Using Photographs as Historical Evidence

HIS 326 COURSE GUIDE
Writing Intensive and Research Intensive
Spring 2009

Prof. L. Tolbert
Office: MHRA 2109
Email: lctolber@uncg.edu (this is the best way to reach me)

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 research paper that uses a particular type of photograph as primary source evidence (rather than as simple illustration) for your thesis. This
course satisfies university writing intensive requirements and the research intensive requirement for history majors.

**Course Learning Objectives**

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

- Demonstrate multiple 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrait analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Documentary analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory and is counted as part of the overall participation grade. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. If the University is closed for snow you will not, of course, be counted absent. If it snows and the University is open, class will be held as scheduled and attendance counts. At the end of the semester I tally the percentage of attendance based on the total number of classes you have attended....100%, 80%, etc. That provides a starting point for considering your overall participation grade.

Here’s an example of how the participation grade is calculated: a student attended class 87% of the time, asked or answered several questions during the semester, actively participated in research workshops and group discussions, but failed to turn in two ungraded assignments and turned in at least one graded assignment late. Though attendance and participation might suggest a B+ for this student, the late assignments mean that this student cannot make higher than a B- and could even be in the C-range depending on the nature of the missed assignments. Ten percent may seem like a small amount in the overall grade, but it can make a significant difference in the final grade. Skipping classes and ungraded assignments can also have a snowball effect for the results of graded assignments. The course is designed to help you develop your research project in stages and learn skills that build on each other one step at a time. If you skip the smaller steps, the larger research project can seem overwhelming.
**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 5-7 pages, typed and double-spaced.

Make note of the following due dates:
11 February Portrait analysis due. Post to my digital dropbox by 5:00 p.m.
1 April Social Documentary analysis due. Post to my digital dropbox by 5:00 p.m.

**Term Paper (50%)**
You will develop a final research paper using a historically related group of 3-5 photographs as historical evidence. Your research bibliography should contain at least 10 scholarly books or journal articles. The final paper should be about 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
- Creating an original thesis or argument
- Applying 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):
23 February Preliminary term paper photograph selections and bibliography due by 3:30 p.m. for extra participation credit. Email your assignment directly to lctolber@uncg.edu.
16 March Post your topic description, with photographs and preliminary bibliography, to my digital dropbox by 3:30 p.m.. This assignment is worth 10% of your final term paper grade.
13 April Email to lctolber@uncg.edu your working thesis statement by 5:00. Write your thesis statement in the text of your email. Do not attach it as a separate document. This assignment is not optional.
20 April Complete term paper due with footnotes, bibliography, and photographic evidence. Failure to turn in a draft will result in a 5% reduction in the final term paper grade. Post to my digital dropbox by 5:00 p.m.
4 May Final, revised term paper due.
Course Schedule

21 January  Introductions

Nineteenth Century Portrait Photographs

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

28 January  Interpreting the Meanings of Photographic Portraits
Read: Trachtenberg, Illustrious Americans [ereserves]

2 February  Photographs as Objects
Read: 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—note that due to its length this chapter is divided into two parts in ereserves. Read the entire chapter, or both of the parts posted to ereserves.]

4 February  Souvenir vs. Personal Portrait

9 February  Family Portraits in the Segregated South

11 February  NO CLASS. Portrait Analysis due. Post to my digital dropbox by 5:00 p.m.

16 February  Research Workshop: Topic design and bibliographic development

Social Documentary: From the Civil War to the Great Depression

18 February  Photography and Civil War: Facts vs. Interpretations

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”
23 February  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.”

**Preliminary topic description and photograph selections with bibliography due by 3:30 p.m. for extra participation credit. Email to lctolber@uncg.edu**


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

4 March  Using Photos as Evidence of the Immigrants’ Perspective

9/11 March  ********Spring Break********

16 March  Lewis Hine and the American Worker

**Topic description with photographs and bibliography. This assignment is worth 10% of your final term paper grade. Post your assignment to my digital dropbox by 3:30 p.m.**

18 March  America and Lewis Hine

23 March  Research Workshop: Topic Revision and Research Design

25 March  The Great Depression

30 March  Interpreting the Migrant Mother
1 April No Class. **Social Documentary analysis due. Post to my digital dropbox by 5:00 p.m.**

**Term Paper Schedule**

6 April Pre-writing workshop: Thesis statements and other intellectual stuff [Rampolla, pp. 47-51 and 75]

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

13 April Pre-writing workshop: Paragraph development and strategies for footnoting [Rampolla, pp. 52-60, 89-102]

**Working thesis statements due by 5:00. Email your thesis statement to lctolber@uncg.edu. Write your thesis statement in the text of your email. Do not attach it as a separate document. This assignment is not optional.**

15 April Writing workshop: Thesis statements and other intellectual stuff

20 April No class. **Complete term paper draft due (all 12-15 pages of it) with footnotes, bibliography, and photographic evidence. Post to my digital dropbox by 5:00 p.m.**

22 April Revising workshop: Thesis revision, paragraph development, and organization of argument

27 April Revising workshop: Strategies for footnoting

29 April Revising workshop: Use of visual evidence, including captions and identification of photos. Addressing your final questions.

4 May Course evaluations. **Final Term Paper** due.