SmART Phone Photography
ArtstudSu24-ARTSTUDI-173S-01
Summer 2024 : June 24-August 18,
Monday/ Wednesday 1:30-3:20 pm in McMurtry Art Building 007 (basement)
Instructor: Damon Casarez (he/him) (dcasarez@stanford.edu)
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This hands-on cell phone photography course is designed to introduce students to contemporary art photography practices while expanding their understanding of photography beyond everyday smartphone use. Through technical demonstrations, lectures, group critiques, and photo assignments, students will engage with project-based approaches used by contemporary photographers to construct narratives and explore themes inspired by personal experiences, societal issues, and the world around them. By analyzing a diverse range of photography projects spanning genres such as documentary, portraiture, and narrative, students will develop their own photographic interests and visual style using their smartphones as the primary medium. Additionally, students will gain experience in speaking and articulating their work through presentations and short written reflections. The course culminates in a final project chosen by each student, showcasing the execution of a photographic series that demonstrates both conceptual depth, technical proficiency, and intentional editing.

Objectives

- Learn how to operate your cell phone camera effectively through manual operation
- Learn how to edit photographs through mobile editing software
- Discover a diverse range of contemporary photographers working across different genres and approaches both conceptually and technically
- Gain an awareness of light and how to utilize it with your camera and settings
- Be able to produce, and sequence a thoughtful photography portfolio
- Gain experience speaking and writing about your photography through critique, reflections and presentations

Required Materials and Software

- **Smart phone with camera**: Students must have a camera with at least 2-5 gigabytes free for class assignments
- **An Adobe Creative Suit license**: A license will be provided to you for use of Lightroom Mobile app which we will use to edit photos for our course
- **LinkedIn Learning (Free with SUNet ID):** Students will watch LinkedIn Learning videos throughout the course for technical demonstrations.
- **Canvas:** We will use Canvas to manage our course communications as well as upload weekly assignments throughout the quarter.
- **Zoom:** In the case that we do need to hold class zoom due to unforeseen circumstances, students will receive notification on canvas with a link to a meeting.
  - Students should keep their video on during Zoom meetings, unless otherwise instructed. (Please, communicate in advance if there is a reason this is not possible.)
  - Find a private space if you can.
  - Be on time to our meetings in appropriate attire.
  - Online class is a private space. No guests allowed.
  - Prevent noisy distractions.
  - Students should refrain from eating during all Zoom sessions.
  - Mute yourself unless speaking to avoid any possible disruptions.

**Required Readings**

- Course readings will be available through Canvas and organized by the week under the heading “modules.” They are also noted in the course schedule below.

**Recommended Books**

- Art Photography, David Bate
- Art Photography Now, Susan Bright
- Photography As Contemporary Art, Charlotte Cotton

**Assignments and Grading**

- **Participation (40%):** Active participation in class discussions, critiques, and demonstrations is crucial for success in this course and will comprise a significant portion of the final grade. The collective progress of the class relies on each student actively engaging and offering thoughtful, respectful dialogue that challenges us to grow throughout the course. Additionally, I expect every student to attend office hours at least once during the quarter to discuss their work, interests, or any questions they may have.

- **Weekly Photo Journal (10%):** To develop students' photography practice, one original photo created by the student before the due date and a short reflection about the image (100–200 words) will be due before the start of each class unless noted otherwise. This
is not a diary, so make sure that the pictures and reflections are something you are comfortable with me reading. These will not be shared with the class. The written reflection can speak about the formal aspects of the image, your intention of the photograph, or a combination of the two. This will be graded on the effort put forth. You are allowed three “free passes” to not submit a journal entry throughout the course. This is intended to get you in the habit of taking images daily, writing about your work, and actively looking while out in the world. This should take no more than 15–25 minutes. You will have 13 total entries (10 if you use 3 passes) by the end of class. Each entry will be due at 8 PM the day before class.

- **Assignments (25%)**: Throughout the course, there will be four photography assignments that integrate the skills learned in technical demonstrations while also fostering the development of a visual style and subject matter of interest. There will also be written reflections throughout the quarter. The details and due dates for each project will be clearly outlined in the weekly schedule provided to students. These assignments serve as stepping stones leading up to the final project, allowing students to refine their skills and voice progressively. More in-depth information about each assignment will be posted in Canvas.

- **Final Project (25%)**: The final project, due week eight, entails creating a photo series comprising 8–12 edited, sequenced images centered around a topic chosen by the photographer. Students will draw upon the skills acquired from demonstrations and gain visual inspiration from our analyses of contemporary photography projects to propose a project that aligns with their interests and preferred style of photography. In week six, each student will deliver a five-minute presentation on their project proposal, utilizing inspirational images, reference images, or photo books from the Bowes Library. As a class, we will offer feedback, pose questions, and address any concerns raised during the presentations. Critiques of the final project will take place during week eight.

- **Grading criteria:**
  A = Exemplary work. Outstanding participation, excellent attendance, and punctuality.
  B = Consistent high-quality work. Active participation and good attendance.
  C = Average work with minimum required attendance and participation.
  D = Below average work with poor attendance, punctuality, and participation.
  F = None of the above – Failing Grade
Policies

Attendance
This course will be most productive when we are all engaged in open, constructive dialogue with each other. I expect you to be present punctual and ready to participate. Attendance and participation is worth 40% of your grade. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

- Being 15 minutes or more late to a class counts as an absence.
- Even if an absence is excused, any work due at that class/section is subject to the due date policy.
- Students anticipating persistent challenges to participating in class or submitting work on time should reach out as soon as possible.

Due Dates
Assignment deadlines are listed in the course schedule and will be posted to Canvas as well for submission. For photo assignments, students will be expected to have their assignments loaded into the class google drive 24 hours before class.

- You get three “passes” on your weekly journal to not submit an entry
- Your grade for an assignment goes down a third of a letter grade (e.g., A– to B+) for every 24 hours the assignment is late.
- The journal entry will be due at 8PM the day before each class.

Honor Code

- Students are expected to act in accordance with the Stanford Honor code.
  https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/policies-and-guidance/honor-code

Content Disclaimer
This course may include the display and discussion of sensitive or provocative photographic art, which may depict challenging themes, subject matter, or visual representations. Such content is intended for educational purposes and may elicit strong emotional responses. Students are encouraged to engage critically and respectfully with the material presented. Participation in discussions and critiques should be approached with sensitivity and open-mindedness. Any discomfort or concerns regarding the content should be addressed with the instructor in a timely manner. Respect for diverse perspectives and experiences within the classroom community is essential.

Accommodations
Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for disabled students. Disabled students are a valued and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you
to our class. If you experience disability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit: https://oae.stanford.edu

If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, we invite you to share your letter with us. Academic Accommodation Letters should be shared at the earliest possible opportunity so we may partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course.

Course Schedule
The syllabus is subject to change; assignments and readings may be added or dropped as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Week 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6/24</th>
<th><strong>Introductions:</strong> Students and their photo interests, syllabus and course expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Photography Book Share:</strong> Instructor will Pass around photography books from the Bowes library for students to look at and discuss in small group.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Reading:</strong> Susan Bright, “Introduction,” <em>Art Photography Now</em>, P. 6-17</td>
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<td><strong>Journal (Light) Entry Due 6/26 before class</strong></td>
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<td>6/26</td>
<td><strong>Demo:</strong> We will do a hands-on demo where we will look at the manual functions of our smartphones, showing how we can adjust the file type, exposure, color balance and, and other modes while shooting through Lightroom Mobile. Please have Lightroom downloaded before class!</td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong> Liz Wells, “Documentary and Photojournalism: Issues and Definitions,” <em>Photography: A Critical Introduction</em>, P. 79–95. Be prepared to discuss on 7/1</td>
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<td><strong>Homework:</strong></td>
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<td>- Select a photo to analyze from the MoMa photo collection between 2000–2024, and submit to Canvas with a written reflection (200 words minimum). It can be a reflection on what the image stirs in you, a</td>
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formal reading, a memory it provokes, etc. This exercise is meant to allow us to consider different ways we can engage with images.

**Journal Entry (Light) Due 7/1 before class**

### Week 2:

| 7/1 | **Lecture**: In this lecture, we'll delve into the realm of contemporary art photographers rooted in the documentary tradition, yet pushing beyond past boundaries. We'll analyze a diverse array of approaches and projects, contemplating how documentation operates while also challenging the notion of truth within photography. Be prepared to discuss the reading. Photographers: Gregory Halpern, William Camargo, Larry Sultan, Stacy Kranitz, Alec Soth, Eli Durst  
**Assignment One (Due 7/8)**: Create three images inspired by one of the photographers from the lecture or from the MoMa database. All images must be unique, meaning they should all be noticeably different from each other. Do not retouch the images as we will do a retouching demo next week. This first assignment will encourage you to think like a photographer you admire but with your own subject matter and/or surroundings.  
**Journal Entry (Texture) Due 7/3 before class**  
| 7/3 | **Demo**: We will do a hands-on demonstration of in-phone editing using Lightroom Mobile software by Adobe. Students will be editing their own images from journal entries during class. Use this demo to edit the photos for your first assignment.  
**Journal Entry Due 7/8 before class** |

### Week 3

| 7/8 | **Critique Assignment One**: Each student will present their work from the class drive, sharing 1-3 images of the photographer they were inspired by followed by their own 3 images. Students are encouraged to share their experience making the photos, whether positive or negative. The class will provide feedback. Each student will have 5 minutes max. |
**Reading:** Susan Bright, “Portait,” *Art Photography Now*, P 18–45 (mostly images and brief intros to photographers)

**Journal Entry Due 7/10 before class**

**Lecture:** We will look at photographers working in the genre of portraiture who explore issues of identity—national, personal or sexual. We will also consider the relationships the photographers have between their subject and discuss concerns about power dynamics between photographer, subject and viewer. **Photographers:** Deana Lawson, Dawoud Bey, Katy Grannan, Cindy Sherman, Wendy Redstar, Stefan Ruiz. Be prepared to discuss the reading.

**Assignment two (Due 7/17):** In this assignment, students will create portraits that go beyond a mere depiction of appearance. They'll delve into aspects of the subject's identity, such as personal life, career aspirations, passions, or cultural heritage, revealing layers of complexity. As the photographer, you can choose to direct your subject, or have a more collaborative approach and have them be active in how they present themself in their portrait. Through this exercise, students will enhance their skill in being able to speak about a person through a photograph that goes beyond representation. Students will present three images to the class which can be of the same person, but noticeably different.

Homework: Watch; [Dawoud Bey on Visualizing History (9 minutes)](#).

**Journal Entry Due 7/15 before class**

**Week 4**

**Art Visit:** On this day, we will visit the Bowes Library to look at and discuss photo books. Each student will pull books related to their area of interest and look at and discuss the books in small groups. Each group will speak about a single photo or photo spread with two photo pages connecting.

**Journal Entry Due 7/17 before class**

**Critique Assignment two:** Each student will present their three portraits as a cold read, with only titles. After feedback and thoughts from class, we will have the photographer speak and share their intentions to see how the class reads them and if they align with the photographer's thoughts. Each student will have 5 minutes.

**Assignment three:** In this assignment, students will explore their everyday
experiences through photography by creating a series of five images based on a randomly assigned word prompt. The goal is to encourage students to look critically at their surroundings and use the word you are given translate their observations into visual narratives. Through careful consideration of lighting, perspective, scale, and composition, students will craft a cohesive series that communicates the essence of the chosen word. Photographs can be indoor or outdoor and in any genre (portrait, still life, street photography, etc.)

**Homework:** Watch: [Carrie Mae Weems in 'Compassion' – Season 5 – 'Art in the Twenty-First Century' | Art21 (15 min)](https://www.art21.org/watch/compassion/season-5-art-in-the-twenty-first-century)

**Journal Entry Due 7/22 before class**

**Week 5:**

| 7/22  | **Lecture:** We'll examine photographers who specialize in "staged" or tableau photography, discussing how they integrate elements of fantasy, artifice, and memory into their work. Drawing from techniques found in cinema and painting, these photographers use the camera's ability to “document” to construct images that convey narrative within an image, blurring the lines between reality and fiction. Photographers: Cindy Sherman, Hannah Starkey, Gregory Crewdson, Jeff Wall, Carrie Mae Weems

**Final Project Introduction (Due 8/12-8/14):** For the final project, students will create a photo series comprising 8-12 edited, sequenced images centered around a topic chosen by the photographer. Students can choose to work in any genre they wish and will draw upon the skills acquired from demonstrations and gain visual inspiration from our analyses of contemporary photography projects to propose a project that aligns with their interests and preferred style of photography. In week six, each student will deliver a five-minute presentation on their project proposal, utilizing inspirational images, reference images, or photo books from the Bowes Library. As a class, we will offer feedback, pose questions, and address any concerns raised during the presentations. Critiques of the final project will take place during week eight.

**Homework:** Watch [Jeff Wall Interview: Pictures Like Poems (37 min)](https://www.art21.org/watch/pictures-like-poems/)

**Journal Entry Due 7/24 before class**

| 7/24  | **Critique Assignment three:** Each student will present from the class drive, |
sharing their images from the word prompt assignment. Students will explain their thinking behind the images and how they relate the image to the word. Students are encouraged to share their experiences making the photos, whether positive or negative. The class will provide feedback. Each student will have 5 minutes max.

**Assignment Due 7/29-7/31:** Create a 3-5 minute presentation on what you propose photographing for the final project. The presentation can contain reference images, original images, or text that speaks about the topic you're interested in. The class will provide feedback and answer any questions.

**Journal Entry Due 7/29 before class**

**Week 6: Final Project Proposals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7/29</th>
<th><strong>Presentations (group 1):</strong> Students will present their final project proposal, speaking about why they are choosing this topic, how they plan to execute it, and any issues they foresee having.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework:</strong> Watch [Elle Pérez Works Between the Frame</td>
<td>Art21 &quot;New York Close Up&quot; (6 min)](<a href="https://www.art21.org/episodes/elle-perez-works-between-the-frame/new-york-close-up">https://www.art21.org/episodes/elle-perez-works-between-the-frame/new-york-close-up</a>)</td>
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<td><strong>Journal Entry Due 7/31 before class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>7/31</th>
<th><strong>Presentations (group 2):</strong> Students will present their final project proposal, speaking about why they are choosing this topic, how they plan to execute it, and any issues they foresee having.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Homework:</strong> Watch <a href="https://www.art21.org/episodes/photographers-in-focus/alec-soth">Photographers in Focus: Alec Soth</a> (5 min)</td>
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<td><strong>Journal Entry Due 8/5 before class</strong></td>
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**Week 7: One on Ones**

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<tr>
<th>8/5</th>
<th><strong>One-on-One (group 1):</strong> Students will meet with the instructor to show the progress of the project, help edit, or provide feedback on conceptual or technical concerns. Each student will have 8–10 minutes. Students not meeting can continue to work on their projects in class or visit the library.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework:</strong> Watch <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jz5y7ZIe96g">There But Not There: Gregory Crewdson Documentary</a> (29 min)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Journal Entry Due 8/7 before class</strong></td>
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### One-on-One (group 2):

Students will meet with the instructor to show the progress of the project, help edit, or provide feedback on conceptual or technical concerns. Each student will have 8–10 minutes. Students not meeting can continue to work on their projects in class or visit the library.

**Homework:**
- Watch [Larry Sultan: Documenting a hidden side of the suburbs](#) (4 min)
- Watch [Larry Sultan discovers his family through photography](#) (4 min)

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**NO JOURNAL**

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### Week 8: Final Presentations

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 8/7    | **One-on-One (group 2):** Students will meet with the instructor to show the progress of the project, help edit, or provide feedback on conceptual or technical concerns. Each student will have 8–10 minutes. Students not meeting can continue to work on their projects in class or visit the library.  

**Homework:**
- Watch [Larry Sultan: Documenting a hidden side of the suburbs](#) (4 min)  
- Watch [Larry Sultan discovers his family through photography](#) (4 min) |
| 8/12   | **Final Critique:** Students will have 8–10 minutes to present their final project and speak about the process behind making the work. As a class, we will ask the presenter questions about their work, an offer constructive feedback.   |
| 8/14   | **Final Critique:** Each student will have 10 minutes to present their final project through the class google drive. Students can choose to have a cold read, go through the images first, or speak about the series before showing them. |