COMM 285  
Fall 2008

BASIC PHOTOJOURNALISM

9 College Way, Room 110  
schmittg@cofc.edu

OFFICE HOURS: MTWTR from 9:30 to 11 and by appointment

TEXT AND OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED:

- Adobe Photoshop Elements 3.0, 4.0, 5.0 or 6.0 with manual
- Memory Flash Drive of 512 MB or higher
- Laser copier glossy paper pack (thin sheets)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides basic principles and practices of photojournalism and documentary photography for newspapers, magazines and public relations, using a digital camera for capture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The goal of this course is to teach you the meaning of photojournalism and documentary photography and the importance of the visual image in communicating ideas and information. You will learn to recognize quality photographs, both technically and aesthetically. In addition, you will

- study the history of photography
- learn basic ethical and legal ramifications of photojournalism and documentary photography
- study the various approaches to photojournalism and documentary photography
- demonstrate knowledge of using a digital camera
- demonstrate basic understanding of exposure
- "develop" digital prints
- demonstrate knowledge of lenses
- demonstrate effective cropping and compositional techniques
- print color images
- demonstrate knowledge of various filters
- demonstrate effective use of flash photography
- learn to write effective cutlines
- complete various photojournalistic and documentary assignments

POLICIES: (NOTE: THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.)

- Attendance:

  You are expected, of course, to attend every class. Realize that if you do not show up for work regularly, you would be fired; excessive absences in this class will have similar consequences. So you have three absences allowed, both excused and unexcused. Use them wisely!

  Turn off your cell phone and computer, unless directed otherwise.

  If you have a disability, ensure that this information is given to me within the first week of classes so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
ASSIGNMENTS:

- All work will be turned in at the deadline provided. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized by grade reduction of one grade per day. In professional photojournalism, deadlines are generally inflexible. A missed deadline is a missed deadline, for whatever reason. Editors will not leave an empty space where your photo was supposed to run. This class adheres to professional standards. You will appreciate this after you graduate; trust me.

Since this is also a learn-by-doing class, you may resubmit an assignment to improve your grade (with the exception of the final). All materials submitted for the first attempt must also be included with the resubmission attempt. Your resubmission must be turned in within two weeks from the time I turn the assignment back to the class with my comments. Your resubmission will include all materials plus a written indication of what you did to improve the first submission.

To submit an assignment, put the 8 1/2 x 11-inch print, written justification of your image, and cutline (if required) in a manila envelope. Do not fold the image—ever. Be sure your name and assignment number are on the envelope and back of print. Cutlines and justifications will always be word-processed; grammar and spelling count for the grade.

At the end of the course you will submit a CD with the images you have turned in for grades, including the final.

GRADING:

- Your final grade will be determined based upon the following:
  1. Two tests—10% each for 20% of total grade
  2. Five assignments—10% each for 50% of total grade
  3. Final project—30% of total grade

- Grading:
  A = 93-100
  A- = 90-92
  B+ = 87-89
  B = 83-86
  B- = 80-82
  C+ = 77-79
  C = 73-76
  C- = 70-72
  D+ = 67-69
  D = 63-66
  D- = 60-62
  F = 59 and below

PLAGIARISM

- Plagiarism is a violation of the Honor System of the College of Charleston. Remember: Plagiarism includes any other person or organization to prepare work that one submits as his or her own. In other words, do the work yourself.
ASSIGNMENTS

26 Aug.  Introduction to course requirements and policies.
28 Aug.  History of photography
2 Sept.  Legal concerns and communicating through photography
4 Sept.  Basic digital camera and how it compares to film cameras
9 Sept.  Digital camera functions and determining exposure
16 Sept. Adobe Photoshop Elements; read chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the Adobe manual.
18 Sept. Elements continued; read through chapters 8, 10, 11 and 12 of the Adobe manual.
30 Sept. TEST 1.
2 Oct.  Assignment 1 due.
7 Oct.  Composition.
9 Oct.  Composition continued.
14 Oct. Fall break.
16 Oct. Filters.
4 Nov.  Assignment 3 due.
6 Nov.  Pretest
11 Nov. TEST 2.
13 Nov. Assignment 4 due.
18 Nov. Ethics and the photojournalist
20 Nov. Assignment 5 due.
25 Nov. W. Eugene Smith documentary photography film. Go over ideas for final project.
27 Nov. Thanksgiving break.
4 Dec.  Sadness prevails—last day of class. Work on final project

PHOTO ASSIGNMENTS

Unless the images have extraordinary visual impact, I don't want to see prints of cute and fuzzy little puppies and kittens, scenes of your roommates at beach parties or even drooling babies. All of these assignments will require you to come up with creative ideas—new ways of seeing the familiar. Trite photos don't receive A's. Give me images that make me say, "Wow!"

ASSIGNMENT 1

Candidly portray a person at work, showing the nature of the work and the degree of the subject's involvement in it. Get close to the subject so we can clearly see the face. Pictures of people's backs seldom work.
ASSIGNMENT 2

Candidly portray a person involved in a sport activity, showing the nature of the activity and the degree of the subject’s involvement in it. Again, as with Assignment 2, move in close to the subject so we can see what’s happening.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Food or fashion is the theme for this assignment—your choice. Make the food look appetizing; lighting is important here. Don’t just take a pic of a lunch tray at Craig Cafeteria. To get ideas, look at the feature pages of various newspapers and magazines. With the fashion pic you need to carefully consider you environment and depth of field. And remember that in fashion the subject is the clothes and not the person. Again, look at various newspapers and mags. Read Chapter 7 of the AP Guide.

ASSIGNMENT 4

This assignment is either a formal or an environmental portrait. This is not a candid shot; here you will need to set up the scene with proper lighting. Lighting will be important in the formal image. If you go with the environmental portrait (often used in photojournalism), then the environment must be appropriate for that person. An example would be a farmer in her barn or in a just-plowed field, sitting on her tractor.

ASSIGNMENT 5

This is a spot news or spot feature situation. This requires a cutline with complete information—the who, what, where, when, why and how. This assignment is a good reason to always carry your camera around with you; you never know when a spot news or feature pic might come available to you.

FINAL

Your final is to produce a photographic feature story or essay on some aspect of contemporary life. Submit five photos (no more, no less) with a short text and cutlines for all pix as if you worked on a newspaper. You will have to sell me on your idea first, so be prepared to defend your story/essay idea. To do a good job you will need to spend many hours on this assignment. Please don’t wait until the last minute. Start thinking about your idea as soon as possible so that you can concentrate your efforts on making it the best possible.