

ARTX115 Digital Photography—Syllabus
Fall Quarter 2023, Kalamazoo College
Richard Koenig, Professor

Meeting Time: Tuesday & Thursday 8:30 to 11:30 AM

Meeting Place: Room 122 of the Light Fine Arts Building

Class Homepage (NOT optimized for phones):

http://people.kzoo.edu/~rkoenig/educator/photo/ph_dig.html

Office Location: Light Fine Arts Building Room 203, Phone: 337.7003

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 to 3:30 PM (or other times by appointment—IRL or via MS Teams)

Cell Phone (emergency only, please): 269.270.8110

Photo Classroom (LFA 103) Phone: 337.7399

E-Mail: rkoenig@kzoo.edu

Course Description and Goals

The objective of this studio art course is to provide the student a working knowledge of, and experience with, the fundamental creative tools used in fine art photographic practice. For this particular class, we will use digital cameras, optimize with Photoshop, with the end product to be viewed on monitor, though we'll also go over the process of making an archival pigment print.

In addition to producing photographs, participants learn to analyze and discuss their work in critiques. When regarding the images produced in this course, discussion will be centered on technical, formal, and conceptual characteristics. We will also discuss subject matter and content—and the difference between the two. In this critical “reading” of images, like that of a text, we will explore some of the basics of visual literacy.

To inspire and contextualize we will view historical examples from the Daguerreotype to contemporary practice, with an emphasis on recent digital work. Through this study and the production of a small body of work, each student should complete the course with an introductory understanding of contemporary photographic practice.

Evaluation

Merely completing the requirements for an assignment will not necessarily ensure a good evaluation. I look at technical, formal, and conceptual aspects of your work (mentioned above) but also the level of exploration and risk-taking. Below is a breakdown of how your final grade will be determined:

15%	Assignment One
15%	Assignment Two
7.5%	Take-home Quiz (technical)
7.5%	Participation (1 st half)
20%	Assignment Three
7.5%	Mini-Assignment (Blog Entry)
20%	Assignment Four
7.5%	Participation (2 nd half)

Credit/No Credit Policy

Students in good academic standing may elect to take at most one letter graded course per term as CR/NC for a total of up to four courses while enrolled at Kalamazoo College. Courses taken CR/NC must be outside the

major, minor, or concentration (including cognates). Students may elect this option for at most one course in any one department. Before signing this form, please be sure to investigate all possible implications:

- This form is due to the Registrar's Office on or before Friday of eighth week of the quarter during which Credit\No Credit is a course registration option.
- Once declared a Credit\No Credit course, the course cannot be converted back to a letter-graded course.
- Declaration of a course as Credit\No Credit makes the student ineligible for the Dean's List consideration for that quarter.
- Many graduate schools and professional institutions may not accept Credit\No Credit graded coursework in subjects related to an intended program of study.
- Students may retake a CR/NC option for a letter grade.
- The course will not satisfy prerequisites for those course sequences that require a "C- or better."
- The course will not satisfy the last course in the language requirement (103 or 201) or any of the Shared Passages Seminar requirements.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory: it is crucial that you miss as few of the meetings as possible as the instruction builds upon itself. After two unexcused absences your grade can be lowered at my discretion. This penalty is applied to your course grade after it is determined using the above formula (see "evaluation"). If possible, one should have documentation to obtain an excused absence. Also, two late arrivals will be counted as one absence. If you do miss a class, get notes from another student.

Participation

Good participation means one actively and candidly contributes to the conversation, while also being supportive of one's peers. It means one is following what is going on and is a constructive presence to the goings-on of the class. It means, quite simply, that one contributes to a positive class atmosphere.

Along those lines, an important note about critiques: we criticize the work, not the person making the work. You should note that I've earmarked a not insignificant portion (7.5% for each half of the term) of your final grade for how you participate.

Diversity and Inclusion

With our time spent together in this course, we will make a conscious effort to ensure that all participants feel welcomed and encouraged to participate. Hurtful comments based on ethnicity, religion, physical appearance, sexual orientation, national origin, and/or socioeconomic status will not be tolerated. Creating personal artwork can often cause the maker to be vulnerable—we, each of us in this course, should endeavor always to treat each other respectfully and regard one another's artistic production seriously.

Required Texts and Lab Fee

There is no required textbook for this class—I will provide handouts or links to websites as needed. The lab fee for this course was rescinded.

Land Acknowledgement

We gather on the land of the Council of the Three Fires—the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. Indigenous nations of the Great Lakes region are also known as the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-nah-bay), or original people, and their language is Anishinaabemowin (Ah-nish-nah-bay-mow-in). We acknowledge the enduring relationship that exists between the People of the Three Fires and this land.

Course Learning Outcomes vis-à-vis Institutional Learning Outcomes

In order to cultivate cross-institutional consistency and coherence, departments and units are encouraged to identify how their learning outcomes might align with and support the broader institutional learning outcomes. These four ILOs were approved by a vote of the faculty in 2019 after thorough campus-wide discussion and deliberation. ILOs enable graduates to...

- Communicate effectively
- Address complex problems
- Collaborate successfully
- Demonstrate intercultural competency

Most, if not all, of the courses in the department of Art & Art History fulfill the ILOs. Beyond communicating through visual artwork, we, in this class, will exercise this ability through discussion, critiques, and possibly some small written pieces or oral presentations. Current artwork more often than not addresses complex social issues such as climate change or institutional racism, to name but a couple. Collaboration may be exercised through a group project where participants modulate their contributions for the best result of the whole. And we are constantly examining the *impact* (rather than the *intent*) of our artistic production using an intercultural lens.

Artificial Intelligence: what is Acceptable and Unacceptable

The use of generative AI tools (ChatGPT, for example) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas
- Fine tuning your research questions
- Finding information on your topic

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into an MS Teams chat.
- Completing group work that your group has assigned to you, unless it is mutually agreed upon that you may utilize the tool.
- Creation of a draft of an image or writing assignment.
- Creation of final images or entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay within college policies on [academic dishonesty](#). Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways will result in failure for that assignment. When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification.

The section above has been adapted from guidance provided by Temple University's Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability who seeks accommodation or other assistance in this course, please let me know. Kalamazoo College is committed to making every effort to providing reasonable accommodations.

If you want to discuss your overall needs for accommodation at the College, please direct your questions to the office of Associate Dean of Students. [<https://www.kzoo.edu/student-life/students-with-disabilities/>]

Learning Support

Learning Support collaborates with students to find effective learning techniques for time management, notetaking, test-taking skills, organization, and more. One-time appointments or regular check-ins are available with a learning coach or peer consultant.

We welcome all students who are interested in practicing new study strategies. If you're facing challenges like ADHD, Autism, or other learning differences, you can expect an ongoing commitment to empathetic support, encouragement, and accountability for student-defined goals and paths. Learn more and schedule your appointments at the following link. [<https://learningsupport.kzoo.edu/>]

Lecture, Computers, and Lab Time

After the experience of holding classes on-line over the last couple of years, I continue to provide all materials ahead of class time (via Moodle). Please look this over prior to our class meeting time so that we can make the most of our time together. While I'm not expecting it, if we must return to on-line instruction, we would meet synchronously via MS Teams. As with my schedule during the last two years, in the midst of the pandemic, I've tried to make our schedule as regular as possible so that it's easy to remember when things are due, etc.

Our normal meeting place will be Light Fine Arts room 122; there you'll find fifteen iMacs with the latest Adobe software. If access to the building and our particular room line up with normal practice, you will have access between 7:00 AM throughout the day till 11:00 PM—except for any organized class times. For example: Nayda's class, *Design Fundamentals*, meets in this same room Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 12:30 to 3:30 PM.

Equipment and Supplies

A digital single lens reflex (or mirrorless) camera is ideal for this course. Kathryn Lightcap of the Center for New Media (first floor of the library) has been in touch with you for the loan of a fine camera.

You may want to purchase a portable hard drive to save your work from this quarter, if you don't already own one. Tripods may be checked out from Curricular Support, also found on the first floor of the library.

Assignments—In General

Assignments must be turned-in (posted on Padlet, an on-line site) on time. Each assignment will require that you shoot a minimum of fifty to a hundred digital files, create a rough edit of twenty to thirty images, and finally optimize, on average, eight final digital images. (Assignments range from six to twelve images each.)

Regarding final digital image quality: these should contain a full-range of tones and straightforward color as a default. Avoid cropping as much as possible—keep close to full frame so I can see how you compose things in the viewfinder.

In terms of concept—assignments are open, but directed. It's really good to kick your ideas around with others—your classmates, roommates, or myself. Do this before, during, and after your shooting.

Assignments—In Particular

Assignment One (an ungraded exercise plus a six-image series)

Technical Exercise: this portion of the assignment is to show that you have a grasp of the basic controls of your camera (shutter and aperture) and the effects they provide when used in combination (time and focus). Give me four images—one each from this list of four effects: blurred action, frozen action, shallow depth-of-field, and great depth-of-field. This exercise will not be graded.

Assignment—Sense of Place: document your existence, where you are. You could do interiors, details, or both, to show us where you physically find yourself. Avoid portraits for now as we will focus on that later. Take many images (30 or more), but edit down to a six-image series to turn in. (Note: a *series* can be shuffled—we'll look at what a *sequence* is with the next assignment.)

Assignment Two (eight images)

Narrative Sequence: tell a story of some kind by turning a *series* into a *sequence* (order-specific.) While we still may be somewhat limited during this time, in terms of where we can go to shoot, put some images into a sequence to impart a narrative (keep it simple). Please give me eight digital images with this assignment. (Alternative: Pick a traditional photograph *genre*—such as portrait, landscape, interior, or still-life.)

Assignment Three (eight images)

Portraits—other people or yourself (self-portraits): if you have willing subjects available, take some meaningful images of these people. The pictures can be carefully posed (directorial) or candid (non-invasive, objective observer). You might look up the concept of “environmental portrait” for this assignment (this refers to the subject's surroundings, not necessarily the natural environment).

An alternate assignment—Light & Form: using anything but people as subject matter (as persons or bodies may be used in the portrait assignment), I want you to give me eight photographs that explore light and composition via *form*. To get you started, I'd like you to think about the idea of a continuum—from whole, through fragmentation, to the abstract. You might try moving in on your subjects here—this will fragment, or even abstract, what you are looking at. Concurrently, please pay attention to the quality of light. Do not, however, shoot light sources themselves, but observe how light defines the physical world (reveals and/or conceals).

In either case (portraits or light & form), please give me eight digital images.

Assignment Four (ten to twelve images total)

Open Project with Artist Statement + Structured Reflection: this assignment is open to you, but please run your idea by me first; we will also discuss ideas as a group. Please make your final project consist of ten to twelve images with the supportive written document, for which I will give you a handout.