Syllabus
Goals
This course will explore the development of photography as an artistic and social practice from its origins to the present day. We shall mainly study photographers who worked in France, with some reference to Britain and North America. Three main objectives will shape the course:

1° Excite students about the possibilities, past and present, for the use of the photographic image.
2° Introduce some of the major figures and images in the history of fine art photography, as well as photographs that were not intended to be artistic but which have since become cultural references.
3° Develop an appreciation of photographic style.

The successful student will leave the course being able to comment upon photographs with critical distance.

Method
• Material will be presented via lectures, slide presentations, some handling of original prints/books and regular discussions.
• In order to take advantage of the rich photographic resources available in Paris, visits to museums and galleries (in class and individually) will be required.
• Assigned reading will be heavy in the first weeks, and otherwise consist mainly in looking (carefully!) at photographs. Please read at the earliest possible opportunity at least one of the “History of Photography” books in the bibliography (the Taschen Photography from 1839 to Today: George Eastman House, the two paperbacks both entitled Concise History, one by Gernsheim the other by Jeffrey, or Mary Warner Marien: Photography: A Cultural History). Set texts are essential to class participation and/or to writing assignments.
• Guest speaker: to be arranged (Guillaume Herbaut, if possible, or Clarisse Rebotier).

Evaluation
• Two in-class written exams, one mid-term (20%) and a final (30%). We will discuss a written/photographic project as an alternative to the final exam.
• Two short papers due during the term (10% each). If further papers are presented, only the best two papers will count for the final grades. These writing assignments will require the student to apply the concepts presented in class to a historical, contemporary and/or personal context.
• There will also be occasional, informal photographic assignments aimed at engaging the students in the process of image making (at a very simplified level) and in the challenges faced by the photographers they will be studying. (10% altogether).
• The participation grade (attendance and involvement in class discussions, 20%)

In all these evaluations, considerable weight will be given to the student’s level of evident engagement with the material, not only his/her mastery of it or the quality of his/her expression.

NB Attendance in class is mandatory. Three absences will result in an automatic reduction in the student’s grade by one level (B+ becomes plain B, for example). Promptness is both a matter of courtesy to others in the class and essential to mastering the material. Arriving more than ten minutes late for two sessions will count as an absence. This is an institute-wide policy.
PROPOSED SCHEDULE

“Reading” is mandatory.

Essays and commentaries are expected to be formal, structured and in good written English.

Oral presentations may naturally be delivered more informally, but should still aim to inform and convince.

Themes may change according to exhibition opportunities and “tie-ins” with other courses.

Week 1 (introductory and cross-overs)


Week 2

4 Idem.

Week 3
5 The Caption. Early photojournalism and the birth of advertising.

6 Student commentaries.

Week 4

8 Idem.

Week 5
9 Art or documentary: Eugène Atget’s Paris and the Surrealist appropriation of Atget.

10 Student photographs.

Week 6
11 Painting, sculpture and photography. Impressionism, Delacroix, Rodin. The "theory of sacrifices". Marey’s and Muybridge’s chronophotography. Influence on (Paul Valéry and) the Futurists.

12 Idem.

Week 7
13 EXAM (1 1/2 hour commentary on a photograph).


Week 8
15 Photo-Theory (Sontag, Barthes).

16 Idem.

Week 9
17 Rodenbach’s illustrated Bruges-la-Morte.
18  *Id.*

**Week 10**

19  Belle Epoque photo-novels.

20  H.P. Robinson’s illustrations.

**Week 11**

21  Cameron’s illustrations to Tennyson.

22  Early portraiture. (Disderi, Hill/Adamson, Nadar, Cameron.) Comparison with 20th-century portraiture (Cartier-Bresson, Brandt, Arbus, Penn, Avedon).

**Week 12**

23  Student portraits.

24  Conan Doyle’s Fairies. The “theory of spectres” and the spiritists. (Balzac, Champfleury, Nadar, Rodenbach.) Dead-eye photos/the "optogram" and the novelists.

**Week 13**

25  André Breton, *Nadja*.

26  EXAM / DEADLINE FOR HANDING IN PROJECTS.

**First month’s work:**

**Reading**  One of the “Histories of Photography”, concentrating on the birth of the invention. It is a good idea to pick from several “Histories of Photography” and compare. Get cracking now on Barthes, *Camera Lucida*; and Sontag, *On Photography*.

**Write:**  A commentary on a single photograph, to be read out and handed in.

**Activities**  Visits… (to be determined)

Create your own Surrealist photograph.

**Second month’s work:**


**Third month’s work:**

**Reading**  André Breton, *Nadja* (buy the English translation if you can’t read French).

**Write:**  Short essay on a portrait or a collection of portraits, or landscapes.

**Activities**  Create a portrait photograph (work in pairs).

Dip into the Rabb anthology, *Literature and photography*.

Then

*Finish your project.*