



Using Photographs as Historical Evidence

History 326/WI

Spring 2019

Prof. L. Tolbert

Office: MHRA 2109

Hours: 3:15-4:15, MW

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History Department Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/>

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**Note that this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Any necessary changes in the syllabus or course schedule will prioritize effectiveness for student learning.*

Scope and Purpose of the Course

This course explores the history of photography by focusing on different types of photographs in particular social contexts from the origins of portrait photography in the nineteenth century, to the history of social documentary in the twentieth century. Although the case studies are organized in a generally chronological order, this course is not a chronological survey of the history of photography. Instead, the priority of the course is to go beyond the use of photographs as mere illustrations to interpret the richer meanings of their visual content. We will study photographs as a distinctive type of 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 photographs as primary source evidence (rather than as simple illustration) to develop your own original interpretation. This course satisfies university writing intensive requirements.

Course Learning Objectives

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

- Apply multiple strategies for “reading” photographs as historical evidence.
- Explain how specific photographs are cultural artifacts that must be critically evaluated in historical context.
- Analyze the visual content of different types/genres of photographs considering such factors as format, purpose, audience, the role of the photographer, the role of the subject or sitter, the technology of the image, and social or cultural context important for understanding the visual content of the photograph.
- 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

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

Hoelscher, Steven. “Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (2003), pp. 657-686.

Hull, Elizabeth Arnold, “Family Pictures ‘Out of Place’: Race, Resistance, and Affirmation in the Pope Family Photograph Collection, 1890-1920” MA Thesis, UNCG, 2006. Selected chapters.

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.

Pegler-Gordon, Anna, “Chinese Exclusion, Photography, and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy.” *American Quarterly*. Vol. 58, No. 1 (Mar. 2006): pp. 51-77.

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.

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

Smith, Shawn Michelle, “Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others': W. E. B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition,” *African American Review* 34:4 (Winter 2000): 581-599.

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.

Yochelson, Bonnie. “What Are the Photographs of Jacob Riis?” *Culturefront* 3, no. 3 (August 1994): 28-38.

Strongly Recommended:

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007.

Evaluation

Discussion Board	10%
Portrait Analysis	20%
Social Documentary Analysis	20%
Paris Exposition Term paper	50%
Ppt (15%)	
Script (20%)	
Annotated Bibliography (15%)	

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.

Final Project: Case Study of the African American Exhibition for the 1900 Paris Exposition (50%)

You will develop an interpretation of some aspect of the photographs included in the 1900 Paris exhibition. We will approach this case study as if you have been invited to present your analysis at a conference on the history of photography and African American experience. You will select a related group of photographs from the exhibit to explore their historical significance.

You will produce a 7-10-page “script” with annotated bibliography and Ppt. for the conference panel. This course does not carry an SI marker credit and so we will be focusing on the planning and visual design of the presentation rather than on oral delivery. The final script will include citations and bibliography. We will be developing this assignment in several stages. This assignment will be the exclusive focus of the course during the month of April, which is organized as a series of workshops for developing and revising the project.

This assignment addresses the following skills:

- Constructing an interesting and clearly focused topic
- Using photographs as primary source evidence
- Synthesizing scholarly arguments
- Creating an original thesis or argument
- Applying scholarly citation methods
- Effective presentation design
- Effective strategies for revising and improving your written analysis of evidence and thesis development

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance Policy

1. Consistent attendance— Attendance is mandatory. 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. We will be critically evaluating the content of the readings and practicing the application of analytical skills during each class period. You will not be able to make up for your absences by copying someone else's notes. For this reason, consistent attendance is essential to your learning in this course. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. You must attend at least one hour of the class period to be counted for full attendance for the class. If the University is closed for inclement weather 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. If I am unable to attend class due to unforeseen circumstances, I will distribute an email message and post an announcement to Canvas at least two hours (if possible) before class is scheduled to begin. Documentation for absences will not be collected except in cases where an extended absence may be necessary (for example, hospitalization). **There will be a 3% reduction of the student's final grade for each absence after the first 3.** Beyond even this penalty, a student who seriously neglects attendance and class preparation risks failing the course. If you are experiencing a personal crisis that requires you to miss more than 2 classes, please let me know *at that time* (not afterwards). Practice the kind of responsible communication and professional behavior you will be expected to demonstrate as a teacher.

2. Thorough preparation for class—readings must be completed before class and assignments must be turned in on time, including Discussion Board postings. Postings must be complete and must fully address the question for credit. Discussion Board assignments are typically due before class because they will form the basis for class discussion and peer review. For this reason, late Discussion Board assignments cannot be accepted for credit.
3. Regular contributions to class discussions—participation is not formally graded as a specific percentage of the final grade but the success of this course for your learning depends on active intellectual engagement with your peers. Peer review will be integral to development of your archive project.

Academic Integrity

UNCG considers academic dishonesty to be a serious offense. Dishonest behavior in any form, including cheating, plagiarism, deception of effort, and unauthorized assistance, may result in such sanctions as a failing grade on an assignment or failure in the course depending on the nature of the offense. Students must follow the guidelines of the University Policy on Academic Integrity: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0rFGGhJvbDHUExSZmFFaWFmb00/view>

Electronic Communication

Students are responsible for checking UNCG email on a regular basis to keep up with communications sent outside of class time. Students are encouraged to utilize email and other forms of digital communication when interacting with the instructor (lctolber@uncg.edu). When using email, students are to be professional and courteous. Students should also remember email is an asynchronous form of communication. Thus, while a prompt response may be desired, it may not always be possible (especially late at night and on weekends). Students should allow at least 24 hours (48 hours on weekends) for a response. That said, the instructor answers emails in the timeliest fashion possible.

Late Assignment Penalty

Meeting deadlines is an essential element of professional behavior. Please note that *unless arrangements have been made well in advance of due dates*, graded assignments will be penalized by a **3% reduction in the final assignment grade for every day the assignment is late**. Graded assignments later than one week will not be accepted for credit without an extremely impressive explanation. Using effective quantitative reasoning, your grade average can recover from an F on an individual assignment more successfully than it can recover from a "0". It is better to turn in an incomplete assignment on time than to turn in nothing at all. As explained in the participation policy above, late Discussion Board assignments will not receive credit.

Academic Accommodations

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. If you feel you will encounter any barriers to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS). The OARS staff can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can learn more about OARS by visiting their website at <https://ods.uncg.edu/> or by calling [336-334-5440](tel:336-334-5440) or visiting them in Suite 215, EUC.

Health and Wellness

Your health impacts your learning. Throughout your time in college, you may experience a range of health issues that can cause barriers to your learning. These might include physical ailments, illnesses, strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. Student Health Services and The Counseling Center can help with these or other issues you may be experiencing. You can learn about the free, confidential mental health services available on campus by calling 336-334-5874, visiting the website at <https://shs.uncg.edu/> or visiting the Anna M. Gove Student Health Center at 107 Gray Drive. Help is always available.

Course Schedule

15 January Introductions

17 January Photographs and Context

Read:

Newspaper article posted to Canvas

Nineteenth-Century Portrait Photographs

22 January Interpreting Portraits

Read:

Elizabeth Hutchinson, Barnard College, Analysis of the Portrait of Sojourner Truth, 1864,
<https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/portrait-of-sojourner-truth-1864/>

William Friedheim, Borough of Manhattan Community College,

<https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/two-photos-many-stories/>

24 January Civil War Photography on the Battlefield and on the Homefront

Listen:

Lecture by Anthony Lee, professor of art history at Mount Holyoke College

<https://civilwar.picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/presentations-about-visual-media/photography/>

29 January How Did Americans Understand Photography in the Civil War Era?

Read:

Primary Documents

[A. J. Russell, "Photographic Reminiscences of the Late War," Anthony's Photographic Bulletin \(1882\)](#)

[Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Doings of the Sunbeam," Atlantic Monthly \(1863\)](#)

[George Alfred Townsend, "Still Taking Pictures," New York World \(1891\)](#)

["Brady's Photographs: Pictures of the Dead at Antietam," New York Times \(1862\)](#)

30 January Discussion Board Assignment due by 5:00 p.m.

31 January The Most Photographed American of the 19th Century

Watch: Picturing Frederick Douglass with John Stauffer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lj0XY6NjXn4>

- 5 February **Photographs as Objects. Meet in the Hodges Reading Room.**
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.
- 7 February **Constructing Middle Class Identity: Private Family Portraits**
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.
- 12 February **Considering Purpose: 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*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- 14 February **Chinese Immigration and the History of Immigration Identity Documentation**
Read:
Pegler-Gordon, Anna, "Chinese Exclusion, Photography, and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy. *American Quarterly*. Vol. 58, No. 1 (Mar. 2006): pp. 51-77.
- 18 February Discussion Board Assignment due by 5:00 p.m.**
- 19 February **Writing Workshop**
- 21 February **Portrait Analysis due. Post to the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by 5:00 p.m.**

Social Documentary: Reform Photography of the Early Twentieth Century

- 26 February **What is a Social Documentary Photograph?**
Read:
Shawn Michelle Smith, School of the Art Institute of Chicago,
<https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/imaging-americans/>
- 24 February **Turn of the Century Technology, Jacob Riis, and the Reformer's Eye**
Read:
Yochelson, "What Are the Photographs of Jacob Riis?" *Culturefront* 3, no. 3 (August 1994): 28-38.

28 February Lewis Hine and the American Worker

Read:

Seixas, Peter, "Lewis Hine: From Social to Interpretive Photographer." *American Quarterly* Vol. 39, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 381-409.

5/7 March *****Spring Break*****

12 March The Great Depression

Read:

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.

14 March Interpreting the Migrant Mother

Read:

Curtis, James C. "Dorothea Lange, Migrant Mother, and the Culture of the Great Depression," *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (Spring 1986): 1-20.

18 March Discussion Board Assignment due by 5:00 p.m.

19 March Writing Workshop

Social Documentary analysis due 22 March. Post to the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by 5:00 p.m.

The Final Project: Paris Exhibition Case Study

21 March Introduction to the Case Study

Read:

Smith, Shawn Michelle, "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others': W. E. B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review* 34:4 (Winter 2000): 581-599.

African American Photographs Assembled for 1900 Paris Exposition

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/anedub/dubois.html>

Du Bois, W.E. Burghardt, "The American Negro at Paris" *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 22:5 (November 1900): 577. https://books.google.com/books?id=hTllg_nfB3YC&pg=PA575&as_brr=1#v=onepage&q&f=false

<http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/exhibits-and-collections/>

26 March Strategies for Selecting Research Images

Read:

<https://web.archive.org/web/19991022052652/http://129.171.53.1:80/ep/Paris/home.htm>

28 March Contextualizing Images of Race in the Jim Crow Era

Read:

Steven Hoelscher, "Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (2003), pp. 657-686.

Discussion Board Assignment due by 5:00 p.m. on 1 April. Select a photograph from the exhibit and use one of the previous assigned readings to contextualize the photograph.

2 April Considering the Role of Data in the Exhibit

Read:

<https://towardsdatascience.com/discovering-a-new-chart-from-w-e-b-du-boiss-the-exhibition-of-american-negros-part-6-66e7b340b90c>

<https://towardsdatascience.com/the-legacy-of-w-e-b-du-bois-the-exhibit-of-american-negroes-part-5-6b735a426c68>

4 April Picturing Race in the Segregated South

Read:

Hull, Elizabeth Arnold, Chapter 3, "Objects of Power," pp. 47-77. In "Family Pictures 'Out of Place': Race, Resistance, and Affirmation in the Pope Family Photograph Collection, 1890-1920" MA Thesis, UNCG, 2006.

Discussion Board Assignments. There will be a series of discussion board assignments designed to prepare drafts of the project for class workshops. In general, prepare for at least one discussion board assignment every week in April. Instructions will be provided well in advance of due dates.

9 April Photo analysis workshop

11 April Ppt workshop

16 April Ppt draft due

18 April Script draft due

23 April Writing Workshop

25 April Writing Workshop

30 April Course evaluations. **Final Project due.**