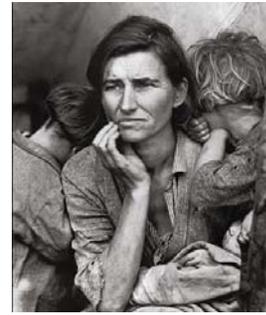


Odyssey: Art History Syllabus Spring 2011



Instructor: Cara Finnegan, Department of Communication, University of Illinois

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Class Meets: Tuesdays, 6-8 pm, Douglass Branch of Champaign Public Library

Description and Goals of the Course

This is a course about looking and thinking. You will learn how to make arguments about what you see and, in doing so, you may experience changes in the way you look at the visual world. We will use the study of art history to train our eyes to engage, interpret, question, and enjoy the visual world around us.

During the first few weeks of the course, we will learn specific ways to describe the visual elements of a work of art (this is called compositional analysis). Then, each week we will examine different genres of art, such as portraiture and landscape. While you will be exposed to a variety of images, our primary focus will be on *photography* as an important, complex, and vital mode of American art. During each class period we will

spend time looking at images, discussing them, and writing about them. We will also learn about the history of such images, in order to be able to understand the contexts in which they were initially produced and circulated.

Readings: Our primary textbook for the course will be Miles Orvell's *American Photography* (Oxford History of Art Series, 2003). Note that the textbook contains lots of images; don't forget to look at the images and their captions as you read.

Other Materials You Need: You will need a notebook for taking notes and doing short writing assignments in class. Your notebook is also a good place to record questions about the reading, jot down terms you want to look up, work on drafts of assignments, and keep track of ideas for writing about images.

Expectations: Attend every class, and do your best to be on time. We will be looking at and discussing a lot of images, and that's not something you can make up easily if you're absent. Be sure to do the assigned reading before class. Spend some time looking at the illustrations in the reading. Come each week prepared to discuss and collaborate with others on class activities. Finally, you are always invited to bring examples of visual images to class. If you find examples that illustrate ideas we're discussing in class, by all means share them with us.

What You Can Expect From Me: I will make each class session worth attending. I will be prepared for every class meeting. I will evaluate your work fairly and offer clear suggestions for improvement. I will create conditions in the classroom that allow you to learn from one another as well as from me. Finally, I will be accessible outside of class for questions and conversation. A note about my teaching style: I like to combine what I call "interactive lecturing"—presentation of new material in ways that actively involve students in the presentation—with small group activities, in-class writing assignments, and larger group discussions. Ideally, one or more of these approaches to teaching fits with your personal learning style.

Assignments and Credit: Your credit in the course is based on these things:

- Attendance and participation in class discussions
- Short, in-class writing assignments done in your notebook
- Essay #1, a 1-2 page compositional analysis of a single image (Due date: 3/8)
- Essay #2, a 4-5 page paper in which you make a critical argument about an image or small group of images, using concepts and ideas from class. This essay is required in order for you to receive full course credit. (Due dates: rough draft due 4/19; final draft due 5/3)

Note: I will hand out more detailed assignment sheets for the essays in class.

Schedule of Readings, Assignments, and Activities

1.18	<u>Introductory Session</u> Get books and syllabus; discuss goals of course, readings, assignments
1.25	<u>Art History 1: Compositional Analysis: Learning to Describe What You See</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, chapter 1 (p. 13-17); flip through the whole book and select one image from the book that drew your attention
2.1	<u>Art History 2: Portraiture</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, chapter 2 (p. 18-31)
2.8	<u>Art History 3: Portraiture and Family Photography</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, chapter 7 (p. 140-161)
2.15	<u>Art History 4: Landscape</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, chapter 3 (p. 39-59); in class, CF will make assignment for Essay 1 (compositional analysis)
2.22	<u>Art History 5: Representing War</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, chapter 4 (pp. 60-67 only); start working on Essay 1
3.1	Critical Thinking and Writing 2 (with Michael Burns)
3.8	<u>Art History 6: Is Photography Art? Early Debates</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, chapter 5 (pp. 80-103). Essay #1 (compositional analysis) due in class tonight
3.15	<u>Art History 7: Social Reform Photography</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, pp. 70-79; chapter 6 (pp. 104-115 only)
3.22	NO CLASS: Spring Break
3.29	<u>Art History 8: Documentary</u> For tonight's class: Read Orvell, pp. 115-139; in class, CF will make assignment for Essay 2 (final paper) and hand out next week's reading
4.5	<u>Art History 9: The Visual Power of Photojournalism: Civil Rights Photography</u> For tonight's class: Read handout, "Through a Lens, Darkly"; come to class with 2 ideas for final paper (written down in your notebook)
4.12	Critical Thinking and Writing 4 (with Michael Burns)
4.19	<u>Art History 10: Writer's Workshop</u> For tonight's class: Draft of final paper due; CF will meet with students in small groups to discuss drafts in progress

4.26	<u>Art History 11: Icons, Parodies, and Appropriations in the Digital World</u> For tonight's class: Read Orwell, chapter 9 (pp. 182-203) and skim chapter 10 (204-215); work on revisions to final paper
5.3	<u>Critical Thinking and Writing 6</u> For tonight's class: Final paper due