



Carrie Mae Weems, *Untitled (Woman Standing)*, 1990

Creative Photography I: Intro to Darkroom ART 244

Monday and Wednesday
9:30 AM – 12:15 PM
Center for Art & Design, Room 221
Fort Hays State University
Fall 2021

Instructor:

Nick Simko

Assistant Professor, Photography
Center for Art & Design, Room 222

Office Hours:

Monday, 2:30 – 4:30

Tuesday and Thursday, 4:00 – 6:00

ncsimko@fhsu.edu

Course Description

This course is an intensive exploration of the medium of darkroom photography. Students will be introduced to the fundamental techniques of darkroom photography, including analog camera functions, developing black and white film, and silver gelatin printing. This is an analog course and only includes limited digital instruction. We will consider the rich history of analog photography as well as contemporary artists that use the darkroom in their practice. The course features a series of thematic projects that will require students to use their new technical knowledge to create a visually coherent group of silver gelatin prints. Students are expected to participate in every class session, and to devote a considerable amount of time outside of class to make their strongest possible photographic work.

Class time will be a combination of technical demonstrations, darkroom printing time, in-class discussions, and slide presentations, as well as occasional field trips. Critiques are an integral part of this course, where each student will share their work and ideas with each other in a thought-provoking and constructive environment. This class is time-intensive, and will require each student's consistent engagement and self-directed problem solving.

Course Goals

- Gain fluency with 35mm analog cameras, film processing, and darkroom printing
- Cultivate an awareness of historic and contemporary issues in fine art photographic practice
- Develop the ability to critically analyze and discuss photographic images
- Cultivate the skills necessary to fully realize photographic projects from initial idea to finished print

Projects

Students will turn in several projects over the course of the session. Each project is designed to help students gain familiarity with the overall practice of photography as both a technical medium and as a conceptual way of creating art. The course will conclude with a final, self-directed project reflecting each student's new abilities in darkroom photography. Also keep in mind that these projects make up 75% of the course grade.

Each thematic project will conclude with in-class critiques. Work should be presented for critique in a professional manner (i.e. clean, unwrinkled, scratch-free prints, well-crafted images, etc.). Part of learning to make good photographic images requires an understanding of the diverse ways in which people see images and the underlying histories they bring to looking at works of art. This process can only be carried out through discussion. Attendance and participation in critiques is required, no exceptions. Failure to attend critique results in a zero for that project. Further, projects lose one letter grade for each day they are late.

There will be a number of in-class assignments designed to help you with the various projects. While these in-class assignments may not be graded, they are required, and failure to complete them will result in an unexcused absence for that day.

Evaluation

All assignments are graded equally on evidence of developing photographic skills such as conceptual depth, formal decision-making (exposure, composition etc.), print quality, and participation in critiques. Students can expect full points for each category according to the following criteria:

Conceptual	Outstanding commitment to developing ideas, original and creative problem solving, clear visual demonstration of ideas expressed from abstract vision to photographic image
Formal	Excellent execution overall, exposure management perfected, carefully formulated compositions
Print Quality	Images are properly printed from negatives with rich range of tonal values, with no dust or other kinds of imperfections, display is considerate and meaningful in critique setting
Participation	Student has thoughtful, constructive feedback to offer to classmates in critique, submits work in progress in a timely fashion and actively engages in one-on-one meetings with instructor

Work that possesses several of the above qualities, but not all of them, will not receive full points. Above all, student success in this course will be determined by each student's willingness to explore the many facets of photographic image-making (and what it means to them personally) paired with satisfactory progress towards basic literacy when using the camera and darkroom. In other words, students will be evaluated on their personal commitment to making photographs that are exciting and meaningful while also understanding how the camera, film processing, and darkroom printing function in symbiotic relation to one another.

Grading

- A** Outstanding commitment to developing ideas, original and creative problem solving, demonstrating clear evidence of risk-taking. Excellent technical execution.
- B** Work that possesses several of the above qualities, but not all of them.
- C** Assignment completed according to expectations, doing what is asked, minimal risk-taking, technique not entirely refined
- D** Less than satisfactory completion of expectations, minimal results, late, sloppy, or incomplete.
- F** Failure to complete minimum expectations.

Late Work

This is a college level course and all work should be completed and turned in on time. For every day that a project is late, students will lose a full letter grade on that project. If a student misses a critique, that student will receive a zero for that project.

Grade Breakdown

Projects	75%
Artist Presentations	5%
Participation/Attendance	20%
Total	100%

Notes on Required Materials

Think of the requirements in this course by means of analogy: *Your camera, film, negatives, and paper are your textbooks, critiques are exams, prints are essays.*

- In the same way that you wouldn't attend a lecture or discussion without the text, it is essential that you have your camera, film, and paper with you **FOR EVERY CLASS SESSION** in order to engage in in-class assignments and exercises.
- Critiques are like exams in the same way you would not miss an exam in a lecture class: critiques are impossible to make up. It is also disrespectful and detrimental to your experience and that of your classmates when you miss a critique. If you miss a critique, you will receive a zero on that project.
- Prints are like essays in that, if we discuss issues with the quality of your prints, the way you printed them (be it printing errors, etc.), or the negative itself, it is expected that you will adjust any problems **before** the critique in the same way you would fix grammatical errors or citations for a written essay before submitting it.

Please note that attendance to individual meetings and submission of work-in-progress in a timely manner have weight in project grades.

Attendance

Attendance is absolutely mandatory on all days and for the entire duration of class time.

A student's grade will be adversely affected by absences, lateness, or premature exit from class. More than three (3) absences will result in a lowering of a grade by a full letter grade. Being late to class or leaving early three (3) times is equal to one (1) absence. Students should not let attendance ruin their grade. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have obtained all of the material they missed for any absence. If a student is aware that they will be absent ahead of time, they must notify the professor in writing (i.e. via e-mail) as soon as possible. All work, including in-class assignments, must be done in advance in order to get full points.

Excused Absences

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A STUDENT COME TO CLASS IF THEY HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 or any other serious/contagious illness. In the event a student is not feeling well, they are strongly encouraged to seek medical attention in a timely manner. In the event that a student has serious

illness such as CoVid-19, they should contact the Office of Student Affairs in order to take next steps while also informing the instructor. Above all, students should NEVER come to class if they are feeling ill or have been directly exposed to someone with CoVid-19.

CoVid-19 Safety Precautions

While the University is not mandating face coverings in general at this time, the University does recommend and support the wearing of face coverings in alignment with current public health guidance. Additionally, the University's policy on face coverings does allow for some local-decision making by instructors and event organizers. Students in this course are required to wear face coverings while in the classroom. This rule is subject to change, at the discretion of the instructor or as otherwise announced by the University.

While instructors and event organizers will attempt to resolve matters at the local level first, violations of this policy will be handled through the Student Code of Conduct process. Individuals may utilize the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Concern Reporting form](#) for this purpose.

Required Costs and Materials

The course fee covers chemical costs and use of darkroom facilities.

- Camera: A 35mm (millimeter) camera w/ lens
 - Students will often borrow a camera from a relative, but please check to make sure the camera is in working condition by visiting a camera shop or dealer ahead of the class to save time.
 - Students can also purchase a used or new 35 mm camera online via Amazon or eBay, however please pay close attention that you are not purchasing a digital camera that resembles a "vintage" camera, a point and shoot camera, an instant camera (Polaroid), or an analog camera that is "body only" (this means it doesn't come with a lens.)
- Film: 5 Rolls Kodak TX 400-36 35mm Tri-X Pan Black and White Film
- Darkroom Paper: Ilford MGIV Multigrade IV RC Pearl 8x10 50 sheet pack
PLEASE DO NOT OPEN THE BOX OF PHOTO PAPER BEFORE CLASS - it will be ruined if exposed to light.
Please note that it is possible that, depending upon how many sheets you go through, that you might have to invest in more paper beyond the 50 sheets box.
- Binder with plastic 35mm negative sleeves
- Accordion file or box for easy transportation of prints
- Sketchbook/notebook
- Apron used only in darkroom
- OSHA approved footwear (closed toe ONLY, no shoes with heels, high heels, or platforms allowed.
- Reusable heavy-duty gloves

Optional Materials

- Acid-free solander box to store prints (optional)
- Glassine, a kind of interleaving to put between prints, is suggested in order to protect work, however it is not required.
- Tripod - highly recommend but not required
- Rocket blower

A Note on Chemistry

Please note that this course is not only a studio art course, but also one that requires students be vigilant about how they handle the materials that they will use in order to make their art. While the chemicals are relatively safe as long as they are properly handled, they are still hazardous to one's health and potentially toxic if not used correctly. That said, *students are required to practice the utmost attention and care during their time in the darkroom, for their safety and the safety of others.* Students must make sure to avoid all contact /

prolonged exposure to all of the darkroom chemicals, and that frequent hand washing is to be made into a darkroom printing habit. Students should avoid touching their face and eyes in the darkroom, and furthermore make sure that they rinse their hands thoroughly with soap and water for 30 seconds after being in the darkroom. Darkroom procedures will be covered in more detail during class.

Course Content and Communications

Course content and schedules will be posted on Blackboard. The primary method of communication for this class is via Blackboard Announcement, which is sent via FHSU e-mail. It is essential that students check their FHSU e-mail on a daily basis to receive assignments, lectures, directions, and updates with regard to the class. Failure to do so will adversely affect student performance in this class and ultimately student grades.

Expectations and Academic Dishonesty

The work presented in class MUST be made by the student from initial idea to final finished product. Any print made by anyone but the student will NOT be accepted; nor will work that was made prior to this class; nor will work that is/was made for another class. If you have questions about academic honesty in relation to this course, please ask the instructor. Turning in work of others as your own will result in an automatic failure of the course (a letter grade of "F" with academic dishonesty). "Creative Photography I: Intro to Darkroom", like all studio and academic classes, demands a commitment of time in order to perform successfully. Much of the work can be done in class if you come prepared with all required materials and assignments. Students are encouraged to read FHSU's Academic Honesty Policy, which is found in the University Catalog and online at: https://www.fhsu.edu/academic/provost/handbook/ch_2_academic_honesty/

Cell Phones and Technology

STUDENTS MAY NEVER USE THEIR CELLPHONES IN THE DARKROOM OR DURING CLASS TIME! The light from this device can IRREVERSIBLY DAMAGE light-sensitive paper. At the same time, students should be using the darkroom facilities with the same degree of caution as they would a wood shop or chemistry lab. That said, students may NOT use personal headphones in the darkroom. This will prevent accidents in a low-lighting scenario where people are coming and going, often with in-progress prints in hand.

That being said, as a matter of courtesy, please turn off cell phones and other devices prior to the beginning of class. If students are using their phones for any reason (which includes text messaging, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, etc.) I will issue one (1) warning after which time I will count every instance of use as a late to class / early departure. That being said, three (3) instances of in-class engagement with non-related devices or applications (or any combination of the two) will result in one (1) absence.

Further, STUDENTS MAY NOT MAKE IMAGES, VIDEOS, or ANY OTHER KIND OF RECORDING OF ANY INDIVIDUAL IN CLASS WITHOUT THAT PARTY'S EXPRESSED VERBAL CONSENT, WRITTEN CONSENT, or KNOWLEDGE. While we will talk about the ethics of portraiture in this class, it is important to remember that in most cases it is a violation of privacy to post images online of someone without their consent and without their knowledge.

Food and Drink

No food is allowed in the darkroom at any time, for any reason. If students need to drink water, they should leave water bottles outside of the darkroom and make sure that they are clearly labeled.

Breaks and Rest

It is important that students rest. If students do not take the time to rest, they cannot fully engage with the material in a meaningful way. That said, all students should have designated times during the day to take a break. They should also have a routine of regular sleeping hours, as well as restricting use of portable

electronics such as cellphones and laptops several hours before bedtime. For more resources on how to cultivate a better work-life balance as a student, please contact the Kelly Center at FHSU.

ADA

FHSU is committed to full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These and other federal, state and local laws prohibit discrimination against qualified persons with disabilities. Under the ADA, "disability" means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity of an individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. A substantial impairment is one that significantly limits or restricts a major life activity such as hearing, seeing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, walking, or caring for oneself. It is the responsibility of persons with a disability to notify the University of that disability and the need for accommodations. For information pertaining to services, activities, and facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities, contact the Human Resource Office, Sheridan Hall Room 110, 600 Park Street, Hays, KS 67601, (785) 628-4462.

Please visit the following page for more information:

<https://fhsu.edu/president/Compliance-Office/Americans-with-Disabilities-Act/index.html>

Harassment

It is expected that all students enrolled in the course will abide by the terms and conditions of student conduct and academic honesty as cited in the FHSU campus-wide policy. FHSU is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which students, faculty, administrative, and academic staff can learn and work together in an atmosphere that enhances productivity and draws on the diversity of its members; an atmosphere free from all forms of disrespectful conduct, harassment, exploitation or intimidation, including sexual. No form of harassment will be tolerated in this class.

Title IX

FHSU is committed to fostering a safe and productive learning environment. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex, gender, and gender identity are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. This includes all types of gender and relationship violence, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, domestic and dating violence, and stalking. If you wish to report an incident or have questions about school policies and procedures regarding Title IX issues, please contact Amy Schaffer, University Compliance Officer and the FHSU Title IX Coordinator, at alschaffer@fhsu.edu or (785) 628-4175. The Compliance Officer can help connect you to campus and outside resources, discuss all of your reporting options, and assist with any concerns you may have.

Confidential reporting gives the victim the opportunity to speak *confidentially* with a Fort Hays State University professional who works in a health-care or counseling role.

- Health & Wellness Services (formerly Kelly Center), 785-628-4401, Picken Hall Room 111
- Health & Wellness Services (formerly Student Health Center), 785-628-4293, Memorial Union Room 045
- Options Domestic and Sexual Violence Services, 785-625-4202, Student Health Center, Memorial Union Room 045

For more information, please visit: <https://www.fhsu.edu/judicial/gender-based-violence-misconduct-policy/>

Security

Please refrain from leaving any of your personal belongings, especially your camera equipment, unattended at any time. Though your possessions are, for the most part, safe when you are in the darkroom, please know

that I am not capable of teaching the course and watching your things simultaneously. The safety of your possessions is your responsibility, so please take the appropriate precautionary measures to ensure your things do not go missing on campus.

Student Support Services:

- Tiger Tech
<http://www.fhsu.edu/tigertech/>
- Forsyth Library
<http://www.fhsu.edu/library>
- Writing Center
<https://www.fhsu.edu/WritingCenter/>