

## Documentary Photography

**Course code:** ART 251

**Term and year:** Spring 2024

**Day and time:** Wednesday, February 2nd (Friday) – Wednesday, May 22nd | 11:30 – 14:15

**Instructor:** MA Björn Steinz

**Instructor contact:** bjorn.steinz@aauni.edu

**Consultation hours:** By appointment online or on Wednesday 17:30 - 18:00

**Art fee:** 1000 CZK

Art fees for this course will be used to cover: Gallery visits, guest lectures, excursions and prints for the final exhibition.

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Intermediate
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	None
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	JC Required; HSC, PS Elective

### 1. Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to documentary photography. Students will become familiar with international documentary photography, both historical and contemporary. The course places special emphasis on a personal documentary project, with the goal of practical application of theoretical knowledge. Students will gain hands-on experience by creating a long-term documentary photography series in Prague which will be exhibited at the end of the semester, and they will present the progress of their projects on the web via the Instagram stream "The Ballad of Quarantine" (@theballadofquarantine) and on their Flickr accounts.

Those who complete the course will have significantly improved their understanding of photography as both a means of documenting events, and as a form of fine art. By the end of the course students will have improved their practical skills to the point of being able to pursue more advanced work in documentary photography covering a wider range of subjects. **The course is designed for students which understand already the technical basics of operating a digital camera as the relationship in-between ISO, Shutter Speed and Aperture.** Students need a DSLR camera for being able to participate in this course (4 cameras are available to borrow from the library).

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will gain a full understanding of what documentary photography represents
- Students will learn how documentary photography and photojournalism differ
- Students will gain a historical perspective on the development of documentary photography
- Students will explore the connection between documentary and fine art photography
- Students will have a good understanding of the various platforms that can be used to

promote documentary photography

- Students will have a good base in the fundamentals of telling a story through documentary photography
- Students will learn to combine photography and writing to reinforce their documentary project and communication skills
- Students will learn and practice the steps involved in defining, preparing and presenting a documentary photography project through hands-on experience

### **3. Reading Material (most of these books are not available in the AAU library but can be found online to view or to purchase)**

Throughout the semester, excerpts from selected books, topical articles, links to videos and other materials will be posted on the course website. Below is a list of books related to the course structure:

"After Photography" / Fred Ritchin

"Ways of Seeing" / John Berger

"Looking at Photographs" / John Szarkowski

"Friedlander" / Lee Friedlander

"The Americans" / Robert Frank

"Gypsies" / Josef Koudelka

"The Decisive Moment" / Henri Cartier-Bresson

"A monograph" / Diane Arbus

"The Photobook: A History 1-3" / Martin Parr and Gerry Badger

"Ray's A Laugh" / Richard Billingham

"The Ballad of Sexual Dependency" / Nan Goldi

"Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography" / Errol Morris

"The New York School: Photographs, 1936-1963" / Jane Livingston

"Naked city" / Weegee

#### **Videos:**

Much of this course involves "visual" learning experience. Several videos of related topics will be either posted on the web site (links) or on reserve at Library. When noted as such, these videos are considered required "watching" for the course.

Of particular interest is the BBC series, The Genius of Photography which will give students a clear and concise overview of the history of photography and how we have come to the "digital age". The series also examines the work of influential photographers both documentary style and others.

#### **Gallery Visits:**

Throughout the semester we will be visiting one current exhibition in Prague. Students will write a short "report" and critique of the exhibit.

#### **Recommended Materials:**

- A real camera (that has Manual functions), **NO MOBILE PHONES** with a camera, **NO COMPACT CAMERAS** without Manual functions for this course.
- A small flash drive to store and transfer images
- Access to and use of a computer and internet outside of class
- Manual for your camera (either printed or electronic format)
- Journal for ideas, thoughts, gallery notes, etc.

#### 4. Teaching methodology

Lectures, Readings, Discussions, Presentations, Exercises and Workshop style instruction followed by fieldwork. The course is highly interactive with weekly assignments and ongoing project work. Assignments and classroom critiques will supplement the technical and theoretical instruction of the course. Through this course, the students will get the opportunity to develop their photographic techniques and critical thinking while getting continuous feedback from their instructor and classmates.

Each student is expected to attend all class sessions and participate in discussions and any group activities. Some material will only be available in class so it will be difficult to make up the material you miss when absent. Additional support is offered to students through prearranged meetings with the instructor. More than 2 absences during the course will negatively influence your final grade.

Late assignments are **NOT** accepted and will be just graded with a reasonable explanation such as illness or anything similar.

#### 5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Class 1, Friday, February 2nd	<p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction lecture</p> <p><b>Description:</b> What to expect ? What is the goal of the course ? Presentation of my own photography. Personal Documentary Project introduction and overview. Discussion of resources needed for course.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 07/02):</b> For next class: <b>1.</b> Set up your personal flickr account <b>2.</b> Please bring - if possible - a selection of your best 10 favourites photographs as prints or upload them to your flickr accounts <b>3.</b> Think of three ideas for your personal documentary project</p>

<p>Class 2, Wednesday, February 7th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction to the history of documentary photography.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> What is documentary photography, where it comes from and how it differs in compare to other areas of photography ? Introduction of key figures, images and movements from the beginning up to 1945.</p> <p><b>Workshop:</b> Introduction to technical basics and camera handling. Who are you ? Students introducing themselves and their images.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 14/02):</b> <b>1.</b> Finalize the subject matter and concept for the Personal Documentary Project. <b>2.</b> Write a short summary of your idea, ready for presentation in class. <b>3.</b> Post at least <b>10</b> (if possible project related sample images/ideas) to flickr: <b>Topic: Open Aperture</b></p>
<p>Class 3, Wednesday, February 14th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethics and manipulation</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Ethics in the field of Documentary Photography and the endless fight against manipulated/faked photographs from the history up to our digital age.</p> <p><b>Workshop: 1.</b> Review of students photographs in class. Analyzing and refining individual project ideas.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 21/02):</b> Post at least 10 images (if possible project related) to flickr: <b>Topic: Longtime Exposure/Motion Blur</b></p>
<p>Class 4, Wednesday, February 21st</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Robert Frank "The Americans"</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Robert Frank's "The Americans" changed the course of twentieth-century photography. In eighty-three photographs, Frank looked beneath the surface of American life. <b>Film projection:</b> "Don't Blink".</p> <p><b>Workshop: 1.</b> Presentation and discussion of the individual project ideas and concepts for the Personal Documentary Project. Review and feedback.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 28/02):</b> Work on your personal longterm documentary project and post at least <b>20</b> project related images to flickr. Final Written Project Statement and Storyboard for the Personal Documentary Project.</p>

<p>Class 5, Wednesday, February 28th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Excursion "The Prague Towers"</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Photographing the "Kings Road" and views from at least 2 different "Prague Towers" in the historical center of Prague.</p> <p><b>Workshop:</b> An excursion about street photography, views from above and the possibility to ask question related to technical, compositional issues or the projects. <b>2.</b> Create a short visual essay under the topic "Storytelling With Pictures". "Telling a story with pictures is just like writing with words. Something is seen, or thought of, or imagined and visually expressed."</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 06/03):</b> Post not more than <b>8 storytelling</b> (not less than 5) images to your flickr account.</p>
<p>Class 6, Wednesday, March 6th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> The New York School</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Weegee // Diane Arbus // William Klein - photographers who stretched the boundaries of their medium in their personal work as street and documentary photographers. <b>Workshop: 1.</b> Review and feedback to the "Prague Towers" assignment. <b>2.</b> Film Projection "Everybody Street".</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 13/03):</b> Choose one photographer/photograph of the artists presented in class and analyze his/her work.</p>
<p>Class 7, Wednesday, March 13th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Field trip</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Gallery visit to a current exhibition in Prague combined with working on the personal documentary project.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (Due 20/03):</b> Write an exhibition critique. Post at least <b>20</b> project related images to Flickr</p>
<p>Class 8, Wednesday, March 20th</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Subjective Documentary Photography</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Different approaches in subjective documentary photography : Nan Goldin and Richard Billingham. <b>Workshop: 1.</b> Review and feedback students photographs in class.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 27/03):</b> Analyze the "photographic expression" of one of the introduced photographers in form of an opinion paper. Post at least <b>20</b> project related images to flickr</p>

Wednesday, March 27th	<b>NO CLASS // Midterm BREAK</b>
Class 9, Wednesday, April 3rd	<p><b>Topic:</b> Different ways to document</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Projects crossing the line in between Documentary and Fine Art photography from 4 different contemporary photographers with an extended look at the extraordinary work of German photographer Michael Wolf. <b>Workshop: 1.</b> Review of students photographs in class. <b>2.</b> Street portraiture introduction</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 10/04): Portrait of a stranger:</b> An assignment that takes you out of your comfort zone. Portrait strangers that you approach in the street (at least 2 different people and 5 image variations of each)</p>
Class 10, Wednesday, April 10th	<p><b>Topic:</b> Guest lecture</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Presentation and Q&amp;A with a working documentary photographer or photojournalist giving us an inside look at his/her profession and daily work.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Please write a review about the guest lecture. Continue working on your final projects. Continue working on your final projects</p>
Class 11, Wednesday, April 17th	<p><b>Topic:</b> Czech Documentary Photography before 1989. <b>Description:</b> Introducing Victor Kolar and Jindrich Streit under the topic of Czech Documentary Photography in a closed communist country.</p> <p><b>Workshop:</b> Feedback to the progress of your final documentary projects.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines (due 24/04):</b> Prepare a wider edit of you final documentary project and be ready for a one to one consultation about the work (up to 50 images).</p>
Class 12, Wednesday, April 24th	<p><b>Topic:</b> The Photographic Book</p> <p><b>Description:</b> The photobook is for many photographers perhaps the most significant vehicle for the display of their work and the communication of their vision to a mass audience. <b>Workshop:</b> Review of students photographs in class.</p>

	<b>Assignments/deadlines (due 15/05):</b> Write an artist statement about your project
Wednesday, May 1st	<b>NO CLASS // State Holiday</b>
Wednesday, May 8th	<b>NO CLASS // State Holiday</b>
Class 13, Friday, May 15th	<b>Topic:</b> Final exhibition  <b>Description:</b> Preparation and installation of the final exhibition !!! Opening of the exhibition during the afternoon.  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare for the final exam.
Class 14, Wednesday, December May 22th	<b>Topic:</b> Home Final exam  <b>Description:</b> Ability to critically review and to put forth personal ideas in an opinion paper including the knowledge gained during the semester

## 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance & Participation	42	20%	Daily contribution to class and preparation based on reading assignments, videos, websites, etc., Ability to explain the studied topic to peers and identify key issues.	2/3
Documentary Project	40	30 %	Working to develop a telling and cohesive longterm documentary project in Prague telling a story about a chosen topic such as a person, a place or any other consulted idea.	1/2/3
Photographic assignments	30	30 %	Different assignments to practise visual storytelling	2/3

Writings	19	10%	Essays, Analysis, Critique, Concepts about photographers/projects introduced in class and one exhibition review	1/2/3
Final Exam	19	10 %	Ability to critically review and to put forth personal ideas in an opinion paper including the knowledge gained during the semester	1/2/3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## 7. Detailed description of the assignments

### **Attendance and class participation:**

#### **Assessment breakdown**

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Attending class each week	50%
Contributing your own ideas, thoughts and questions and discussing with classmates during class	30%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20%

**Assignment#1 (due 07/02):** Set up your personal flickr account 2. Please bring - if possible - a selection of your best 10 favourites photographs as prints or upload them to your flickr accounts 3. Think of three ideas for your personal documentary project

#### **Assessment breakdown**

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	50%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20 %
Presentation and content	30 %



**Assignment#2 (due 14/02):** Post at least 10 images (if possible project related) to flickr:  
**Topic: Open Aperture**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	50%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20%
Image exposure, composition and quality.	30%

**Assignment#3 (due 21/02):** Post at least 10 images (if possible project related) to flickr:  
**Topic: Longtime Exposure/Motion Blur**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	50%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20%
Image exposure, composition and quality.	30%

**Assignment#4 (due 28/02):** Work on your personal longterm documentary project and post at least 20 project-related images to flickr | Final Written Project Statement and Storyboard for the Personal Documentary Project.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	50%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20%
Image exposure, composition and quality.	30%

**Assignment#5 (due 06/03):** Post not more than 8 storytelling (not less than 5) images to your flickr account.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
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Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	50%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20%
Image exposure, composition and quality.	30%

**Assignment#6 (due 13/03) Choose one photographer/photograph of the artists presented in class and analyze the work. Post 20 project related images to flickr**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to critically review the work of the introduced artist and to put forth personal ideas related to his/her in an opinion paper.	100%

**Assignment#7 (Due 20/03): Write an exhibition critique.**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to critically review the work of the introduced artist and to put forth personal ideas related to his/her in an opinion paper.	100%

**Assignment#8 (due 27/03): Analyze the "photographic expression" of one of the introduced photographers in form of an opinion paper.**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to critically review the work of the introduced artist and to put forth personal ideas related to his/her in an opinion paper.	100%

**Assignment#9 (due 10/04): Portrait of a stranger: An assignment that takes you out of your comfort zone. Portrait strangers that you approach in the street (at least 2 different people and 5 image variations of each)**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	40%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20%

Image exposure, composition and quality.	40%
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**Assignment#10 (due 17/04): Prepare a wider edit of you final documentary project and be ready for a one to one consultation about the work (up to 50 images). Please write a review about the guest lecture. Continue working on your final projects**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	40%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	20%
Image exposure, composition and quality.	40%

**Assignment#11 (due 01/05). Send the 10 final post-produced image edits till Friday morning to me. There is no deadline extension and those who will not deliver the images in time will not be able to join the exhibition. (!!!) Write an artist statement about your project.**

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to follow instructions and apply the techniques outlined in class.	20%
Ability to turn in the assignment (and upload online) within the given deadline to review in class.	40%
Image exposure, composition and quality.	40%

**8. General Requirements and School Policies**

**General requirements**

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

**Electronic communication and submission**

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”. All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

## ***Attendance***

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, at AAU courses is default mandatory; however, it is not graded as such. (Grades may be impacted by missed assignments or lack of participation.) Still, students must attend at least two thirds of classes to complete the course. If they do not meet this condition and most of their absences are excused, they will be administratively withdrawn from the course. If they do not meet this condition and most of their absences are not excused, they will receive a grade of "FW" (Failure to Withdraw). Students may also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (for example by arriving late or leaving early).

## ***Absence excuse and make-up options***

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), and the student wishes to request that the absence be excused, the student should submit an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence to the Dean of Students within one week of the absence. Each student may excuse up to two sick days per term without any supporting documentation; however, an Absence Excuse Request Form must still be submitted for these instances. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

***Late work:*** No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

## ***Electronic devices***

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

***Eating*** is not allowed during classes.

## ***Cheating and disruptive behavior***

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the student's Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the student will fail the exam or assignment and be expelled from the exam or class.

### ***Plagiarism***

Plagiarism obscures the authorship of a work or the degree of its originality. Students are expected to create and submit works of which they are the author. Plagiarism can apply to all works of authorship – verbal, audiovisual, visual, computer programs, etc. Examples are:

- **Verbatim plagiarism:** verbatim use of another’s work or part of it without proper acknowledgement of the source and designation as a verbatim quotation,
- **Paraphrasing plagiarism:** paraphrasing someone else’s work or part of it without proper acknowledgement of the source,
- **Data plagiarism:** use of other people’s data without proper acknowledgement of the source,
- **False quotation:** publishing a text that is not a verbatim quotation as a verbatim quotation,
- **Fictitious citation:** quoting, paraphrasing, or referring to an incorrect or a non-existent work,
- **Inaccurate citation:** citing sources in such a way that they cannot be found and verified,
- **Ghostwriting:** commissioning work from others and passing it off as one’s own,
- **Patchwriting:** using someone else’s work or works (albeit with proper acknowledgement of sources and proper attribution) to such an extent that the output contains almost no original contribution,
- **Self-plagiarism:** unacknowledged reuse of one’s own work (or part of it) that has been produced or submitted as part of another course of study or that has been published in the past,
- **Collaborative plagiarism:** delivering the result of collective collaboration as one’s own individual output.

At minimum, plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the student’s Dean. A mitigating circumstance may be the case of novice students, and the benefit of the doubt may be given if it is reasonable to assume that the small-scale plagiarism was the result of ignorance rather than intent. An aggravating circumstance in plagiarism is an act intended to make the plagiarism more difficult to detect. Such conduct includes, for example, the additional modification of individual words or phrases, the creation of typos, the use of machine translation tools or the creation of synonymous text, etc. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Intentional or repeated plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

### ***Use of Artificial Intelligence and Academic Tutoring Center***

The use of artificial intelligence tools to search sources, to process, analyze and summarize data, and to provide suggestions or feedback in order to improve content, structure, or style, defined here as AI-assisted writing, is not in itself plagiarism. However, it is plagiarism

if, as a result, it obscures the authorship of the work produced or the degree of its originality (see the examples above).

AAU acknowledges prudent and honest use of AI-assisted writing, that is, the use of AI for orientation, consultation, and practice is allowed. For some courses and assignments, however, the use of AI is counterproductive to learning outcomes; therefore, the course syllabus may prohibit AI assistance. A work (text, image, video, sound, code, etc.) generated by artificial intelligence based on a mass of existing data, defined here as AI-generated work, is not considered a work of authorship. Therefore, if an AI-generated work (e.g. text) is part of the author's work, it must be marked as AI-generated. Otherwise, it obscures the authorship and/or the degree of originality, and thus constitutes plagiarism. Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor, submission of AI-generated work is prohibited. If unsure about technical aspects of writing, and to improve their academic writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

**Course accessibility and inclusion**

Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Students to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

**9. Grading Scale**

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95-100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90-94	
B+	87-89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	

D+	65-69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60-64	
F	0-59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by: Björn Steinz  
Date: 6th of November 2023

Approved by: Karolina Dolanská  
Date: November 8, 2023