

ARTS 208/CAMS 238: Intermediate Digital Photography

Wellesley College: Spring 2019

T/F 1:30 - 4:10 pm

Room: JAC 464 & JAC 350

Professor: William Van Beckum

Course Website: <https://williamvanbeckum.com/arts-208>

Office: JAC 455

Office Hours: Th 10:00am - 12:00pm. Please sign up using google form. <https://goo.gl/ohVrqX>
wwanbeck@wellesley.edu

Course Description:

Intermediate Digital Photography is a studio-based survey of contemporary photographic practices in the fine arts. The course emphasizes the acquisition of a comprehensive knowledge of standard workflows, from image capture (with DSLRs) and manipulation (with Photoshop and Lightroom), to fine-art digital printing. Practical exercises are supplemented by writing assignments and readings. Over the course of several independent projects and a final project, students will use technical skill, conceptual rigour, historical context, and aesthetic originality to produce a portfolio of work.

Expectations:

Students are expected to complete all shooting assignments, journal entries, and readings on time. Students are expected to spend time outside of class shooting, developing, and printing their images. Active participation in group critiques is required for a passing grade. Students must follow posted studio policies and practices to ensure proper workflow and safety.

Goals/Objectives:

- Technical mastery of digital image making using DSLR cameras and digital printing.
- The ability to communicate an effective story or concept in a single image or group of images.
- Establishing a working knowledge of the history of the photographic arts as well as contemporary image making trends, and the ability to position your own work in conversation with these movements.
- Development of an artistic vocabulary and the ability to speak clearly about your own images as well as images made by others.
- Presentation and exhibition skills including matting, hanging, and sequencing of images to present images in an exhibition setting.

Office Hours:

Office hours are an excellent opportunity to check in with me about your progress in the course. I encourage students to attend office hours for absolutely any reason. I have found that students who check in regularly tend to have a firmer grasp on content and thus have higher grades.

Sign up for office hours using the following link: <https://goo.gl/ohVrqX>

If you are unavailable during my normal office hours, Thursday 10am-12pm, please email me to set up an alternative meeting time.

Readings:

Most readings will be available in PDF form at www.williamvanbeckum.com/teaching

Readings are due on the day that they are listed on the syllabus. You are expected to come to class with questions or comments about that days readings.

Supplies:

Cameras and other equipment will be available at the Equipment Cage (PNW 310). For the first two assignments you must use a Canon Rebel from the equipment cage. After that you may use an approved personal DSLR if you would like. Photo paper and mounting supplies will be available in the Flex Media Room (PNW 309). The first \$30 of printing is covered under our course budget but you will be required to pay for additional printing. Please speak to me to arrange for financial assistance if additional printing creates significant financial hardship for you.

Attendance policy:

Due to the hands on nature of this studio course, absences are extremely detrimental to the comprehension of topics covered. You are expected to attend every class. More than two unexcused absences justify the reduction of your grade by a mark (ex; B to B-), with each additional unexcused absence resulting in the reduction of another mark. Be aware that arriving late and leaving early are noticed, and three such events count for one full absence. If you arrive after roll has been called you MUST check in with me during a break to make sure that you are not marked as absent. Those with 5 or more absences will not pass.

If you are dealing with a personal or medical issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or participate in your critique, please let me know as soon as possible.

Absences due to religious holidays will always be accommodated as long as needs are communicated in advance. Please fill out the colleges [Religious Observance Notification Form](#) before September 14th.

Journals:

You will complete weekly journal entries on a photographer, portfolio/project, or single image of your choosing. You may choose to explore an artist who has been presented in class or seek out artists independently using online or library resources. If you need recommendations, please speak to me and I can suggest artists who are relevant to your interests.

Journal entries should be approximately one page double spaced and may be written in any format. You might include reflections on aesthetic choices such as lighting, composition, printing, or focus more on the subject matter of an image, analyzing the social, political, or cultural impact of your chosen work. Journals may be informally written, but should be clear and concise.

Sample Prompts:

- What was the photographer trying to say? Were they successful?
- Why do you “like” this image? Is it the visual experience, subject matter, relatability, or something else? Elaborate...
- Analyze the visual tools that the photographer used in this image.
- If you had made this image, what would you have done differently?

- What did this image mean when it was first created? What does it mean now?

Journal entries should be submitted as PDF documents and should include an image from the photographer/series that you are writing about embedded within the document.

Journals are graded based on completion. I will notify you if the quality of your journals is not adequate. Late journals will be reduced by one mark (ex A to A-) for each day that they are late.

If you attend a lecture related to photography you may skip that week's journal and receive an automatic A. Email me a few sentences describing what you took away from the event as proof of attendance.

You may skip one journal entry without any impact on your grade. A sample journal entry is available on the course website.

Journals are due on the following dates:

Sept 8, Sept 15, Sept 29, Oct 6, Oct 20, Oct 27, Nov 3, Nov 10, Nov 17, and Nov 24.

Grading:

The following breakdown is used to calculate a majority of your grade. Further adjustments will be made based on attendance, improvement, and effort.

Class participation: **20%**

Image creation assignments: **30%**

Journal entries: **10%**

Presentations: **10%**

Final Project: **30%**

Image creation assignments the final project will make up a large portion of your grade and will generally be evaluated based on the following criteria. More detailed criteria for individual projects can be found on project assignment sheets.

- A Projects show evidence of complete mastery of technical and thematic concepts.
- B Projects are above average, show evidence of growth are effective and well planned.
- C Projects are satisfactorily completed and may lack individual research, or evidence of growth.
- D Projects are insufficient and/or show inadequate technical execution and reflect a lack of growth.
- F Projects are unsatisfactory, incomplete and/or reflect student's unwillingness to work.

Critiques:

Group critiques will be held upon the completion of each image based assignment. Critiques are designed to offer productive feedback on your work. They are also designed to help to develop your artistic vocabulary. You might share what you enjoy about a particular project, or offer constructive criticism. A large part of your participation grade will come from your level of engagement during classmates critiques. Remember that sharing work may be anxiety producing for some, and showing compassion and respect for your peers is essential for the creation of an environment where everyone feels safe.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

If you have a disability or condition, either long-term or temporary, and need reasonable academic adjustments in this course, please contact Disability Services to get a letter outlining your accommodation needs, and submit that letter to me. You should request accommodations as early as possible in the semester, or before the semester begins, since some situations can require significant time for review and accommodation design. If you need immediate accommodations, please arrange to meet with me as soon as possible. If you are unsure but suspect you may have an undocumented need for accommodations, you are encouraged to contact Disability Services. They can provide assistance including screening and referral for assessments.

Disability Services can be reached at disabilityservices@wellesley.edu, at 781-283-2434, by scheduling an appointment online at their website www.wellesley.edu/disability, or by visiting their offices on the 3rd floor of Clapp Library, rooms 316 and 315.

Device use:

Laptops, tablets, and smartphones may be used for note taking, or to look up materials directly related to class. Other uses such as email, text, social media, and games are strictly prohibited out of respect to me and your classmates. Repeated misuse of devices will result in a grade deduction.

Image Release:

Throughout this course I may take photographs of the class on field trips, in critiques, or in classroom demonstrations. These images may be posted on Wellesley College Art Department social media pages or printed for display during reunion. Images of you will never be used for commercial purposes without your explicit consent and notification.

Images that you turn in for critiques may be added to my teaching portfolio. These images may be submitted in the process of applying for other teaching jobs in the future but will never be shared publicly without your explicit consent.

If you would like to opt-out of either of these uses please speak to me privately or send me an email notifying me of your preference.

Content Warnings:

There will be times during the semester when readings or screenings will contain graphic or explicit material, including profanity, nudity, depictions of sex or sexuality, drug use, and violence. I always strive to give content warnings prior to lectures, but often class discussions will lead us to content which may be triggering. If you have any concerns related to this possibility, please see me privately so that we can discuss them and I can make proper accommodations.

Building access & security:

As a member of this class, you have permission to work in common spaces of Jewett Art Center (JAC) and Pendleton West (PNW) 24 hours a day. Campus police are scheduled to lock the doors at midnight most nights. Once the doors are locked, you will not be able to get inside. If you are already inside you may stay past midnight. If you are inside you are allowed to open the door to allow other students from your class to gain entry.

When working "off hours" you must have a **designated buddy** working nearby who could assist you in case of an injury, studio accident, or emergency. This person does not have to be someone enrolled in our class, but they must be within earshot of your workspace. Bear in mind that if you have a guest serving as your buddy in the studio (or, if you let anyone else into the building off hours) you are responsible for their conduct as well as your own. Do not leave outside doors propped open or allow unknown persons into the building during off hours.

Failure to act responsibly and safely in the studios may result in your off-hours work privileges being revoked. Don't hesitate to call for help (x 5555) in the case of an accident or emergency.

It is considered a violation of honor code to give access to secured spaces (darkroom, lighting studio) to any student who does not have authorization.

Photo classroom (JAC 464):

The photo classroom is open 24/7 except when being used by a class. You do not need a key for access. The room contains cutting mats, hot presses, copy stand, scanner, camera cleaning supplies, and an assortment of other tools. You are welcome to use the room so long as you clean up after yourself. The film and paper cabinet is off limits unless you have been given express permission by myself or Fari.

Lighting Studio (PNW 306):

Working in the Lighting Studio (PNW 306) requires that you make a reservation in advance and check out a key from the art library. The studio follows the same hours as the art library, which can be found on the art libraries website. You will receive safety training in the Lighting Studio in class which will help you use this space safely and competently. You may arrange further training by contacting Fari Eshraghi (feshragh@wellesley.edu). When working in the lighting studio you must always follow posted policies and rules.

Flex Media Room (PNW 309):

The Flex Media Room (PNW 309) contains photo printers, paper cutters, scanners, and large worktables. The flex media room is open 24/7 and requires that you act as responsible custodians of the space. Always strive to keep it clean and orderly out of respect for the rest of the Wellesley community. All prints must be recorded into the online print log. We will cover the operation of most of this equipment in class but you should never hesitate to contact Fari Eshraghi (feshragh@wellesley.edu) with additional questions about the tools available in this space.

Equipment & the Cage (PNW 310):

As a member of this class, you are allowed to check out equipment from the Art Cage, located in PNW 310. Access and hours will be posted in the first several weeks of class. Contact Fari Eshraghi (feshragh@wellesley.edu) with questions.

Technology Support Specialist:

The art department employs a Technology Support Specialist who is an excellent resource for students who need additional technical assistance that goes beyond what is covered in class. Fari Eshraghi will come into class to introduce herself during the first week of class and make us aware of her various services. She is a fantastic resource and we are lucky to have her support! She is also responsible for the upkeep of the darkroom, lighting studio, flex media room, and digital printers. All questions related

to labs, equipment, and facilities should be directed to her. Her email address is feshragh@wellesley.edu. Her office is in the Equipment Cage PNW310.

Honor Code:

This course strictly operates within the Wellesley College honor code. Failure to follow posted building and syllabus policies will result in an honor code violation.

Course Schedule:

Due to the nature of the course, this schedule is likely to change. Updated versions can be found on the class website. Readings are listed under the day that they are due.

- T Sept-3** **INTRODUCTIONS:** Overview of syllabus and course expectations. Tour of facilities.

IMAGE STUDY: Migrant Mother contact sheets.
- F Sept-6** **DEMONSTRATION:** Lighting Studio, Flex Media, Equipment Cage policy, and liability forms with Fari Eshraghi. Check out DSLR and external hard drive from the Equipment Cage.

DEMONSTRATION: DSLR camera setup. Part 1.
Manual mode, RAW, White balance, Focus modes.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.
- T Sept-10** **DEMONSTRATION:** DSLR camera setup. Part 2.
Manual mode, RAW, White balance, Focus modes.

READING DUE: David Gonzalez- Andre Kertesz's Photos from his Window

ASSIGNMENT #1 GIVEN: Compose & Wait. Due September 17th.
See assignment sheet for additional information.
- F Sept-13** **DEMONSTRATION:** Digital Workflow.
External hard drive setup.
Using Adobe Lightroom to import and organize images.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.
- T Sept-17** **CRITIQUE:** Assignment #1. **Compose & Wait.**
See assignment sheet for additional information.
- F Sept-20** **Meet in the Jewett/Davis Plaza.**

FIELD TRIP: MFA Boston to view "Viewpoints" <https://mfa.org/exhibition/viewpoints>.

READING DUE: Robert Adams - Beauty in Photography.

Pick a line that stands out to you from this text. Write it on a piece of paper and consider it as you view the exhibition. Be ready to share your line with classmates.

PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT GIVEN: **DUE: Tuesday Sept 24th.**

Pick an image from the exhibition and evaluate its effectiveness as an object of aesthetic value versus its ability to tell a story. Find a digital version to display for the class and be ready to lead a group discussion on this images characteristics.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **No journal due this week.**

T Sept-24 **PRESENTATIONS:** Aesthetic vs. Story in MFA show.

READING DUE: Being Women: Poetry and Imagery.

ASSIGNMENT #2 GIVEN: **Group Poetry. Due October 4th.**

See assignment sheet for additional information.

F Sept-27 **MEET IN PNW 306. Lighting Studio.**

DEMONSTRATION: Studio safety, studio lighting, location lighting, tripods, shutter releases.

ASSIGNMENT GIVEN: Research Haley Morris-Cafiero's work and email me at least one question that you would like her to answer during her upcoming guest lecture. **DUE Tuesday, October 1.**

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Oct-1 **MEET IN PNW 309. Flex Media Room.**

DEMONSTRATION: Digital photo printing.

WORK DAY: Come to class with assignment #2 images ready to develop and print.

DUE: Email me questions for Haley Morris-Cafiero prior to class.

F Oct-4 **CRITIQUE:** Assignment #2. **Group Poetry.**

See assignment sheet for additional information.

ASSIGNMENT #3 GIVEN: **Historical Adaptations. Due October 25th.**

See assignment sheet for additional information.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Oct-8 GUEST LECTURE: Haley Morris-Cafiero.

(content warning: discussion of societal body image standards and "fat shaming").

F Oct-11 **Meet in the Davis Museum Lobby.**

FIELD TRIP: Davis Museum print study room.

LECTURE: Movements building on movements: Group f64, New Topographics, and Anthropocene art.

READING DUE: Kelly Dennis: Landscape and the West – Irony and Critique in New Topographic Photography.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **No journal due this week.**

T Oct-15 Fall Break. No Class.

F Oct-18 Meet in JAC 350.

DEMONSTRATION: advanced digital workflow.

Lightroom to Photoshop link, layers, selection tools, adjustment layers.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Oct-22 Meet in the Davis Museum Lobby.

View New Acquisitions show.

GUEST LECTURE: Carrie Cushman: Japanese and Asian photography and photo books.

READING DUE: TBA.

F Oct-25 CRITIQUE: Assignment #3: **Historical Adaptations.**
See assignment sheet for additional information.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Oct-29 Tanner Conference. No Class.

F Nov-1 Meet in the Jewett/Davis Plaza.

FIELD TRIP: MFA Boston to view "Make Believe" <https://mfa.org/exhibitions/make-believe>.

ASSIGNMENT #4 GIVEN: **Uncanny, Bizarre, Fantasy, Composite.**
See assignment sheet for additional information.

READING DUE: Jack Kerouac: Introduction to Robert Frank's 'The Americans'.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Nov-5 DEMONSTRATION:

Compositing.
Plan group session in lighting studio. (Brainstorm concept, assign tasks)
Advanced camera workshop.

F Nov-8 **GROUP PHOTOSHOOT: Meet in PNW 306 Lighting Studio.**

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Nov-12 **WORK DAY.**

F Nov-15 **CRITIQUE: Assignment #4: Uncanny, Bizarre, Fantasy, Composite.**

See assignment sheet for additional information.

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Nov-19 **LECTURE: The Photographic Project.**

READING DUE:

The Power of Three: Arno Rafael Minkkinen.

Vicki Goldberg: Sally Mann's Haunted South.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT GIVEN: **DUE DECEMBER 10TH.**

See assignment sheet for additional information.

F Nov-22 **GROUP DISCUSSION: Present your final project ideas to the class.**

JOURNAL ENTRY: **Due** emailed to me by midnight on Sunday.

T Nov-26 **RESEARCH DAY: Spend class time in the Art Library to research final project topics.**

DUE: Email me a final project proposal before class. This proposal may be informal and still in development but must show that you have started to seriously consider your final project.

F Nov 29 **Thanksgiving Break. No Class.**

JOURNAL ENTRY: **No journal due this week.**

T Dec-3 **IN-PROCESS CRITIQUE: Show at least three images in digital or print form. Graded only for completeness and not on the quality of this 'in-process' work.**

F Dec-6 **WORK DAY.**

JOURNAL ENTRY: **No journal due this week.**

T Dec-10 **Last day of Class.**

FINAL CRITIQUE

See assignment sheet for additional information.