

Open College of the Arts 2020/2021

Short Course Unit Descriptor

Photography as Language



Photo by Dylan Ferreira on Unsplash

Overview

Course Duration:	10 weeks
Scheduled Learning Hours:	20
Independent Learning Hours:	60
Credit Value:	8
Accreditation:	CPD
Location:	Distance Learning
Course Fee:	£295

Content

Instead of being told what photography is, you will be introduced to key approaches to thinking in photographs and making photographic work. You will be offered the theoretical and technical skills on how to think about and through photography and introduced to the nature of photographs from a historical perspective and through contemporary development.

Furthermore, you will be introduced to the key concepts which highlight the cultural importance of the photographic medium as well as the cultural impositions upon it. We will engage with the technical aspects of photography and how they extend to the way we see, perceive, and feel photographs. Most crucially we will explore the communicative potential of the photograph as a sign within the photographic visual language, an aspect at the heart of our cultural obsession with photography; a cultural obsession which becomes the crux of the fallacies on the photograph and its representative nature.

Learning Methods and Assessment

Through interaction with the VLE online platform you will receive weekly lecture presentations, reading material, lecture notes and weekly tasks which will help you put your recently acquired knowledge into practice. You will undertake a variety of tasks which range from visual research, photographic practice, academic writing skills, self-reflective skills, critical skills through the weekly online forum and summative quizzes.

This mode of study requires no summative assessment. There will be formative feedback as well as individual summative feedback at the end of the course. In addition, there will be a showcase of the students' work on the OCA website and blog posts celebrating work.

Course Requirements

This course assumes no prior knowledge and is aimed at artists, budding as well as advanced photographers, writers and anyone interested in the medium of photography.

- 10 study hours available to dedicate per week*
- Access to desktop/laptop computer with internet access
- Must be 18 years of age at the time of submitting the enrolment
- Camera
- IT literate and comfortable using web-based technologies
- For students whose first language is not English, you must evidence English Language proficiency equivalent to B1 of Common European Framework of Reference.

* The above hours are indicative and will vary from student to student.

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Syllabus

- › Week 1: Familiarise yourself with course materials, guidelines and learning platform and meet your fellow students! You'll also be introduced to the philosophy, aims and outcomes of the course with an online presentation.
- Week 2: The Nature of Photographs; thinking in photographs and writing with light. review the methodology of critical thinking in photographic practice and initial concept of photography as language.
- Week 3: The Physical Level of Photographs & Understanding Photographs: object and imagination. Understand the physical aspects of the photograph with an introduction to image-based research .
- Week 4: The Depictive Level & the Phenomenology of Photographs: look at the technical parameters of the photograph, experience and the fallacies of photography. Introduction to image making according to weekly conceptual brief.
- Week 5: The Mental Level of Photographs and Mental Modelling: The complexities between the described and connoted attributes of a photograph. Introduction to cultural mental models and the mental organisation of a photograph. The meeting points of the operator and the observer. Image-based research and practice; introduction to writing reports for visual practice and building upon previously achieved skills (visual research, theoretical engagement, photographic practice, contextualisation).
- Week 6: Reflection Week and Group Crit: Week 6 is an opportunity to pause and consolidate what you have learnt so far. There are no presentations or additional reading for this week. Instead, you will take part in an online discussion on the course topics.
- Week 7: Roland Barthes' the Studium and Punctum of Photographs: 'To interest and to affect are two different things.' Analysis of Barthes' seminal work on photography as an instrument of effect and emotional engagement. Introduction to semiology. Image-based research and evaluation of the chosen images' properties and effect according to the weekly concepts.
- Week 8: After all... What is Photography? (Recapitulative lecture) Practice-led work and introduction on the creation of series of photographs according to the course's established debates. Evaluative work which builds on the ability to communicate students' practice, choices and conceptual underpinnings.
- Week 9: Elective material: There will be two elective lecture presentations from which to choose. For those students who want to take the concepts a step further, the 2nd elective can be undertaken after the course's end.
- Week 10: Final week quiz, reflection, discussion. Individual summative feedback.