HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT #1: ESSAY PAPER

The History of Photography is fascinating and complex, especially considering its brevity. Students with strong writing skills might prefer this project as it challenges both their analytical and composition talents. It will also challenge you to think creatively, and translate this to writing. The purpose of this project is to stimulate clear and critical thinking about photography, and the ability to communicate this information in a concise and individual manner. The more you are interested in something, the greater your insight, so pick a topic or photographer that appeals to you.

You must submit a written proposal in a paragraph or so, describing your project choice by Session 3. Late Proposals will adversely affect your grade. Completed project due Session 11.

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS: SELECT ONE TOPIC FOR YOUR PROJECT FROM BELOW

You will be required to write a short paper, not less than 4, and not more than 6 pages long (excluding illustrations and bibliography), double-spaced, 10 pt. font, 1” margins. It must be written clearly, concisely, coherently, and it must adhere to standard rules of grammar, spelling, and structure. Your writing and ideas should be clear and concise. To resolve questions of form, consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, available in the library. Your paper will be graded on both content and form. You may use any outside research material you wish, however, if you quote sources directly, or paraphrase them closely, be sure to credit them properly. A bibliography is required. Any photos referred to should be included. Guidelines: Begin your essay by stating your main idea. Use the body of your essay to present the specific details and arguments for your idea in a logical direct manner. Conclude your essay with a brief summary, and/or insight into your idea.

TOPICS: CHOOSE ONE TOPIC FROM BELOW

#1: Choose any one photographer you like and discuss his/her work in detail. Concentrate on the work and its formal or aesthetic meaning, rather than biographical information. Discuss the artist’s ideas, intent, style, subject matter, technique, etc. What did this photographer do that was considered special or unique? How did this artist reflect his/her time? Was this photographer part of a movement or genre, and how does their work relate to the ideals of this group?

#2: Pick one photographer and one painter working in the same time period. Discuss the similarities and differences between their works, in terms of aesthetic/formal, narrative, and intent. Discuss the ideals of any movements they are a part of, including how these principles manifest themselves in their work, respectively.

#3: Pick one 19th century photographer and one 20th century photographer whose work shares a similarity. This may be a physical formal similarity, or a subject narrative likeness. Discuss how their work is alike, as well as different. Address technical considerations, as well as content, and form. Also, discuss how their different technical processes affect the interpretation of their work. Remember to include relevant historical events in regards to their work. How do historic world events, photography’s own history, and your own visual saturation/de-sensitization, affect your perception of these two photographers?

#4: Choose an advertising/fashion photographer below or of your own choice, and discuss their work as both commerce, and fine art. Where do they intersect, where do they divide? Discuss color photographs vs b/w photographs. Discuss the political, social, and artistic implications of this duality. Discuss their different or similar approaches to both bodies of work, and how their artistry operate in each. Explain how their work has influenced other fashion photographers.


#5: Compare and contrast any two photographs, by different photographers, that you admire from either the 19th or 20th century. Discuss the photographer’s composition, technique, vision, and intent. Why have these two photographs inspired you personally? Give detailed reasons why you chose them for their form, and subject matter.

#6: Pick a 19th C./Early 20th Photographer, and one of their photographs and compare it to a 19th C./Early 20th Poet, and one of their poems or sonnets. How does the image and words, subject matter and meanings, share a connection for you? Explain their similarities in formal and narrative terms, as well as shared ideals. Hint: Poets: Whitman, Dickinson, Poe, Browning, Tennyson, Emerson, Longfellow, T.S. Eliot, Edna S.V. Millay, W.C. Williams, Auden...OR Pick an American photograph from the 1930’s to early 1960’s, and discuss its form and content in comparison to an American Jazz composition, from the same time period. Why do they have a shared connection for you? How does Jazz relate to the creative process, ie. Painting, photographs, poetry? How do the ideals of their respective movements relate to one another, and materialize in their works? For ex.: 1930’s-mid 1940’s Swing/Big Band song to Depression/FSA photo, 1940’s late-mid 1950’s Be-bop song to Robert Frank or Roy DeCarava photo, 1950’s late-early 1960’s Cool Jazz song to Gary Winograd or Bruce Davidson photo Hint: Swing/Big Band Musicians: Armstrong, Ellington, Goodman, Shaw, Miller Be-Bop: Gillespie, Parker, Monk, Powell Cool Jazz: Baker, Davis, Brubeck, Getz, Mulligan