



PHO 497: Urbanism and Photography
COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2013
Class Room: UCD330

Instructor: Leigh Merrill

Email: leigh.merrill@tamuc.edu

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 3 – 4pm

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description:

In this course students will learn ways in which contemporary artists have depicted our built environments through photography. Through projects, readings and discussion students will develop a portfolio of work examining the urban environment.

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

There is no mandatory text. Supplementary readings will be assigned throughout the semester.

Student Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course students should be able to demonstrate the following:

- A portfolio of work examining the urban environment. This portfolio will be built throughout the semester from course assignments
- A final project consisting of 10 – 15 images on a single theme related to Urbanism and Photography
- A general understanding of how contemporary photographers depict the built environment
- Effective critiquing by participation in critical evaluation regarding your own work and the work of your peers
- Effective critiquing of readings and contemporary artists through participation in class discussions
- An exchange portfolio with the class

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

This course will consist of a series of photographic assignments and exercises to assist you in achieving the objectives of this course. Each class will consist of a combination of some or all of the following activities:

- Lectures by instructor on contemporary artists
- Technical lectures by instructor on photographic techniques
- Studio time to work on assignments and one-on-one meetings (student/ instructor meetings to discuss assignments)
- Critiquing of course assignments
- Discussion and presentation of readings about contemporary artists

Participation is critical to your success in this course. Please come to class prepared to participate.

Grading

Your grade will be a combination of your projects, participation in class, and an exam covering the artists and readings we have looked at in class.

Project 1: 10%

Project 2: 10%

Project 3: 10%

Project 4: 10%

Project 5: 10%

Exchange Portfolio: 10%

Readings and Participation: 10%

Final Project: 25%

Exam: 5%

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

- A work well above the general class level, evidence of participation in related activities outside of the classroom, thoughtful participation in classroom discussion and critique
- B work above the general class level, participation in classroom discussion and critique
- C average work, minimal requirements met
- D work below class average, lack of participation and/or poor attendance
- F inferior work, work not turned in, failure to attend class

Attendance

Attendance is critical for your success in this course. We meet only once a week and therefore each class will cover a variety of material. Please contact the instructor in advance of any absence. **Note: A total of 3 absences from any class meetings will result in a failing grade ("F") for the course and you will be dropped from the class.**

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Students will have access to a computer equipment with all the software needed to complete photographic assignments and exercises.

Students will need to provide the following:

- **Digital camera and media cards.** You will need to have a camera that allows for some manual controls. DSLR cameras are not required, but are an excellent investment for any art major. Cameras are available from the 3rd Floor check out at the Journalism building on the Commerce campus. Note: Find the instruction manual and read it / make sure that the camera is in good working order.
- **Tripod.** This will be helpful to have for some of the assignments. If you do not own one you can check one out from the 3rd Floor check out at the Journalism building on the commerce campus.
- **An external hard drive**
- **Printing costs**

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

Please contact me through email:

Email: leigh.merrill@tamuc.edu

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 3 – 4pm (at the Commerce campus or via Skype if you are based out of the Dallas campus) please make appointments one day in advance.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures:

Procedures & Policies for Submission of assignments

A. *Due Date*: All assignments and exercises are due on the date and time given by the instructor. Any work that is late will be reduced by one full-letter grade. Assignments will not be accepted if they are more than one week late. All work handed in after critique will be considered late, including partially completed assignments. It is your responsibility to inform the instructor of any problems that might make a project late well before the due date.

Note: All images must have been shot, processed and printed this semester for this class only.

B. *Print Submission*: All work must be from files that were produced during this semester. No images from previous classes can be submitted. All printed assignments will be printed on 8 X 10 or larger inkjet paper and presented in a professional manner. Work must be handed in at the beginning of the critique designated for that particular assignment to be counted "on time".

University Specific Procedures:

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Texas A&M University-Commerce does not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material.

Statement on Accommodations for ADA eligible students:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library, Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

Statement on Student Behavior:

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenet of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)

All students must show respect toward the instructor and the instructor's syllabus, presentations, assignments, and point of view. Students should respect each others' differences. If the instructor determines that a student is not being respectful towards other students or the instructor, it is the instructor's prerogative to ask the student to leave, to refer the student to the department head, and to consider referring the student to the Dean of Students who may consider requiring the student to drop the course. Please refer to pages 42 – 46 of the Texas A&M University-commerce Student guidebook's Codes of Conduct for details.

Student Conduct/Citizenship

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook). Students are expected, at all times, to recognize constituted authority, to conform to the ordinary rules of good conduct, to be truthful, to respect the rights of others, to protect private and public property, and to make the best use of their time and effort toward the educational process.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

The Instructor reserves the right to make adjustments and changes to this calendar. Any changes will be relayed to students via either verbal discussion in class or via email.

Week One - January 15

Introductions

Review of Syllabus

Lecture: Intro to Urbanism and Photography

Assignment: Project 1 The Urban Scavenger Hunt

Readings: Please read and make notes on the by January 28:

- *New Topographics: photographs that find beauty in the banal*, Sean O'Hagan, The Guardian February 8 2010
- *Our Sprawling Supersize Utopia*, David Brooks, Worlds Away Exhibition Catalog, 2008
- *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape*, William Jenkins, International Museum of Photograph, George Eastman House, 1975
- *OPTIONAL readings:*
 - *Interview with Bernd and Hilla Becher*, Ulf Erdmann Ziegler, Art in America, June 2002 ** interview can also be found at www.americanauburbx.com, 2012

Recommended Event: through February 16, Casey Williams, Holly Johnson Gallery

Recommended Event: January 15 – July 21, Ed Ruscha: Made in California at the Amon Carter Museum

Week Two – January 22

FIELD TRIP – Please attend Vaughn Wascovich's opening reception for his exhibition, *Building Cleveland*, at TAMUC Art Gallery. Optional assignment for those who can not attend the opening.

Week Three – January 28

Critique: The Urban Scavenger Hunt

Lecture/Discussion: New Topographics Then and Now

Assignment: Project 2 The City as Landscape

Readings: Please read and make notes on the by February 5:

- *Edward Burtynsky: Manufactured Landscapes*, Laurel Ptak, Aperture, 2006
- TBA

Week Four - February 5

Technical Demo: Photoshop review / Printing

Lecture/Discussion: Topics in Urbanism and Photography – Botany of Desire

Readings: Please read and make notes on the by February 12:

- *Todd Hido: Art of Darkness*, Justin Berton, American Suburb X, February 1, 2006

Week Five – February 12

Critique: Project 2 The City as Landscape

Lecture/Discussion: The Built Environment at Night

Assignment: Project 3 Night

Readings: Please read and make notes on the by February 19:

- *The Theater of the Street, the Subject of the Photograph*, Philip Gefter, The New York Times, March 19, 2006
- TBA

Week Six – February 19

Technical Demo: Photoshop Review / Compositing

Lecture/Discussion: Topics in Urbanism and Photography – The Theater of the Street

Guided Studio Time

Readings: Please read and make notes on the by February 26:

- *Building Pictures*, exhibition essay, Karen Irvine, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago, 2008
- *A Conversation with Beate Gutschow, Natasha Egan, Lesley Martin, and Akiko Ono*, LS/S, Aperture, 2007

Week Seven – February 26

Critique: Project 3 Night

Lecture: Modified Landscape

Assignment: Project 4 Modified Landscape

Readings: TBA

Week Eight – March 5

Technical Demo: Photoshop and Compositing

Lecture: Topics in Urbanism and Photography

Assignment: Final Project

Recommended Event: March 5 – April 21, Big Pictures Exhibition at the Amon Carter Museum

Week Nine – March 12

NO CLASS - Spring Break

Recommended Event: March 17 – June 9th, Cindy Sherman Exhibition at the DMA

Week Ten – March 19

Technical Demo: Photoshop and Compositing

Discussion: Exchange Portfolio

Guided Studio Time

Readings:

- *Ruscha vs. Street View*, Rob Walker, The Design Observer, August 2011
- TBA

Recommended Event: March 21 6-7pm, Artist Talk: Dornith Doherty and Misty Keasler, Amon Carter Museum

Recommended Event: March 25 Penelope Umbrico artist lecture, UNT Denton, 3pm

Week Eleven – March 26

Critique: Modified Landscape

Lecture: Every Building on the Sunset Strip

Assignment: Project 5 Every Building on the Sunset Strip

Week Twelve – April 2

In-class shooting session: Bring your cameras

Guided Studio Time

Week Thirteen – April 9

Critique: Every Building on the Sunset Strip

Guided Studio Time

Week Fourteen – April 16

Lecture: Review of Artists for exam

Due: Files for Exchange Portfolio

Week Fifteen – April 23

Exam: Contemporary Photographers and Urbanism

Exchange Portfolios

Guided Studio Time

Week Sixteen – April 30

Critique: Final Project