

# **Teaching Photojournalism: A Portfolio Based on Peer Review of Teaching**

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## Teaching Photojournalism: A Portfolio Based On Peer Review of Teaching

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## I Portfolio Purpose: Goal of the Peer Review Process

When I signed up for the Peer Review program, I knew I could use some guidance with my photojournalism class. Not only would I be teaching it for the first time, I would be teaching it in only my second semester at Kansas State University.

Two other challenges awaited me. First, having worked as a news photographer in the past and in newspapers for a couple of decades, I have an intuitive sense of what makes a good photograph. Finding the words to explain my intuitions would require no small amount of reflection and preparation.

In addition to instruction, the class would require me to evaluate and grade the photographs of students whose skills would vary tremendously. On the one hand, I would be teaching students who had worked for the campus newspaper for several semesters, some of whom had held internships at professional newspapers. On the other hand, I would have students whose only photographic experience outside of cell phone shots posted on Facebook was the prerequisite class that explained the basics of using a camera and composing a photo. Finding a way to grade them fairly would be a goal of mine.

I presented my mentor, Professor Cora Cooper, and my peer, Professor Cathie Lavis, with an early draft of my syllabus and discussed my goals for the students. They were two-fold: Understand the beginnings of photojournalism, its development, and current issues. Second, select a story to photograph over the final two to three months of the semester.

Lectures would tell the story of history, along with assigned reading. To give ideas of excellent photography, I would show examples once or twice a week (the class met twice a week) of a prominent photographer's work and explain its relevance. I also wanted them to think about how photography is used by news outlets today, so each student was assigned to choose a news source (typically a newspaper or web site, but it could be any other news medium) to follow for several days. During class, the student would bring in the papers or show the web site and explain how the photos were used in the publication.

Presenting the news, whether in photos, text, video, or anything else, is more complicated than it appears by simply looking at the final product. So I wanted students to learn a little about the choices that go into creating the news. For this I used a case study of a "Frontline" documentary in which the producers had to select which parts of interviews to use in their film, and which to leave out. Students were assigned background reading to do in advance, and after watching the case study in class wrote a paper in which they had to explain what they would have included and excluded, and why.

All of these aspects of class counted for about half a student's grade. The rest came from their photo portfolio, which served as their final project.

My goal with the students' portfolios was to help them find an idea that they could follow for several weeks, in the end telling a story in several photographs. I encouraged them to think of ideas they had an interest in, and to look on and off campus. I wanted them to understand that the project needed to last several weeks—it couldn't be a one-day event, for example—and that they would need the cooperation of the subjects they photographed. Students wrote proposals, the best of which I shared with the class.

Once the students started photographing, they brought in proofs of their work (prints made on inexpensive paper from a standard printer). The first time that they brought in proofs I reviewed each student's work individually, in front of the class, giving positive reinforcement and suggesting which photos could be improved by re-shooting



and the kinds of pictures that were missing. In subsequent classes, I paired students together (different pairings each time) and had the students critique each other.

As I prepared for the semester, I had several key questions I looked forward to exploring with my peers.

How could I fairly grade students whose abilities and backgrounds were so different? How could I connect with all of them, finding a way to open their eyes to new elements of photography that would challenge the experienced students without losing the newcomers? These are the questions I would like readers to address when reviewing the portfolio.

Syllabus development was another big question mark for me. New to teaching, I had reviewed syllabi that, on the one hand, listed the topic for each day the class met; on the other, I've seen syllabi so brief they barely elaborate on the course description in the catalog.

I was hopeful that the Peer Review program would help me find answers to these questions. I am thankful that the program did, particularly through the guidance of my small-group colleagues. The class, and my students' experiences, were far richer with the insight I gained from the program.

## II Course Design: Course Details and Background

The course is intended to explain the world of news photography, its goals, challenges, and functions. The Internet's effect on the news is significant because newspapers, the organizations that are most likely to hire young photojournalists, are under severe stress caused by the decline in advertising revenue that follows a switch to online content. As a result, newsrooms are not only hiring fewer staffers, they are shrinking their news output. So another point I wanted to make was how a news photographer could survive in the new media world.

What we today call news photography has its roots in the social documentary photography of the early twentieth century. At the time, cameras were large (about the size of a microwave oven), heavy, and delicate. Negatives were glass plates, which were easily broken particularly when the photographer worked outside the studio. To top it off exposures were slow. In short, technology prevented photographers from working quickly, candidly, and certainly not surreptitiously.

By the 1920s, however, cameras had become much smaller and far more durable, and flexible film were common. Photographers could explore social issues and report without tripods or assistants. The Great Depression created an unlimited supply of stories of misfortune, which photographers helped to tell.

After World War II, most news photography told the American success story. It wasn't until the 1960s that society opened up sufficiently to be willing to examine cultural challenges such as racism, poverty, and the way farmworkers, particularly immigrants, were taken advantage of. Life magazine was in the vanguard of covering such topics, which larger newspapers began to take up as well.

The rich social history of news photography is often overlooked today. More common are photos of celebrities, sporting events, and politicians at podiums. Such photos are taken at a planned event, at which the photographer simply needs to react (press the button) at the right moment.

More important, however, are the stories that require a photographer's intellect to uncover. A good photographer should learn how to find a story, research it, propose it to an editor, and then deliver on it. For the class, I asked students to find a story they could tell in one of three traditional ways.

One was the photo story, which typically follows a person or group as they go about their lives. But it's not simply a day-in-the-life project. The subject needs to have something unusual about him or her. For example, a single mother who's also a student, or the last baker in town who still gets up at 3 every morning even though his clientele grows smaller every month. Most students chose this approach.

Another choice was to create a documentary project. In this method, a photographer reports a topic, one with enough layers that the photographer can cover it in a number of ways. For example, poverty in Riley County may have as its primary subjects homeless families or the chronically unemployed, but the reporting could include social service agencies, the head of the unemployment office, and the kinds of jobs that pay minimum wage. A few students chose this approach.

The third option was to create a portfolio around a student's stylistic interest or topical specialization. Studio lighting (with multiple flashes) or team sports are examples of this option which, to my surprise, no one chose.

The course covered two other important aspects, intellectual reactions to photography and newsroom ethics.

The course worked toward the portfolio by covering history at the beginning of the semester. This was the easiest part to teach because I had complete control over the

content: my lectures, the assigned reading, and the photographers' work I showed in class.

As we ended the historical overview and began discussing the project, we moved into the intellectual reactions to photography. This portion was similar to history because I controlled the lecture and reading. I required two papers on these topics.

For the ethics portion, I also had control with the assigned reading and the video case study that we watched in class.

The portfolios, however, were created without my direct involvement. Of course, I had set the parameters in class, and the students' work in progress was reviewed by their classmates and by me. But the photography itself took place on their own time. Since I didn't know what kind of quality to expect, I used the in-class reviews as a way to emphasize new directions and to suggest ways to improve weaknesses. Seeing the final results—particularly the improvements—was the most rewarding part of the course for me.

Ten undergraduates took the course, five of whom were seniors, four were juniors and one was a sophomore. Half were women, two were from outside Kansas (New Mexico and Illinois), and all were Caucasian. Three of them had been my students in a previous class.

Three of the students were majoring in journalism and mass communications. For three others it was their minor; their majors were sociology, anthropology, and fine arts. The other four majored in engineering, modern languages, and biology. Seven of the students worked for either the Kansas State Collegian, the campus newspaper, or the Royal Purple yearbook (or both); in my role as the adviser to the Collegian, I was already familiar with these students. Of the seven, four worked as photographers and so had plenty of experience before taking this class. The other three were editors or writers whose experience in news photography was negligible, as was the case for the three who had never worked for a student publication.

The four with a bit of practical experience in photography naturally took to the portfolio assignment faster, and were quicker to focus their stories. The others demonstrated a broader range of comprehension and enthusiasm for the classroom portions. I was lucky to have among the former group three students who were vocal in sharing their campus expertise, giving classmates the names of people or offices to contact for help with their stories. When pairing the students to review their work in progress, I never put one of these four with each other, instead connecting them with students who needed more help.

During the other portions of the class, the students were essentially equal. Even the experienced photographers were only barely aware of their medium's history, none had had to write about its intellectual impact, and none had taken a class in journalistic ethics (although some had covered it as a segment of another course, as they did in this one).

Journalism has a tremendous impact on society. Journalists need to understand the way in which their information is received, because that's often quite different from the way in which they believe it is understood. The interpretation of photography is especially subjective, so I wanted students to learn how their work as professional photographers would be seen by the public.

The course goals and learning objectives were, in summary, to help prepare students for the professional realm of news photography by giving them a historical and intellectual background of the medium and by requiring them to find and photographic portfolio that they would work on for several weeks.

Specifically, the historical section was to explain how news photography started and why photography that covers social issues is the most highly regarded. The intellectual section was to require them to ask themselves why photography matters, how it is

distinct from other news media (print and video), and ask them to answer its critics. The segment on ethics put them in the position of making a difficult choice about which portions of an interview with women who had had abortions should be included in a documentary film.

My goal was to make them think about news photography as an outsider—such as the journalist's audience—would think about it, and in so doing make them consider how news photography is seen by those who aren't creating it.

Students in the course earn credit for the journalism and digital media sequence within the school of journalism and mass communications. The class is an elective, with the prerequisites of news and feature writing (MC200) and photography (MC311). It and photography are the only two courses on the medium in the school. It is the only photo-journalism course in the university. The Department of Communications in the College of Agriculture, which offers a major in agricultural communications and journalism, has no photography classes.

The course incorporates alternative news media by giving credit to students who create digital slide shows for their final projects. While film cameras are permitted, the school has no facilities for processing film; all the students used digital cameras.

### III Teaching Methods: Implementation of Pedagogical Goals

I taught the class primarily through lecture, with discussion at the end of most sessions. The class read from one book, "They All Had Cameras," by Richard Steven Street, which was on reserve in the library along with copies of the assigned chapters. They read a second book, "On Photography," a series of essays by Susan Sontag. Lectures were illustrated with photos that the authors discussed because photos are rare in the Street book and absent in Sontag's. I found that once the students had seen the photos, they had a much easier time discussing the concepts relating to them.

My goal was to cover key issues in the history and criticism of news photography as a background for understanding the role of photojournalism in society today.

The segment on ethics was a combination of assigned reading, video, and discussion. It was a case study prepared by the Knight Center at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, in which a documentary for the PBS show "Frontline" was the subject. In advance, students read that the documentary, "The Last Abortion Clinic," covered the struggle in Mississippi between maintaining and closing the only clinic in the state that performed abortions.

The ethical question centered on one interview of several women who had had abortions. Students learned in advance that the producers felt that the interview was topically relevant, intellectually challenging, emotionally strong, and journalistically significant because it recorded women talking about their abortions and the regrets they felt. But the length of the edited interview took nearly one-third the time of the entire documentary. Should the complete interview be used, and other valid information cut? If the interview should be trimmed to fit the time available, which questions and answers would remain? Or would excerpted portions distort the interview, leaving as the best choice keeping it out of the film entirely?

When I assigned the reading I explained that the discussion would not consider any issues of the legality, ethics, or morals of abortion. Instead, we would discuss the topic in the same way it would come up in a newsroom: Detached professionals making decisions without letting personal feelings interfere. I repeated this guideline before watching the video and again before assigning the paper. It worked. No one took a soap-box position on abortion, and everyone discussed the ethics of the case.

The background reading done, we watched the video in class. It was prepared for classroom viewing, with the interview presented with raw editing and rough cuts so that students saw an unpolished version. We were able to discuss the video and re-watch parts of it when questions came up.

My goal was primarily to teach about making a hard decision, one with no right or wrong answer, in preparing a news report. A secondary goal, in light of the subject (it was the only case study I could find that involved visual journalism), was to teach them to discuss a hot-button issue in a disinterested way.

Another portion of the class required students to present the work of others, that of other news sources and that of a favorite photographer. I allowed them to choose their sources in both cases. When they demonstrated how news organizations covered events (such as the earthquakes in Haiti or China), some brought newspapers and others showed Internet sites. Similarly, when presenting their favorite photographers, some brought in books while others used the Internet.

My goal was to let the class hear how their classmates thought about photography, and to hear each other describe their personal feelings about very different kinds of work. Some students selected portrait photographers, one chose an advertising photographer, and others presented the work of famous photojournalists. All explained compelling reasons for being attached to the photographer they chose.

The portfolio project required students to propose their story ideas as they would pitch a proposal to an editor. They had to explain their concepts in writing with enough detail to show that they had done some investigating, but without so many specifics that they would not be boxed in if the story changed halfway through.

My goal was partly to show them how to write a story proposal, and chiefly to get them to think about how they would approach their stories before starting to photograph them.

As students began shooting their portfolio projects, I showed a few examples of photo stories and documentaries. Then I required them to bring in their own work for critiques. I led some of them, demonstrating how to praise and how to point out weaknesses so that the students could comfortably critique each others' work in the following weeks. When we got to that point, I oversaw the students' critiques and asked for other students' comments before adding my own thoughts.

My goal was to lead them to think critically about assessing the breadth and depth of a photography project so that they could begin to see the strengths and weaknesses in their own work.

Students wrote three papers in the class: one each for the ethics segment, the favorite photographer, and the Sontag book. I gave five quizzes to test students on their reading, comprehension of lectures and discussion, and awareness of current events.

Class participation accounted for ten percent of their grades. In the discussion category, which some students took part in only when called upon, I included their presentations to the class. I'm glad I did because some of the quietest students during the discussion portion were the best prepared and most well spoken during the presentations.

For the portfolio, students were required to bring in their work, either as proofs on paper or as digital files to project onto a screen. This demonstrated that they were working from week to week and allowed me to help them focus on the main points of their stories without getting distracted by secondary ideas.

The final writing assignment students completed was a self-assessment of their work in the class. It's an idea I learned from my peer, Dr. Lavis, one I found useful in showing students that it was they who earned a grade more than it was I who gave a grade. I instructed them to write an essay of about 800 words in which they made their case for the grade they believe they had earned. By this time they knew their score for everything but the portfolio (and the self-assessment), so they had a quantifiable idea of how they were performing. I explained that just because one argued for an A wouldn't mean one would get an A if one's work was only average. Instead, I was looking for a candid review of their effort in the class.

For example, I suggested they consider how much of the reading they had done on time, and whether they asked questions when they didn't understand something in a book or something I had said. I asked them to think about how much they had contributed to class, and whether they followed the news or used the web page I had set up for the class with links to ideas we had discussed. I also reviewed with them the grading criteria in the syllabus to remind them that such things as arriving on time and writing clearly counted too (pp. 11-12, *infra*).

The results were quite interesting. Most demonstrated self-awareness and were not shy in pointing out their deficiencies. Others overlooked details such as absences, and only one was disconnected from reality. To wit: "Let us face it Steve. I am great."

Many of the students, if not all of them, were surprised by the amount of writing I required of them—it was the first semester I had taught it so they had no stories from previous classes to go by. Although the class has been taught for at least fifteen years, it was usually led by an adjunct member of the faculty. Their syllabi, which I had reviewed,

showed a heavy emphasis on simply going out and taking pictures. As important as it is for photographers to be comfortable shooting a variety of assignments, it's even more important that photographers know how to think about photography particularly if they are going to succeed in the new world of news, where traditional newspaper jobs dwindle on a monthly basis.

Photographers who don't know where news photography came from or why it looks the way it does today are poorly equipped to make a difference in the medium. That's an obvious statement, of course, but photojournalism in the United States takes too many of its creative cues from the winners of last year's contests. I can't say why it's been that way, but I've seen that the photographers whose work opens wider the eyes of society know the names and legacies of the giants on whose shoulders they stand.

No creative field should let those giants go nameless. So I emphasized the importance of the genre's beginnings and current challenges. I required them to leave the medium the most dedicated of them were most comfortable with, photography, and required them to put their ideas in words on paper. Those who complained, and they did, were treated to my explanation that already every journalist has to do everything. Writers photograph. Editors report. Producers blog. Unless photographers can do at least one other newsroom task well, they will be working on their own.

The photographic portfolio performed a parallel task. Most of the previous syllabi describing shooting assignments to meet a class topic, such as sports or a news conference, and many of them required a photo story but without enough description to judge the assignment's requirements. A few instructors required students to shoot for a publication in another class (the school's alumni journal) or for the Collegian (which is extra-curricular).

Those were fine methods but have been outdated for several years as drastic realignments in the news media have led to the changes in newsroom duties that require journalists talented in many skills. In addition to writing, another is being able to identify a story, research it, propose and execute it without the help of editors. Many photographers work as freelancers, particularly when they're young, which is why I want students to be comfortable working independently.

Ethics is a topic I feel strongly is under-represented in most curricula, including ours, where it is an elective. Working as a freelancer, without the professional guidance of an experienced newsroom staff and without its broad financial and legal support, journalists will have no backstop to help them with the ethical issues they are likely to face. Large news organizations hire lawyers who specialize in First Amendment issues and smaller newsrooms keep them on retainer. Both options are too expensive for a solo journalist. Most journalists learn ethics on the job, listening to seasoned staffers and watching how their peers react when faced with unclear decisions. As freelancers, young photographers will need a way to evaluate difficult questions on their own. Three class sessions and a paper on the topic will make no one an expert, but it will show them how to ask the right kinds of questions before acting.

Thanks to one of my peers, Dr. Lavis, I included in my syllabus lengthy descriptions of the criteria I would use in determining grades. These were fairly easy for me to apply to everything except the portfolio, which will be discussed later.

For the other coursework, I used Dr. Lavis's descriptions as a template. They emphasize the subjective measures of a student's performance. So although it includes attendance, tardiness, and preparation—points that can be demonstrated easily—they also cover writing, expression, and the quality of one's self-evaluation.

A good example is to compare the grade descriptions for a student's thinking, which would be evident from both class participation and written assignments. From the description for the grade of A: "High-level performance implies excellence in thinking and perfor-

mance. A-level work is not only clear, well-reasoned (in writing) and technically superior (in photography), it is also insightful.”

For a B: “The grade of B implies sound thinking and performance. Above-average work is clear, precise, and well-reasoned, but does not have the depth of insight as in A-level work. B-level work displays sound reasoning (in writing) and technical proficiency (in photography).”

For a C: “C-level work is not reliably clear, precise, and reasoned, nor does it display depth of insight or even consistent competence. The C-level student sometimes raises questions, recognizes some questionable assumptions, occasionally uses language consistent with educated usage and journalistic standards, and shows technical proficiency often but not always.”

For a D: “This level of learner demonstrates a minimal understanding and skill in thinking. ... This kind of work is marked by thinking that is typically unclear, imprecise, and poorly reasoned, and is technically sub-standard.”

Finally, “...the F-level student regularly mis-evaluates his or her own work, does not raise questions or issues, does not recognize his or her assumptions, and does not use language consistent with educated and journalistic standards.”

Grading student work with these guidelines in mind—just as I hoped students wrote with them in mind—gave me criteria for deciding how to evaluate students’ assignments.

The bigger question for me was grading their photography. Since some of the students had several semesters’ experience under their belts, and were familiar with all the functions and features of their expensive professional-grade cameras, and since the others were new to photography and had basic cameras that in some instances were checked out from the library, were grades for the final project a foregone conclusion?

That was my concern. I didn’t want the project to cater toward the experienced students, so I created it in a way that let each student start from his or her own level of skill (with a camera) and comfort (with subjects).

To provide both the students and me with a framework for grading their photographs, I explained how my grading criteria covered the portfolio. A-level students, whose work was to be “technically superior (in photography),” were also to be insightful. That means being able to produce photos that are in focus, properly exposed, and aesthetically framed (all of which I include under skills, including composition because they were taught the basic standards); it also meant their photos needed to show that as photographers they did more than stand in front of a person and press the button. They needed to show that the subject trusted him or her, such as by granting access to private or personal space (where strangers wouldn’t ordinarily be permitted), and by appearing oblivious to the photographer.

Work that rose to the level of a B included “technical proficiency,” though not finesse, and didn’t show as much insight as A-level work. In other words, exposures were pretty good, but the connection with the subject wasn’t as deep. Without a subject’s trust, a photographer won’t get complete access and therefore miss some of the story.

Earning a C reflected “work with as many weaknesses as strengths” and sometimes shows technical proficiency. Students at this level would have difficulty using a camera properly and would have difficulty in selecting an appropriate subject.

Below-average performances would be marked by a misunderstanding of the creative process. “The D-level student tries to get through the course by emphasizing the quantity of work that goes into the portfolio or the effort at producing it instead of examining the quality of its outcome.”

A student who performed at an even lower level would not pass. An F “demonstrates a *failure to do the required work* of the course. ... The student who fails often



neglects to contact the instructor for help and ultimately takes little responsibility for his or her own learning. In addition to neglecting the quality of his or her portfolio, the F-level student regularly mis-evaluates his or her own work, does not raise questions or issues, does not recognize his or her assumptions, and does not use language consistent with educated and journalistic standards.”

#### IV Assessment: Analysis of Student Learning

The students undertook four major assignments, three papers and the photographic portfolio. A paper on ethics measured their ability to make difficult choice; a report on a photographer required them to read a book and discuss his or her photos; near the end of the semester, an essay reacting to a critic's statement that photographers don't matter (because cameras do all the work) gave them the chance to defend or challenge the idea based on the work they had done for the course.

In this section I will refer to and quote from the work of three students. They, like all the others in the class, gave me permission to use their work in this portfolio with their names included. I will use their first names here; their papers are part of Appendix B.

A. The first paper was a reaction to the ethics example discussed above. Students chose one of two questions to answer. Which of the video segments, if any, would you choose to include in the documentary? The other question was based on the statement of the documentary's director: "It doesn't matter what I believe, because I'm actually going to be able to put my personal point of view aside and report on the issue." This set up the other question, can a journalist ever be completely objective?

One goal of the assignment was to help understand that the questions did not have right or wrong answers. They would be graded on how well they explained their points of view and, more importantly, by the soundness of the reasoning they used to reach their conclusions. The other goal was to put them in the place of a reporter or editor who is faced with having to decide which quotes from an interview to use, and how to defend the selection; or how to explain the less specific but bigger question of objectivity.

The background material students read before viewing the video included discussions of these topics, which were then reviewed by the class both in reaction to the video and to examples I posed.

The student whose work was reliably high found specific details and wrote about them thoughtfully. Caroline chose to decide which of the interview segments to include in the final film. Her aim was to keep the documentary neutral, a hard task considering the subject, made no less easy because Christianity played a central role in the lives of the Southern women interviewed.

Caroline set the stage by reiterating one of the documentary's theses: Abortion is legal in Mississippi but the legislature passes laws that increase the regulations that abortion providers must meet to run a clinic. She writes,

Since the entire documentary is really more about the law in regards to abortion, there are many scenes that could be excluded because one could misperceive the documentary to be promoting pro-life choices. For example, there are several sections that discuss the women's feelings of guilt that follow with religious advice ... (Page 31, *infra*.)

She takes the general point (the legal aspect) and contrasts it with a specific example that, in her opinion, is unrelated to the first. Caroline follows this reasoning in a discussion of another portion of the interview, in which, as she puts it, "... we see the women discuss how Satan wants them to suffer in their grief and that only through the healing of Jesus Christ can one be liberated of such feelings." (P. 32) She continues,

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\* The page numbers referred to in the student work refer to the pages in this document; they appear in Appendix B. Henceforth I will eliminate the direction notation from student quotations.

As a section with seventeen segments of these same very strong religious implications shown repeatedly it would only make sense to remove them for the sake of neutrality. Likewise, the producers run the risk of offending religious pro-choice viewers. (Ibid.)

Despite her feelings, Caroline finds an interview segment she believes is appropriate to include because, she says, it relates to the rest of the film. "The women in this segment actually bring up Roe vs. Wade ... Even though the conversation is obviously biased, this segment actually pertains to the actual situation at hand ..." (Page 33).

I found her ideas original, thoughtful, well-expressed and logically sound. She received nine out of ten points.

The other two students answered the second question, about whether a journalist could ever be disinterested.

Lindsey's paper, like the rest of her work, was above average. Her ideas about journalistic objectivity were typical of the national dialogue about it, and were not particularly different from those we discussed in class. "I do think that journalists can fully put aside their personal views when covering a story or documenting a topic, otherwise I do not think they could be considered journalists," she writes (Page 35). I particularly liked her thoughtfulness and honesty when she put herself in a hypothetical situation.

I think it would be easy for me to keep my point of view out of a story or documentary. ... If I were assigned to cover something that I had strong personal convictions toward, I would have to evaluate whether I could keep everything in perspective and leave it to the people I interview to give their opinions, not my own. If I could not do this, I would pass on the story." (Ibid.)

One of the strengths of Lindsey's writing, imagining that she were answering the question in a real-world setting, set her apart. She received eight and a half out of ten points.

Another student's work was better than average for this assignment but average overall. Ashley's paper reiterated points about the importance of journalistic objectivity, but in writing that a journalist should "always be objective even if people question them" (Page 38) she overlooks an important point. The job of some journalists, such as columnists, is precisely to express opinions. In her conclusion she seems to contradict herself. "I think that a journalist's opinion becomes important if it is relevant to what the reporter has written or reported about." (Page 3.)

She seems unaware of these oversights, but the rest of the paper is cleanly written. I gave her eight points, although re-reading her paper now I think I was a bit generous. Seven would have been plenty.

B. The next major assignment was to write a book report about their favorite photographer. They could choose anyone they liked, living or dead, discussed in class or not. They were to write a biographical sketch of the person and then describe some of his or her photos and explain why they're interesting. When the papers were due, each student presented a slide show of the photographer's work, explaining to the class some of the same points from their papers.

Caroline's favorite photographer's most famous work is portraits of lesbians on the fringes of normal society. She sensitively writes about the photographs, which are not exactly Kansas fare. With a reference to a self-portrait the photographer, Catherine Opie, took as a child, Caroline describes a modern self-portrait:

To show off her bravery as she once did in her childhood self-portrait, we see that Opie has threaded 23 long needles throughout her arms. As a lesbian and member of the sadomasochistic leather subculture of San Francisco Opie claims that

at the time of her second self-portrait she was upset with America's view and mistreatment of the gay community. (Page 42.)

Caroline uses quotations from the photographer and descriptions of the photos to round out her review. She earned all ten points.

Lindsey chose Richard Avedon as her favorite photographer. Avedon, who became famous shooting fashion for Vogue, reinvented his career by making portraits of ordinary people, including carnival barkers, slaughterhouse workers, and drifters. Lindsey discussed a group portrait he made of a women's organization in which he took the photo before the group was posing. Most of the women are chatting as they prepare for the formal shot. Lindsey writes,

What is most interesting about this photograph is that Avedon took the picture with one woman having her back to the viewer. This is something that the renaissance [sic] artists did hundreds of years ago to make the audience feel as if they are part of the photograph [sic], and to show depth. (P. 47.)

Her editing errors aside, Lindsey is able to connect photography and a historical antecedent, one of the points I had made in class, showing original thinking. Unfortunately, she made a few other errors that should have been caught while re-reading, and she forgot to mention the book she read. She earned eight out of ten points.

Ashley wrote about Steve McCurry, a National Geographic photographer, calling him "the male, older version of the photographer I want to be." She clearly admires his work and was familiar with it before taking the class. Her enthusiasm, however, appears to have been insufficient to prepare a second draft of her paper, whose many details and interesting points are overshadowed by a lack of creativity and by simplistic writing. For example, seven of the first fourteen sentences begin with his name. On the other hand, she includes a bibliography. Ashley earned seven of ten points.

C. The last writing assignment asked students to respond to a statement made by the critic Susan Sontag. She suggested that in photography, the person taking the photo is irrelevant because the camera does the work; in paintings, by contrast, the painter matters completely and exclusively because it is the artist who creates everything on the canvas. Sontag's assertion came in an essay printed in a collection of essays. I invited students to find points from throughout the book to support their reactions to her statement, in part to find out how closely they had read the book but also to help frame their ideas.

Most students, not surprisingly, felt that Sontag was wrong and that the photographer was an intrinsic part of the photograph. Some of them strongly disagreed with her, and one cited a Sontag statement from another part of the book in which she seems to take the opposite view.

Even Sontag's words attribute the responsibility of creating a great image on [sic] the photographer, as she attributes the great social and political photography movements to such subjects [i.e. photographers] as Riis, Frank, Arbus, Steichen and Stiglitz[,] not to things like Canon, Kodak and Hasselblad.

Few other students noticed Sontag's apparent contradiction.

Caroline's paper didn't rise to her usual standard. Instead of her usual insight, she spent most of her paper quoting Sontag (which was part of the assignment) and then re-stating Sontag in her own words (which chiefly took up space). Other points that she raised had been made in class, such as what it would take for a hypothetical, verifiable painting of Shakespeare to be considered, by Bardolators, more valuable than a verifiable

photograph of him. Caroline suggests the answer would be yes, if the painting had been the work of da Vinci (pp. 53-4). In class, we pretended Holbein had been the painter. She also brings up photo alteration, saying that it's a recent innovation (p. 54) even though in class we examined examples of doctored photos from as far back as the Civil War.

For this paper she earned seven of ten points.

Lindsey excelled on the assignment. She's one of the students who really thought about the assignment and was willing to share her ideas.

She agreed with Sontag's proposition. "Thinking about Sontag's idea that the individual photographer is irrelevant I began to think about how I look at photographs." (Pp. 56-7.) As an example she suggested that someone who had heard for the first time that Venice is slowly sinking would want to see for oneself. Short of taking a trip, one could search for online photos of Venice, "... and thousands of images taken by people all over the world will appear. When we research ideas like these we are simply looking for some sort of proof, evidence, or idea of what the visual image is, not caring who took the photograph." (P. 56.)

Lindsey's original ideas earned her nine out of ten points.

As most students did, Ashley challenged Sontag's proposition. Many of her points, however, had been discussed in class, and one of the two quotations from the book that she included came from the anthology of quotes in the book's appendix. Her written expression was basic and sufficiently syntactical: "It is the photographer that makes a difference in the photo. Anyone can take a picture but certain people can see something in life and turn it into a beautiful photograph." (P. 60.) Her writing and editing were clean, however; she had evidently worked harder on this paper than the previous one.

Ashley earned seven of ten points.

D. Nearly half the points students earned in the course came from their photographic portfolios. The goal was to have them learn how to photograph a story with an idea that would last over the several weeks that the students would work on it without wearing thin. They were given the choice of preparing a portfolio that demonstrated their personal style, or a documentary, or a photo story. No students selected personal style, and only one selected a documentary. I was surprised that so many of them selected photo stories. Perhaps I shouldn't have been because a story's narrative form makes it easier to imagine in advance.

The syllabus describes a photo story as following a person or group in their daily lives, "one that has challenges your subject will react to," such as the single mother changing diapers while studying for an exam. Before they started shooting their stories, students had to turn in a story proposal that I had to approve.

Of the three students we're reviewing, two changed their stories completely when the first idea didn't work out. Caroline wanted to find varsity student athletes who were foreigners and show how they coped with being not only a student and an athlete but also with the culture shock of Kansas (p. 62). No coaches cooperated with her (some would not even return phone calls or e-mails), and the few student athletes she knew were competing in the spring semester and thus too busy to volunteer.

Her interest in finding someone who had to work to fit in led her to a drag queen (p. 63). I assumed she would do a story about his over-the-top personality and outrageous friends, so I was thoroughly impressed to see her bring in photos that showed a nurse in his late 20s who looked quite ordinary (p. 64). He spent time with his loving grandmothers, one of whom is deaf (he knows sign language), and both of whom know he's gay.

Showing her photos, Caroline would often say that she felt she missed a perfect moment or that her exposure wasn't ideal. Those criticisms may have been true, but she

had gained her subject's trust to such a degree that her photos showed him relaxed in an array of social settings: at work, with family, at a party. His drag queen persona came at the end of her story, where it could be seen as just one facet, albeit an extravagantly costumed one, of her subject's life.

Caroline visited him numerous times in a half-dozen places and constantly improved her work. Her captions were superb. She earned the maximum, forty out of forty points.

Lindsey's proposal changed too, but all it needed was focus. Initially she proposed "taking pictures of various students on campus participating in activities that involve their major" (p. 78). That includes everyone and excludes nothing. I asked if it would be a story (with a narrative) or a documentary, and through a conversation suggested finding one student or one major. She did. As a fine arts major, she was intrigued by the ceramics studio but had never taken a class in the medium. Students working in the studio became her project (p. 79).

The photos Lindsey brought in to share with the class after her first day shooting were uninspired. That showed a shelf of broken pottery, pots of glaze, and a storeroom. No people were shown, which other students noticed. The class and I gave her suggestions for finding ways to include people, and we suggested ways to improve her still lifes. When she returned with more photos, we could see a roomful of potters working on their projects, but details—such as what, exactly, the potters were creating—were absent. When she said that some of the student potters were nervous around the camera, one of her experienced classmates gave her suggestions for putting people at ease.

It worked. Her later photo shoots not only showed potters, but showed them so closely that I had to suggest she take a step away from them. I was thrilled that she was taking suggestions so well and growing as a photographer. She also ventured beyond the studio where potters work clay and into the rooms where fire, smoke, and steam offer tremendous opportunities for atmospheric shots. When she showed them to the class on the projector, I think she was surprised by the excited comments from the students.

Lindsey demonstrated exceptional growth in the process of shooting the story. I wish it had incorporated a few more points, such as following one student's work from beginning to end, or found a way to show the scale of the pottery in her still lifes. These criticisms are minor, however, and her captions were informative. Lindsey earned 39 out of forty points.

When Ashley proposed a story on homelessness in Manhattan, I should have pressed her for details harder than I did. Homeless people are often ashamed of their condition and rarely agree to be photographed when first approached. Ashley was new to social photography and had never conducted work of this kind. She started the assignment with my approval and visited a homeless shelter for families, where the staff welcomed her but told her she could not show the faces of the families living there. I think she was genuinely concerned for the less fortunate, but her inexperience with them would keep her from succeeding.

Ashley missed class one or twice a month (we met semi-weekly), sometimes with medical excuses and sometimes with none. She never contacted me about her project, so I was surprised one night in class when she announced that she had abandoned it. The photos she would show that night were from her new project: Found objects in the Flint Hills. The details in her re-written proposal were quite general (p. 90), so I suggested ideas to narrow them.

Then on the last day of class, when the portfolios were due, she announced that she had changed her subject again. Two days earlier she had happened upon a cattle ranch and photographed it. Her project became showing a ranch in twenty photos. The

number was random, she said, though it probably correlated to the number of images she took that she liked (p. 91).

Unfortunately, Ashley's photos are a weak collection related only by location. They barely relate in a narrative way, and the people included are shown from behind. What's more, she turned the portfolio's concept on its head: Instead of photographing a subject, which could certainly include a cattle ranch, over several weeks, she had taken all her pictures in one afternoon. Her captions describe each photo but offer little explanation and don't work together to tell the story.

Ashley earned 29 points out of forty, though looking back I think that was generous.

At the end of the course, the average grade was 84.93 percent, and the median grade was 86.65 percent.

Three main components comprised eighty-five percent of the final grade. The first two, discussed in detail above, were the writing assignments and the portfolio. The other main component was a series of quizzes, which contributed only ten percent to the final grade.

A breakdown of the three main portions of the grade show how each of the three students performed compared to the class average and mean. Although all three performed below the average and mean on the quizzes, only the lowest-performing student earned grades for her papers and portfolio below the class aggregate. The other two students outperformed the aggregate in both categories.

	Papers	Portfolio	Quizzes	Total of all course work
Average	80.67%	88.5%	64.3%	84.93%
Mean	83.33	86.25	70.7	86.65
Caroline	86.67	100	50	90.5
Lindsey	85	97.5	45	88.3
Ashley	73.33	72.5	55	73.5
Portion of final Grade	35%	40%	10%	100%

The other fifteen percent of the grade came from class participation and the students' self-assessment.

I feel that students grew evenly in their understanding of the goals I set for the class, a judgment based on their scores over the semester as well as their class discussions. The ideas the best students raised in their papers became slightly more complex as the weeks passed, mirroring the complexities they learned in class about ethics and critical challenges to photography.

Student learning really took off with the photo portfolio. From their initial hesitation in choosing topics (some, however, had settled on excellent ideas right away) to their initial shoots, most of the class was feeling its way toward the goal I had set: Telling a story over weeks, not days or an afternoon, and telling it in a compelling way.

They all learned from the critiques they received. In some cases I don't know if they learned more from their classmates' suggestions or from me, a transference of teaching duties I'm proud of. I was pleased that the students were comfortable pointing

out weaknesses in their peers' work because I had been afraid that no one would want to say anything that could be considered unkind. Looking back, I think that I helped create an atmosphere of collegial reviews by leading the class through critiques of professional work, which became student critiques of professionals. They learned how to talk about photographs based on more than personal reactions, but within a framework of criteria in which several qualities had to be considered before rendering a fair, overall judgment.

My favorite moment came early in the semester when I was teaching the history of news photography. I knew it wouldn't be a popular topic because the photographs from the era are sleepy compared to modern photography and because none of them had any previous exposure to it. I had assigned two dense chapters from a massive book about the depictions of farm laborers from the nineteenth century to the present. Neither the topic nor the author's writing style were particularly enticing.

So I was thrilled when, after one of my lectures, a student told me how excited he was. "Now I understand why we do what we do!" he exclaimed, and told me I should have assigned more than just two chapters.

It was one of those moments when I felt I really knew what I was doing in the classroom. I believe that at least some of my success carried through to the other students, and through the rest of the semester.



## V Reflection on the Course and Teaching Practices

As someone quite new to teaching, I expected the peer review process to be helpful. It far surpassed my expectations.

Before coming to Kansas State I had worked at a half-dozen newspapers in twenty years, and I had taught one university course, on copy editing and design, during two semesters at the University of Akron. The photojournalism course that this paper is the subject of was my second class at Kansas State, and was my first one on photography.

Classroom skills were the first category I improved in because I could implement changes quickly. Visiting my peer's class during its first meeting of the semester, I saw Dr. Lavis's smooth and practiced delivery put students at ease. She introduced herself and provided a brief biography that explained how she came to teach, what her credentials are and the academic topics she's most interested in. She also shared a few personal details and later asked the class to do the same for her (on paper, not in front of everyone).

From this I realized—not having watched a professor teach in eighteen years—that I needed to loosen up. I was concentrating on establishing gravitas but wasn't showing students why I deserved it. Through an oddity in scheduling my class had already met twice by the time of Dr. Lavis's initial meeting, so I'll save the introductory ideas for next semester. But I incorporated all of her ideas throughout the semester.

When Dr. Lavis and, later, Dr. Cooper visited my class, they gave me suggestions to make my presentations easier for students. They will sound quite obvious to an experienced class leader, but they were revelations to me. Dr. Cooper suggested I move around the room while lecturing. Mine was a small class, and we all sat around a large table with me at the head. Usually I stood, but when I did I stood in the same place. Soon, however, I began moving around the classroom and the table, allowing me to look into each of their faces head-on instead of expecting them to turn their necks toward me the entire time.

Another key suggestion was to start with all the lights on. That's because I often started the class with photos, which were projected onto a large screen. The classroom, for some historical reason, has no light switches in it. They're outside the door, in an anteroom between the classroom and the hallway. So to save myself the time (which wasn't more than thirty seconds but felt much longer) I would leave on only one set of lights. That probably wouldn't have been significant if the class didn't start at 5:30 p.m., a time that during the winter months is well after sunset. As Dr. Cooper pointed out, 5:30 is an ideal time to be resting or eating dinner, so commencing a class full of hungry students in semi-darkness was an unlikely way to keep students alert. Another improvement in illumination came from asking a student to dim the lights for me.

I also learned some important classroom management tactics. One student reliably fell asleep in class. He was a good student who worked a late shift at the campus newspaper, so I wasn't terribly concerned. After visiting, both Dr. Lavis and Dr. Cooper mentioned him to me, and pointed out that since the ten students all sat at one table, everyone would notice that he was asleep. Not only could it be embarrassing to the student, but it could be distracting to the others. So one night after class I brought up the topic with him, alone, and suggested that maybe he bring in coffee or a snack (keep in mind that the class met until 7:20). He responded positively and said he thought he had undiagnosed narcolepsy (I wasn't sure if he was pulling my leg), and he did start bringing in cans of mixed nuts. That made the difference, and he even shared his snack with the class.

Another management issue was one student who was happy to monopolize the class discussion. I didn't mind it at first because his ideas were creative and his under-

standing was sound. But his confidence led him to jump into other conversations and to lead them into the direction he wanted them to go instead of answering the questions posed. Both my visitors brought up his eager responses, and noted that the three or four quiet students probably relied on him to fill discussion time so they wouldn't have to speak up. I hadn't thought about that, and realized they were right. One afternoon I saw this student in the hallway and asked to have a conversation with him in private. I told him how much I appreciated his comments and reassured him that I knew he was adding to the class, but I told him that I wanted to hear from the other students as well. I could tell he liked the praise, so I asked him to raise his hand (he had gotten into the habit of speaking when an idea occurred to him) and told him not to be disheartened when I didn't call on him. The plan was quite successful. He waited for me to call on him and usually held back from speaking up when I didn't. I also made a point of bringing the quieter students into our discussions too.

More importantly, though, were the changes to the content of the teaching. Dr. Lavis pointed out that the students rarely took notes and that some of them seemed to lose interest, so I looked for ways to keep their attention and to make clear my expectations from them.

I learned from my department head the importance of a short break in the class. She has taught at the same time and said she gives the students a ten-minute recess about forty-five minutes into each session. I had been giving breaks, but usually waited until I reached a point in my lecture or presentation that felt natural to me. Sometimes that meant the break came after an hour or more, which is a long time to concentrate during dinner time. Realizing the students' needs, I paced my presentations more carefully and watched the clock so we could all take a break before I lost them.

Getting students to take notes is a challenge of its own. Because this is an upper-level class with two prerequisites, I didn't expect that students would need to be reminded of notes' importance. I had been giving quizzes based on the material we covered in class, but by the time Dr. Lavis made her point I had stopped giving quizzes because we were halfway through the semester; I returned to quizzing them after telling them in advance that they could expect them.

That had some effect on note-taking, but their scores didn't get a boost. At this point I started watching to see when they would take notes and realized their pencils met paper whenever I started a sentence with a number: "The three motivations ..." or "Four factors contributed ..." Abstract points, on the other hand, rarely led to note-taking, so it was abstract points I loaded the quizzes with.

As the chart in Section IV (p. 19, *supra*) shows, students performance was weakest in the quizzes. The average score of all students from all five quizzes was 64.3 percent, and the mean was 70.7 percent, both considerably lower than final grades which had an average of 84.93 percent and a mean of 86.65 percent. Quiz scores counted for only ten percent of the grade; next year I will give more quizzes and will increase their contribution to the final grade to emphasize the importance of learning from daily lectures and presentations.

An important tactic I learned from Dr. Lavis was to state my expectations more clearly and more often. At the beginning of the semester I would briefly mention the topic of a lecture and the reasons I wanted them to know about it. By the end of the semester I started explaining, in addition to those points, the ideas I wanted students to understand. Doing so helped them to know when to ask questions and why I would ask questions on certain points. This was especially critical, I learned, during the portfolio project because I expected them to work outside the classroom without supervision; their only feedback came when they brought their work into the classroom. While the students with the most photographic experience seemed to have an intuitive sense of how to go about

shooting a photo story, those who were new to it needed help. Of those, the ones who asked the most questions performed the best; Caroline was one of them.

Dr. Cooper suggested that in class discussions, when students are giving their points of view on a topic, that I share mine too. She pointed out that I was good at repeating students' positions, sometimes restating to make them clearer, but I wasn't always providing my point of view. That's probably because I had noticed that sometimes I was too quick to provide an answer to a student's question when I could have asked the class to try to answer it. Once I made the switch, and made a point of including my views in the summary of the discussion, I felt that I was doing a better job of directing the class.

All of these examples were tremendous benefits to my teaching. My pedagogy is better focused and easier to understand now, which means that the students are the real beneficiaries of my experience in the program. Re-reading my notes and the memos from Drs. Cooper and Lavis, I couldn't find any suggestion or insight that didn't help me in some way. I come away from the program enthusiastic about it and will continue, as I've done already, promoting it to other new faculty members on campus.

Another way they'll learn is through the monthly group meeting of all the peers and mentors. I learned the benefits of grading rubrics for students and instructors alike from the interactions, as well as the ways different departments and faculty members approach the question of grading, extra credit, and students who are inattentive or in need of greater challenges.

The next time I teach this course I will create a rubric for the portfolio project so students understand from the beginning how they will be graded. I will give them a short photo assignment or two during the first few weeks so I can assess the skills they come to class with and to identify weaknesses that need to be solved before starting the portfolio. Quizzes will remain part of the class, but will be spaced out more evenly, and with more explanation of what the class should expect to see on them. I will also require another paper, one on the history section I teach at the beginning.

## VI Appendices

## Appendix A: Syllabus

# PHOTOJOURNALISM *Revised Syllabus*

**MC 416 Spring 2010**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:30 to 7:20**

**Stephen Wolgast, M.A.**

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**Office Hours**

**Tuesday: 11 to noon**

**Wednesday: 11 to noon; 2 to 3**

**By appointment**

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**Student Publications Inc.**

105 Kedzie

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**Required Texts**

*On Photography*

*Steven Scalet*

*The Visual Culture Reader: Guide to Photojournalism*

**Chapters 3 and 6 from: *Stepping out: How to Survive in Photography and the world in California*, 2005-2009**

**Richard Steven Smith\***

*Remember: The Last Abortion Clinic: What's Felt in a Patient's Mind?*

**Rudolf Center Co., Seattle**

**Suggested Reading**

*Remember: (media news):*

**www.poynter.org**

*The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*  
**Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel**  
New York: Random House, 2001.

\* Copies on request *After Learning*.

\* You will receive a syllabus to download this from the web.

**P**rimarily because of the photography market, many of the photographers are starting and closing. Those that remain have smaller staffs, and often print newspapers with even spendingly less space for photos.

Photo agencies have a tough market too. Looking U.S.A. founding in 1946 to close its doors. Others like only two-line staff instead of full-time.

As if the past century wasn't a big enough challenge, photographers no longer need press credentials and special equipment to be published. Amateurs of all stripes, from the dedicated go-getter to the ordinary camera user who happens upon news, are happy to share their images with news publications and often do so for free.

The Internet makes the past problem and makes easy the second. We in the public suddenly become eye witness to incidents and releases information about celebrities - and we're in a work with more media but for less pay. How can news photographers adjust?

## Course Objectives

This class will aim to help you prepare for the future. While general education, long the standard skill for young photographers, is less and less important. Although you'll still need to know how to enter a press conference, light a portrait, and get the best sports action, you'll be more successful if you develop an area of expertise. A marketable specialty will help you to stand out when you're looking for work.

How do you find out what that is for you? We'll begin by examining several genres of news photography, going back to its roots in documentary journalism, and discover how those origins continue to shape current photography of significant events.

You'll learn how journalists work by using what they cover and how they publish it, have a significant impact on the ideas and topics the public is not only made aware of but made to believe are important and relevant to their lives.

## Research Paper

You will choose a photographer whose work you admire and write about the creative background, professional experience, and journalistic goals. Most importantly, you should do so for his or her work as it explains what, if anything, you think it contributes to journalism, as well as your own ambitions to it.

The paper should be at least 1000 words long.

# PHOTOJOURNALISM

## *APC 416: Syllabus, page 2*

### **Professionalism**

**Attendance:** Arriving on time. In addition to the academic purpose, this class will be conducted like the professional newsroom you may one day work in.

If you're late, you get no extra time. Plan ahead for bad weather and kinds of parking.

**Deadlines:** Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period unless otherwise stated. You must attend class to turn in your work. If you do not, your work is considered late, and will lose half its point value. Assignments turned in more than one week late will receive no points.

**Civility:** Beyond your initial courtesy to be late with an assignment, you must get approval from your advisor if you want to turn in your work after deadline without losing credit. This approval is not automatically granted and may or not prevent you from a written short's letter or other withdrawal for your course.

**Discussions:** Any newsroom worth its salt is filled with passionate people with strong convictions about the best way to practice journalism. Even though most of them will share the same goals, they often have different methods for accomplishing them.

Nevertheless, the people who succeed are able to share their ideas without stepping on the rights of others: the right to share an opinion, the right to be heard, and the right to be treated as a respected colleague, among others.

### **Critiques**

You will read printed newspapers and read news web sites to critique their photography. In front of the class, on a regular basis. You and your classmates will also be current news photographer with the goal of learning how to think about on-site work and be comfortable critiquing.

News photography is much bigger than newspapers and news agencies. It appears in literary magazines such as *Esquire* and *The New Yorker*, general interest magazines like *Time* and *National Geographic*, and in specialty books that are usually photographed by war photographers. The last two categories represent the work of photographers at the same time as showcasing the income photographers derive from their work.

Students will be assigned to monitor various publications, in print and online. For a few weeks at a time. You will participate in class critiques of the journalism you see in the m—photographs and everything else. The goal is to expose you to current trends in news photography as practiced in publications around the country and world. Your informed participation counts toward your grade.

### **Portfolio**

Your biggest task will be your class portfolio. For this you'll choose one of two concepts, and spend the semester shooting and developing it into the portfolio, which will double as your final exam.

You may choose either of: developing your style or specialization, or creating a documentary project, or creating a photo story.

The goal is to make you think out of a single assignment but of a single project that defines who you are, what you do well, and what your interests and enthusiasms are. Successful photographers create their own assignments through research and investigation, and you will do the same. You will come up with an idea that, once approved by me, will last a semester of shooting, re-shooting, and improving. Details:

**Style or Specialization:** Focus on a topic you're interested in or a way of shooting that will make you stand out among other photographers. The field here is very wide. The guiding rule is, that it must be journalistic, and specific enough to tie the people together. Sports, for example, is too wide a topic, but sports fans may be people, or take a topic like's (as opposed to team sports) could work.

**Documentary:** By contrast, this project concentrates on one topic. The goal of a documentary portfolio is to uncover a situation with enough layers that your photos demonstrate how the many and varied aspects contribute to the subject's challenge. It should be definable as a topic instead of an event: homelessness, poverty in Riley County or the last great nation on a lonely farm could work and if these narrowed so that your idea and your point of view are clear.

**Photo Story & Final option:** is to find a person or group to follow as they go about their lives. Make them the subject needs to have something unusual about them. For example, a single mother who's also a student or a hotel worker who gets up at 3 a.m. to start work every

# PHOTOJOURNALISM

## *MC460 Syllabus, page 3*

day. You'll need to find a story that is **visual**, one that has challenges that your subject will react to, such as the mother studying for an exam while changing diapers or studying for a dying loved one.

Any portfolio must be cohesive and serve to explain the kind of journalist you are and the kind of photography that excites you.

### Other Requirements

Your best work will be displayed on a website dedicated to the class.

**News photographers.** Like all journalists, are expected to reach areas of the world. You will be updated occasionally on news from around the campus, city, state, nation, and world.

**Politics and First Amendment issues** will be studied in a real-world example that is the TV program *Frontline*. After the class discussion you will write a paper about ethics and free speech based on the facts presented in the *Frontline* study. It should be at least 500 words long.

### Self-Evaluation

An honest, thorough self-evaluation, in which you "make a case" for receiving particular grade. Citing your work inside and outside the classroom as if the instructor you should describe your progress. You should be realistic. If your grades reflect a B, even a superbly written evaluation will not result in an A or an A+. It may, however, boost your grade to the next level in ascending order.

It should be at least 500 words long and is due at the beginning of the final class meeting, at 5:00 on Thursday night, May 4. You may, of course, turn it in earlier.

### Final Exam

We will meet on the day of the final exam Thursday night, May 11, from 6:00 to 8:00, to talk of portfolio.

### Technology

Your photos must be in digital form of at least 1 megabyte. Rough prints, printed on any inexpensive paper, will be required for editing in class. If you prefer to show film, you are responsible for not writing your photos in the digital format.

### Grades

We use multiple points of A 50/50/70/100 scale. Your assignments and how break down like this:

Class participation	about 20 %
Quizzes	about 20 %
Research paper	about 20 %
Ethics paper	about 15 %
Self-evaluation	about 10 %
Portfolio	about 20 %

The entire grade is intended as an evaluation of your performance over the semester. Keep track of your scores through the semester so you won't be surprised by your final grade. Ideally you will work to earn

You are expected to share your ideas and listen to others' respectfully. Disagreements are perfectly acceptable as long as they are expressed respectfully.

**Writing standards.** All journalists, no matter their medium, must be able to write clearly, accurately, grammatically and stylistically. Your written work must rise to the highest standards. Misspellings, missing other sites, will count against you. Each misspelled name will knock ten percent off the assignment's grade.

If your written English is shaky, you may share your work with me by letting me see a draft at least two weeks in advance. It is due: I will edit it and return it so that you may make corrections before turning it in for a grade.

### Honor, Integrity & Plagiarism

In journalism, plagiarism is a firing offense on the first offense. Using someone else's work as your own, even if you paraphrase it, is a definition of plagiarism. If you plagiarize someone else's work, you will fail the class.

A consequence tied to the Honor System is the inclusion of the Honor Pledge, which applies to all assignments, examinations, or other course work undertaken by students. The Honor Pledge is implied, whether or not it is stated. "On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work."



# PHOTOJOURNALISM

## MC416: Syllabus, page 4

A grade of XF can result from a breach of academic honesty. The F indicates failure in the course, the X indicates the reason is an Honor Pledge violation.

By registering for class, you acknowledge the jurisdiction of the X-State honor system. Review it at [www.xstatehonor.com](http://www.xstatehonor.com).

### Special Needs Statement

If you have any disability which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work in this course, let's visit so I can help. You may also contact Disability Support Services.

### Expectations for Classroom Conduct

All student activities in the University, including this course, are governed by the Student Judicial Conduct Code as outlined in the Student Government Association By Laws, Article VI, Section 2, paragraph 2. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment may be asked to leave the class.

### Campus safety

X-State is committed to providing a safe working and learning environment for student and faculty members. To enhance your safety, make sure you know where and how to exit your classroom quickly and how to follow any emergency directions.

Please review campus safety details by clicking "Emergency Information" at [www.xstate.edu](http://www.xstate.edu).

**your grade instead of having one given to you.**

Part of grading is objective, such as the results of the quizzes, but the large portion is subjective. Class participation, for example, requires more than simply speaking up now and then, but also contributing in a thoughtful way. The same thing can be said for your portfolio, which counts for half your grade: merely shooting scores of photos doesn't count nearly as much as coming back with photos that tell a story or demonstrate your growth as a photographer and journalist.

### Letter Grades

The grade of A (90 to 100%) shows *excellent overall*. The A student attends class, arrives on time, and is prepared. High-level performance implies *critical use in thinking and performance*. A-level work is not only clear, well-reasoned (in writing) and technically superior (in photography), it is also insightful. The A-level student demonstrates the ability for *critical self-evaluation*.

The grade of B (80-89%) demonstrates *more strengths than weaknesses*, but shows *some distinctive weaknesses*. The grade of B implies *solid thinking and performance*. Above-average work is clear, precise, and well-reasoned, but does not have the depth of insight as in A-level work. B-level work displays *solid reasoning (in writing) and technical proficiency (in photography)*. The B-level student demonstrates competence in *self-evaluation*.

The grade of C (70-79%) implies *solid thinking and performance* and reflects work with as many weaknesses as strengths. The average student misses class or arrives late and is *immediately prepared*. C-level work is not *solidly clear, precise, and reasoned*, nor does it display depth of insight or even *consistent competence*. The C-level student sometimes raises questions, recognizes some questionable assumptions, occasionally uses language consistent with educated usage and journalistic standards, and shows technical proficiency often but not always. The average student may be unable to provide a clear self-evaluation.

The grade of D (60-69%) implies *poor thinking and performance*. This level of learner demonstrates *minimal understanding and skill in thinking*. The below-average student skips class frequently, arrives late, and is *inadequately prepared*. The D-level student tries to get through the course by minimizing the quantity of work that goes into the portfolio or the effort in producing it instead of examining the quality of its outcome. This kind of work is marked by thinking that is typically unclear, imprecise, and poorly reasoned, and is *technically sub-standard*. The below-average student does poorly in self-evaluation.

The grade of F (below 60%) demonstrates a *failure to do the required work of the course*. The F-level student misses class, arrives late, and is *not prepared*. The student who fails often neglects to contact the instructor for help and ultimately takes *little responsibility* for his or her own learning. In addition to neglecting the quality of his or her portfolio, the F-level student regularly *mis-evaluates his or her own work*, does not raise questions or issues, does not recognize his or her assumptions, and does not use language consistent with educated and journalistic standards.

## **Appendix B: Students' Written Work**

### **1. Ethics**

9/10

Caroline

... ethics  
excellent points -

you clearly understand the difference between strong scenes and the focus of the documentary

The video of the abortion support group for the documentary "The Last Abortion Clinic" includes enticing segments that give viewers an inside perspective into personal testimonies of now pro-life women who chose abortion in the past and the affect their choice has had on their personal lives. Each segment carries the potential to challenge the viewer's thoughts and personal views of abortion and the ongoing legal war it encompasses. However, some of the segments, while still demonstrating real-life, raw emotion, seem to tip-toe on the edge of ethics and what it means to be unbiased as journalists. From a journalistic perspective, the producers of this documentary could use less of the footage, with many of the segments including testimonies that may seem more pro-life sided than needed for a "neutral-based" documentary. Here we will discuss five segments of the video that should have or should not have been included in the documentary.

nicely put

good!  
organization!

The discussion <sup>within</sup> between the women's abortion support group convey<sup>3</sup> that the meeting was held to discuss feelings of grief after having chosen an abortion and how one can handle such feelings. Since the entire documentary is really more about the law in regards to abortion, there are many scenes that could be excluded because one could misperceive the documentary to be promoting pro-life choices. For example, there are several sections that discuss the women's feelings of guilt that follow with religious advice from Barbara, the facilitator. In segment five "God has a purpose" we see Janet, a pro-life woman who feels the guilt of having had an abortion, give us her testimony that God has a purpose for everything that happens. Although a journalist could see this as compelling and dramatic, it takes away from the overall idea of the documentary and confuses the viewer.

yes - good point

In "Deliverance from Satan" we see the women discuss how Satan wants them to suffer in their grief and that only through the healing of Jesus Christ can one be liberated of such feelings. As a section with seventeen segments of these same very strong religious implications shown repeatedly it would only make sense to remove them for the sake of neutrality. Likewise, the producers run the risk of offending religious pro-choice viewers. We see this in the section, "I had a miscarriage" includes Barbara talking about having had a talk about the worth of embryos and her opinion of stem cell research. This brings the group to discuss the value of life and their personal views of science and religion. It is apparent that the women are all clearly conservative Christian women which does not bear any significance on whether or not abortion should be outlawed completely in the state of Mississippi. The topic of religion and abortion <sup>is</sup> an ongoing debate alone. To continuously show women who base their decisions on their religious beliefs can confuse viewers to think that <sup>the</sup> documentary is about the topic of religion. Lastly, we see segments such as "The baby didn't want to die" and "The abortion was holding me back" that get into a more personal, emotional side of these women but an emotional side that doesn't seem appropriate for this type of documentary. *another good point*

The section of the documentary did, however, include some segments that, although still biased in some ways, fit well with the rest of the documentary because they were relevant to the issue at hand and did not give the feeling that the producers were promoting pro-life. We see in the emotional segment "I was in the family room" Janet again speak. This segment really pulls in the viewer because Janet gets very emotional while talking about looking at her children's baby photos and thinking there is a photo missing. This segment shows the viewer a more emotional and personal side of someone who has experienced the topic at hand while still staying neutral because it's not providing strong opinions one way or the other; it simply shows a woman's personal struggle with herself. *yes*

Keeping fairness in mind, this is a good segment to show because it keeps the viewer attentive while still remaining indifferent on either side. Another segment of the story that can be used for the documentary is "America's been fed one big fat lie" because this is the only segment that actually ties into the rest of the documentary. The women in this segment actually bring up the topic of Roe vs. Wade, the case that allowed women the choice to have abortions. Even though, the conversation is obviously biased, this segment actually pertains to the actual situation at hand, making it a more feasible segment. This also gives a good insight into the general conservative thought of the issue. These segments will help further educate viewers, providing them more background of the issue but still allow the documentary to remain neutral.

We can see that these segments are compelling and thought provoking because of the heightened emotion that is very rarely caught on film. From a journalistic standpoint it is sometimes difficult to capture human emotion. However, it's crucial to keep in mind what's right and what's fair when filming a documentary that is meant to inform and educate the public. In the case of the women's abortion support group, it would be necessary to include some of the segments into the documentary because of the insight they provide while omitting others that sway the balance of the opposing viewpoints.

MC 416

Steve Wolgast

2-18-10

8 1/2 / 10 Lindsay

good examples  
and clear reasoning

#### Ethics

I agree with Raney Aronson that the journalist's opinion does not matter, at least not in the case of a news article or a documentary. I do not think that professional reporters should put in their point of view in whatever they are working on, because the No.1 goal of any good journalist is unbiased objectivity.

As Aronson said, "It doesn't matter what I believe, because I'm actually going to be able to put my personal point of view aside and report on the issue." In other words, she will not insert her personal political view of, in this case, abortion, because she wants her subjects and people she interviews to speak for themselves. She is not trying to make her audience conform to her way of thinking, whatever that might be, but is trying to present them with all the facts. The facts and opinions of those more closely associated with whatever topic or event she is covering will be far more relevant than hers.

When she filmed her documentary about the "last abortion clinic," she let people who worked at the clinic, people who were going in for abortions or related appointments, the women who experienced abortions, and people who were anti-abortion present their thoughts and experiences to the audience their way. She did not try to put words in their mouth or try to frame questions that would skew answers to her favor. She let them speak their piece, and only edited for time and to make sure she was not being used for their own political agenda.

right

A professional journalist's opinion should never matter when it comes to doing a documentary or serious news coverage. That journalist is there to provide information on what is happening in there here and now so that audience members know that their news is clear and accurate. They are not watching the news to see what the reporter thinks of the situation. For starters, their opinion is usually not interesting to viewers. They do not want to hear what some person in a



studio thinks about a given topic. They want to hear what real people think, real people like them. They want to be in control of their judgment and not feel like "Big Brother" is trying to get inside their head.

I do think that journalists can fully put aside their personal views when covering a story or documenting a topic, otherwise I do not think they could be considered journalists. The definition of journalist is someone who prepares news, not someone who prepares opinions. Their job is to sift through everyone else's opinion to find the story and present it to the public. This, to me, seems like the easiest way to keep one's personal point of view out of a story.

✓ good

However, it is harder for a journalist to take their opinion out of stories on topics that they have an extremely strong point of view on. This would be a situation where the journalist might try to stay neutral and keep the coverage for two opposing sides balanced and in perspective, but they still might have a tendency to lean toward one side. This could happen when they are interviewing people. They could ask leading questions or somehow try to skew the answers of the person they are interviewing so that they sound stupid or ill-informed. The same could happen in the editing process. They could cut out vital parts of people's answers so that their comments are taken completely out of context. One other thing that the journalist could do that would upset the balance of the story and sneak in their opinion is choosing poor candidates to interview for the opposing side. Or they could just give that side less coverage altogether in the finished product.

✓ yes

I think it would be easy for me to keep my point of view out of a story or documentary. I do not have very many strong political views, and covering something as controversial as an abortion clinic would be relatively easy for me to keep the final product fair and balanced. If I were assigned to cover something that I had strong personal convictions toward, I would have to evaluate whether I could keep everything in perspective and leave it to the people I interview to give their opinions, not my own. If I could not do this, I would pass on the story.

✓  
a good policy

I think every journalist has to consider if they could produce a story to the best of their ability. If they accept a story that they know they cannot keep their view out of, then they are not a very

good journalist. Like I said before, a journalist's job is to prepare the news, and if they cannot do that objectively, they are not a good journalist.



8/11  
good points

Ashley

### "Fairness Policy"

I have no experience with abortion but I do have an opinion about it. If I were to do a documentary about the topic I would find people who knew what they were talking about and who actually have had a first hand experience with abortion because those people have reasons to believe what they believe. I feel like to have a good story the writer has to let the readers get an inside look on both sides. 120

узо

opinion which is something I haven't done since because my professor made me realize what a big deal it was.

I know that some people would agree that a journalist's personal point of view is very important because they would try to put in their views. I don't think that if a journalist discussed their point of view it would be beneficial to their story. I think if a journalist did express their opinion it would only hurt their story and their credibility even if the story was well written or discussed.

*careful - some journalists are like columnists are paid to have opinions*

It is necessary for a journalist to always be objective even if people question them on their beliefs of a subject because that could hurt the journalists credibility. I feel like Aronson did a good job of keeping her personal opinions out of the story and it makes her a better journalist because she said that her opinion doesn't matter. The writers of this documentary abided by a "strict standards and practices guideline", which I think is important to any story. Aronson wanted to give people a voice without putting in her own voice, which is a huge part of being an objective journalist. Aronson said that she had a hard time choosing which side of the story she wanted to voice more because she didn't want it to come off biased. Aronson said that she researched the court case "Roe vs. Wade" which was one of the countries first abortion cases. I think that it was good that she did background research before she went and interviewed people. It gives her knowledge of both sides of the issue. I think it is important to have a background knowledge of both issues so you aren't judgmental.

Aronson chose Mississippi to do the documentary because it is one of the hardest states to get an abortion in. She wanted to look at abortion on a state level so that alone was being objective. She wasn't looking at the typical pro-choice or pro-life debate.

In conclusion I do not believe that a journalist's point of view is important as long as they don't express it in their documentary or article. I think that a journalist's opinion becomes important if it is relevant to what the reporter has written or reported about. If the journalist is objective and shows both sides of an argument fairly the opinion of the writer should not matter at all. The most important thing a good journalist can do is be a clean slate and take in as much information as possible from both sides of an argument. Aronson remained objective and provided both sides of the argument a chance to talk about their most important issues.

*I'd like to read an example of this b/c it seems to contradict your main point*

## 2. Favorite Photographer

11  
10/10  
Caroline Knudson

February 25, 2010

*lots of great detail and description!*  
*you have an easy style for such a tough subject (her photos, I mean)*  
*nice work*  
Catherine Opie: The American Identity

Bright and vivid images of prideful women dressed in men's clothing, naked bodies covered in tattoos and curving-textured lines of places and objects. These are some of Catherine Opie's most well-known photographed subjects that take a viewer out of the realm of normalcy.

American-born photographer Opie began her career shooting lesbians and transsexuals in San Francisco's leather-fetish scene during a time when gays and lesbians were being scrutinized by heterosexuals in the 1980s. Opie, born in Sandusky, Ohio, earned her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1986 and her MFA from the California Art Institute in 1988. Now a professor of photography at the University of California Los Angeles, Opie has come a long way with her work being displayed not only in the United States but in parts of Europe and Asia.

At first glance, many of Opie's photos may not seem out of the ordinary or easily captured. However it's the message behind her work that intrigues viewers and shapes her photographs into true works of art. Throughout her career Opie has been most interested in the social structure of society and its role in shaping identities. She has divided her work into various series that demonstrate different aspects of American culture from suburban life to architectural structures to lesbian couples in domestic settings. Each series has been carefully mastered to demonstrate how each subject is influenced by the structure of our society.

Opie began her series while still working on her Master's Degree. After experimenting with the leather-fetish scene of San Francisco and Los Angeles, Opie moved on to a completely different subject: suburban life. Her first series called "Master Plan" is a collection of the development of the houses being constructed, advertisements of homes and ultimately homes in which families live. Opie's goal in creating the piece came from her interest in the framework of families. Opie was inspired by Russian Constructivism and 1930 documentaries that she studied while in college to do a piece that she said, "[shows] the identity politics of why someone would choose to move to a master plan community."

By 1988 Opie had "Master Plan" ready on display. According to her biography, Opie had seven distinct segments of the final product including a segment of the construction, two segments of photos that included captions with layout plans and building regulations "proscribing the lives of community residents". Her final segment included text among the photographs of interviews she collected of families actually living in the homes. In 2006, Opie re-installed the piece in the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach. In this piece she included trash and condemned houses to demonstrate what she says is, "going beyond the image, and really talking more about people's choices in terms of how they create community and also the white flight from the urban environment."

Opie admitted that much of her work has been influenced by her life. She began taking photos when she was 9 years old after she studied Lewis Hine and his famous documentary images of child laborers from the farm industries in the United States. These photographs spawned a desire in the artist that reflects through her work as an adult. One of <sup>the</sup> her first photographs Opie took as a child was a self-portrait of her showing off her biceps displaying her need to demonstrate power. As an adult, we see this theme reappear in other self portraits such as Self Portrait/Pervert. Opie admits that she had a difficult childhood that has influenced her desire to understand the structure of American families.

In Self Portrait/Pervert we see an angry Opie lashing out on American criticisms of her community: the lesbian community. In the self-portrait Opie's face is covered by a leather mask and bloodily inscribed across her exposed chest is the word Pervert. To show off her bravery as she once did in her childhood self-portrait, we see that Opie has threaded 23 long needles throughout her arms. As a lesbian and member of the sadomasochistic leather subculture of San Francisco Opie claims that at the time of her second self-portrait she was upset with America's view and mistreatment of the gay community.

*much of her  
one tough  
description*

She said, "Perverts [sic] is a very angry piece. I was pissed off. I really wanted to make that piece because of what was happening culturally in the U.S.: the [NEA] censorship, the fuss around the Mapplethorpe show and what was happening in mainstream gay culture. All of a sudden mainstream gays and lesbians were calling themselves 'normal' and yet a lot of communities were being pushed further and further out in a certain way."

We see this community Opie speaks of full throttle in her series "Being and Having" exhibited at New York's 494 Gallery in 1991. The series included 13 photos each of a different lesbian woman wearing an exaggerated mustache in front of a brightly lit yellow backdrop. Each woman, all friends of the artist, are makeup-less and photographed close-up, staring directly into the camera. Each photograph is labeled with a masculine nickname of each woman that plays on the symbolism of their apparent masculine gender roles. According to her biography, Opie's photos denounce the belief that gender roles are a balanced or stable way of being. Her gallery of "Being and Having" launched during a critical time for the lesbian community when lesbian behavior and thought were being analyzed.

She went on to create more documentary series that showed American relations and gender roles in rare form. She also continued to demonstrate our culture's desire to create a generic world in her series, "Mini-malls" and "Freeways". According to her biography, Opie wanted to demonstrate the banality of the structures and its reflection of the communities that created them.

Opie stated, "[I was] interested in the way that the language of the people embedded is in the body of the structures in the same way that the language is embedded on the bodies of my friends and myself as a structure of identity...And I feel that the language wouldn't be able to be looked at in the same way if the spaces were inhabited by people."

The artist's series "Mini-malls" became a turning point in her documentary career. By then she had taken what we see as the everyday norm, from mini-malls to suburban neighborhoods to freeways, to demonstrate how we have formulated and created a type of generic culture that has manifested from several places and ideas.

Catherine Opie is a world-renown photographer for her work that looks deep into the American identity and the flaws that have arisen from our highly-structured society. Her photographic techniques and choice of subjects make her work unique and worthwhile not only to look at but to make you think.



Lindsey C Maxwell  
Richard Avedon  
2/25/2010

8/10  
good details - some  
editing errors and  
a few unanswered  
questions.  
What book did you  
read?

Having received a Rolleiflex camera from his father as a going away present,

Richard Avedon started out taking pictures of crewman for the Marines. However, he was quickly noticed as an up and coming photographer and began a career shooting for big name magazines such as *Life* and *Vogue*. His images usually captured the model staring straight into the camera against a stark white background. He is also well known for shooting large format photography, sometimes measuring over three feet high. Avedon was unique compared to most high fashion photographers, capturing images full of action where he moved with the camera. It is said that the reason Avedon's pictures were so lively was because during his photo shoots he brought life himself by jumping and hollering about, to create excitement in his models.

Avedon <sup>was</sup> well known for photographing famous actors and actresses, something which I believe takes a great deal of talent. Public figures need to trust the photographer and believe in what they are doing, or else they will not be able to relax in front of the camera. Avedon, having shot many nude actors, had the ability to make people relax in the most uncomfortable positions. In a photo shoot with actress Nastassja Kinski, Avedon photographed a nude Kinski lying on her side in a cocoon<sup>✓</sup> like position with her knees slightly bent and arms relaxed. Avedon then placed a serpent on Kinski and watched it begin to weave its way across her body. The large serpent wrapped its body up between her thighs, lingering over her stomach to wrap around her back, and then began coiling its head up towards her shoulders to linger next to her cheek. The very moment Avedon snapped the photograph was when the serpent struck its tongue out towards Kinski's ear.

negs? or  
prints?

a snake



not to mention her willingness to risk!

The expression on her face remains calm and relaxed even when the serpent's tongue comes out as if it will strike her face. This photograph demonstrates the ability the photographer must have to develop a trusting relationship with his clients. It also shows his willingness to take risks, and allow himself to let go of the situation so that it can control itself while he patiently awaits for the perfect moment to shoot.

Two of these phrases don't make sense together  
Another striking photograph of Avedon's that displays his ability to recognize a decisive moment to capture the perfect moment was "Dovima with elephants." This fashion photograph showed his favorite model Dovima in a long black dress with a big white bow and flowing sash from waist to feet. With elephants roaming in the background, Dovima's left arm is elegantly stretching out while her head presses into the elephant's cheek, and her right arm clings to the trunk in tension. But even someone as prominent in the world of photography as Avedon can admit when something is wrong with his photography. He claimed that he wished the sash on the dress has been blowing in the wind to the left of the photograph to complete the line of an already striking photograph.

Avedon sometimes spent months planning out his photographs. He once had an idea to photograph a nude male covered in bumblebees in a tattoo-like pattern. Sketching out his idea and publishing an add in beekeeper trade journals, Avedon waited for three months until he found a willing model for his next project. Ronald Fischer who volunteered to model was sprayed with pheromone, an odor the queen bee gives off to keep the other bees in a particular hive. Avedon captured Fischer from just above the belly button with bees swarming over him in clusters as if he had tattoos covering his relatively hairless chest, arms, and bald head. Two versions of this portrait were shot

behind Avedon's signature stark white background which they set up on the side of a barn. One photograph was of Fischer with an agonizing expression of pain upon his face from the supposed sting of the bees. The other photograph, which is more well known, captions Fischer with a calm expression as if he has been covered in bees a million times with relatively no protection from stings, something he had never done before this photo shoot. This again demonstrates Avedon's ability to explain his ideas to the models so that they are able to be comfortable and confident that they can relax and not be put in harms way.

Working for magazines such as *Vogue* meant that Avedon created a lot of high fashion photography. But what was unique about his photographs was the liveliness and heavy emphasis on line and movement. One of my favorite photographs is of a woman in a simple classic short white dress. The model in this photograph is leaning only on the tip of her toes on her left foot as if she dancing about. With arms stretched wide she wraps the long braid that is almost the length of her body, around her hand swinging it in a motion to mock the circular shape of her left arm completing the line of the picture. This photograph demonstrates the importance of line and angles in photography. It also demonstrates how Avedon not only inspired movement, but moved with his subjects to create energy in his work.

A rather odd photograph that Avedon took was of a group of older women who appeared to be preparing for a portrait of their organization, but perhaps were not aware the photo shoot had already begun. The women in this photograph are looking down and have their faces turned towards a woman<sup>a</sup> with her back to the camera as if they are in deep conversation. You can tell from the facial expressions of these women that some are

annoyed with what the woman is saying, and that others simply are not willing to listen to what she is saying at all. There is one woman however, who is smiling into the distance knowing Avedon has begun shooting, which is an acknowledgment that it was in fact suppose to be a formal portrait. What is most interesting about this photograph is that I like this connection Avedon took the picture with one woman having her back to the viewer. This is something that the renaissance artists did hundreds of years ago to make the audience feel as if they are part of the painting ~~photograph~~, and to show depth.

Richard Avedon was successful because of his ability to relate to his models and keep them calm and interactive with the camera. He demonstrates to us how important finding that decisive moment to snap the photograph can be, and shows how effective planning your photo shoots can be with his powerful images.

Ashley Kuegler

Steve Wolgast

2-25-10

Steve McCurry

I can tell you really  
like and admire his work -  
your ideas are plenty but  
they're trapped in their first  
draft. Re writing it would  
have improved it.

Steve McCurry is an American photographer who was born in 1950 in Philadelphia. He graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a degree in cinematography and history. After <sup>he</sup> worked for a local newspaper for two years he began freelancing in India where his journalism career really began (Magnum Photos). McCurry went into Afghanistan just before the Russian invasion. He sewed film rolls into his clothes and those <sup>would be his</sup> became the first images of the war. McCurry's most famous photo, the Afghan girl was taken during this photo shoot. <sup>new paragraph</sup> Steve McCurry has photographed many wars and conflicts but his passion is portrait photography. McCurry has also won many awards <sup>still</sup> from 1980 ~~to present times~~ including magazine photographer of the year from the National Press Photographers' association (Magnum Photos). McCurry says he likes to capture the "essence of human struggle and joy." McCurry uses natural light and likes to "capture the unguarded moment, the essential soul pecking out, experience etched on a person's face. I try to convey what it is like to be that person, a person caught in a broader landscape that you could call the human condition" (Steve McCurry). <sup>new paragraph</sup> McCurry has published nine books. All of his books are photographs mixed with his written experiences. His photos all use vibrant colors and show humans in their natural habitat, whatever that may be. McCurry likes to put himself in dangerous, or risky situations because that is where he gets the best photos because it is what their lives are really about. What I like about his older photography is that it is the same as the photography he

seven  
sentences on  
this page  
begin with  
"McCurry"  
- aim  
to for varia-  
tion in ex-  
plaining  
your ideas.

does today. I like how he has a specific type of photography that he has stuck to for over 30 years. A great source to learn more about his photography and himself is his website [www.stevemccurry.com](http://www.stevemccurry.com).

McCurry has a lot of professional experience. I didn't find any books that had information about him but I found multiple biographies and I found that he has written books but they are full of pictures from his adventures from all over the world. What I found most interesting about his career is the picture he is most famous for, The Afghan Girl was taken back in the 1984. McCurry went back to Afghanistan 18 years later to find the same girl and take a picture of her again (culturekiosque). The girl's eyes are haunting which is what drew me to the photo. McCurry described the photo of the little girl to a photography magazine: "First of all she's a very beautiful little girl. I think there's an ambiguity, a mystery about her expression. I think there's a kind of haunted, troubled quality on one level, but there's also fortitude, perseverance, respect, and pride to her look. It's clear that she's poor. She has this torn shawl. But with her poverty she has this dignity" (culturekiosque). <sup>new paragraph</sup> I feel like McCurry really connects with his subjects and doesn't just take a photo to get a good shot, he wants to inform the world of these people and places that are unfamiliar. McCurry has worked for National Geographic, which is where the Afghan Girl photo was first published. He hosts photo workshops for both film and print they are usually hosted in China and they are two weeks long (stevemccurry). Steve mentioned on his blog page that if he had any advice to aspiring photographers it would be to "get as far away from home as possible" he says that getting away from home will get you out of your comfort zone and make you a better photographer. McCurry has one style of photography, which is the use of bright colors and from what I



*good point - a nice detail to notice*

have seen he likes to capture just one person at a time to focus on their individual self. On his website he has fine arts, posters, portraits, trains, and New York photo galleries. My favorite of these are his portraits. His portraits are usually the photos used in National Geographic.

McCurry's journalistic goals are just to, as I mentioned earlier, capture a person's true self. He uses natural light and in one news article written about him he said "I think it is an important part of photojournalism - to show people what is happening" (Interview). I like that he is so honest with his subjects and his photography style. He also mentioned that "he doesn't like to show what the war impresses on the landscape but what it shows on the human face" (Interview). McCurry mentions that he sees life as a photo opportunity, "Creatively, I imagine and visualize photo possibilities wherever I am. I think it is an important skill to be able to isolate and recognize a picture out of a scene" (Interview). McCurry now uses a digital camera but back when he began he used a film camera and he said that he prefers a digital camera now because he doesn't have to carry around hundreds or even thousands of rolls of film.

I feel like Steve McCurry is the male, older version of the photographer I want to be. I love that he just took off to a foreign country to take pictures of people because they are the most interesting subjects you could take. I would love to go freelance all over the world once I graduate. I prefer his style of shooting with natural light because it gives the photo a more real feel rather than the harsh flash of a camera. Most of the pictures I have taken so far in my photography career use bright colors and harsh color contrast because I feel like bright color photos are something everyone likes. I think McCurry has contributed a lot to the journalism community since 1980 because he took one of the

most recognizable photos of the century. He isn't scared to put himself in situations where he could be harmed because he is doing something fun and exciting. I hope to some day be able to do the things he does.

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### 3. Susan Sontag Reaction



Caroline Knudson  
Analysis of Susan Sontag  
April 20, 2010

*you have  
good ideas that  
are about to take shape -  
I wish there was more of  
your thoughtful and less  
reminiscent of the book's  
points*

*7/10*

According to Susan Sontag, the power of photography lies within the absence of the photographer's ability to control the image. In other words, photography demonstrates reality to such a greater extent than other works of art, such as painting, that society has become fascinated with it because of its ability to capture a moment in time that has occurred and is preserved forever. Although Sontag is accurate in her analysis to a greater degree, with advancing technology we now see that photographers, whom according to her have no control over the photo, now have access to altering the photo much like painters have the ability to control and alter a painting. Here we will further analyze Sontag's view of photography and whether or not today the individual photographer plays a role in the power of their photography.

Sontag compares the art of photography to the art of painting. In her in-depth and seemingly complicated analysis she claims that our modern world has become dependent on photos as substitutes for what really occur first-hand. She uses Feuerbach's analysis of photography, one that was developed shortly after the invention of the camera, that we actually prefer images to the real thing all the while being completely aware of our preference. Sontag goes on to state that Feuerbach's analysis has become widely accepted and that it has more pertinence to our modern world than during the beginning years of the camera. Sontag claims, "that a society becomes modern when one of its chief activities is producing and consuming images, when images that have extraordinary powers to determine our demands upon reality and are themselves coveted substitutes for firsthand experience become indispensable to the health of the economy, the stability of the polity, and the pursuit of private happiness (pg. 153)."

*break this  
sentence into  
two - it will  
be easier to  
follow*

Sontag continues with her comparison of painting, an art form that can also demonstrate a resemblance to reality, <sup>and that</sup> does not meet the same standards as photography because it is in fact only an interpretation of reality where as a photograph is the reflection of light waves that do not only produce a resemblance of the truth but the truth itself. To prove her case, Sontag uses a fictional comparison of a painting of Shakespeare to an actual photographic image of him, the latter taking precedence in importance. Sontag says, "This is not just because it would presumably show what Shakespeare really looked like, for even if the hypothetical photograph were faded, barely legible, a brownish shadow, we would probably still prefer it to another glorious Holbein. Having a photograph of Shakespeare would be like having a nail from the True Cross (154)."

However, as truthful as this may be, one cannot help but come to realize that although a painting is merely the resemblance and sometimes altered resemblance of truth, it is still highly regarded for its display of the artist's ability to produce such fascinating images by the workings of their own body. A painting of Shakespeare could in fact be as highly regarded as an actual photo of himself if the painting had been painted by Leonardo da Vinci or someone of the liking because of

the long  
sentence  
here gets in  
the way of  
meaning

yes

the artistic genius shown in the painting—for the artist's ability to create a masterpiece using human effort no matter how exactly close to reality the painting really is.

( This brings us to the issue at hand. According to Sontag, not only do we place importance on photography for its ability to produce a replacement of what's real but because it also holds more power than any other form of image operation for its independence from whom is creating the image. No matter how one tries to alter the image they are pursuing to capture the actual automatic process of light reflecting off of objects cannot be changed—allowing the process to guide itself. Sontag states, "However carefully the photographer intervenes in setting up and guiding the image-making process, the process itself remains an optical-chemical (or electronic) one, the workings of which are automatic, the machinery for which will inevitably be modified to provide still more detailed and, therefore, more useful maps of the real. The mechanical genesis of these images, and the literalness of the powers they confer, amounts to a new relationship between image and reality (pg. 158)."

you lost  
me on  
this

However, as truthful the words of Sontag may be in relation to past times of photography, today her opinion may not hold true. With the increasing popularity of photography came the ability to actually alter an image. It is true that during the actual process of taking a picture, the photographer cannot alter the chemical process needed to create the photo but now the photographer has the ability to alter after the process has taken place. We see in our everyday lives photography that has been altered, in fact, it has almost become necessary to alter images with the increasing narcissism seen in the media and facebook. In magazines, advertisements, books and personal photos of families and friends we say that the image creator has cropped, deleted, resized and reshaped the objects that the chemical process created.

see?

In conclusion, I do not disagree with Sontag but her analysis is outdated and less relevant with the increase of technology. The process of photography still remains fascinating for its ability to demonstrate and preserve reality but like painting, we are able to alter and change what we see within the image, therefore altering and taking away from what is in fact the truth.

Lindsey C Maxwell  
Photojournalism  
4/20/2010

*Some great  
ideas in there!  
nicely argued*

$\frac{9}{10}$

Author Susan Sontag is well educated on what is going on in the world of photography, and has many ideas about what it takes to be a photographer. However, the most interesting point she has in her book is that photography is powerful because of the irrelevance of the person shooting the photograph. Sontag says "...the process itself remains an optical-chemical (or electronic) one the workings of which are automatic."

Sontag brings up an interesting point. Anyone can shoot photographs, especially now that we have small point-and-shoot cameras that have automatic settings allowing the photographer to get decent exposure at almost anything they are shooting with just the click of a button. The idea that anyone can take a photograph is appealing to our society because never before can any person truly say that they can capture a moment in time for forever. Sontag says "It is not reality that photographs make immediately accessible, but images." (165) She discusses that we can now know what our grandparents used to look like. I think this plays a large importance to the world of photography because before cameras the only way to know these types of things was through paintings, which only the wealthy owned (163). Even if we could produce paintings rapidly and in large amounts, the world would still choose a photograph of a family member over a painting. This is because photographs are proof. When you look at a painting you may think to yourself that the painting is a great depiction of your relative, but a photograph will give you more, a verification of the exact truth of the shape of the individual's nose, or the complexion of their skin.

Photography is powerful in our society because it offers every individual the chance to prove that they have been somewhere or seen something. On family vacations, such as a visit to New York, anyone could take a nice picture of the statue of liberty.

However, the reason it is so powerful in our society is because we have a camera and can take a picture with ourselves or a family member in the photograph to prove that we were there, and that we didn't just get a picture of the statue of liberty from some gift shop.

Who took the photograph of the family standing in front of the statue is not important, what is important is that the individual has the photograph and can prove that they were there no matter what the quality.

As a society we want to educate ourselves on everything from objects, to places, to people. As the society learns people will <sup>become?</sup> become curious as to what these objects, places and people look like. When you are studying the city of Venice, Italy you may read in a textbook that Venice is essentially sinking. Now when we picture Venice sinking in our minds we wonder what that looks like. Is it all under water? Are the streets all made of rivers? How are people living in a sinking city? Because of the advancement of cameras we are able to type in any search browser "Venice" and thousands of images taken by people all over the world will appear. When we research ideas like these we are simply looking for some sort of proof, evidence, or idea of what the visual image is, not caring who took the photograph. Even the ability to photograph paintings of public figures such as Abraham Lincoln is important to our society. Who painted the painting is not as important to us as the fact that we have large quantities of pictures of the painting and can understand what he may have looked like.

Thinking about Sontag's idea that the individual photographer is irrelevant I

*excellent  
reaction!*

*yes!*

began to think about how I look at photographs. Most everyone can say they have viewed photographs of people on facebook, or some sort of social networking site. When you view someone's profile they may have hundreds of photographs in various albums of an experience they had a trip the went on. As you flip through the photographs you look for who was there, what the were doing, and where they were doing it. I do not however, think about who took the photograph, or care about the lighting, the contrast, or any other technical thing. I only think about what was important in the picture, which I believe is the "proof." What matters in our society is that we can prove that something is a certain way, or was a certain way through photography and that is what makes photography so powerful. The old saying "a picture doesn't lie," comes into play here. Because of this I agree with Sontag the reason photography is so powerful in our society is because who takes the picture if irrelevant.



Ashley Kuegler

4-19-10

photojournalism

### Susan Sontag paper

Susan Sontag implies that the reason photography is so powerful in our society is the irrelevance of the individual photographer. Is she right? *GOOD INTRO!*

I agree with what Susan Sontag is implying that photography is powerful despite who takes the photo. I also disagree because each photographer has a different perspective on what they are photographing. The camera is just an instrument used to portray what a person wants to show.

Photography is powerful no matter who takes the photo because all photos show some kind of story. The ones that aren't edited show the truth but not the whole truth to a situation because the photographers choose what is going to be seen. If someone were to set up a camera and have a panoramic picture taken that captured the entire scene of an event then the camera would be the only thing necessary.

"Photography has powers that no other image system has ever enjoyed because, unlike the earlier ones, it is not dependent on an image maker. However carefully the photographer intervenes in setting up and guiding the image-making process, the process itself remains an optical-chemical (or electronic) one, the workings of which are automatic" (158). I disagree with this quote because in order to have a good photo a person has to set up the camera so that the angles are aesthetically pleasing. No one wants to look at a picture that is of hills and has no focal point. I think that photos need to have a person behind the camera to give them meaning.

"Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still" (163). Photographers choose the reality they want people to see, the camera captures the reality with the influence of the human who took it. There have been pictures taken of famous events that can be edited to show the true reality of the event or they can show what the person wants people to see. The people who take the photographs have a huge impact on the photos because they choose what is seen. The camera simply shows the image, it does not create it. Sontag uses this quote to make a point about photography and its different perspectives, "To us, the difference between the photographer as an individual eye and the photographer as an objective recorder seems fundamental, the difference often regarded, mistakenly, as separating photography as art from photography as document. But both are logical extensions of what photography means: note taking on, potentially, everything in the world, from every possible angle." (175-176). This quote says that photography can be art or it can be a teaching tool, showing people things that are going on in the world. The difference between the two is the person who is taking the photo not the camera itself. The camera needs someone behind it to make an image, whether it be art or a document, the camera cannot make a good image on its own.

A quote at the end of the book that I found really interesting was, "photography is a tool for dealing with things everybody knows about but isn't attending to. My photographs are intended to represent something you don't see." – Emmet Gowin (200) I think that it's interesting that Sontag included this in her book because it is saying that people use photography as a tool to show people the unseen in the world. The things that regular people pass over every day but photographers see as something interesting and

something that needs to be seen. It is the photographer <sup>who</sup> ~~that~~ makes a difference in the photo. Anyone can take a picture but certain people can see something in life and turn it into a beautiful photograph.

yes!

I think that Sontag has some good points in her book but I found it incredibly hard to read. I disagree when she says that the individual photographer doesn't matter though because each photographer has a certain eye for what they are photographing. You can't have two people take a picture of something and have it be exactly the same because each person would interpret the situation differently. I enjoyed what Sontag had to say about photography and how different cultures treat it differently. I think that it is interesting that people see a photo as a part of your soul being captured. I think that photography is more important now because it documents everything that is happening and will preserve history for thousands of years. I feel like photos have to show truth or they are not important at all even if a beautiful picture is created, if it is not showing the true story of what is going on it is not important at all. In that case it would be the photographers fault, that is why photography is powerful, because the person taking the picture has the power to tell a truthful story or the power to tell a lie depending on how they take the picture.



## Appendix C: Students' Photographic Portfolios

## Caroline's first proposal

Caroline Knudson

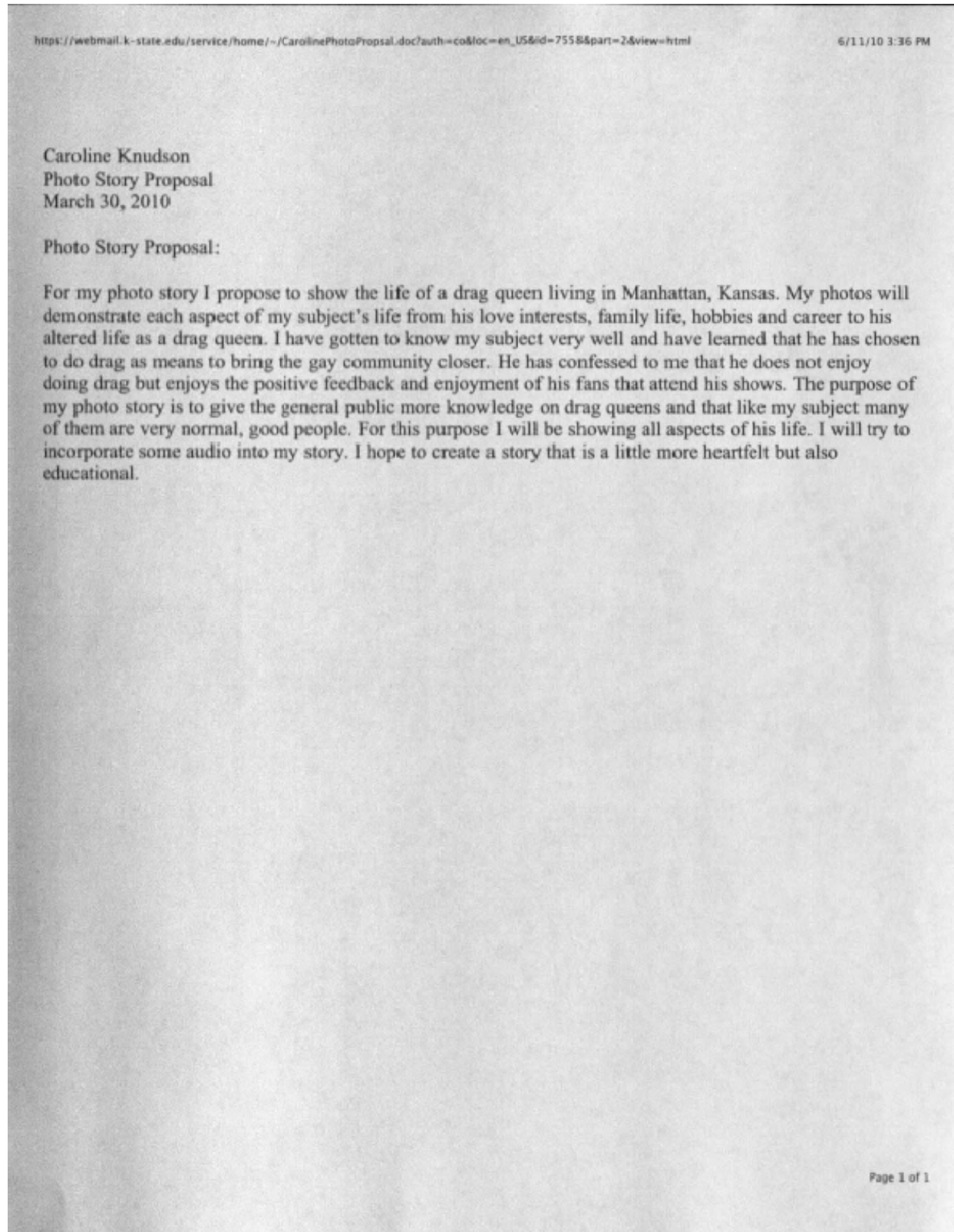
### Photo Story Proposal:

*motivation*

For my upcoming portfolio, I propose to do a photo story on a student athlete on K-State's campus that has come here from another country. I want to show photos that demonstrate different aspects of this person's life while living here. I chose this topic because after having lived abroad myself, I find it interesting how it is to live here as a student from another country. Likewise, I find that coming here to play a sport interesting to the general population because it shows extreme dedication, a willingness to adapt to changes and the personal struggle a foreigner faces while adapting. I would like to take photos that demonstrate the athlete's personal life such as friends, living arrangement and daily life, their involvement with the sport and practice routine as well as some of their background and history. Some of the photos I would like to include would be action photos, their friends, possibly some demonstrating their religious beliefs and traditional customs.

*very good -  
finish the proposal with  
the student's name and  
relevant info (sport, home  
country, personal routine  
that interests you)*

## Caroline's second proposal



## Caroline's portfolio (excerpts)

### [Introduction]

No matter how one may view him, 24-year-old Joshua Reed is your typical, hard-working nursing student. A Manhattan native, Josh enjoys spending time with his close-knit family, expressing himself through art and advocating for better healthcare through nursing and volunteer work. However, there is another side to Josh that makes him stand out among the crowd: Josh is a drag queen performer. Here is Josh's story.

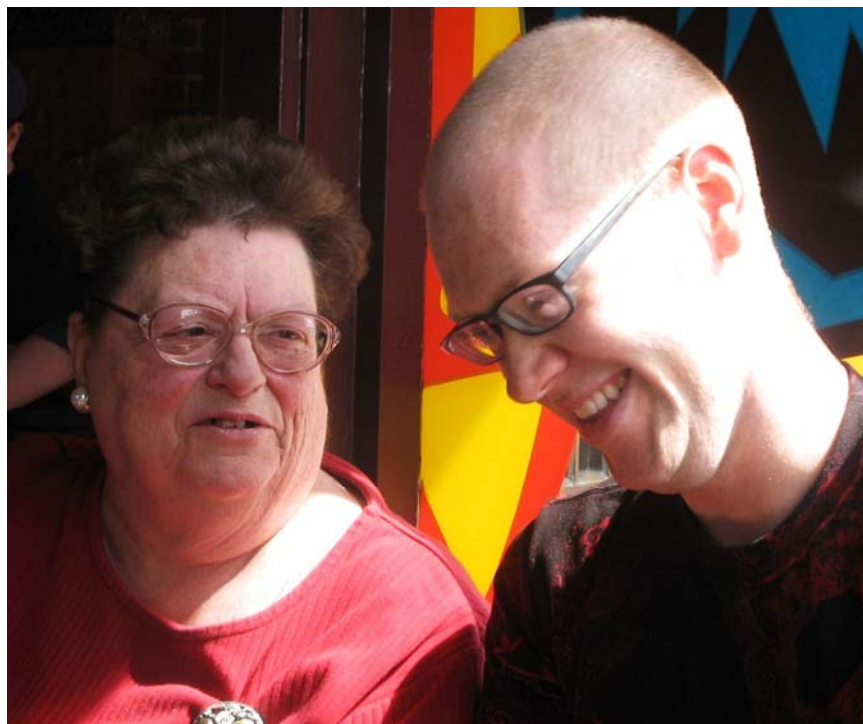


Josh began doing drag performances a little over a year ago with close friends. He also works as a Dj during “Alternative Nights” at Mel’s Tavern in Manhattan as a means to bring the gay community closer.





Out to lunch with his grandmothers at So Long Saloon, Josh comes from a unique and open-minded family. They are not only accepting of him as a gay man but are supportive of his decision to do drag performances.



Josh and his grandma Pat share a good laugh while waiting to be seated. He tries to meet up with his grandmothers as often as possible.



He discusses family history through the use of sign language with his grandma Liz. Josh learned sign language at a young age in order to communicate with her.



According to Josh, he has always had a close relationship with his family. "I never went through that stage in high school of trying to be independent of my family or embarrassed to be with them," he says.



Josh greets his boyfriend Josh with a hug during "Alternative Nights" at Mel's Tavern. The couple have been dating casually since fall of 2009.





At home with his Border Collie, Kati. “Kati is my best friend. She has been with me through some really tough times. Its been amazing to have her as a part of my life. Having been a traveling nurse before, it was nice to have such a neat road companion as I slept in hotels for weeks on end, hundreds of miles from home.”



While still in nursing school, Josh works part-time at Stoneybrook Retirement Community as a practical nurse. He also works as a traveling nurse in surrounding communities. "I hope to continue my education in the field of nursing. My focus is eventually public health in regards to the low poverty population and at risk groups such as non-English-speaking individuals living in America," he says of his work as a nurse.



At a family “mushroom fry” with close friends and family in Riley, Kans. He listens intently to long-time friend Jolene tell a story.



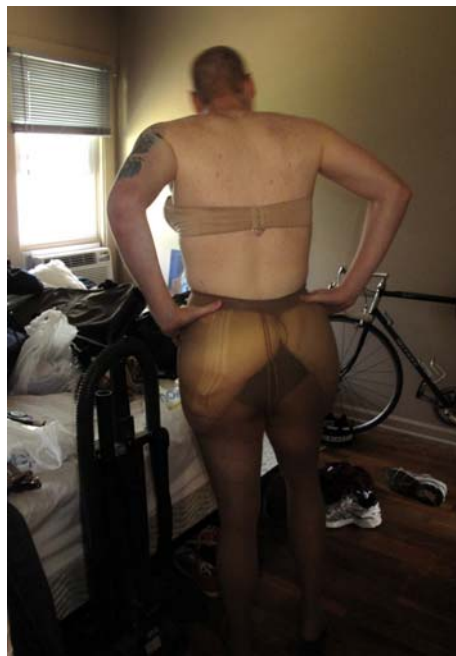


At his home getting ready for a day out in drag. Josh normally performs as Patti O´Dour with the trio “Hot, Sticky and Sweet” in Manhattan and surrounding areas. He says the shows are a way to bring the gay and lesbian community together. “I’ve had fans write me telling me that I’ve helped them come out or I’ve helped them to be comfortable with themselves,” he says.



While applying makeup Josh admits that dressing up in drag is sometimes a struggle. The process of putting on makeup makes him nervous: "I don't like having something near my eyes," he says.

From the makeup to the clothing, Josh has to special order his drag gear.



"There are female illusionists that dress up to look like women and then there are drag queens that exaggerate their look. I prefer to look like a drag queen," he says.

Josh wears padding underneath his clothing to give him a more feminine physique.





He chooses a sleek black dress to emphasize his look. “[Drag] is only a show to me,” he says. As Patti O´Dour, he wears a brown wig full of high-volume hair.



Josh selects his heels based on his mood. For day wear, he opts for comfort but during night performances he wears high-inch, clear heels. After applying finishing touches, Josh has now transformed himself into his drag persona: Patti O´Dour.



“Doing drag is like a Van Gogh, you’ve gotta step back to get the full effect,” he says.





For his night out, Josh goes to a theatre performance of “Clue” at the Manhattan Performing Arts Center to watch a friend. To accompany him is his grandmother Pat. “Nothing shocks me with Josh,” says his grandmother while purchasing tickets to the show. “Our family has always been on the colorful side.”



Despite strange looks from other audience members, Josh acts at ease and comfort while talking with friends.





"I have a strange spiritual drive to care for people and often joke about the 'marriage' I have to humanity. I truly believe we are all tied together and I hope to meet and help as many people as I can with the short time I've been granted on earth."

Lindsey C Maxwell

I plan on taking pictures of various students on campus participating in activities that involve their major. I thought this would be interesting because there are so many unique things going on around campus that most of us don't know about. For instance, the journalism majors working on the radio, or collegian; the ceramic majors throwing pots, the milling science majors in the flour mill, the music and theater students performing. This story would mostly focus on the activities, but may also demonstrate the long and late hours that students spend working on projects and studying.

-this is a start, but it needs to be  
fleshed out. is it focussed ~~entirely~~ on  
academic projects (things related  
to majors)? will you do 1-2 photos  
of a ~~doz~~ dozen students or a dozen  
photos of 2-3 students? is it a story  
with a beginning, middle, and end,  
or an essay of students at work?

Lindsey's portfolio (excerpts)



Clay covered fingerprints mark the entrance to Kansas State Universities Ceramics Department in West Stadium.





These pieces, each measuring around two feet in size, demonstrate how much these large kilns can hold.



Underneath the steps of West Stadium is a storage room for pots waiting to be fired, along with other versions of kilns that use gas to fire pottery at high temperatures.



Gas kilns can hold around 50 ceramic pots thrown by K-State's Ceramics One classes.



The Ceramics Department at K-State recycles its clay to be reused into its moist state.



The ceramics two students, who specialize in hand building techniques, discuss ideas about their pieces during studio hours.



Lindsey Melichar (left), a Junior at K-State majoring in elementary education, works with a needle tool to clean the edges around her pieces. Students use a tool called a rib to take out any imperfections in the clay, and make their pieces smooth.



Students bring their lunch to studio because of the long process involved with clay.





Alex Twitchel, a sophomore majoring in Painting at Kansas State, uses a process called coning and centering while he practices throwing on the wheel.

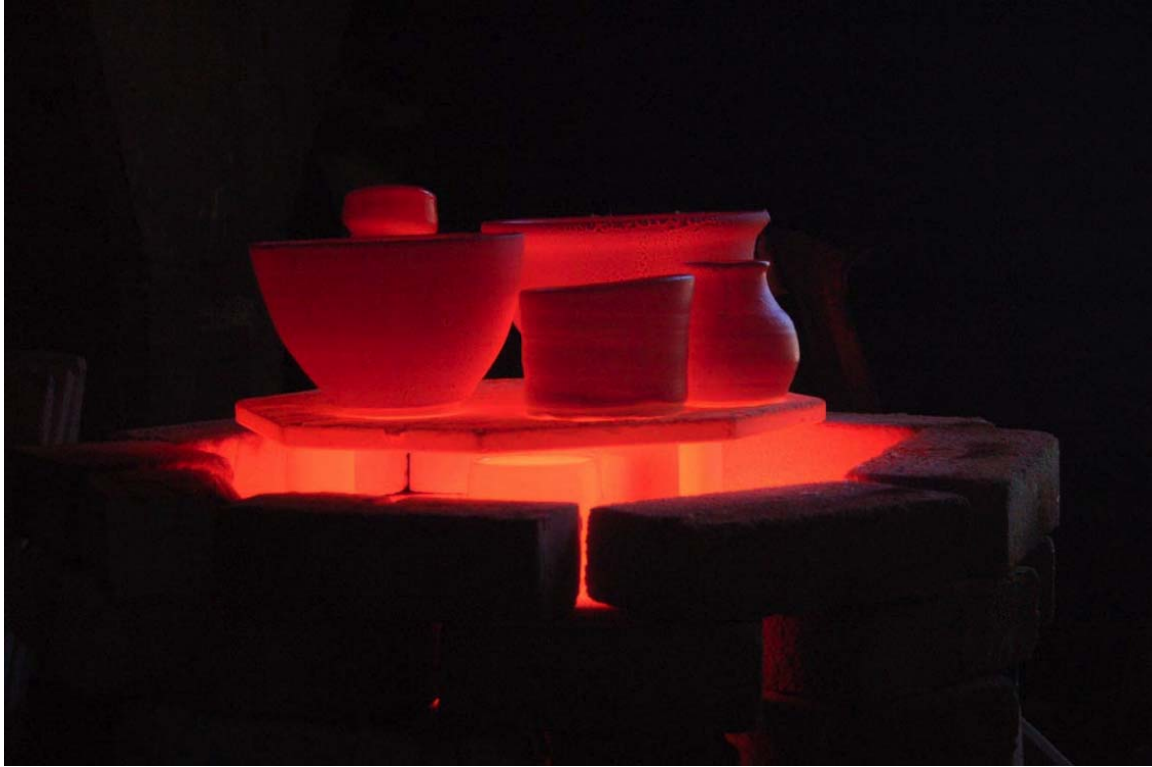


Bisque fired ceramic pottery next to glazed ceramic pottery demonstrates the possibilities that can come from the glazing process.



Ceramics one student, Maleri Malekyar, works on a machine called a grinder, used to clean up drips from firing, that are now considered to be glass.





In a process called Raku Firing, pottery is heated up to 1800 degrees fahrenheit.



Pottery is quickly put into the trash can in its liquid molten form.



Glendinning moves the trash can outdoors while the pots cool and go through a reduction phase in the firing process.



Although finished raku fired pottery is not functional, it is an attractive process to many because of the quick two hour process.





A unique and exciting form of art, the possibilities in ceramics are endless.

New Proposal

Ashley Kuegler

4-27-10

#### Found in the Flint Hills

I have not been able to find any person who wants to be photographed that is homeless. I felt terrible stereotyping people on the streets this past weekend when I went out to take pictures so I am changing my topic to items found in the flint hills.

This weekend when I was driving around taking pictures of the Flint Hills I kept finding old broken down tractors and cars in the middle of these fields and I thought that it would make a great story. I want to show people the treasures that the hills around Manhattan hold. The lighting yesterday when I went out was beautiful. The hills were lit up gold and the sky was a dark navy blue. I want to show the differences between the burning fields, the burnt fields and the newly growing fields.

My final project will have my top 10 favorite found treasures in the fields with the best lighting and the most interesting subjects. People in Kansas City never get to see big open fields and my idea is that I want to show them the beauty of central Kansas through photos. I had an idea a few years ago to take pictures of things around Manhattan that people in KC would never see. I feel like I can do that with this project but instead of use cattle ranches and dairy farmers like I was going to, I can find old abandoned buildings, broken down cars and tractors and streams that show the true beauty of Kansas that a lot of people don't get to see.

I found that taking pictures of people is too difficult and especially homeless people because they are so vulnerable. A lot of people don't want to be depicted as homeless because they are simply trying to get back on their feet. I feel like starting off with photo journalism I should try static objects that I know I can photograph and make unique. I think my final project will influence people to visit the flint hills and go exploring because they hold so much beauty that a lot of people never get to see. I also know of a place off of highway 24 that a lot of people don't know about but it has a lot of history. I want to show people all of these cool things we have in Manhattan so that others will be inspired to go exploring.

I will add music to my slideshow much like the photo essays we watched in class to add more emotion to the pictures. I know that I only have a couple of weeks left but I know that the hills aren't going anywhere and I can get a lot of pictures in a short amount of time.

Ashley's portfolio (excerpts)

### Wickstrum Farms



The farm that Mr. Wickstrum and his wife own surrounded by thousands of acres of pastures where they let their thousands of cattle graze before they are shipped off. The Wickstrum farm doesn't only breed cattle, they also farm land. This farm has been around for two generations and takes at least 20 people to run it daily.





Two Black Angus cows eating in one of the pastures closest to the house. A pile, right, of old furniture and metal scraps sits in the middle of the cattle ranch making a unique sculpture.



Mr. Wickstrum directs his son to lift the minerals off the truck bed and move them to the food storage barn. The ranch has thousands of Black Angus cows and their feed is stored here. The mountain to the right is ground up corn mixed with a fructose supplement. This feed is delivered to the cows in every pasture, every day by tractor.



Aiden, a Kansas State student in Animal Science works on the farm. He was sent to try and fix this tractor to bring feed out to the pastures.





A road divides two of the many pastures that the Wickstrums own. The road is scattered with old skeletons of animals and surrounded by the beautiful Flint Hills.



One of the many pastures that the Wickstrums own. The cows in this pasture are new mother cows and their babies.

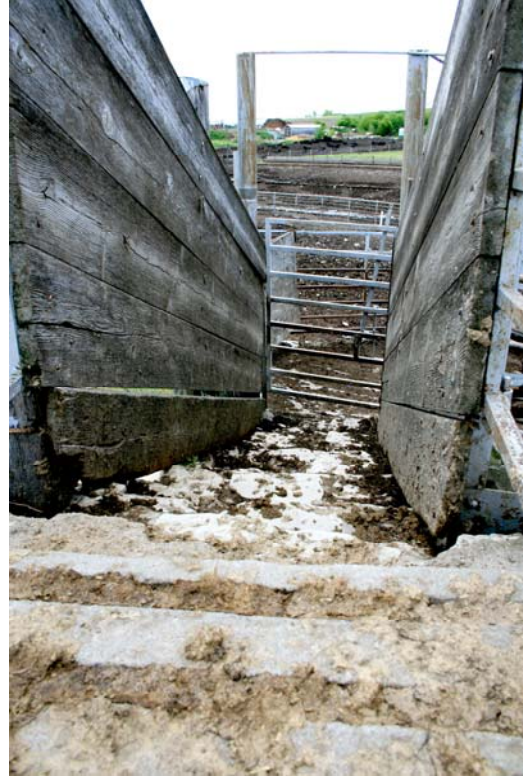


Mr. Wickstrum (Left) and an employee work to fix the broken grain bin piece.



A worker waits for instructions on what to do at the bottom of the broken grain bin. The corn is what is stored in the bin they are trying to fix. Water had gotten into the bottom of the tank from the rains a couple days ago.





A narrow path, left, leads to the final steps of the loading dock before the cattle are shipped off to be slaughtered. This is the last stage of the loading docks, the cows walk up the stairs then are packed into a trailer.



This is the trailer that Mr. Wickstrum uses to transport cattle from one ranch to another.

## Appendix D: Peer Interaction Memos

To: Cathie Lavis  
From: Steve Wolgast  
In re: Observing your class on January 20  
Date: January 28, 2010  
cc: Cora Cooper, Kurt Gartner

Cathie's enthusiasm toward her subject is the first thing I noticed. She clearly cares deeply about aboriculture, even using tree bark as a background for her slides, and wants her students to care about it too. She's not entirely serious, however, and sprinkles humor throughout her opening remarks.

She's very practiced in presenting her ideas to a class, so I found myself taking notes to improve my own introductions in future semesters. I've tended to be fairly quiet about my background to avoid coming across as overbearing, but I see from Cathie that sharing a bit of personal information in an understated way not only establishes credibility with students but also lets them know how she arrived where she is now.

For example, she explains that (among many other things) she once operated a business that maintained the outdoors of private and commercial properties. Students who are thinking of going into business after graduating know that she can offer them that perspective, just as those who are considering graduate school find out what she studied for her master's and doctoral degrees.

Perhaps just as important to students as her professional and academic credentials are her personal interests. Cathie not only mentions them but describes why they're important to her. That helps students see her as a person.

I especially liked one segment: "What Can You Expect from Me?" Students probably feel that they have to accept the instructor's direction, whatever her whims may be. Cathie makes clear that she is giving something to the students, specifically promising to be organized, pointing out that she never intends to embarrass a student, that she'll grade fairly, ask questions that require thought, and try to sense confusion—and patiently and politely listen when students ask for clarification.

Another idea I'll incorporate is having students fill out an index card that, in addition to basic information about themselves, also asks what background preparation they've had, for one interesting them about them and what each would like to know about her.

She also makes clear her expectations of the students. This is a 500-level class, she tells them, and she says that she expects them to be practiced students. Key points that I noted: She says that in their writing, references must be included and that they must be accurate. She tells them which book is required reading and which is optional, but strongly suggested.

I would have liked to learn a bit more about one arrangement, in which pairs of students become quiz partners. If I were a student I'd want to know more about how partners are selected.

I was glad to hear her explain her goals for the students' personal assessments. This is an essay they write at the end of the semester explaining the grade they feel they earned. She tells the class that the essay is to get them thinking about the quality of their own work throughout the semester, and also to let her think about them beyond just totaling their scores. It's an idea I liked so much from her syllabus that I included it in my class.

**Peer Review for Teaching—Spring 2010**

First Class Visit— Thursday, January 21

Steve Wolgast—MC416: Photojournalism

- Steve appears to have a good relationship with the students, acknowledging each as they enter the room, recognizing each by name.
- Steve speaks clearly and with an easy pace.
- I liked the fact he felt comfortable referring to his notes—these notes served only as a reference from which he expounded upon to carry on a conversation over the required reading.
- I noted a sleeping student to which he did not draw attention to—I am sure I would have—I do not know which is the right thing to do?
- Steve admitted he had to look up some terminology from the assigned chapter when he was reading—this shows he too is always learning and it is okay not to know everything.
- Steve demonstrates empathic listening.
- I liked the fact he discussed the assigned reading drawing attention to the information he felt was important for the students to understand.
- Good summary of chapter—using the computer only to show photos that helped students understand the content.
- Many of the students did not take notes.

Overall—Steve has an inviting approach and yet he is professional. His background experience serves him well as it supports the fact that he truly understands the topic.



From: "Cora Cooper" <corac@k-state.edu>  
To: "Stephen Wolgast" <wolgast@k-state.edu>  
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2010 11:27:47 AM GMT -06:00 US/Canada Central  
Subject: Re: tuesday feb 9

Hi Steve,

First of all, I think you are a natural! I really enjoyed the class and would have stayed for the student presentations if I didn't have a puppy waiting to be let out at home.

I felt you talked very naturally without notes, just referring them at transitions. The verbal examples you used for illustration of points were great-- clear, often local or personal-- that students could relate to. The students looked very interested in what you had to say. In the first part of class, the students were very quiet, and I wondered if it might help to call on individuals for thoughts, especially as Lisle tended to dominate any discussion. But once you got into the video and still examples, there was a really healthy exchange, and you did also call on one girl who hadn't participated yet.

It is really a good technique when you change your position by walking around the table, and I would suggest you do more of it, especially towards the beginning of the class time. It keeps students more alert and less in "tv watching" mode. I also wondered if more lights on at the start of class would be helpful, even though I hate fluorescents.

I really liked the manner in which you posed questions to the class. They were phrased in ways that didn't lead to only one "correct" answer, but invited opinion. Another good technique I noticed was that sometimes you would repeat back what a student had said (like a psychologist does!), which I thought was an effective way of validating a point of view without necessarily agreeing or disagreeing with it. Your instructions at the beginning of class on how Thursday's class will operate were very clear as well.

In short, I enjoyed it and would be happy to take a class with you, and I think K-State is lucky to have you!

Best,

Cora



To: Cathie Lavis  
From: Steve Wolgast  
Date: February 15, 2010  
Re: Follow-up on memo from first class visit  
cc: Cora Cooper, Kurt Gartner

Cathie made some helpful suggestions in her memo which I have added to my teaching. Namely:

- I spoke privately with the student who was sleeping through class. He had been in a class with me last semester, one that met over lunch (and this one meets over dinner). I pointed out that his nodding off was distracting to his classmates and to me, and suggested he bring in a cup of coffee or snack. He apologized and now brings in peanuts—and even offers to share them.
- I will start giving quizzes more often to encourage them to take notes. The next will come tomorrow night.
- While I'm glad Cathie didn't mind my referring to notes, I felt a bit awkward when I had to stop speaking for several seconds to find my next subject. I'm going to review them better before teaching.
- Cora mentioned the dimmed lights at the beginning of the class, correctly suggesting that it probably contributes to shorter attention spans. I had left some of the lights off to make a quicker transition to the slides on the screen because the light switch is outside of the classroom in a foyer. Classes now start with all the lights on, and I find the brightness makes a difference.

**Peer Review for Teaching—Spring 2010**

Second Class Visit—Thursday, February 11, 2010

Steve Wolgast—MC416: Photojournalism

- Apparently, Cora recommended to Steve that he stand up and move around as he visited with the students—this was a change from the first visit and I did like how he handles himself moving about. I thought Steve did a nice job of this; however, I also liked the feel of the class when he sat at the head of the table. Both techniques have pros and cons.
- Good class discussion; Steve does a nice job of getting students to interact. My one recommendation is to be more aware of those students who do not “hog” the conversation. At one point, the young man sitting at the end of the table volunteered to talk and was “booted” out by a student who *just* spoke up with an answer. That was okay, but you should have gone back to that student to hear what he had to say so it does not discourage his interaction in future conversations. Occasionally, I have had students comment on my TEVALS that I seem to favor students because they were always leading the discussions. I think it is only natural for us (teachers) to gravitate to those students who offer their thoughts because at least some one is responding to our questions; however, it may also discourage those students from speaking up who are not as confident. I know how challenging it is to be aware of all of this while keeping the class flowing—just a thought.
- The only other piece of advice I have from this visit is—I would like to hear more from you. What I mean by this is that when you ask the students to respond with their thoughts I am curious to know what you think—perhaps you can do this by summarizing before moving on to your next topic. Because the topics are new to me, I find myself listening to you with curiosity, perhaps your students are doing the same so I would like to hear your thoughts interwoven into a summary. Hope this makes sense.
- Overall, I find you to have an approachable style in the classroom that draws students to listen and interact. And it is apparent, you are prepared.

To: Cathie Lavis  
From: Steve Wolgast  
Date: 18 February 2010  
In re: Second observation of your class  
cc: Cora Cooper, Kurt Gartner

My second visit came on a day when you had asked students to bring in written summaries of their reactions to a chapter in a book you had assigned. I counted about 30 students.

I like how you walked around the room before class began, chatting with various students, and sometimes mentioning their homework assignment if they had it on their desks. It showed you were interested in them as more than students and want to get to know them a bit.

Once class began you asked for their thoughts on the chapter. Aiming for a discussion, you suggested that students imagine themselves seated in a circle of comfortable couches instead of at a series of tables, in hard chairs, all facing front.

One person volunteered an answer right away, and as others offered their thoughts you called on them by name. At about the fifth response, you interjected "Bingo!" He had nailed the answer because the book it really clicked with him, as you said you hoped it would with the others.

From his spot-on answer you start the teaching, explaining the ecosystem of the tree and the species around it (as I understood). As you returned to the points in the book to encourage more responses, you walked around the room, making it easier for students on the edges to answer questions and participate. In a class this size, that really helped to encourage responses.

One interesting exchange came about with mention of the big bang theory. One student said he wasn't too keen on it; unsaid but implied was his religious or moral belief. You acknowledged his comment and enlarged on the issue by referring to your Catholic upbringing and your career as a scientist. You asked if anyone else struggles with the conflicting viewpoints, and made clear that conflicts are acceptable. "You came to learn, but you also came to learn how to learn," you said, adding that college students need to learn how to ask tough questions and to entertain concepts that are personally disagreeable. An excellent point.

You must have been gratified by the student who complimented the author. "I haven't read a book like the one that he wrote," he said, because the book uses a story to teach science. This student clearly shares your enthusiasm for the book, and even though he sat in the back was one of the vocal participants. You encouraged him but didn't let him, or anyone else, have too large a role in the discussion.

At the end of class we visited briefly, and you were wondering how I saw the discussion. We agreed that even though you wanted students to interact with the others, the class was really about them answering your questions. Your idea to have student turn their chairs facing toward the aisle (so they're looking at each other instead of the front of the room) will certainly help, particularly if there's room for you stand in the center. I wonder what would happen if you sat down when someone was making a good point? That way the focus would leave you, and students would have to eyeball each other, waiting for a peer to speak next. Or so I would hope!

**Peer Review for Teaching—Spring 2010**

Third Class Visit—Tuesday, March 23, 2010

Steve Wolgast—MC416: Photojournalism

- Good welcoming , asking students about their spring breaks.
- Perhaps state objectives at beginning especially after spring break to bring the students back up to speed .
- How are the students held responsible for information? They do not take notes.
- Are students graded on participation? If not, you may want to consider so more folks get involved especially with such a small group.
- Good job of “slowing” Lyle down. He is enthusiastic but tends to take over the conversation.
- A few students seem to lose attention—how might you get them involved?

To: Cathie Lavis  
From: Steve Wolgast  
Date: 29 March 2010  
In re: Third observation of your class  
cc: Cora Cooper, Kurt Gartner

Like my first visit, my second visit came on a day when students were expected to discuss a book chapter. This time you arranged students' chairs in a large circle, which gave them a helpful way to interact.

Once the discussion got underway, the students commented on each others' points, making observations well enough that you were able to keep quiet except for the occasional positive feedback. The class seemed to enjoy this chapter; at one point I counted about a dozen students making about two dozen comments without any direction from you. I was amazed!

When you moved into the lecture, you used slides from your trip with (some of your) students to Italy earlier this month. Other in the class perked up at this point, probably because they had been on the trip or because they were familiar with it from stories from their classmates or you.

One of the really positive outcomes from sitting in a circle came at this point. When a student asked a question, he could ask it either of you or of the class in general. Sometimes another student would chime in after you gave your response, lending the class an air of collaboration.



## Appendix E: Student Permission Forms

Instructor's Participation in the Project: Peer Review of Teaching

The professor of this course is involved, with other K-State faculty members, in a University-wide project that is intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences of faculty and students. Because the main goal is to improve your learning experience, your help is requested in the following ways:

1. You may be asked periodically to fill out forms similar to a course evaluation to help learn more about your participation and your learning.
2. Your graded material may be looked at anonymously by people other than the professor to document the learning process. A small, random sample of student work on each assignment will be photocopied and kept as an archive for the course. Normally there are no names kept on student papers, but you may request that your name be retained on any of your work that is part of that small sample. The sample of student work will be looked at by other faculty who are helping your professor to develop greater student understanding.
3. The classroom activities will be observed periodically by other faculty, with the focus primarily on the professor. The observers are making no judgments of quality of your performance; they are observing the class in order to help the faculty member improve his or her teaching.

Your participation is greatly appreciated, and it is integral to the improvement of teaching and learning. If you have concerns or questions, please feel free to discuss them with the professor. Should you feel those concerns are not addressed, you may request that your work not be included in the sample of work placed in the archive.

-----Please tear here and return signed form to -----

I have read and understood the above information regarding S. WOLGAST's involvement in the *Peer Review of Teaching Program*. I hereby grant my professor permission to photocopy any of my work with the understanding that all indications of my identity will be removed prior to photocopying. To rescind this permission at any time, I simply need to inform S. WOLGAST in writing.

Caroline Krudson  
Signature

Caroline Krudson  
Please print name

1/19/10  
Date

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Ashley Kuegler  
Signature

Ashley Kuegler  
Please print name

1-19-10  
Date

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Lindsey C Maxwell  
Signature

Lindsey C Maxwell  
Please print name

1/19/10  
Date