INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY
Syllabus - Spring 2012

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Course description: The course is programmed on photography as art and photography as communication basis. It includes aspects of history of photography, comparative views on photography, literature and the arts and practical photography education. Importance is laid on students’ understanding the photographic picture as a means of expressing an individual artistic attitude towards the world, be it in portraits, still lifes, landscapes etc. Books by e.g. Wm.Flusser – Towards A Philosophy of Photography, and Roland Barthes – Camera Lucida are recommended to students as an important basis for problems lectured in the course.

The technical part of the course with instruction in the dark rooms, studios and elsewhere, will be continually connected to the theory of photography and its overall inclusion in the sphere of interpretation and philosophy. Four graded assignments on themes from the history of photography are assigned to students during the semester. The course finalizes in all the students writing tests based on the history of photography as art and communication, and in their having learned how to create a photographic image as based in technological aspects and also their mastering the analog cameras, developing their b&w films and making the b&w prints. During the course, students will support their submitted prints with short explanatory texts.

The course will include a Presentation/Exhibition of the students’ photographs. The whole campus will be invited to the opening of it.

The lectures on the history and theory of photography are based on CD shows and also in books supplied by the NYU Prague Library and in the aid the students can be getting from the Computer Room.

An important aspect is also discussing the different genres of photography. Students majoring and/or studying different programs at NYU or other universities, bring into the debates in the class their different experiences and views based in the subjects they study “at home”.

The course being held in Prague, it inevitably brings into its view the local color – in the themes based in the newcomers’ new experiences of daily life, in the Czech history, old and recent, in architecture, in the Central European connections and contacts etc. All that is then becoming part of the students’ photographic projects. Guest lecturers are invited to share with students their opinions on photography.

Classes are scheduled twice a week, two acad. hours per lecture, plus time spent in photography assignments and the darkrooms time by individual schedules. However, the program of one week (or even of two) may overlap depending on the theme. The photography theory and history program will be lectured on every scheduled day, and also the practical photography part will be on every scheduled day of the course.

Prof.Z.Kirschner and Assist. B.Mrázková will be both present in class on all the scheduled days, unless the program requires a change.
Grading policy:
Attendance, class participation 30%
Four thematic papers & student photos plus notes 20%
Mid-term tests /& mid-term photographs 15%
Final tests /& photographs for the Presentation/Exhibition/ 35%

Schedule of classes - Section 1 & Section 2
Schedule: Tues & Thus - Section 1: 1.30- 2.50 pm
Section 2: 4.30- 5.50 pm
Sections 1 & 2 - schedule-plus hours in dark-rooms
(Student exchanges in sections at the opening of the course, and on 1:1 basis only.)

When the students embark on photography projects, their photographs shall be based on ‘local color’ and with different genres: document, body, landscape and/or still life.

Week 1 – Febr. 14 & 16
Over view of the course
Information on the program of the course.
Information on schedule-plus hours and on dark-rooms equipment and schedules.  
Students: For Tue, Febr.14, students are requested to bring their cameras to the class. Also, those, who will be buying analog cameras etc., can do so on Week 1, Thu, Febr.16 – see scheduled visit to Langhans Gallery/Škoda Photography Shop.
Lectures: The arts, people and the situation of the image before and at the time of the invention of photography. – Paintings (e.g. Goya, Ingres, Canova, David, Blake, Turner, Degas, Doré, Delacroix), fashion, objects of art, furniture etc., literature (Keats, Shelley, Byron, Poe, Goethe, Schiller, Mácha etc.). The photographic apparatus as a new way in Man’s existence for making images after the 1820s/1830s. The newness of two separate cooperating (?) existences in making an image: the photographer & the camera.
Debate: students on photography: personal aims, projects and views, student photos, made prior to enlisting in this class, viewed.
Reading: For informative survey on Czech modern history between 1901 and 2000:
David Travis: The Art of Photography, pp.19-29, Roland Barthes: Camera Lucida, pp. 8-10, Susan Sontag: On Photography, pp. 8-12, 14-17 - see Reader
Instruction: Darkroom equipment viewed, student cameras viewed.
Basic principles of photography technology & its creative aspects (analog/digital photography).
Visit to Langhans Gallery/Škoda Photography Shop, Vodičkova Str.37, Prague 1 on Thu, Febr. 16, dep. from NYU at about 18 hours.

Week 2 – Febr. 21 & 23
Lectures: First ‘photographic’ pictures aiming at the truthfulness in the images of the world:
L.N.Niépce’s heliographs, daguerrotypes and talbotypes by L.-J.M.Daguerre and Wm.H.F.Talbot. - In the Czech lands by W.Horn, J.Maloch, J.Bekl etc.
Reading: Wm.Flusser: Towards a Philosophy of Photography, pp.14-20 - see Reader
Students shall bring to class on Tue, Febr. 28 (=Week 3) quotations from American (or any other) romantic (1790s to 1840s) literature and/or a list of some historical events in America and/or in Europe of between about 1830 and 1860, to better understand the world in the period of photography beginnings.
Instruction: Seeing photographs (Content, Composition)

Instruction: How to take a picture. Exposure (film speed, aperture, shutter speed).


Week 3 – Febr. 28 & March 1

Lectures: A new era in making images: photography. With making pictures previously made by painters only, photographers are struggling for being accepted in the world of the arts, and also into the arguments about everyday reality of human lives. - Ideals connected with the invention of photography and the establishment of the camera in human existence:


Photographers of this period in the Czech lands: J.Bekl, M.L.Winter, V.Rupp, J.Eckert, J.Mulač, R.Bruner-Dvořák, etc.

Debate: based on student quotations from romantic literature in connection with photography beginnings (see Week 2), and on historical and/or cultural events in the period between 1830’s and 1860’s.

Paper [1]: “J.N.Niépce, L.-J.M.Daguerre & Wm.H.F.Talbot, three different steps in inventing photography”.

Paper 1 to be delivered in class on Tue, March 6 (= Week 4).

Reading: Roland Barthes: Camera Lucida, pp.10-15 - see Reader,

Instruction: Developing b/w negative, chemistry, enlarger, contrast and density. Developing student negatives in darkroom.


Instruction: The basic camera regimes and its effect on structure of the image.

Instruction: Contrast, density and photographic papers. Positive b/w processing, basic darkroom work (test prints, contact sheets). Printing student photographs in darkroom.


Week 4 – March 6 & 8

Lectures: The truthfulness of the images compared with viewers’ experience. Photography entering the realm of the arts world: Pictorialism - while termed in the 1860s, in reality it borders later on Secession/Art Nouveau and the 1900s with H.P.Robinson (showed “pictorial capacity of the photographic art”), E.Muybridge (photos of American West & “Objects in Motion”), F.M.Sutcliffe (photos of English rural life), L.W.Hine (his photos of social conditions of children etc. changed U.S.legislation), G.Käsebier (wanted “to make likenesses that are biographies”), A.E.Disdéri (invented the carte-de-visite and thus made photos cheaper), P.H.Emerson (his landscape photos were influenced by Whistler, Turner and French impressionist painters), E.Atget – photos from Paris between 1900-1925 admired by French surrealist painters, F.H.Day (leading American art

**Students:** Paper 1 (see Week 3!) to be delivered to class on Tue, March 6.

**Debate:** On the truthfulness of a photographic image.

**Reading:** D.Mrázková & V.Remeš: Cesty československé fotografie (= The Ways of Czechoslovak Photography), pp.352-355 - see Reader

**Instruction:** Printing student photographs in darkroom.

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Week 5 – March 13 & 15

Lectures & instructions of Week 4 continued in Week 5 on Tue and Thu, March 13 & 15. Also on Czech photographers of this period - J.Vaněk, Z.Reach, A.Schneeberger, J.Lauschmann, J.Sudek, E.Wiškovský, J.Rössler.

**Reading:** Wm.Flusser: Towards a Philosophy of Photography, pp. 21-32 – see Reader

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Week 6 – March 20 & 22


**Paper [2]:** “Pictorialism, a new definition for photography”. (Also on the authors, period, style). Paper 2 to be delivered in class on week 7, Tue, March 27.

**Reading:** Czech Modernism 1900-1945: Anděl pp. 87, 90, 101, 104, 106-107, 109, 111, 112-113. Kirschner pp. 115, 118, 121 - see Reader

**Instruction:** Printing in darkroom. Apart from scheduled class time.

Aperture, shutter speed and depth of field. Focus and depth of field.


Presentation of Bára Mrázková portfolio.

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Week 7 – March 27 & 29 - Fri, March 30 -

**Mid-term tests:** on Thu, March 29: a/ on theory/history of photography, b/ on technique of photography.

Both tests are based in the lectures and instructions held in Intro to Photo class in Weeks 1-6, plus connected readings from the Readers and the Handbook.


**Reading:** Czech Modernism 1900-1945: Dufek, pp. 123-124, 127, 129, 137-138, 140, 142, 146-147 – see Reader

**Students:** Paper 2 to be brought to class on Tue, March 27 – see Week 6

**Instruction:** Positive b/w processing / advanced darkroom techniques.
Printing in darkroom – apart from scheduled class time.
Tue, March 27: Overview of the students' mid-term photographs.

Week 8 – April 3 & 5
Reading: Susan Sontag: On Photography, pp.51-65 & 75-78 – see Reader
Paper [3]: “Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen in American modern art & photography”. – Paper to be delivered to class in Week 10, on Thu, April 19.
Instruction: Exposure, metering, zone system.

Week 9 – April 9 – 13
SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week 10 – April 17 & 19
Reading: Photography at the Bauhaus, ed.by Jeannine Fiedler, pp. 127, 133, 138, 140-143, 146-153 – see Reader
Students: Paper 3 to be delivered to class on Thu, April 19 (see Week 8!)
Instruction: The major types of cameras.

Week 11 – April 24 & 26
Tue, April 24: overview of student photographs for Presentation/Exhibition
Thu, April 26: Student Photographs Presentation-Exhibition – Overview, mounting, framing. Opening at 6 p.m. The whole campus is invited to the opening.

Week 12 – May 1 - NATIONAL HOLIDAY – NO CLASSES
May 3 –
Fri, May 4 -
Two plus one names outstanding in the history of Czech photography: J.Funke, J.Sudek &
M.Novotný.
Fri, May 4 - Guest speaker: MgA. Jiří Skála, artist: Photography, its role and position in contemporary art and art reflection
Reading: Wm.Flusser: Towards a Philosophy of Photography, pp. 41-48 & 76-82- see Reader
Instruction: Lens focal length, lenses.

Week 13 – May 8 – NATIONAL HOLIDAY – NO CLASSES
   May 10
   Fri, May 11
   Fri, May 11: Guest speaker: MgA. Filip Láb, PhD.: On creative possibilities of photography in view of its latest technical developments.
Paper [4]: “František Drtikol, Jaromír Funke and Josef Sudek: Czech photographers in the 20th century history of photography”.
   Paper 4 to be delivered in class on Week 14, on Tue, May 15.

Week 14 – May 15 & 17
   Fri, May 18
Czech photographers - photographs based on a very different life experience (!): P.Štecha, B.Kolářová, B.Holomíček, J.Svoboda, J.Štreit, E.Medková, J.Koudelka.
Reading: Susan Sontag: On Photography, pp. 75-78 – see Reader
Students: Paper 4 to be delivered to class on Tue, May 15 (see Week 13)

Week 15 – May 22 & 24 – FINAL EXAMS
   Tue, May 22: Final tests on history, theory and technology of photography.
The tests are based on lectures and instructions, plus information received by the students through reading the Readers and the Handbook. The Final tests cover the whole semester program of the Intro to Photo class, i.e. also lectures and instructions of the pre – mid-term period.
   Thu, May 24: Meeting of the Intro to Photo class for a debate on the basic artistic and social changes in photography through the arrival of digital cameras.

THE END