Using Photographs as Historical Evidence

HIS 326 COURSE GUIDE
Writing Intensive and Research Intensive
Spring 2008

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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 explore the history of photography by focusing on different types of photographs in particular social contexts from the evolution of portrait photography, to compelling images of the American Civil War, one of the earliest wars ever to be photographed, to 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

By the end of the semester students should be able to:

- Demonstrate different strategies for “reading” photographs as historical evidence.
- Explain how specific photographs are cultural artifacts that must be critically evaluated in historical context.
- Explain some of the ways that technological change affected the results and meanings of photographic evidence.
- Analyze the visual content of two different types/genres of photographs.
- Develop a research paper (12-15 pages) using photographs as primary source evidence rather than simple illustrations
- Practice such research skills as defining an interesting and focused topic, creating a meaningful research bibliography, and using primary source evidence to defend and explain a thesis statement.

Required Readings


Journal Articles and Book Chapters: (available as indicated on ereserves or electronic journal databases.)


Evaluation

Participation 10%
Portait 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. Late policy: 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.

Make note of the following due dates:
12 February Portrait or Civil War analysis due
25 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 and clearly focused research topic
- 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):
- 26 February Preliminary term paper photograph selections due for extra participation credit
- 27 March Topic description with photographs and preliminary bibliography due
- 7 April Email me your working thesis statement by noon
- 10 April Complete term paper draft due with footnotes, bibliography, and photographic evidence
- 1 May Final, revised term paper due

**Course Schedule**

15 January Introductions

**Nineteenth Century Photography: Portraits and Civil War**

17 January Portraits Before Photography/Daguerreotypes and Other Cased Images
*Read:* Orvell, Ch. 1. Introduction, pp. 13-18. [ereserves]
*Read:* Orvell, Ch. 2 Presenting the Self pp. 19-38. [ereserves]

22 January Cartes de Visite and the Artistic Portrait Photograph
24 January  no class

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

31 January  Photography and Civil War: Facts vs. Interpretations
Read: Trachtenberg, Alan, “Albums of War: On Reading Civil War

Does the Camera Ever Lie?
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam1.html Read both “The
Case of Confused Identity” and “The Case of the Moved Body”

5 February  Souvenir vs. Personal Portrait
Read: Sandweiss, Martha A. “‘Momentoes of the Race’”: Photography and the
American Indian.” In Print the Legend: Photography and the American West.

7 February  Family Portraits in the Segregated South
Read: Elizabeth Arnold, “Family Pictures ‘Out of Place’: Race, Resistance, and
Affirmation in the Pope Family Photograph Collection, 1890-1920” MA Thesis,
UNCG, 2006.

12 February  Research Workshop: Topic development
Portrait or Civil War Analysis due

Social Documentary and the Twentieth Century

14 February  Turn of the Century Technology
Read: Orvell, Ch. 6. Photography and Society, pp. 105-140. [ereserves]
Jacob Riis and the Reformer’s Eye
Read: Lytle, “The Mirror with a Memory.” In After the Fact: The Art of
Historical Detection, pp. 178-200. [ereserves]

19 February  Using Photos as Evidence of the Immigrants’ Perspective

21 February  America and Lewis Hine

26 February  Lewis Hine and the American Worker

*For extra participation credit turn in to me your selected photographs as samples for the workshop*

28 February  **Research Workshop**: Topic refinement and bibliographic development.

4 March  The Great Depression  

6 March  Dorothea Lange  

11-13 March  *******Spring Break********

18 March  Walker Evans  

20 March  Ben Shahn  

**Term Paper**

25 March  Research Workshop: Topic Revision  
**Social Documentary analysis due**

27 March  **Topic description with photographs and preliminary bibliography due**

1 April  Pre-writing workshop: Draft development; use of visual evidence, including captions and identification of photos; citation formatting; and other practical stuff

3 April  Writing workshop: Thesis statements and other intellectual stuff
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>8 April</td>
<td><strong>Working thesis statements due by noon on 7 April.</strong> Writing workshop: Thesis statements and other intellectual stuff</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 April</td>
<td><strong>Complete term paper draft due (all 12-15 pages of it) with footnotes, bibliography, and photographic evidence</strong></td>
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<td>15 April</td>
<td>Revising workshop: Thesis statements</td>
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<td>Revising workshop: Paragraph development and organization of argument</td>
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<td>Revising workshop: Strategies for footnoting</td>
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<td>Revising workshop: Use of visual evidence, including captions and identification of photos</td>
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