Dr. Adina Schneeweis
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109 Vandenberg Hall
Office hours:
Wed 5:00-6:00 p.m.; Tu
3:00-3:30 p.m.; and by
appointment

Course description

Digital Photojournalism introduces students to non-fiction photographic storytelling - telling stories with images. Students learn fundamentals of photography for different media outlets through a sequence of hands-on assignments. In addition, we examine different approaches to documentary photography, objectivity in photographic work and ethical issues raised by documentary photography. Exemplary work by documentary photographers will be presented and reviewed.

Course goals

Students have the opportunity to pursue an in-depth project during the semester. The course purpose is to produce a completed photo documentary (photographs and text) by the end of the semester. The final format of the project will be determined through class discussion (in past years, students have produced magazine spreads, exhibition prints, books and websites). Your selection of your best photographs may be displayed in the student showcase in April.

The goal for students is not to learn how to be a photographer, but how to be a photojournalist. There is a difference, and we’ll spend time talking about it in class. You’ll do better in this class if you constantly remind yourself that this is a course in visual communication, and the word “communication” is key.

Course outcomes

By the end of the class, students will be expected to:
• Analyze and create effective photographs
• Understand research strategies involved in photography
• Learn approaches to shooting
• Understand and write text to accompany photography
• Learn photo editing
• Build visual sequences

Course structure

The course will tackle photojournalism through technical, conceptual and applied components.

Technical: We will spend part of the course honing photography skills, both shooting and post-production in Photoshop.

Conceptual: We will work to conceptualize well-researched, informed, and compelling documentary projects. There is no single approach to documentary and no single route to follow. Our job will be to examine approaches that make sense and adapt them to our specific goals and processes. Be prepared to review a variety of strategies and to craft your own, defensible approach.

Applied: As we tackle the technical and conceptual aspects of documentary work we will put our ideas to the test by exploring the process of shooting photographic documentaries. You will have success, and you will have failure, but you won't be bored!
Required texts

- Reading assignments posted on Moodle or distributed during class. It is your responsibility to make sure you have all the required readings.

Class website
Access the Moodle site via Sail Portal at https://moodle.oakland.edu. You are responsible for the content posted on the course website. This is where you will find communication with your professor, as well as course materials.

Course expectations
What to expect from me. Be certain I will prepare for each class to the best of my capabilities. We will discuss the grading criteria in class. I will only speak within my area of expertise; if your questions fall outside that area, I am committed to either say “I don’t know” or do some research in order to answer your questions. I record and follow your progress throughout the semester. I do my best to get to know your names, interests, and learning process. I respect your confidentiality.

Be present and participate, as a rule in life, and in this class. Don’t be a bystander. Get involved. Show up and speak up. Come by my office hours. I’m best reached via e-mail.

Don’t fall behind on your readings. Assigned readings should be read in advance of the class meetings. Lectures will focus minimally on key points from the readings, therefore you are responsible for covering assigned materials and raising questions during class discussions. Class time will be used to review and critique your work, hone skills, edit in Photoshop and discuss next steps to move projects forward.

Lecture notes will be available on the course website until the end of each week (for example, notes for the second week of class will be available Jan. 7-11).

Work hard. You will not be able to successfully complete this course without a commitment to about nine hours a week of work outside of class. Production work is labor-intensive. Plan accordingly. Much of your time will be spent in the field photographing.

Technical experience. It is important that you have first-hand experience with digital cameras and software used to create online media. Again, this is a not a software learning class; your professor is here to introduce you to different tools, but you will be expected to be self-motivated in learning to use them. Some of you will use software and equipment for the first time, while others will have some hands-on experience. Your grade will reflect your ability to apply visual principles and theories, not the extent of your previous experience.


Electronic devices in class. No electronic devices can be used during class time. No texting under no circumstances. If you use electronic devices without permission, you will be asked to leave the class. Repetition of this issue may lead to being asked to drop the class.

- If Disability Support Services determines that you require a laptop as a course accommodation, you are welcome to use one. Please communicate with the professor if this is the case.
Email policy

Email is the fastest way to reach me. I will respond to your email in a 24-72 hours window, on weekdays 9-5; exceptions may occur, but don’t expect them. Plan accordingly (avoid last minute communication on rescheduling assignments or on assignment feedback). Treat email communication the same as face-to-face communication. If you send a disrespectful email, you may be asked to read it aloud to the addressee.

Course curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photoshop improvement</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (2 x 30 pts., 1 x 40 pts.)</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vis class</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News photography 1</td>
<td>30 pts.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News photography 2</td>
<td>40 pts.</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>40 pts.</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-the-subject</td>
<td>50 pts.</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>240 pts.</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project proposal</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First draft</td>
<td>30 pts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second draft</td>
<td>50 pts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text draft</td>
<td>40 pts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>60 pts.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>600 pts.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photoshop improvement

This assignment will take place outside of class. All students must complete the Lynda.com course “Photoshop CS4 for Photographers.” You have one month to complete it (details discussed in class). Enrollment is ~$10 and everyone must sign up by Jan. 15.

Quizzes

There will be three quizzes that will cover (1) concepts from lectures, textbook, and other reading assignments and (2) discussion points from class.

Vis class

During assigned class periods, you will present the work of a photographer, along with a visual, technical or practical tip to your fellow students. This time you are the teacher, so plan your presentation accordingly (include Q&A, show resources, justify your selection, etc.).

News photography

Two assignments will be to shoot and present photography for news. The first assignment, “News Photography Assignment 1,” is to shoot 5-10 photos for a news story of your choice that is already released (you may also shadow a reporter that will write the story). The point of this assignment is to shoot for a story that someone else writes; you are the photojournalist in this case, but not the reporter too. You will present the news in class, with one image of your choice, with a caption. Then show the other 4-9 shots and explain why you chose the one to illustrate the news. Presentations are 5 minutes.

The second news assignment, “News Photography Assignment 2,” is to shoot photos for a news story that you find in your community and surroundings. You will turn in one image, with a caption. The point of this assignment is to shoot for a story that you find developing when you are on location. You serve here as reporter, in a sense, but are not writing the story. You are shooting, writing the caption and sending the photo as a quick release to your editor. This photo may be breaking news or feature.
**Framing**

Find an OU student or member of the staff or faculty who would make an interesting story (feature or news). Your job is to capture their personality or talent in a series of photos (20-30) shot in the same location but framed differently (5-10 should be close-ups). Each image must be different and present a new take on your subject. This is an assignment in portraiture.

**Working-the-subject**

Find a scene or situation and work it from every conceivable angle, using your frame in every way imaginable. Turn in 40-50 exposures, of which 5-10 photos must be shot from dramatic, unusual angles. Use your creativity. The story you present must be a complete and complex telling of your subject.

**Attendance and participation**

Attendance will be taken regularly during the semester. Punctuality is essential for complete scores. Some materials are only available in class. If you miss more than four class sessions, your ability to pass the class will be jeopardized. Participation refers to active listening and respectful discussion, not just attendance.

**Project**

You will propose a project that you will pursue during the entire semester. You will write and present a proposal, for which you will receive feedback, as well as turn in drafts for the photos and accompanying text. All these steps should ensure a polished final product.

Choose a project you find interesting and compelling. You’ll spend a lot of time working on it. If you are committed to it, your project will be meaningful, exhilarating and fun. Choose a project for which you can gain access (the people involved must be willing to give you permission to spend time with them and photograph them) and that is easy to get to (don’t choose something that requires a car you don’t have or something that will be impossible to schedule). Do choose something you can shoot often and easily.

Your project doesn’t need to be monumental. Everyday life and unexamined routine events are great subjects. Examples include things like life on a dorm floor, a month at a local laundromat, an invisible occupation and the work it involves, an underrepresented sports team and their story, a passionate and interesting person’s story, etc.

Plan on devoting a substantial amount of time to shooting your subject. You will make multiple visits to the site of your project and spend lots of time with the people you are photographing. Documentaries take time to complete! Make sure you give yourself the time you need to succeed.

Projects must have my approval. Class critiques will also provide you with constructive responses designed to move your work forward. Your active participation in both receiving and giving feedback will help your work progress.

**Final output**

We’ll work together to determine what you want to create as the end product of your hard work during the semester. Your final project may be a book, a website, a photo story or prints.

**Other points**

Based on the pace of the class, other points may become available – either as extra credit or as graded class assignments. The point distribution below will change to accommodate a new total possible point amount.
Assignments will fall into these grade ranges which adhere to the OU grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>3.6-4.0</td>
<td>Professional quality work. Excellent technical execution (sharp, properly exposed and toned). Excellent composition: Visual hierarchy is well established, a reader will be able to differentiate the primary subject from foreground and background items. Content of value to target audience and hits on ideals of historical, sociological, psychological and aesthetic standards discussed in class. Well controlled with excellent moments. Flawless captions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>3.0-3.5</td>
<td>Journeyman photojournalism. Strong technical execution (sharp, well exposed and toned). Good composition that allows viewer to understand the subject. Competent storytelling image, clean and controlled. Good moments advance the story. Adequate captions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>2.0-2.9</td>
<td>Entry level photojournalism. Adequate technical execution (sharp, some exposure issues). Problematic composition that struggles to communicate. A “record shot” that accompanies a story but does not offer any insight into issue or event. Problematic captions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>1.0-1.9</td>
<td>Not publishable. Poor technical execution (not sharp, improperly exposed or poor toning). Unclear or unorganized composition. Content not relevant to target audience. Incomplete captions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 59</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Not acceptable, not publishable. Major technical issues. Unclear subject matter. Inaccurate or misspelled captions. Missed deadline.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignment grades are based on the following rubric:

- Captions/text: Is it to style? Is it accurate? Does it answer the right questions?
- Technical execution: Is it sharp? Is it properly exposed and toned? Does it demonstrate a mastery of the medium?
- Composition: Is the visual hierarchy well established? Can a reader differentiate the primary subject from foreground and background items? What about balance? Does it flow?
- Assignment criteria: Does the image fit the criteria of the assignment?
- Content: Will a reader care about this image? Will it stop them, make them think? Does it deal with the historical, sociological, psychological and aesthetic values discussed in class?

**Deadlines.** Deadlines are at the heart of journalism. All assignments must be completed and submitted before or at the beginning of class in order to be eligible for full points. Due dates are listed in the class calendar. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade for every day it is late. For example, if a 3.6 assignment is submitted two days past the due date, it will earn a 2.0 grade.

**No e-mail submissions of assignments will be accepted.**

**Grade Disputes.** Grades are not negotiated, they are earned. Grades are based on the final product, not the amount of time or effort put into assignments. If you disagree with a grade, I welcome your feedback, which you must submit in writing (not via email) no more than one week after the original grade is posted. I do not discuss grades via email (due to FERPA regulations).

**Make-up Policy.** You may take missed quizzes or turn in a project late only with a University-sanctioned excuse and / or approved by your professor. Travel, deadlines for other classes, or non-emergency events in your life do not constitute approvable excuses.
If you know in advance that you have to miss a deadline, notify the professor at least 2 weeks prior to that date. Absence without a valid reason will earn you 0 points, with no make-ups possible.

**Extra Credit.** Extra credit will be offered only when it advances the course objectives and can be afforded to all students. Extra credit work will not disadvantage students electing not to participate in extra credit opportunities. Publication of your work will also earn extra credit.

**Equipment use**

The Journalism program has equipment available for your use. Be aware that other classes are using the same cameras, so plan accordingly when assignment deadlines are coming up. If you have your own equipment, that's great (and preferred)! You must sign the Equipment Use Agreement form if you do use the Journalism program's equipment. Manuals for the cameras are available on the course website; consult them if you have questions. Also feel free to discuss with me technical and photographic problems you encounter, but remember that this class does not teach equipment or software use in detail.

**Equipment toolkit**

**Required:**
- An online account on picasa/flickr/shutterfly (or similar). This is where you will upload and display your work for grading and class discussion. You must upload images for web format (meaning, in the appropriate resolution - not the highest), in order to avoid overwhelming the account. If you upload files that are very large, your account will shut down before the class ends and you will need a new one.
- You may choose to turn in your work on CDs or flash drives, which you will then have to purchase. Always label anything that you turn in to me with your name and class number.

**Recommended:**
- A digital still camera (DSLR) - advise with me if you want to purchase a new camera and are uncertain about the type to choose. It is important that your camera can do what I will expect your photos to show (meaning, good aperture, etc.).
- Batteries for the digital cameras (AAAs).
- Memory card(s) - class 6 or class 10. I recommend at least 8 GB storage (more information in class).
- Eight to 10 CDs for burning and storing projects to submit for grading (optional).
- A USB thumb drive with at least 2 GB of storage (optional).

You can also check out equipment at The Student Technology Center in the OC.

**Additional student learning assessment**

**Student Integrity.** Students that cheat, fabricate, or plagiarize (which means misrepresenting as your own work any part of work done by another) may fail this course. Falsification, fabrication or plagiarism will result in a 0.0 for the offending assignment as a minimum consequence.

**Professionalism.** Professional behavior is the invariable standard for personnel in any of the communication fields when they interact with one another or with others. Like much else in this course, such professionalism requires dedicated attention.

In class, professionalism means alertness and attention to the task at hand and unfailing respectfulness in word and behavior. Such professionalism is among the core require-
ments for success in this class and in any communication field. Chattering, sleeping, text messaging, reading and writing email, and checking your Facebook account during class is unprofessional. You will be called on it.

Out of class, professionalism means courteous and respectful behavior with sources. When you do your out-of-class stories, you must introduce yourself as a journalism student, but emphasize that you are gathering information for stories you will try to publish. In other words, you must let sources know they are “on the record.” It is not professional to tell sources that the information they supply is “just for a class assignment.”

**Disability Accommodations.** Please let me know in the first week of class if you have a disability that affects your learning style or needs. I would like to make whatever adaptations would be of benefit. You should also contact campus Disability Support Services.

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**Course schedule**

Subject to change. Check Moodle and your @oakland.edu email frequently for last minute changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic of the week and dates</th>
<th>Class work and skills</th>
<th>What is due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 3</strong> Introductions</td>
<td>Who we are and what we expect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Syllabus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 8</strong> Visual literacy</td>
<td>Vocabulary basics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 10</strong> Basics of photography</td>
<td>Shooting basics and photographic vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Chapters 1 and 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 15</strong> News photography</td>
<td>Basics of photojournalistic profession and photographic vocabulary</td>
<td>Start Photoshop improvement assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chapter 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 17</strong> News photography - continued</td>
<td>Technical and conceptual photographic skills</td>
<td>Project proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chapters 3 and 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 22</strong> Portraits</td>
<td>News photography assignment 1</td>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Chapter 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 29</strong> Photo editing</td>
<td>The step-by-step editing process</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Chapter 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan. 31</strong> Features</td>
<td>Storytelling techniques</td>
<td>Framing assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chapter 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb. 5</strong></td>
<td>Finish Photoshop improvement assignment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb. 7</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb. 12</strong> WINTER RECESS FEB. 17-24</td>
<td>Approaches to light</td>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb. 14</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb. 26</strong> Light</td>
<td>News photography assignment 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Chapter 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb. 28</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic of the week and dates</td>
<td>Class work and skills</td>
<td>What is due</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 5</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td>Writing text and assignment captions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 7</td>
<td>- Chapter 10</td>
<td>Working-the-subject assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 2</td>
<td>Documentary - continued</td>
<td>Image sequencing and photo stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 4</td>
<td>- Chapter 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 12</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Ethical guidelines to shape the photo-journalistic decision-making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 14</td>
<td>- Chapters 15, 16 and 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 19</td>
<td>Integrating word and image</td>
<td>Narrative structures and editing strategies in photographic documentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 21</td>
<td>- Chapter 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 26</td>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td>Second project draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 28</td>
<td>- Moodle resources</td>
<td>Lab work on projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 2</td>
<td>Photography for advertising and public relations</td>
<td>Understand exhibition, publication and distribution options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 4</td>
<td>- Moodle resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 9</td>
<td>Lab work on projects</td>
<td>Quiz 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 11</td>
<td>Show time!</td>
<td>Final project due, class presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>