photography, video, interviews, use of apps and platforms, consult start-up companies such as Impact Hub, etc.)
5. What will each team member do and where will you store your collective research?
6. What do you think you will find and where do you think you can offer consulting for improvement in your area of expertise?
7. Consider: what exactly could the “The Surveillance Camera Players” and other activist groups like #TakeCTRL attack in your consulting work?

C. Research on Travel

8. Team work: who is in charge of what?
9. Assessment of project: are you finding what you think you will find?
10. Do you need to modify your project?
11. Does your method of documentation work?

D. Assessment and Improvement Concept

12. What has your data collection revealed?
13. Based on the visual and verbal data you collected, what is your concept for improvement for each city?
14. How will you present your concept? (video, power point, discussion etc.)
15. Make sure that your visuals speak for your project!

E. Innovation

16. What kind of unusual idea does your team have to set you apart from any other consulting company? (i.e. Laurence Kemball-Cook at TEDxBerlin)

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Final Project: Visual Story Telling **“My Story/My Wish”**

Grade percentage **20%**
Presentations: **3 & 6 December**
Project due: **9 December**

In this final project, we will choose topics in class on which you build a visual story. Contrasting the notion of documentation, the final topics will be rather intangible, such as friendship, integration, trauma, organic, etc. Reflect on how imperceptible concepts can be told in form of a visual narrative without words. What is the best way to communicate your perception of the topic? Where are the strengths of photography? Where are its limitations and how can they be bridged? What pictures do best communicate my story? What other medium can I include to tell me story: drawing, video, animation, time-lapse, slow-motion, boomerang, sound files, etc....

Make sure to consider:

1. Presenting at least 10-15 images
2. include captions with short description
3. plan your project well: research and reflect on your story and how it is told best
4. consider composition, light, angle, black and white/color, digital manipulation
5. what holds your series together?
6. select a strong opening and closing image to make an impact with your story

This assignment builds on the previous assignments and we will define its parameters further in class.

13. Travel Logistics

22 October Lugano – Berlin
27 October Berlin – Munich Bus Travel
31 October Munich – Lugano

Hotel Information (Breakfast included)

Berlin: Hotel Hollywood Media <http://www.filmhotel.de/en/>

Munich: Art Hotel <http://www.arthotelmunich.com>

Travel Waiver

If you wish to return independently from Munich to Lugano following the completion of the travel, you must submit an approved Independent Travel Waiver form, signed by your parent/guardian/or person of financial responsibility.

Visa Requirements

Germany is part of the Schengen countries (as is Switzerland). If you require a Schengen visa, please make arrangements as soon as possible, otherwise you risk not being able to go on the travel. For further information on a Schengen visa, check with the local consulate if you need a visa. This website may also be helpful: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/index_en.htm

(if you don't have a Schengen visa and need to apply for one, make sure to request a "multiple entry" visa)

Allergies and Medical Conditions

Please inform me if you have a medical condition that I should be aware of and what to do in case of emergencies. If you have allergies or intolerances (food, etc.) please also communicate that to me in order to be safe.

Sustainable Tourism

FC's academic travel program is a major contributor to polluting the environment: plane, bus, and train travel consume a significant amount of energy. In addition, we require water and energy to keep our hotel rooms clean and consume additional resources. In a general "campus-greening" endeavor, our travel strives to be as sustainable as possible. On location, we will take local transportation and walk on our group activities. Although at times this may not be the most *convenient* way to travel, we are making a contribution to respect our environment. Please keep in mind that your sacrifice of comfort will help our planet!

Pack comfortable walking shoes, as we will be on our feet all day. Check the forecast before we leave and bring warm clothes and rain gear. Central Europe can be unpredictable in the fall, windy and cold! Bring clothes and shoes to change in case of rain. We will be visiting museums where you cannot bring your backpack into the exhibitions halls. You might want to bring a smaller bag to carry your vitals.

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Documentary and Street Photography on Location

Reading Presentation Sign-up Sheet

September 3 (5 students)

Graham Clarke. *The Photograph*. Oxford, 1997. Chapter 8: "Documentary Photography."

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

September 10 (4 students)

G. Clarke. *The Photograph*. Chapter 6: "The Portrait in Photography."

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____

September 24 (4 students)

G. Clarke. *The Photograph*. Chapter 5: "The City in Photography."

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____

September 27 (4 students)

Clive Scott. *Street Photography from Atget to Cartier-Bresson*. New York, 2007.
"Introduction."

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____

October 1 (5 students)

Douglas Harper. *Visual Sociology*. New York: Routledge, 2012. Chapter 1: "Visual
Ethnography."

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____