

PHOTOGRAPHY I



image: Ren Hang, 2014

Photography I

Instructor: Assistant Professor Christopher Meerdo (he/him)

Meeting Time: Tuesday/Thursday 8 am – 10:50 am

Spring Semester 2026

Classroom Meeting Place: CVAD, 3rd Floor, Room Number ART 359

Course Number: ASTU 2501

Contact: christopher.meerdo@unt.edu

UNT COURSE DESCRIPTION

2501(ARTS 2356). Beginning Photography: Photo I. 3 hours (0;6). Beginning photographic materials, techniques, software and digital cameras. Assignments, lectures, demonstrations and critiques expose students to the necessary tools for creative image making and expression using photography. Students will gain technical competencies with DSLR cameras, Adobe Lightroom, and Inkjet printing. Prerequisite(s) : 2 of the following with a C or better: ART 1600, ART 1700, ART 1800.

CLASS OBJECTIVE

To implement a greater understanding of the contemporary photographic process as it relates to the historical, physical, digital, professional, and conceptual realms of practice.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will engage with a multitude of photographic discourses, which will result in many areas of growth and professional development. By the end of the course, active and committed participants will have garnered expertise in the technical workings of a manual camera, processing and printing of images, formal analysis and the construction of photographic visual culture, and an ability to speak about image making through both an art historical and theoretical framework. Specific skills you will learn include:

- project development in the context of contemporary photography.
- knowledge of contemporary photography and discipline vocabulary used to analyze artworks.
- DSLR camera functions including aperture, shutter speed, ISO and equivalent exposures.
- file management and tonal/ color correction in Adobe Lightroom.
- basic inkjet printing (tonal and color correction for prints).
- basic studio lighting using LED lighting
- competencies using a Tripod.

METHODOLOGY

In class demonstrations, lectures, classroom critiques, field trips, guest critics, group Lightroom exercises

Outside class work will require photographic assignments, printing, and reading and writing assignments.

STUDENT EQUIPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All students must meet all equipment and supplies **requirements** of the course. This includes:

Required Purchases:

1. Professional Inkjet Paper - You will need 50 sheets of 8.5" x 11" or 11" x 17" satin or luster inkjet paper. [Epson Luster](#) or [Red River Ultra Pro Satin](#).
2. Notebook - For weekly reading notes and attendance questions, taking notes during critiques, and a place for your photographic concepts.
3. Solid State Hard Drive (SSD) - a 1TB or larger. [I recommend this one from SanDisk](#). Your hard drive will need to be formatted to work on Mac computers. A thumb drive will not work as the read/write speeds are too slow to support Lightroom. See instructor if you need help.
4. Course Textbook - [The Photograph as Contemporary Art by Charlotte Cotton \(4th edition, 2020\)](#). Do not use the previous edition, it is not the same text.

Required Materials - also available via checkout:

5. DSLR or Mirrorless Camera with Manual override and RAW capabilities. A DSLR is necessary for completing all the projects. If you do not have a DSLR camera you can check one out from CVAD IT.
6. Memory Card - you will need at least one memory card for your camera. I recommend 64gb cards and up. Checkout cameras have this included.
7. Tripod - a tripod is necessary for all projects. If you do not own a tripod, you can check one out from CVAD IT.
8. Camera Accessories - battery charger, camera bag, card reader or camera to laptop usb
9. Laptop - with Adobe Lightroom installed. We will be using Mac in the classroom, but you are welcome to use PC laptops.

CVAD IT EQUIPMENT/SOFTWARE

As part of being enrolled in Photo 1, you have access to checking out DSLR cameras, tripods, and other related equipment through CVAD IT. To make a reservation ahead of time to ensure that equipment is available, visit: <https://checkout.unt.edu/patron>

You can check out, pick up, and drop off equipment in person at the CVAD IT checkout desk located in CVAD room 375. Hours for the Lab and more information can be found through [Microsoft Teams by following this link](#).

Additional locations and links for borrowing and reserving photo equipment:

[CVAD Photo Lab \(ART 362\)](#) and [CVAD IT/Student Computer Lab \(ART 375\)](#)
[Spark Makerspace \(Willis Library room 135\)](#)

You have access to the Adobe Creative Suite (including Lightroom and Photoshop) on your personal computer while on campus only. The campus license agreement for students does not

include off-site access to the Adobe Creative Cloud. In order to use the software away from campus you must purchase a license from Adobe directly.

<https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/buy/students.html>

PRINTING

All work must be printed by you in the Photography Lab at UNT.

Printing is a major component of photography and takes a lot of time, consideration, and skill. While you will need to cover the cost of your paper, \$225 worth of ink is covered through your student fees – this should be more than enough for this course.

Make sure to schedule dedicated time in the printing lab before each assignment. Prints made the day of critiques will not be accepted. You must print in advance of each project and critique day.

GRADING/REVIEWS

I will be calculating your projects and assignments based on percentages. Late work is not accepted. Participation is a critical element of the course; this applies doubly for readings and reading responses. Failure to fully participate in the course will cause you to fail this class.

The course content you will be responsible for includes:

- Reading Attendance Questions - 10%
- Weekly Photo Journal - 10%
- Exercise Files and Quizzes - 10%
- Shooting Projects 1-4 - 40% (10% each)
- Artist Research Project - 10%
- Final project - 20%

Projects are assessed based on their technical, formal, and conceptual merit. All work in this class must demonstrate a high level of engagement with the medium.

COMMUNICATION

My Office Location: CVAD, 3rd Floor, Office Number 345F

In-Person Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Email: christopher.meerdo@unt.edu

I am always available to be reached by email or office hours but I ask that you are respectful and professional in your communication.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Attendance in all classes is required. **You are allowed two unexcused absences without it negatively affecting your grade.** After two unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered by 1 letter grade (10%) for each class meeting you miss. If you feel like your absence is excusable based on UNT policy found [here](#), please let me know as soon as possible.

- 3 Times Tardy = 1 Absence.
- Leaving class early counts as an Unexcused Absence.
- Missing a critique counts as 2 absences

Please refrain from walking out of class in the middle of activities. We have a break in the middle of class – schedule yourself accordingly.

An unexcused absence is any missed class without a doctor's note. Simply emailing if you are sick is not an excused absence. In the case of any type of emergency, I also require official documentation. You can review UNT official authorized absences here:

<https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039%20Student%20Attendance%20and%20Authorized%20Absences.pdf>

Class Participation Expectations

I expect you to attend every class. You are responsible for completing all of the required assignments on time. I expect all students to participate in class discussions, contributing ideas and perspectives on topics or art. All your work should incorporate aspects or issues addressed in class in relation to your personal or professional interests.

You are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. To assure that everyone has an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, you are prohibited from using cellular phones, checking your email or surfing the internet, checking socials, eating or drinking in class, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers or magazines, sleeping or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class, which will be counted as an unexcused absence.

OPEN STUDIO TIME:

Throughout the semester, there will be class periods set aside for dedicated studio work time. For these days, it is expected that you come prepared to work. This means bringing the materials or files necessary to work toward your upcoming critique. You must remain within the classroom but you can work in the Print Lab, etc with permission from your professor. You are not permitted to leave class and go home. All students must be back in class within the last 15 minutes of class for cleanup and general announcements. Students who are not in class at this time or who knowingly leave will be marked absent for the day.

REQUIRED READING:

The course textbook for this class is: **The Photograph as Contemporary Art** by Charlotte Cotton 2020 Version (4th Edition). You can purchase the textbook here: <https://a.co/d/hwBMNtz>. I will also provide the book in scanned format for screen reading. I recommend buying the book so you have something on your bookshelf from the time you spent in college. We will be reading from this book every week throughout the semester.

We will discuss the readings with a set of attendance questions at the beginning of class. You will be graded on your ability to answer the question for the class as evidence of reading the week's assigned chapter. This is 10% of your grade in this course. For this reason, summarize the reading and keep track of key ideas in your notebook as you read each week.

The readings have been specially selected to coincide with the theme of the course and will help us think conceptually about making photographs and provide a vocabulary to do so. Each week we will discuss the readings at length, and I expect that you will have read everything in entirety.

CONTENT DISCLAIMER

Content in the arts can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that can be personally challenging or offensive to some students on the grounds, for example, of sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. As the College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, and it is not the college's practice to censor these works or ideas on any of these grounds. Students who might feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should withdraw at the start of the term and seek another course.

LOCAL EQUIPMENT RESOURCES

Denton Camera Exchange - 117 Piner St, Denton, TX - dentoncameraexchange.com
Photographique - 3111 Canton St Suite 100, Dallas TX - photographique.com
Red River Paper - 8330 Directors Row #100, Dallas, TX - redrivercatalog.com

ONLINE EQUIPMENT RESOURCES

These stores offer great prices on used and new cameras and other related gear

B & H Photo and Video	bhphotovideo.com
Pro Photo Supply	prophotosupply.com
KEH Camera	keh.com
Digital Photography Review	dpreview.com (a great informational resource)

RECOMMENDED PHOTOGRAPHY WEBSITES

International Center of Photography (NY)	icp.org
FOAM (Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam)	foam.org
Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago)	mocp.org
Aperture (NYC)	aperture.org
TOP Museum (Tokyo)	topmuseum.jp
American Suburb X (NYC)	americansuburbx.com
Fotomuseum Winterthur (Switzerland)	fotomuseum.ch/en
Pier 24 (San Francisco)	pier24.org
The Photographer's Gallery (London)	thephotographersgallery.org.uk
Light Work (Syracuse)	lightwork.org
Center for Creative Photography (Tucson)	ccp.arizona.edu
Society for Photographic Education (US)	spenational.org
Magnum Photo (International)	magnumphotos.com
SF MOMA (San Francisco)	sfmoma.org/artists-artworks/photography

CANVAS

This course is integrated with UNT's Canvas learning management system. It is your responsibility to check our class page regularly to keep an eye out for announcements, communicate with the professor and fellow students, and keep track of your overall class standing. This is also where each assignment must be handed in and where you have access to assignment sheets and readings.

CLASS TIME COMMITMENT

This class will require a full intellectual and time commitment from you in order to pass with full marks. There are 12 hours minimum per week that you should schedule for yourself - 6 in the classroom and 6 outside of the class. Realistically, you should budget between 10-20 hours per week on this class. Make sure you are mindful of this as you begin the semester so that you stay on track throughout and are successful in the end.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tentative and subject to revision.

WEEK ONE	
Tue Jan 13	Introductions/ Syllabus Survey of digital experience Manual Camera Controls - Introduction Weekly Photo Journal Introduction <i>Project 1: Six Street Exercises</i> - assigned
Thurs Jan 15	Presentations of your photographic interests in images and words Manual Camera Controls - Intermediate Homework: PHOTOGRAPH: <i>Project 1: Street Exercises</i> READ: <i>The Photograph As Contemporary Art</i> - Introduction POST: Weekly Photo Journal
WEEK TWO	

Tue Jan 20	Manual Camera Controls – Intermediate
Thurs Jan 22	Homework: PHOTOGRAPH: Project 1: <i>Street Exercises</i>
WEEK THREE	
Tue Jan 27	Attendance Questions Project 1: <i>Street Exercises</i> Due Class screen-share critique (no prints) Attendance Questions Advanced Lightroom Workshop <i>Project 2: Intervention</i> presented Digital Workflow: Lightroom to Print PRINT LAB tour Contact Sheet Workshop
Thurs Jan 29	Introductory Lightroom Workshop Advanced camera technique Homework: READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art – Chapter 1 POST: Weekly Photo Journal RAW conversion Lab Printing Workshop 1 - Orientation PHOTOGRAPH: Project 2: <i>Intervention</i> POST: Weekly Photo Journal
WEEK FOUR	
Tue Feb 3	Attendance Questions Digital Workflow: Pre-flight Printing Workshop 2 - proofing, test strips, & contact sheets
Thurs Feb 5	In-class printing time for Project 2 PHOTOGRAPH: Project 2: <i>Intervention</i> READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art – Chapter 2 POST: Weekly Photo Journal
WEEK FIVE	
Tue Feb 10	Project 2: <i>Intervention</i> Due Class Print Critique Midterm Research Project presented
Thurs Feb 12	Using a Tripod – Best Practices POST: Midterm Research Project Artist Pick POST: Weekly Photo Journal READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art – Chapter 3
WEEK SIX	
Tue Feb 17	Attendance Questions Research Project Artist signup due Meet in classroom & walk over together Collections visit – 8:30 am – room 443 Special Collections Project 3: <i>Be Brave</i> presented
Thurs Feb 19	PHOTOGRAPH: Project 3: <i>Be Brave</i> RESEARCH: Midterm Research Project POST: Weekly Photo Journal READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art – Chapter 4
WEEK SEVEN	
Tue Feb 24	Attendance Questions Midterm Research Project Presentations Due – Group 1

Thurs Feb 26	Midterm Research Project Presentations Due - Group 2 PHOTOGRAPH: Project 3: <i>Be Brave</i> POST: Weekly Photo Journal READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art - Chapter 5
WEEK EIGHT	
Tue Mar 3	Attendance Questions In Class Printing Workshop 3
Thurs Mar 5	In-class printing time for Project 3 PRINT: Project 3: <i>Be Brave</i> POST: Weekly Photo Journal Midterm Grades Provided
WEEK NINE	
Tue Mar 10	No Class - Spring Break
Thurs Mar 12	No Class - Spring Break
WEEK TEN	
Tue Mar 17	Project 3: <i>Be Brave</i> Due Class Print Critique
Thurs Mar 19	Equipment Demos Attendance Questions Manual Camera Controls - Advanced
WEEK ELEVEN	
Tue Mar 24	Equipment Demos Attendance Questions Manual Camera Controls - Advanced
Thurs Mar 26	POST: Weekly Photo Journal READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art - Chapter 6
WEEK TWELVE	
Tue Mar 31	Attendance Questions Printing Workshop 4 Future Digital Workflow: Bridge + Adobe Raw + image adjustment
Thurs Apr 2	PHOTOGRAPH: Project 4: <i>Tableau Vivant</i> POST: Weekly Photo Journal READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art - Chapter 7
WEEK THIRTEEN	
Tue Apr 7	Project 4: <i>Tableau Vivant</i> Due Class Print Critiques Final Project Presented
Thurs Apr 9	WRITE: Final Project Proposal POST: Weekly Photo Journal READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art - Chapter 8
WEEK FOURTEEN	
Tue Apr 14	Attendance Questions In Class work time Final Project Proposal Due

Thurs Apr 16	In Class work time POST: Weekly Photo Journal READ: The Photograph As Contemporary Art – Chapter 9
WEEK FIFTEEN	
Tue Apr 21	Attendance Questions Individual Meetings In-class studio time
Thurs Apr 23	Individual Meetings In-class studio time POST: Weekly Photo Journal
WEEK SIXTEEN	
Tue Apr 28	Final Critique - Group 2
Thurs Apr 30	Final Critique - Group 1

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

According to UNT Policy 18.1.16, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

HEALTH & SAFETY PROGRAM

All users of the studio classrooms are expected to always follow studio area rules. If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

- Follow all CVAD Health and Safety handbook guidelines (the handbook should be reviewed by your instructor and can be found here: <https://art.unt.edu/healthandsafety>)
- Follow the CVAD Waste Management Chart in the classroom and other health & safety guidelines posted
- In case of emergency, call campus police at (940)565-3000 or call 911
- File an incident report (forms may be found in the CVAD H&S handbook and in the main office) within 48 hours of the event)
- Do not prop classroom doors. Doors are to remain closed to ensure the building HVAC
- and ventilation work properly
- No food or drink in the studio
- There is absolutely no food or drink allowed in the darkroom at any time.
- Your class and experience level determine the level of your darkroom privileges and
- access to certain equipment and processes.
- Be mindful and respectful of all darkroom rules and procedures, designated wet and dry
- areas, and use properly labeled equipment appropriately.
- If you cross contaminate chemistry or an area, please inform an instructor, lab tech or
- student worker immediately.
- If you do not know how to use a piece of equipment or are unsure of proper procedures
- please ask someone.
- Do not use force on any piece of equipment.
- Clean up after yourself- wipe down surfaces.
- Do not block doorways or block access to lights.
- Do not remove furniture from rooms or borrow furniture from rooms without permission.

- If something breaks, please tell the lab worker or a Faculty member immediately.
- You must leave enough time at the end of open lab or class time to properly wash your prints, clean up, and return equipment.
- Do not create "daisy chains" with multiple electric cords.
- No hazardous materials down sinks.
- Store all flammables in the flammable cabinet. Keep flammable cabinet closed at all times.
- First aid kits are found in each studio. Notify your instructor or technician if supplies are low.
- Report any safety issues IMMEDIATELY to your instructor.
- All courses must engage in an end of the semester clean up.

Lighting Studio

The lighting studio is a shared space with its own set of rules. It is most important that you respect the time you have signed up for, especially during the busy hours. It is also important to keep the area clean and orderly. If you take an item from the closet, you want to make sure you return it to the same place. You also want to create a space for yourself to work in that is not cluttered with cords.

- If anything breaks for any reason, please let the lab worker on duty know immediately.
- While the studio is a space that can be used by many people, there are some pieces of lighting equipment reserved for students who are enrolled/have completed the Advanced Lighting Techniques. It is always better to ask if you are not sure if you can use a piece of equipment or not.
- All lighting that needs to be plugged in must be plugged into one of the power strips in the studio. Never plug anything but a power strip into the wall.
- When using the C-Stands it is important to understand how heavy the equipment is and you want to make sure you are using the sandbags to weight the stand down.
- Make sure you are keeping the cords clear.
- Never mix water and electricity. If you are photographing a liquid, make sure you are careful to keep it away from the equipment.
- When you are changing the light modifiers, be careful of the flash tubes.
- Do not put heavy objects on the cyclorama.
- Leave the studio cleaner than you found it.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION & PROCEDURES

UNT Emergency Guide: <https://emergency.unt.edu/about-us>

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to the course management system for contingency plans for covering course materials.

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION, HARRASSMENT & ASSAULT

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. UNT's Student Advocate she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct

STUDENT EVALUATION ADMINISTRATION DATES

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13 and 14 [insert administration dates] of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey, they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the spot website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

An Incomplete Grade ("I") is a non-punitive grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/semester and only if a student (1) is passing the course and (2) has a justifiable and documented reason, beyond the control of the student (such as serious illness or military service), for not completing the work on schedule. In consultation with the instructor, complete a request for an Incomplete Grade. This form can be found on the department website and must be turned into the department chair prior to the last day of classes (not the exam date). Note: A grade of Incomplete is not automatically assigned to students