

**Western University • Faculty of Arts and Humanities • Department of Visual Arts****VAS 2246A DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Course time:** Mondays & Wednesdays 2:30pm - 5:30pm

**Location:** NCB 120D/VAC 135

**Instructor:** Gabriella Solti ([gsolti@uwo.ca](mailto:gsolti@uwo.ca))

**Office Hours:** Mondays & Wednesdays 5:30pm - 6:30pm (or by appointment)

**Office:** VAC 222

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is an introductory course to various technical and artistic approaches to digital photography in contemporary artistic practice. This class will be organized around various technical demonstrations and tutorials of digital photographic techniques and practices. Through a series of assignments, workshops and tutorials the student will learn the mechanics and functions of the digital single-lens reflex camera, the processes of image evaluation and development, and the production of the digital photographic print.

Lectures and exemplary material will be organized thematically. Students will benefit from exposure to a diverse and wide-ranging field of approaches to digital photography and are presented with productive evaluative modes of interpretation.

Introductory visual presentations and lectures will be offered in this class. Students will engage in a critical discourse on the subject of digital photography in art, and will be expected to draw on this discourse in their discussion during critiques of their own assignments. Students of this course will be required to make a formal presentation of a selected digital photography topic and write two technical exams/tests. This course will also involve the production of a number of photographic projects that will expand and practically inform the theoretical discussions based in the student presentations.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

**Students who come to classes well prepared, actively participate in discussions, critiques and in-class technical exercises and complete all assignments successfully will be able to:**

- Effectively use a digital SLR camera in manual and semi-manual shooting modes
- Understand and use various software applications for image processing, organization and manipulation
- Understand the historical development of fine art photography in order to contextualize and locate their own contemporary art practices
- Engage in critical issues surrounding both historical and contemporary photographic discourses
- Articulate their ideas and intents in a clear and effective manner
- Analyze and provide constructive and critical feedback on the work of others
- Demonstrate appropriate vocabulary and strategies of assessment for photographic imagery

**CLASS FORMAT:**

Each class will meet in the VAC 134/135 media lab prior to working in other production and/or seminar spaces. Classes will normally begin with group screening responses, followed by technical lectures, workshops, reading/viewing responses and discussions, as well as project consultation/development sessions. Although a certain amount of time will be allotted for in-class project work, students will also be required to spend *a minimum of 10 hours/week* developing techniques and strategies introduced in the course, conducting independent research, completing assigned projects, and preparing for discussions and presentations.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Attendance in all classes is mandatory. Students taking this course will be expected to arrive on-

time at the start of each class, and be sufficiently prepared to work on projects and participate in class activities. Each unexcused absence without proper medical documentation will result in the participation/attendance component of the semester grade being penalized by 10%. Requests for accommodation must be processed through the Academic Counselling office of the student's home Faculty. Students arriving more than 20 minutes late for class will be marked as absent.

Work will not be accepted from students who are absent 15%, or more class time (i.e. four classes per term) without documented medical or bereavement reason and may be debarred from participating in final studio evaluations. **Class contact hours will be crucial for this course. Be on time! Technical workshops, presentations, critiques, lectures and discussions will happen during class time and will not be repeated.**

**Students may not submit a project completed for another course unless special permission is obtained from both of the course instructors involved, and arrangements have been made to ensure that a sufficient quantity of new production has occurred for both courses.**

Students are required to observe all specified mandatory safety protocols governing media lab use. Students consistently failing to meet these requirements will have their media lab privileges suspended.

Students are expected to demonstrate an attitude of respectful criticality and active engagement at all times, and contribute to the creation of a collegial and productive learning environment.

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no fee adjustment. These decisions cannot be appealed.

***The use of cellphones, text messaging, and/or social media sites during class time will not be tolerated.***

#### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & MATERIALS:**

- Access to and knowledge of OWL Students are responsible to take the necessary training to use OWL effectively. OWL Sakai training and documentation: <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal/site/owldocs>
- Active UWO e-mail address (communications outside of class will be done via e-mails)
- Active Western ID Card for access to the labs
- Access to a DSLR camera or other higher-end digital camera with creative control functions such as manual focus and exposure (of 6 megapixels or greater and capable of shooting RAW images) is required. A few digital DSLR cameras are available in the Visual Arts sign-out office, though they are often in high demand, especially during mid term and at the end of term, thus their reservation well in advance is highly recommended. Cameras can be reserved at: <http://uwo.ca/visarts/resources/signout.html> **camera should be acquired, and brought to the second class in week one together with its manual.** Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the particulars of their camera's interface, as individualized instruction in this area is not provided
- A binder for consolidating course content
- USB flash drive or portable external hard drive (recommended minimum: 16GB)
- Recordable DVD's for final outputs (you can purchase these when needed).
  - Students are expected to produce their own digital files, and, buy their own paper and other materials and prints. High quality digital printing is available on the Visual Arts Epson printer for approximately \$7 per square foot. Printing of small format prints are available at: Imprint at UCC; Forest City Image Works, Kinko's, Blacks, Mercury Printers, Costco, some Shoppers Drug Mart stores and Walmart among others.

**EQUIPMENT BOOKING AND PRINTING:**

Please make sure that you book the necessary equipment for feedback sessions and presentations. Class time will not be used for set-up, and students will be expected to have any necessary technology installed, tested and running smoothly beforehand. Students are responsible for the costs of printing for project feedback sessions, and - when required - images must be in a hard-copy form in order to be considered complete.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Assignments are designed to incorporate ideas and approaches learned both in class and through independent research, practice and experimentation. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves to explore, personalize, and expand on the creative potential of these skill sets.

Project descriptions will be posted on OWL, and in each course module, students will be expected to present project work at three key points: (1) Proposal Due dates; (2) In-Progress Critique dates; and (3) Project Due dates. These dates are outlined on the Course Schedule, and information as to what is required at each stage will be explained in class and can be accessed on OWL

Student performance will be evaluated in terms of technical proficiency, conceptual focus, synthesis/presentation, as well as work ethic/development. Emphasis will be placed on the serious engagement with relevant and challenging ideas. Furthermore, students will be expected to think critically and respond to the historical and contemporary issues presented in class. Successful projects will clearly demonstrate effort in three key areas: research/planning, experimentation/development, and refinement/resolution. For more information on the assessment of project work, see the departmental rubric included with this syllabus. A more course-specific outline of instructor expectations will be posted on OWL.

**A one-time, late penalty of 10% shall be applied to all late submissions or those not presented in the required format.** Studio projects, presentations, and written work will be considered incomplete and late if items on the Due Date Checklist included with each assignment description are missing from the submission package. It is the student's responsibility to remain informed as to submission details and requirements. Assignments submitted more than 10 days late without official documentation (see UNDERGRADUATE POLICIES section for details) will not be accepted, and will receive a grade of zero.

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Students will be evaluated according to the following criteria: Understanding of assignment concepts, level of ambition, resourcefulness and creativity, technical facility, conceptual development and complexity of ideas, completion and quality of assignments as well as attendance and participation.

**For example\*\*\*\*\***

- demonstrates a firm understanding of camera functions printing parameters
- demonstrates considered editing of images
- composition is carefully considered and engaging
- demonstrates overall technical knowledge
- project presentation is well considered and suits the concept of the work
- project guidelines have been followed and material requirements have been fulfilled
- overall the photographs are visually engaging, thoughtfully considered, and well done

**BASED ON THE STUDENT'S SUCCESS IN MEETING THE ABOVE CRITERIA GRADES WILL BE ASSESSED ON THE FOLLOWING:****90-100 (Outstanding, A+)**

The **studio work** shows significant originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Sophisticated analysis and synthesis involving complex theoretical and conceptual thinking are demonstrated. Mastery of complex ideas is immediately evident. The studio work has originality, clarity

and ambition. The project is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is exemplary.

### **80-89 (Excellent, A)**

The **studio work** shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. The work is clearly focused and intelligently presented. Mastery of complex ideas is demonstrated. The studio work has clarity and ambition. The quality of the studio production immediately engages the viewer. The studio work has been sufficiently developed and demonstrates mastery of techniques so that results are compelling. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is impressive.

### **75-79 (Very Good, B+)**

The **studio work** shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. It demonstrates a clear awareness of the parameters of the assignment and a very good attempt to respond creatively to them. The work demonstrates reasonable depth and/or breadth and engages in a production that is appropriate to the level of the course. The quality of studio work engages the viewer and demonstrates above-average mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is very good.

### **70-74 (Good, B)**

The **studio work** shows a satisfactory attempt at analysis and critical thinking. It shows a good attempt to respond to assignment parameters. The work demonstrates some depth and/or breadth, making references to appropriate course material/art context. The studio production engages the viewer and demonstrates a sufficient mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is satisfactory.

### **60-69 (Competent, C)**

The **studio work** demonstrates adequate engagement with the project. It shows an attempt to respond to assignment parameters but does so at a very basic level that lacks creativity. Engagement with studio production demonstrates basic mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is competent.

### **50-59 (Marginal, D)**

The **studio work** shows less than adequate engagement with the topic and with the material covered by the course. The studio work waivers in its attempt to respond to assignment parameters and tends to be simplistic. Engagement with studio production demonstrates less than a basic mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is less than satisfactory.

### **Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)**

The **studio work** demonstrates a failure to comprehend/engage the topic. The studio work is incomplete and lacks redeeming creative merit. The work clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is unacceptable.

### **GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

In class exercise portfolio:	5%
Mini Project Portfolio	10%
Module 1 Project	15%
Module 2 Project	20%
Module 3 Project	25%
Research Presentation	10%
Quality of class participation/attendance:	15%

**MEDICAL POLICY:**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed assignments, presentations or participation components worth **10% or more** of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

A student who cannot complete coursework totalling **less than 10%** of their final grade, due to medical reasons, may speak with the instructor and arrange an extension of no more than one week to complete the assignments without presenting medical documentation.

For more information on accommodations for medical reasons, refer to [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>.

**MENTAL HEALTH:**

“Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.”

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

With fair notice, course assignments, procedures and due dates may be changed by the instructor in response to class needs. Instructional outlines and lecture contents will be uploaded to OWL the same day they are distributed/communicated to the class.

<b>Module 1: Camera and Digital Darkroom</b>		
<b>Week: Date</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>
1: Sept 14/16	Class Introduction Media Lab Orientation Sign Out Office Orientation Digital Image Fundamentals Understanding Exposure Orientation Questionnaires	<b>Orientation Questionnaires Due</b> Camera Nomenclature and Setup Camera Control Composition Basics Manual Exposure In-class Shooting Exercise Uploading images (Image Capture) Mini Project 1 assigned
2: Sept 21/23	<b>Mini Project 1 Due</b> Understanding Camera Raw Lightroom Demo: Library Module (Basic Edits) Research Presentations Assigned	Semiotics: Photographic Analysis Histograms In-class Shooting Exercise Mini Project 2 Assigned
3: Sept 28/30	<b>Mini Project 2 Due</b> Lightroom Demo: Develop Module (Basic Edits) Work Session Module 1 Project Assigned	White Balance Lighting Workshop Mini Project 3 Assigned
4: Oct 5/7	<b>Research Presentation Topics Due</b> <b>Mini Project 3 Due</b> Lightroom Demo: Develop Module (Advanced Edits) Resolution: Export for Print and Screen	Lenses and Focal Length Manual White Balance Metering Modes Portfolio Work Reading/Viewing Response Session <b>Module 1 Project Proposal Due</b>

	Portfolio Work	
5: Oct 12/14	Holiday	<b>In-Class Portfolio Due</b> <b>Mini Project Portfolio Due</b> <b>In-progress Critique</b> <b>Research Presentations (Round 1 and Round 2)</b> Work/Consultation Session
6: Oct 19/21	<b>Module 1 Project Due</b> Group A Critique (Module 1 Project)	Group B Critique (Module 1 Project) Module 2 Project Assigned
<b>Module 2: Composite Photographs</b>		
Week: Date	Monday	Wednesday
7: Oct 26/28	Photoshop Demonstration 1 In-Class Compositing Exercise	Photoshop Demonstration 2 In-Class Compositing Exercise
8: Nov 2/4	Photoshop Demonstration 3 In-Class Compositing Exercise	Reading/Viewing Response Session Photoshop Consolidation Research/Consultation/Shooting Session
9: Nov 9/11	<b>Module 2 Project Proposal Due</b> <b>Research Presentations (Round 3)</b> Work/Consultation Session	<b>Research Presentations (Round 4)</b> Work/Consultation Session <b>In-Progress Critiques</b>
10: Nov 16/18	<b>Module 2 Project Due</b> Group A Critique (Module 2 Project)	Group B Critique (Module 2 Project) Module 3 Project Assigned
<b>Module 3 • Independent Project</b>		
Week: Date	Monday	Wednesday
11: Nov 23/25	<b>Research Presentations (Round 5)</b> Reading/Viewing Response Session Course Consolidation	<b>Research Presentations (Round 6)</b> Research/Consultation/Shooting Session
12: Nov 30/Dec 2	<b>Module 3 Project Proposal Due</b> Work/Consultation Session	Work/Consultation Session <b>In-Progress Critiques</b>
13: Dec 7/9	<b>Module 3 Project Due</b> Group A Critique (Module 3 Project)	Group B Critique (Module 3 Project)

**SESSIONAL DATES FOR 2015:**

September 7 – Labour Day

September 10 – Fall/Winter Term classes begin

September 18 – Last day for late registration

October 12 – Thanksgiving Holiday

October 29-30 – Fall Study Break

November 5 – Last day to drop a first-term half course without academic penalty

Nov. 18 – Dec. 9 – Course/Instructor Evaluations for Fall term

November 30 – Last day to drop a full course without academic penalty

December 9 – Fall/Winter Term classes end

December 10 – Study Day

December 11-22 – Mid-year examination period

**The University of Western Ontario  
Visual Arts Department**

**POLICIES****Student Conduct:**

All students will conduct themselves in a manner that will be consistent with the maturity and academic integrity expected of university students. Student conduct shall be consistent with the general laws of the community and with University regulations. Students shall show regard and respect for the rights, safety, and property of all members of the University community and are expected to act in a responsible manner within the University and the community at large.

**Attendance:**

A student who misses more than 15% of the course hours, without written corroboration for health or bereavement, can be debarred from writing final exams, or participation in final studio evaluations. Note that if a student consistently is absent from a 3-hour class for 1 hour, they will exceed the 15% cutoff and can be debarred.

**Prerequisites:**

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal.

If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism, which may be defined as "The act or an instance of copying or stealing another's words or ideas and attributing them as one's own," will not be tolerated. (Citation excerpted from Black's Law Dictionary, 1999, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 1170). (Refer to <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2015/pg113.html> or the 2015/2016 Western Academic Calendar, with regards to academic penalties for plagiarism.)

**Medical Policy:**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. See course outline for specific arrangements regarding less than 10% of assignments.

**Building Access:**

The John Labatt Visual Arts Centre will be closed at 10:30 pm each night. There will be no after-hour access for undergraduate students. The Centre is open weekends 12:00 noon-5:00 pm. Students should be prepared to vacate the building promptly at 10:30 pm and 5:00 pm. You must also sign-in with the building monitors when working in the workshop areas outside of regular office hours.

**Please remember:**

One of the most important resources for course counselling, special permissions, course changes, grade appeals, etc., is the Undergraduate Chair of Visual Arts, Prof. David Merritt (tel. 519-661-3440; [vaugc@uwo.ca](mailto:vaugc@uwo.ca)). Please note, however, that should you encounter any serious difficulties due to illness, family emergency, etc., you should consult the Academic Counselor for your Faculty, IGA Building, Room 1N20 (Ms. Amanda Green and Mr. Ben Hakala are the counselors for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities).

The Student Development Centre (WSS room 4111; tel: 519-661-3031; [www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)) offers a wide range of useful services to students including workshops on learning skills, career and employment services, and an effective writing program, amongst many more.

The D.B. Weldon Library offers orientation tours from the first week of classes until Thanksgiving, where you will get acquainted with the numerous research resources available. As well, the University libraries have an extremely useful website where you can search the library system, the databases, view your circulation record, renew materials, access your UWO e-mail account, and much more. Check it out at: [www.lib.uwo.ca](http://www.lib.uwo.ca).

Financial Aid Services is your main source of information for OSAP, bursaries, loans, scholarships, and the work-study program which offer part-time positions on campus for Western students.

Tel: 519-661-2100; e-mail, [finaid@uwo.ca](mailto:finaid@uwo.ca); or check out their website at [http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/student\\_finances/financial\\_counselling.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/student_finances/financial_counselling.html)