ART 395.02: Digital Photography

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Description
This course offers an introduction to basic digital photography techniques and aesthetic issues. Demonstrations are scheduled every week for most of the semester, and are supplemented by additional impromptu demonstrations as specific student needs arise. Class attendance is therefore vital. As the semester progresses, students should gain awareness of the creative and expressive possibilities of digital photography, and begin to develop a personal vocabulary of photographic aesthetics.

Rather than focusing on the functions and capabilities of specific cameras, much of this class will be devoted to learning software skills, as I believe the real innovation in digital media is the computer rather than the camera or the printers. This approach ensures that the variety of cameras students bring to this course will be acceptable to complete coursework.

We will start the course with fairly simple tasks about how to work on a computer including basic image editing skills (cropping, repairing, color and tonal corrections), familiarity with scanning and resolution issues, color management and printing considerations. We will progress into more advanced skills involving image compositing, working with layers and channels, and creating very detailed selections for specific adjustment. We will discuss how to replicate some traditional darkroom skills in the digital world (solarizing, split toning, infrared, etc.) and have conversations about “why do it?” not just the “how to” of image manipulation. As there is much to cover in technical terms, this course is very structured for the first half of the semester and falling behind in coursework will be disastrous. This early structure will diminish later in the semester, and students will be free to explore media and technique as their interests dictate.

Coursework
Specific projects will be detailed on a weekly basis; the attached calendar for Art 395 will give an idea of the pacing and project expectations. We will complete both didactic (technical) and conceptually based assignments. The writing of an Artist Statement will complement your Final Project. Projects cannot be completed satisfactorily during classtime alone. You should probably plan to spend at least five hours outside of class time working on assignments each week. Individual and group critiques will coincide with the completion of assigned projects. Students are required to evaluate their photographs, communicate verbally about their reasons for making their art, and understand criticism given by others.

To be successful in this class, each student must:
- Attend and participate in all scheduled classes.
- Actively participate in critiques (sitting silent and still is not participation).
- Complete all assignments on time.
- Keep notes on technical information.
- Help to maintain a safe, clean and organized photographic lab that every student can use.

Attendance
Attendance at all classes is mandatory. After three unexcused absences your grade will drop by one letter grade per absence, up to six absences when a failing grade is issued automatically. Three lates equals one absence. Come to class ready to work, students are not to leave class to purchase supplies. Demonstrations missed will not be repeated for the absent student. The absent student must obtain the notes from another student on the missed demonstrations.
Safety
The digital lab does not contain hazardous materials as a traditional darkroom does, but as students you can be a hazard to the computers. Therefore there is no eating or drinking in the digital lab, and no animals or children are allowed in this facility. Hours for the FA210 Digital Lab are posted on the door, UC and Mansfield Library hours are available from: http://www.umt.edu/it/learning/Computerlabs.htm and http://www.lib.umt.edu/about/open_hours.htm.

Evaluation
Mid-term evaluation will be Tuesday March 13, and final evaluation is scheduled for Thursday, May 3. A grade will be assigned after all aspects of this final evaluation are complete.

Grading
Simply showing up and completing all assignments does not equal an “A”. However, if you attend class, participate in the hands-on demonstrations, complete all projects on time, actively participate in critiques and discussions, ask questions, take notes, show care towards the digital lab and the artists working within it, and demonstrate motivation, technical growth and aesthetic development - you will succeed in Digital Photography.

Three factors will be considered in the determination of grades. Most projects will receive individual grades calculated on a numeric scale, with these general guidelines in mind:

1) Adherence to Project Guidelines: 33%  Completed on time, addressed project’s learning objectives, active participation in critique, effective use of classtime, correct number of prints, size of prints, use of techniques, etc.

2) Craftsmanship: 33%  The quality of the product, including technical comprehension, compositional effectiveness, sensitivity to materials, care in presentation

3) Concept: 34% Including selecting appropriate techniques and materials to support idea, inventiveness, developing concept in relation to the project guidelines. Idea is not lost.

A = Excellence in all assignments, highly motivated, extremely innovative solutions to projects
B = Above average in all work, demonstrated technical growth and visual maturity
C = Completion of all projects, satisfactory class participation
D = Incompletes on some projects, inadequate class participation
F = Incompletes on many projects, poor class participation, several unexcused absences

Incompletes
It is the student’s responsibility to complete the coursework within the semester the class is offered. Not finishing the required work within the allotted time frame does not entitle a student to an incomplete. Incompletes will only be given in cases of extreme emergency.

Disability Services
Students with disabilities or special needs should see the instructor in the beginning of the semester.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code
All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/Index.cfm/page/1321.