



Using Photographs as Historical Evidence

HIS 326 COURSE GUIDE Writing Intensive and Research Intensive Spring 2005

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Hours: Tuesday, 3:15-4:15
and by appointment

Scope of the Course

This course takes a case study approach to evaluating the content and history of photographs as historical evidence. We will begin with compelling images of the American Civil War, one of the earliest wars ever to be photographed. The second case study will explore several different conventions of portrait photography. Finally, we will evaluate the history of social documentary from the turn of the twentieth century through the Great Depression. Overall, we will strive to go beyond the use of photographs as mere illustrations to understand the richer meanings of their visual content as primary source evidence that must be critically evaluated in historical context. You will put these methods and perspectives into practice by developing a term paper that uses a particular type of photograph as primary source evidence (rather than as simple illustration) for your thesis.

Course Learning Objectives

- Learn strategies for “reading” photographs as historical evidence.
- Understand that photographs are cultural artifacts that must be critically evaluated in historical context.
- Evaluate how technological change affected the results and meanings of photographic evidence.
- Analyze the visual content of two different types/genres of photographs (3-5 pages)
- Develop a research paper using photographs as primary source evidence rather than simple illustrations (12-15 pages)

Required Readings

Book: (Available at UNCG Bookstore)

Robert M. Levine. *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2004.

Journal Articles and Book Chapters: (available in the Reserve Room of Jackson Library, on electronic reserves, and/or electronically on JSTOR or other databases.)

Cohen, Lizabeth. “Embellishing a Life of Labor.” In Dell Upton and John Vlach, eds. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986. [ereserves]

Curtis, James C. “Dorothea Lange, Migrant Mother, and the Culture of the Great Depression,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (Spring 1986): 1-20. [Use Journal Finder]

Curtis, James C. and Sheila Grannen. “Let Us Now Appraise Famous Photographs: Walker Evans and Documentary Photography,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 1-23. [Use Journal Finder]

Daniel, Pete et al. *Official Images: New Deal Photography*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1987.

Davidson, James West and Mark Hamilton Lytle, “The Mirror with a Memory.” In *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1992, pp. 178-200. [ereserves]

Kasson, Joy. “American Indian Performers in the Wild West.” In *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000. [pp. 161-219; ereserves]

Levine, Lawrence W. “The Historian and the Icon: Photography and the History of the American People in the 1930s and 1940s.” In *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. [ereserves]

- Natanson, Nicholas. "The Photo Series: Ben Shahn's Southern Meditations." In *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992, pp. 85-112. [ereserves]
- Orvell, Miles. *American Photography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. [ereserves]
- Sandweiss, Martha A. "Momentoes of the Race": Photography and the American Indian." In *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. [ereserves]
- Seixas, Peter, "Lewis Hine: From Social to Interpretive Photographer." *American Quarterly* Vol. 39, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 381-409. [Use Journal Finder]
- Severa, Joan L. *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans and Fashion, 1840-1900*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1995.
- Trachtenberg, Alan, "Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs." *Representations* 9 (1985): 1-32. [Use Journal Finder]
- Wajda, Shirley Teresa, "The Artistic Portrait Photograph." In *The Arts and the American Home, 1890-1930*, ed. by Jessica H. Foy and Karal Ann Marling. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994. [ereserves]

Evaluation

Participation	10%
Portrait or Civil War analysis	20%
Social Documentary analysis	20%
Term paper	50%

Participation (10%)

You will have a variety of opportunities to participate in class discussion and workshops throughout the semester, and active participation in the course will improve your learning significantly. Active participation includes doing the assigned reading before class, taking notes on class discussion and lectures, making substantive contributions to class discussion, turning work in on time, and active engagement in research and writing workshops. Please note that unless arrangements have been made well in advance of due dates, late assignments will be penalized by a 3% reduction in the final grade for every day the assignment is late. Assignments later than one week will not be accepted for credit without an extremely impressive explanation.

Photographic Analyses (40%)

You will complete an analysis of two different types or genres of photographic evidence. These assignments will entail selecting an appropriate photograph and using assigned readings to evaluate its visual content in historical context. You will receive a more specific set of questions for analysis and instructions for finding an appropriate photograph well in advance of the due date. Each analysis will be the equivalent of about 5 pages, typed and double-spaced.

Due Dates:

10 February Portrait or Civil War analysis due

29 March Social Documentary analysis due

Term Paper (50%)

You will develop a final research paper using a particular type or genre of photograph as historical evidence. Your research bibliography should contain at least 5 scholarly books or journal articles and about 3-5 photos. The final paper should be about 12-15 pages typed and double spaced, with Turabian-style footnotes and bibliography. We will be developing this assignment throughout the semester. This assignment will be the exclusive focus of the course during the month of April, which is organized as a series of workshops devoted to specific term paper revision issues.

Research skills this assignment will teach you include the following:

- Constructing an interesting research problem
- Using photographs as primary source evidence
- Developing a meaningful research bibliography
- Synthesizing scholarly arguments
- Developing an original thesis or argument
- Practicing scholarly citation methods
- Effective strategies for revising and improving your written analysis of evidence and thesis development

Due dates (see course schedule for writing workshops related to term paper development and revision):

15 February Bring to class your preliminary term paper photograph selections

3 March Topic description with photographs and preliminary bibliography due

4 April Email me your working thesis statement by noon

7 April Complete term paper draft due with footnotes, bibliography, and photographic evidence

3 May Final, revised term paper due

Course Schedule

- 11 January Introductions
- 13 January Robert M. Levine, "Photographs as Documents," pp. 2-19.
Orvell, Ch. 1. Introduction, pp. 13-18. [ereserves]

Civil War

- 18 January Robert M. Levine, "A Divided Nation, 1840-1870," 22-31.
Trachtenberg, Alan, "Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs."
Representations 9 (1985): 1-32. [Use Journal Finder]
Orvell, Ch. 4. Seeing and Believing, pp. 61-80. [ereserves]
- 20 January Trachtenberg, Alan, "Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs."
Representations 9 (1985): 1-32. [Journal Finder]
Orvell, Ch. 4. Seeing and Believing, pp. 61-80. [ereserves]
- 25 January Research Workshop I: Topic development
Robert M. Levine, "Industrializing America," pp. 32-56.

Portraits

- 27 January Orvell, Ch. 2 Presenting the Self pp. 19-38. [ereserves]
Wajda, Shirley Teresa, "The Artistic Portrait Photograph." In *The Arts and the American Home, 1890-1930*, ed. by Jessica H. Foy and Karal Ann Marling. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994. [ereserves]
- 1 February No class. Assignment: Select a portrait from Severa, Joan L. *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans and Fashion, 1840-1900*. [on reserve in Jackson Library] for in-class analysis on 3 February.
- 3 February Kasson, Joy. "American Indian Performers in the Wild West." In *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000. [pp. 161-219; ereserves]

8 February Sandweiss, Martha A. “‘Momentoes of the Race’”: Photography and the American Indian.” In *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. [ereserves]

10 February **Portrait or Civil War analysis due**

Social Documentary

15 February Robert M. Levine, “Nation of Immigrants,” pp. 56-82.
Orvell, Ch. 6. Photography and Society, pp. 105-140. [ereserves]
Research Workshop II: Topic refinement and bibliographic development. **Bring your selected photographs to class for the workshop.**

17 February Lytle, “The Mirror with a Memory.” In *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, pp. 178-200. [ereserves]

22 February Cohen, Lizabeth. “Embellishing a Life of Labor.” [ereserves]

24 February Seixas, Peter, “Lewis Hine: From Social to Interpretive Photographer.” *American Quarterly* Vol. 39, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 381-409. [Use Journal Finder]

1 March Robert M. Levine, “Years of Boom and Bust,” 82-109.
Levine, Lawrence W. “The Historian and the Icon: Photography and the History of the American People in the 1930s and 1940s.” In *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. [ereserves]

3 March **Term Paper: Topic description with photographs and preliminary bibliography due**

8/10 March SPRING BREAK

15 March Research Workshop III: Topic Revision

17 March Curtis, James C. “Dorothea Lange, Migrant Mother, and the Culture of the Great Depression,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (Spring 1986): 1-20. [Use Journal Finder]

- 22 March Curtis, James C. and Sheila Grannen. "Let Us Now Appraise Famous Photographs: Walker Evans and Documentary Photography," *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 1-23. [Use Journal Finder]
- 24 March Natanson, Nicholas. "The Photo Series: Ben Shahn's Southern Meditations." In *The Black Image in the New Deal : The Politics of FSA Photography*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992, pp. 85-112. [ereserves]
- 29 March **Social Documentary analysis due**

Term Paper

- 31 March Writing workshop: Draft development; use of visual evidence, including captions and identification of photos; citation formatting; and other practical stuff
- 5 April Writing workshop: Thesis statements and other intellectual stuff (**email me your working thesis statement by noon on 4 April**)
- 7 April **Complete term paper draft due (all 12-15 pages of it) with footnotes, bibliography, and photographic evidence**
- 12 April Revising workshop: Thesis statements
- 14 April Revising workshop: Paragraph development and organization of argument
- 19 April Revising workshop: Use of visual evidence, including captions and identification of photos
- 21 April Revising workshop: Strategies for footnoting
- 26 April Revising workshop: TBA
- 28 April Revising workshop: TBA
- 3 May **Final term paper due.** Last day of classes (Friday schedule)