

# ARTS 095: Storytelling with Photographs

Online/Asynchronous

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office hours: monday 12-2p and by appointment\*

\*all meetings will be via microsoft teams

*Photograph: To write with light*

## Course Description:

We swim in an ocean of photographs. They're constantly flickering in and out of our vision, on our phones, our computers, in magazines, and on billboards. They shape and define the way we see ourselves and the world around us.

There's an old adage, "A picture is worth 1000 words," and in some ways it's true. Describing the unimaginable beauty of a sunset in the mountains or the vast openness of the sea is far more difficult than showing a photograph of the same. Photographs communicate incredible detail in an instant.

Photographs also lie. That image of untouched nature and majestic mountains doesn't show the crowd of people behind you making the same photograph, or the pile of garbage left by someone just outside the frame, or the highway rest area guard rail you're standing on to get the shot. Photographs easily mislead—we cram together and smile at the holidays, looking happy even while we're dying to leave and be away from these people.

Pictures of people laughing frequently look like those of people crying. I might think you look great in a photograph, and you might only be able to see your imagined flaws. Photographs are fickle at best.

A single image can contain an entire world of endless possibilities and truths. So, what happens when we stick another photograph next to that? And another? And then another? We begin to stitch together a fuller, more complex story. If one photograph is worth 1000 words, then are 30 in a sequence worth a novella?

This course is an introduction to the art and craft of photographic storytelling. Over the next four weeks we will dive deep into the history of the medium, work through technical considerations, and explore how to transform the world around us into more than the sum of its parts

We will examine the functions of the camera—how to use the tool of the trade, we'll look carefully at our images, and we'll think deeply about how to link images together to tell a story.

## Learning Objectives

- To learn how to think critically and creatively about photograph
- To develop storytelling skills using images
- To see the world transformed by the act of photographing
- To understand the basic mechanics and operations of our digital cameras

By the end of this class you will be able to confidently create photographic sequences to tell stories using images.

## Class Structure

This course is fully online and asynchronous, so that means we won't have specific meeting times. With hectic summer schedules I've found it's more successful to allow you to work in your own time.

Each week I'll open a new module on Blackboard. There will be assignments that are due throughout the week, each week will have one overarching image making project supported by various readings, written assignments, and videos.

I'll send regular updates and provide prompt feedback. Each week I'll introduce the content with a short video, explaining where we're going and our goals for the week. I'm open and available to meet and talk through any questions or problems you may have.

## Text:

There is no required text for the class. I'll distribute readings, videos, tutorials, podcasts, and any other course material via our Blackboard page.

## Class Resources:

Check out the resources tab in Blackboard. I'll link to a variety of resources for your viewing pleasure and edification. You're not required to use a specific editing software, but we will cover general editing tips and thoughts. If you'd like to use Adobe Lightroom or Photoshop, there are subscription plans, they start at around 10 bucks a month, but you have to be careful—the basic plans require an annual commitment, and they'll bill you for the whole year if you cancel early. There will be a handful of tutorials for a variety of programs, and I'm happy to answer questions about all of them.

## Email/Questions/Support:

I'm generally available for help/support. During the week I'll respond to your emails quickly, typically within a couple of hours and at most within 24 hours. Over the weekend it may take a little longer. I'm frequently doing things that leave me without cell reception and I'm not constantly checking. If you email me on a Saturday morning, I may not get back to you until Sunday night, if you email me on Sunday night you may not hear anything until Monday morning. Be prepared.

If you're having problems or struggling with assignments, if things aren't making sense, or if you'd just like to chat, please reach out. I'm always happy to help, and I want you to succeed in this class.

## Grades

I dislike the way that numerical grades with this sort of subjective work rewards natural skill or prior experience while punishing those who are learning or experimenting or are new to these skills. I'm much more interested in ensuring that you're putting in the work and moving forward while learning new skills.

So, to that end, most grading is on a completion basis—so I'll first look to see that you've completed an assignment. If you don't do the work, you won't pass the class.

If you complete all the assignments—that means you turn in the correct number of images, generally on time, you participate in the class, and are generally a good citizen of this course, you'll earn a pretty good grade.

We'll have two types of assignments, first there will be completion-based practice assignments. After all, practice makes perfect. We'll use these assignments to develop a scaffold of skills upon which we'll build out a broader network of accomplishments. Second, there will be three major projects. These will be carefully evaluated for competency, labor, and creativity.

I'll provide in depth feedback on the whole of your progress each week, looking holistically at your contributions to the course, how you've engaged with the material, and what I think your grade trajectory looks like.

This system works on mutual trust and engagement. I expect you to do the work and contribute to the course, and I'll do the same. If you choose not to participate it will degrade not only your class experience, but it will bring down the entire group, as much of this course is built on collaborative effort and feedback.

## Modules/Course Plan

### Week 1: Story of Myself

Week one is built around getting acquainted; introductions, learning about stories, practicing with our cameras, working out the kinks, and so on. It will start with introductory stories, move to reading about how stories work, we'll do a little research about our cameras, and then practice taking pictures, and then we'll try our hands at creating short photographic stories.

### Week 2: This Equals That

Week two is all about connecting images. Now that we have an idea how to use a camera and how to frame a photo, how do you take multiple images and connect them?

### Week 3: What's in a Place?

Week three takes our skills of image making and connection and applies them to a place—how do you tell the story of a place? How can you use photographs to describe and tell us something complicated about it? How can you show us someplace familiar in a new way?

### Week 4: Complex Narrative

Finally, we wrap in all up with a complex narrative of your choosing. How can you use all of what you've learned to tell us a story with multiple parts?

### Student Learning Accommodations

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact SAS, the office of Disability Services on campus. SAS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which are communicated to faculty in an accommodation letter. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course. A student's accommodation letter lists those accommodations that will not be implemented until the student meets with their faculty to create a plan. Contact SAS: A170 Living/Learning Center: 802-656-7753.

Contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS):

A170 Living/Learning Center

802-656-7753

access@uvm.edu

[https://www.uvm.edu/academicsuccess/student\\_accessibility\\_services](https://www.uvm.edu/academicsuccess/student_accessibility_services)

### Religious Holidays:

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please submit the dates of your absence to me in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time.

### Academic Integrity:

The policy addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating. <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

### Grade Appeals:

If you would like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in this policy: <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/gradeappeals.pdf>

### Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities:

<https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/studentcode.pdf>

FERPA Rights Disclosure:

The purpose of this policy is to communicate the rights of students regarding access to, and privacy of their student educational records as provided for in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/ferpa.pdf>

Center for Health and Wellbeing:

<https://www.uvm.edu/health>

Counseling & Psychiatry Services (CAPS):

Phone: (802) 656-3340

If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at <https://www.uvm.edu/deanofstudents>.

Counseling and Psychiatry Services: <https://www.uvm.edu/health/CAPS>