



## Using Photographs as Historical Evidence

History 326

Spring 2023

Prof. L. Tolbert

Office: MHRA 2109

appointment

Hours: Zoom by

Email: [ltolber@uncg.edu](mailto:ltolber@uncg.edu) (this is the quickest way to reach me)

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

History Department Website: <https://his.uncg.edu/>

*\*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

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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.

# Course Learning Objectives

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

- Apply multiple strategies for analyzing photographs as 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.
- Select a historically related set of photographs and identify appropriate scholarly resources for contextualizing them.
- Demonstrate effective use of visual rhetoric and historical photo analysis in an analytical presentation.

## Evaluation

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**Discussion Board** **15%**

**Photograph Analyses** **40%**

Portrait (20%)

Social Documentary (20%)

**Research Presentation** **45%**

Visual Rhetoric/Ppt Design (15%)

Analytical Script (15%)

Annotated Bibliography (15%)

All required readings will be provided on Canvas. I have selected readings by scholars who explicitly talk about how they analyze photographs and who also take you through important developments in the social history of photography from its commercial beginnings in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through the 1930s.

### **Photograph Analyses (40%)**

You will complete an analysis of two different types or genres of photographic evidence. These assignments will entail using assigned readings to evaluate its visual content in historical context. You will receive a specific set of questions for analysis well in advance of the due date.

### **Research Presentation (50%)**

For this assignment you will develop an interpretation of a historically related group of 3-5 photographs as a case study interpretation of their historical significance. But instead of writing a traditional research paper, you will present your interpretation in a well-designed, visually effective presentation. Note that this is **NOT** an oral presentation. You will not actually be delivering the presentation in class. We will approach this case

study as if you have been invited to present your analysis on a panel at a history conference and our focus will be on effective presentation design.

We will be focusing on the planning and visual design of the presentation rather than on oral delivery. That said, this will not be a presentation from a loose set of notes. You will produce a 7-10-page “script” with annotated bibliography and Ppt. for the conference panel. As with any professional conference paper, 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

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### 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).
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.

## **COVID-19**

As we return for spring 2023, please uphold UNCG's culture of care to limit the spread of covid-19 and other airborne illnesses. These actions include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging in proper hand-washing hygiene
- Self-monitoring for symptoms of covid-19
- Staying home when ill
- Complying with directions from health care providers or public health officials to isolate if ill
- Completing a [self-report](#) when experiencing covid-19 symptoms or testing positive for covid-19
- Following the CDC's [exposure guidelines](#) when exposed to someone who has tested positive for covid-19
- Staying informed about the University's policies and announcements via the [covid-19](#) website

# Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic
Week 1	10 January	Introductions and Course Overview
	12 January	Learning to “Read” a Photograph
<b>Module 1: Nineteenth-Century Portrait Photographs</b>		
Week 2	17 January	What is a Portrait?
	19 January	The Role of the Sitter: Personal and Political Identities
Week 3	24 January	The Role of the Viewer: How Did Americans Understand Photography in the Civil War Era?
	26 January	The Role of the Photographer: Studio Portraits
Week 4	31 January	Photographs as Objects. <b>Meet in the Hodges Reading Room</b>
	2 February	Seeing History: Thinking About and With Photographs
Week 5	7 February	Portraits as a Political Statement: W.E.B. DuBois and the Paris Exposition
	9 February	Writing Workshop: Portrait Analysis Drafts
Week 6	14 February	Portrait Analysis due
	16 February	Preliminary Introduction to the Case Study: Strategies for Selecting Research Images
<b>Module 2. Reform and Documentary Photography of the Early Twentieth Century</b>		
Week 7	21 February	What is a Social Documentary Photograph?
	23 February	Considering Photographs in the Archive—Jacob Riis
Week 8	28 February	Considering the Role of the Employer—Lewis Hine
	2 March	How did Americans Understand Photographs of the Great Depression?
Week 9	7/9 March	Spring Break
Week 10	14 March	Creating Photographs as an Event—Interpreting Migrant Mother
	16 March	Itinerant Photographers and the Business of Photography
Week 11	21 March	Writing Workshop: Social Documentary Analysis Drafts
<b>Module 3. Putting It All into Practice</b>		
<i>From this point on you are creating the content for the course!</i>		
	23 March	Launching the Case Study
Week 12	28 March	Locating Scholarly Sources for Contextualizing your Photo Content and for understanding relevant history of photography
	30 March	Developing an Annotated Bibliography
Wee 13	4 April	Photo Analysis Workshop
	6 April	Photo Analysis Workshop
Week 14	11 April	Visual Rhetoric and Presentation Design
	13 April	Ppt Draft Workshop
Week 15	18 April	Script Draft Workshop
	20 April	Putting it All Together
Week 16	25 April	Final Presentation Deliverables due.

