

Photo Essay

AMST 201: Literary Approaches to American Studies

Instructor: Ben Bolling

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

For this assignment, you will create a photo essay consisting of 12 – 15 photographs on the theme of “home.” This subject is meant to be capacious; you may interpret the theme in any way you choose as long as you defend that interpretation through your work. The photographs you choose may be of any style (landscape, portrait, self-portrait, screen captures, etc.) as long as they contribute to the theme of your essay.

Along with the photos you will compose:

- A title page that includes your name, title of your project, and one of your photos as a “cover” image
- A 250-350-word introduction to the images in the vein of those by Joseph Rodriguez for [Where Children Sleep](#) and Yves Marchand and Romain Mefre in [The Ruins of Detroit](#)
- Your 12 – 15 images, each on a single page with a title/caption (see below), and preferably centered on that page
- A 750-1000-word analysis of the photos where you:
 - Discuss your reasons (both rhetorical and aesthetic) for selecting and editing the images
 - Provide a narrative context for your images by telling a story of their creation/discovery, providing historical or anecdotal background, and/or creatively framing your connection to the images
 - Conduct at least ONE “close reading” (200-300 of the 750-1000 word allotment) in which you analyze your “cover” image as indicative of the larger project of your essay
- A Works Cited page in MLA format

Each image must feature titles or captions in the following format:

Name of Photographer, Title or Caption, Location of Photograph, Date of Photograph.

For example:



Charles D. Thompson, Jr., **Farmer cultivates young tobacco in a field, near Viñales, Pinar del Rio, Cuba, 2011.**

PROCESS

First you'll need an idea. Think about the rhetorical situation in this way: you've been invited to submit a photo essay to an online publication. For our purposes, Emory University's *Southern Spaces* (<http://southernspaces.org/browse/photo-essays>) is a great model. The only parameters you've been given are that your composition explore real or imagined spaces that signify "home."

For the purposes of this assignment, you may either take original photographs or compile photographs from another source. If you choose to take original photographs, consider how the medium you use to record photos affects the way your audience will receive/perceive the collection. For instance, let's say you decide to do a project chronicling the behavior of 20-year-olds on their 21st birthdays. Using a digital app like Instagram might be appropriate here; you might

argue that the app offers an organic way of capturing your subjects in their most natural state. Similarly, if you chose to capture a couple of friends getting married in the home they share, using a cheap, disposable camera—like those sometimes given as favors at weddings—might be an interesting choice. You will not be graded on your skills as photographers. You will, however, be graded on your skills as editors and composers—that is, your ability to create a narrative by carefully selecting your photos and putting them in context through your written account.

If you choose to collect photos from sources other than yourself, make sure to keep detailed notes to help compile your Works Cited page. Collecting photos may seem like an easier option, but keep in mind that your project should have visual cohesion as well as a narrative throughline. The UNC Libraries have some wonderful photo archives that you may want to explore if you choose this method (see select links below).

Once you've decided on a topic, schedule a meeting with Mr. Bolling to “pitch” your idea. **You must pitch your topic and have it approved by no later than Friday, July 12th**. Email Mr. Bolling to schedule your pitch; if you are not available during his regular office hours (M-F 10AM-11AM), suggest some alternative times when you first contact him.

CITATION

Below, I've collected a few pertinent tips on citing photographs, images, and digital files according to MLA formatting. You may also find the link to the UNC Library citation guide on our class Sakai site helpful. Additionally, the Purdue Online Writing Lab MLA style guide is very thorough and clear:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/> .

A Painting, Sculpture, or Photograph

Include the artist's name. Give the title of the artwork in italics. Provide the date of composition. If the date of composition is unknown, place the abbreviation *n.d.* in place of the date. Finally, provide the name of the institution that houses the artwork followed by the location of the institution.

Goya, Francisco. *The Family of Charles IV*. 1800. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

For photographic reproductions of artwork (e.g. images of artwork in a book), cite the bibliographic information as above followed by the information for the source in which the photograph appears, including page or reference numbers (plate, figure, etc.).

Goya, Francisco. *The Family of Charles IV*. 1800. Museo del Prado, Madrid. *Gardener's Art Through the Ages*. 10th ed. By Richard G. Tansey and Fred S. Kleiner. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace. 939. Print.

An Image (Including a Painting, Sculpture, or Photograph)

Provide the artist's name, the work of art italicized, the date of creation, the institution and city where the work is housed. Follow this initial entry with the name of the Website in italics, the medium of publication, and the date of access.

Goya, Francisco. *The Family of Charles IV*. 1800. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. *Museo Nacional del Prado*. Web. 22 May 2006.

Klee, Paul. *Twittering Machine*. 1922. Museum of Modern Art, New York. *The Artchive*. Web. 22 May 2006.

If the work is cited on the web only, then provide the name of the artist, the title of the work, the medium of the work, and then follow the citation format for a website. If the work is posted via a username, use that username for the author.

brandychloe. "Great Horned Owl Family." Photograph. *Webshots*. American Greetings, 22 May 2006. Web. 5 Nov. 2009.

Digital Files (PDFs, MP3s, JPEGs)

Determine the type of work to cite (e.g., article, image, sound recording) and cite appropriately. End the entry with the name of the digital format (e.g., PDF, JPEG file, *Microsoft Word* file, MP3). If the work does not follow traditional parameters for citation, give the author's name, the name of the work, the date of creation, and the medium of publication. Use *Digital file* when the medium cannot be determined.

Beethoven, Ludwig van. *Moonlight Sonata*. Crownstar, 2006. MP3.

Smith, George. "Pax Americana: Strife in a Time of Peace." 2005. *Microsoft Word* file.

Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project. *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. CWPA, NCTE, and NWP, 2011. PDF file.

Bentley, Phyllis. "Yorkshire and the Novelist." *The Kenyon Review* 30.4 (1968): 509-22. JSTOR. PDF file.

DETAILS

Due date: Upload a pdf of your Photo Essay Assignment to your Drop Box folder on Sakai by **no later than 10 A.M. on Monday, July 22nd**. You may turn in this assignment up to two times before the deadline for editorial feedback.

Format: 12 point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins. Include title, header, and page numbers.

Citation: MLA parenthetical notations for page numbers in text. Works Cited page should contain the information for any texts cited and any images for which you are not the creator.

RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES

- *Southern Spaces*: <http://southernspaces.org/browse/photo-essays>
- ["On my Way to Cape May: Phantom Portraits of my Hometown"](#) by Christen Otter
- ["Presence in Absence: A Visual Exploration of Camden, NJ"](#) by Samantha Brown
- ["makeup and confidence"](#) by meghan o'donnell
- *Time* photoessays: <http://www.time.com/time/photoessays/>
- UNC North Carolina Collection Photo Archive: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/photos.html> and http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/archivalhome/collection/dig_nccpa
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