Using Photographs as Historical Evidence

HIS 326 COURSE GUIDE
Writing Intensive and Research Intensive
Spring 2005

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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)


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


**Evaluation**

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portrait or Civil War analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Documentary analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**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


Civil War

Orvell, Ch. 4. Seeing and Believing, pp. 61-80. [ereserves]

20 January  Trachtenberg, Alan, “Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs.”
Orvell, Ch. 4. Seeing and Believing, pp. 61-80. [ereserves]

25 January  Research Workshop I: Topic development

Portraits

27 January  Orvell, Ch. 2 Presenting the Self  pp. 19-38. [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.


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

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**Social Documentary**

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.**


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

8/10 March  SPRING BREAK

15 March  Research Workshop III: Topic Revision


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)