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# PHOT-530: HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Effective Term**

Fall 2026

**BOT Approval Date**

12/11/2025

**Discipline**

PHOT - Digital Photography

**Course Number**

530

**Course Title**

History of Photography

**Short Title**

History of Photography

**Credit Status (CB 04)**

D - Credit - Degree applicable

**Units****Lecture Units**

3.00

**Total Units**

3.00

**Hours****Lecture Contact Hours**

48-54

**Out of Class Hours Lecture**

96-108

**Total Contact Hours**

48 - 54

**Total Out of Class Hours**

96 - 108

**Total Student Learning Hours**

144 - 162

**Distance Education**

Yes

**Distance Education****Distance Education Type**

Both Fully Online and Hybrid Online

**Fully Online Delivery Requirements:**

- a. Students must be notified via the college schedule of classes and the syllabus for the class if proctored tests are required for this course
- b. Any planned face-to-face meetings, such as an orientation or study session, must be optional

c. The MSJC curriculum committee requires the use of accessible, asynchronous discussion as a component of every fully online course

Are you using publisher content?

No

### Regular Substantive Interaction

Instructor-to-student, student-to-student, and student-to-content contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure regular substantive interaction (RSI) is maintained not only weekly but also for the duration of the course. Instructor interactions should be equivalent in time, quality and consistency to the engagement students would receive in a face-to-face course—for example, through announcements, discussion participation, personalized feedback, video messages, or other instructional communications. Instructors are expected to be responsive to student inquiries within a 24-72 hour time frame excluding holidays. RSI will be maintained through a variety of methods:

- Orientation - Students must be oriented to the online and face-to-face portions at the start of the course.
- Announcements - Announcements using the course management system must be posted at least weekly to keep students current on course events, due dates, materials, etc.
- Discussion Forums - Content-related discussion forums within the designated CMS will include appropriate instructor participation and will be initiated and maintained, with timely feedback provided. Instructors are required to monitor the discussions and related activities to provide guidance and direction. Open-ended discussion boards may be used to further learning and interaction.
- MSJC Communication – Instructor will use MSJC-administered communication tools (such as email or the designated CMS communication tools) to regularly communicate with and provide ease of access to students.
- Timely Feedback - Timely feedback on student work will be provided by the instructor, which may include comments and/or rubrics, within the Grades area of the designated CMS.
- Scheduled Meetings – Hybrid and synchronous courses will meet at regularly scheduled times.

ADA Compliance - All course interactions and content must be designed with accessibility in mind and meet ADA requirements.

### Catalog Description

This course offers students a historical survey of photography from its ancient origins through contemporary digital practices. The course emphasizes technological, artistic, cultural, and social developments, as well as the impact of photography on science, politics, and visual culture. Students will engage with primary sources, critical readings, and historically-based projects to deepen their understanding of photography's history and legacy.

### Codes

#### TOP Code (CB 03)

1011.00 - Photography

#### CIP Code

50.0605 - Photography.

#### Repeatability Code

No

#### Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

#### Minimum Qualifications

| Minimum Qualifications         | And/Or |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Photography (Masters Required) | End    |

### GE Information

#### Check GE Types Requested

AA/AS C - Humanities

### Learning Objectives

#### Learning Objectives

| Learning Objective                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Identify key historical developments, figures, and issues in the history of photography. |
| 2. Explain the progression of photographic technologies.                                    |

3. Compare contemporary photographic techniques with their historical foundations.
4. Evaluate the technical, conceptual, and aesthetic aspects of historical photographs and photographic movements.
5. Critique photographic images using approaches grounded in historical context.
6. Assess how race, gender, class, and culture have shaped photographic practice.

## Learning Outcome Information

### Course Learning Outcomes

#### Learning Outcome

1. Students will analyze the social impact of the camera throughout history.
2. Students will interpret key historical concepts in photography.
3. Students will evaluate works to distinguish the stylistic and thematic approaches of influential photographers.

## Content

### Course Lecture Content

1. Origins of Photography
  - a. "Drawing with light" and naturally occurring images.
  - b. Early optical devices: camera obscura, camera lucida.
  - c. The human visual system and artistic applications from antiquity through the Renaissance.
  - d. Alchemy, science, and the groundwork for photography in the Middle East and Europe.
2. Early Chemical and Optical Innovations (18th–19th Century)
  - a. Invention of permanent photographs: Niépce, Daguerre, Talbot.
  - b. Daguerreotype, Calotype, Wet Plate, Tintype processes.
  - c. Evolution of photographic chemistry: silver salts, emulsions.
3. Photography in the 19th Century
  - a. Photography's relationship to fine art and science.
  - b. Portraiture, landscape, and documentary photography.
  - c. Early social and political photography (Civil War, abolitionist imagery, Indigenous representation, and cross-cultural portraiture).
4. Photography as Art and Science (Late 19th–Early 20th Century)
  - a. Pictorialism, Modernism, and Straight Photography.
  - b. Steichen, Stieglitz, Weston, Adams.
  - c. Photography as scientific tool: Muybridge, motion studies, X-ray and medical imaging.
5. Expanding Styles, Movements, and Technologies (20th Century)
  - a. Emergence of color photography: Autochrome to Kodachrome and Agfa.
  - b. Photography in mass media, advertising, and popular culture.
  - c. Photography and war: Spanish Civil War, World Wars, Vietnam.
  - d. Photography and social justice: Civil Rights, feminist, LGBTQ+, labor, and postcolonial perspectives.
6. Photography in the Contemporary Era (1970s–Present)
  - a. Postmodern photography and conceptual practices.
  - b. Photography as political activism and social critique.
  - c. Digital revolution: CCD sensors, photo diodes, and the rise of digital imaging.
  - d. Photography in the information age: social media, AI, image manipulation.
  - e. Global perspectives and diversity in contemporary photography.
7. The Future of Photography
  - a. Imaging technologies of tomorrow (VR, computational photography, AI-driven imaging).
  - b. Ethical and cultural considerations for photography in a digital age.
  - c. Issues of equity, accessibility, and representation in emerging imaging trends.

## Methods of Instruction

### Method

### Activity

**Integration**

The instructor will present demonstrations of historical and contemporary photographic equipment, describing their functions and significance. Students will compare and contrast the equipment to understand technical changes in photography over time and their impact on image-making.

**DE Adaptations for MOI**

In the online format, students engage with accessible instructor-created video demonstrations, links to virtual museum tours, and curated image archives that illustrate historical photographic equipment. Descriptions and comparison prompts are provided in the CMS' lecture page. Students participate in discussion boards or short reflection assignments submitted to the CMS to compare and contrast the tools, ensuring they gain the same historical and technical insight as in face-to-face instruction.

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**Method**

Directed Study

**Integration**

Students will engage in directed study through guided web and literary research. Assignments will require students to analyze the historical evolution of photography and critically deconstruct key images, with a focus on how diverse photographers and communities have been represented or marginalized in photographic history. This approach reinforces connections between historical context, cultural perspectives, and visual analysis.

**DE Adaptations for MOI**

In the online format, students access curated research links, digital archives, and scholarly articles provided in the CMS. Written assignments and analysis activities are submitted digitally, and students share their findings through online discussion forums or collaborative documents. Instructor feedback is provided electronically, ensuring students develop research and critical analysis skills in a structured, accessible environment.

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**Method**

Homework

**Integration**

Homework assignments will require students to view production presentations related to the history and practice of photography. Students will then respond through written reflections or short analyses that connect the material to course content and themes.

**DE Adaptations for MOI**

In the online format, accessible presentations are embedded or linked in the CMS. Students complete guided prompts or reflection questions and submit their responses digitally through the discussion section of the CMS. Discussion boards may also be used for peer exchange, allowing students to compare insights and perspectives on the presentations in a collaborative online space.

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**Methods of Evaluation****Method**

Class Participation

**Integration**

Student participation will be evaluated through structured "round table" discussions on lecture presentations and assigned readings covering the historical progression of photography. Evaluation is based on the frequency and accuracy of contributions, as well as the ability to reference course materials and engage respectfully with peers.

**DE Adaptations for MOE**

In the online format, class participation is evaluated through discussion board posts and responses in the CMS. Students are required to contribute original posts responding to guided prompts and to engage with at least two peers in a meaningful way. Evaluation focuses on the quality of contributions, demonstrated understanding of course content, and respectful exchange of diverse perspectives. Students will receive feedback through the feedback portion of the CMS within a week of the submission deadline.

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**Method**

Exams/Tests

**Integration**

Exams and tests will include image gallery practical exams requiring students to deconstruct photographs by noteworthy photographers. Students will analyze technical elements and conceptual achievements demonstrated in the images. Evaluation is based on accuracy of identification, depth of analysis, and demonstration of comprehensive understanding of historical context.

**DE Adaptations for MOE**

In the online format, image gallery exams are delivered through the CMS using digital image sets. Students respond to timed written prompts requiring image analysis, technical identification, and contextual evaluation. Question formats may include short answer, essay, and comparison tasks. Exams are designed to maintain academic integrity while ensuring equitable access, and evaluation criteria remain consistent with face-to-face sections. Students will receive instant feedback upon submission through the quizzes portion of the CMS.

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**Method**

Papers

**Integration**

Students will complete written and/or oral research papers and presentations that reinforce understanding of the historic evolution of photography. Projects must examine how race, gender, class, sexuality, or culture have shaped photographic practice or representation. Evaluation will be based on reading and research comprehension, content accuracy, and the depth of cultural analysis demonstrated.

**DE Adaptations for MOE**

In the online format, research papers are submitted digitally through the CMS, and oral presentations are adapted into narrated slideshows or video recordings. Students engage with peer presentations through discussion board responses to ensure collaborative learning. Evaluation emphasizes content validity, research integration, and the student's ability to critically analyze photography from diverse perspectives, ensuring the DEI focus is preserved in the online environment. Students will receive annotated feedback through the submission portal of the CMS within a week of the submission deadline.

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**Assignments****Assignment Type**

Other

**In-class and/or outside of class**

Outside of class

**Formative or Summative**

Summative

**Assignment**

Pinhole Camera Fabrication

**Overview:**

For this project, you will design, construct, and document your own pinhole camera. This assignment integrates historical knowledge of early photographic processes with hands-on fabrication and reflective documentation.

**Instructions:****Preparation**

Review the online lecture on pinhole camera attributes, function, and construction concerns.

Read the reference link provided in the LMS for additional context on pinhole photography.

**Project Development**

Plan and assemble the necessary materials for your camera.

Construct your pinhole camera over the course of the semester, documenting each step.

**Documentation Requirements (12 digital images)**

Submit a visual and annotated slideshow in the LMS demonstrating your design and process. Include the following images:

Design drawings or plans.  
Raw materials displayed on a simple, uncluttered surface.  
3–6. Four images showing construction in progress.  
7–10. Four images showing each side of the completed camera.  
The interior of the camera.  
Your signature on the exterior surface of the camera.

#### Submission Guidelines

Submit your 12 images as attachments no later than three weeks before the end of the semester (see syllabus for due date).  
Each image should be between 300–800 pixels on its largest dimension.  
If you need assistance resizing digital images, consult the resource link provided in the LMS.

#### How assignment will be adapted in online format

In the online format, the Pinhole Camera Fabrication project is completed independently, with instructor support provided through asynchronous and synchronous tools. All instructional resources (lectures, reference links, and tutorials) are available in the CMS, with captions and accessible formats. Students upload their documentation as a digital slideshow or narrated video presentation to the CMS, ensuring equitable access to feedback.

Progress is monitored through scaffolded checkpoints: students post initial design sketches and material lists to a discussion board for peer and instructor feedback, share mid-project construction photos for formative feedback, and submit their final set of 12 images digitally through the CMS. Extra credit images or scans of pinhole-produced photographs may also be uploaded digitally; mailing physical prints is optional but not required for online learners.

Peer interaction is incorporated through discussion board critiques, where students review and comment on each other's documentation, ensuring that online participants engage in the same collaborative learning as face-to-face students.

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#### Assignment Type

Reading

#### In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

#### Formative or Summative

Formative

#### Assignment

Reading Analysis – Early Photographic Processes

##### Overview:

This assignment builds your historical understanding of photography by engaging with key texts and connecting them to course themes.

##### Instructions:

Read Chapter 3 of *Seizing the Light* (Hirsch), which covers the invention of the daguerreotype and calotype.  
Review the supplemental online lecture "Invention of Photography: Daguerre and Talbot" in the CMS.

Take notes on the following:

- The major differences between the daguerreotype and calotype processes.
- How these technologies shaped early photographic practice and public perception.
- How issues of access, cost, or culture influenced who could use these processes.

Bring your notes to class to participate in small-group discussion and image analysis.

#### Submission Guidelines:

- Submit a one-page summary of your notes to the CMS.
- Include at least one question you still have after completing the readings.

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**How assignment will be adapted in online format**

In the online format, the reading analysis is supported through digital tools that ensure access and interaction. Assigned chapters and supplemental lectures are provided in the CMS in accessible formats (with captions and transcripts as needed). Students upload their one-page summaries to the CMS and post at least one discussion question to a course forum. Peer-to-peer interaction is incorporated as students respond to each other's questions in threaded discussions, simulating the in-class small-group analysis. This adaptation ensures that online learners engage critically with the material and with each other's perspectives.

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**Assignment Type**

Writing

**In-class and/or outside of class**

Outside of class

**Formative or Summative**

Formative

**Assignment**

Photography and Representation

**Overview:**

This essay asks you to explore how photography has represented—or failed to represent—marginalized communities, and how photographers from those communities have used the medium to challenge stereotypes and assert identity.

**Instructions:**

Select one photographer from an underrepresented community (e.g., Gordon Parks, Carrie Mae Weems, Zanele Muholi, Lola Álvarez Bravo). A list of suggested photographers and resources is provided in the LMS.

- Choose two photographs by that photographer and analyze them in detail.
- In a 4–5 page essay, address the following:
  - What social, cultural, or political issues are being explored in the images?
  - How do these images challenge or reinforce mainstream narratives?
  - How does the photographer's identity and perspective shape the work?
  - Why is this photographer's contribution significant to the history of photography?
- Use evidence from course readings, lectures, and at least one scholarly outside source to support your analysis.

**Submission Guidelines:**

- Essays must be 4–5 pages, double-spaced, in APA format.
- Include citations from at least one assigned text and one outside scholarly source.
- Submit through the CMS by the posted due date.

**How assignment will be adapted in online format**

In the online format, students access a curated list of digital archives, museum collections, and scholarly resources linked in the CMS, ensuring equitable access to diverse photographers and images. Drafts may be shared in small peer-review groups through discussion boards or conferencing tools, where students provide feedback using a structured rubric that emphasizes sensitivity to representation and cultural context. Instructor feedback is given electronically, and students are encouraged to reflect on how their own perspectives shape their analysis, ensuring the DEI focus is preserved in the online environment.

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## Course Materials

### Textbooks

Robert Hirsch (2024). Seizing the Light: A History of Photography. Routledge. ISBN: 9781032100821

## Class Size Information

### Class Size

40

### Class Size Category

A - Lecture/discussion 40

## Diversity and Inclusion

**Course Design and Materials:** Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

**Inclusive Learning Environment:** Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

**Accessible Instruction:** Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

**Equitable Teaching Practices:** Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogies:** Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

**Ongoing Reflection and Improvement:** Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

### **Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.**

Diversity and inclusion are infused into PHOT-530 through both course content, MOIs, MOEs, and assignments. The course highlights the contributions of photographers from underrepresented groups—including women, LGBTQ+, and global artists—while critically examining how photography has been used to both reinforce and challenge cultural stereotypes. Assignments, such as research papers and DEI-focused analyses, require students to engage with diverse perspectives and issues of representation. This ensures that students not only study photography's technical and artistic evolution, but also understand its role in shaping and reflecting social, cultural, and political identities.

### **Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.**

Assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions in PHOT-530 are intentionally contextualized to support diverse learners and promote equity. Assignments include DEI-focused research papers and image analyses that require students to study photographers from underrepresented communities, highlighting diverse voices in the field. Instruction incorporates inclusive teaching strategies such as structured peer critiques, guided discussions, and access to digital archives that highlight global and marginalized perspectives. Evaluation emphasizes not only technical accuracy but also students' ability to critically analyze representation and cultural context, ensuring equitable measures of success. Course content covers a wide spectrum of cultural, racial, gendered, and global photographic practices, reinforcing that photography is both an art form and a social tool. Interactions are facilitated through roundtable discussions, peer feedback, and online forums, all structured with clear criteria and guidelines to ensure students learn collaboratively across perspectives.

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## Interactions

### **Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.**

In PHOT-530, student-to-student interaction is built into group discussions, collaborative image analyses, and peer critiques of written and visual assignments. These interactions encourage students to exchange diverse perspectives on photography's historical and cultural impact, fostering a deeper collective understanding. Structured peer-review activities also ensure that students practice giving and receiving constructive feedback in an equitable and respectful environment.

In the online environment, these same interactions occur through discussion boards, shared digital critique platforms, and synchronous or asynchronous peer-review sessions, allowing students to engage meaningfully with one another across varied schedules and locations.

### **Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.**

In PHOT-530, instructor-to-student interaction occurs through lectures, guided discussions, and individualized feedback on assignments and projects. The instructor facilitates critical dialogue, models methods of visual and cultural analysis, and provides formative comments on written and creative work to support student growth. Regular check-ins and office hours (in-person or virtual) further ensure that students receive timely support and equitable access to instruction.

In the online format, this interaction is supported through recorded or live virtual lectures, timely written or video feedback, and virtual office hours that maintain consistent access to the instructor regardless of a student's location.

### **Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.**

In PHOT-530, student-to-content interaction is achieved through direct engagement with primary sources such as historical photographs, critical texts, and digital image archives. Students interact with the material by analyzing images, reading scholarship, and applying concepts in assignments like essays, presentations, and the pinhole camera project. These activities allow students to actively connect course content to both historical context and contemporary cultural perspectives.

Online, students engage with digitized archives, streamed lectures, and multimedia resources within the LMS, ensuring they can access and analyze the same materials in a flexible, digitally enriched environment.

### **Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).**

In PHOT-530, student-to-self interaction is supported through reflective activities that encourage metacognitive awareness of learning. Students complete weekly reflection journals and project critiques where they assess their own understanding of photographic history, evaluate the effectiveness of their analytical approaches, and connect course material to their personal perspectives and experiences. This process helps students monitor their growth as learners, recognize biases or assumptions, and develop lifelong skills in self-assessment and critical thinking.

In the online setting, these reflections are submitted digitally through journals or discussion prompts, allowing students to revisit materials, track their progress over time, and articulate insights at their own pace.

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