

Studio Lighting: Course Basics

Course Requirements

This is a studio course. It requires that you spend time in the studio. Spending time in the studio is the primary requirement, for if you spend time working there, you will come to understand in your gut what your head has learned in class.

According to the Registrar, letter grades A through F have the following meanings: Exceptional, Good, Acceptable, Poor, Failure. If you care about your grade, there are at least three things you can do to improve your chances for success.

1. Come to class. It's worth a third of your grade.
2. Turn in assignments every week. They are worth one third of your grade.
3. Make interesting photographs. The effort and quality you put into your work is worth one third of your grade.

Enthusiasm and a good attitude toward work will be an asset in this course. Extra weight will be given for work produced in the second half of the course, once basic technical issues are solved. Exceptional students take heed. Talk to me if this, or anything else covered in this course, is not clear.

The first part of the course will have assignments with some structure. During the second half of the semester you will be expected to work on photographs that have some personal interest to you. Your final presentation will come from this body of work. Along the way, we will look at your progress weekly. You won't benefit from comment and criticism unless you have something to show and are present to show it.

Although I have been a photographer for more than thirty years, making interesting photographs is still the essential problem. Like everyone else, you will have to figure this one out on your own. The best suggestion I can give you is to approach your work with interest, curiosity, enthusiasm, and thoughtfulness. And don't be afraid of mistakes.

Course Site

A course web site is at woodypackard.com/austudio. I will post as much as I can there, including information about your assignments, additional reading you can do, some notes on subjects we cover in class or don't have time to cover in class. You can also check your current standing by logging in to *Progress* with your last name and a password that you give me in class.

Technical Problems

Although this is not strictly a technical course, photographic results depend on technical proficiency. Basic photographic proficiency is a prerequisite for taking this course. You must be able to show results each week, so if you're having trouble with this part of the process, we need to talk and find a solution sooner rather than later.

For studio and lighting questions, you should feel free to ask me questions in class, or during the week by calling me at my studio— 585 232-1187. I get email at wood@woodypackard.com, so if your question requires a really brief answer this will work. (Email gets lower priority than a phone call and is less useful in solving a problem of any complexity.)

Studio Equipment

When you use the studio, it is your responsibility to account for the equipment that is there. If equipment is missing when the next student checks in, you will be held responsible for it. So it is critical that you:

First, make sure you do an inventory and report any missing or damaged items immediately. A checklist will be posted in the studio. (Hope Zacagni, x2545)

Protect your lock code. Do not give it to anyone.

In addition to lighting and grip equipment, the studio will have a computer, disk burner, and printer for processing digital work. A single lens digital camera will be available for use in the studio only. You may use your own camera if it is suitable.

Studio Photography: Writing With Light

Here is the purpose of this course:

You can make a photograph look any way you want to the extent that you can control the elements that make up the photograph. Those elements are light, time, and subject matter. What guides the control of these elements is the intent and imagination of the photographer. I can't control your intent or your imagination. I hope to help you with the control of the medium of light and with some ideas for helping you control your subject.

Like writing with words, writing with light:

- Starts with an idea
- Develops in unexpected ways
- Improves with practice
- Requires editing and revision
- Is hard work

Writing, with words or with light, requires the use of tools and the understanding of language. Eskimos have many words for snow because their survival depends on noticing fine distinctions between one condition and another. If you are a photographer, your survival will depend on making fine distinctions between light and shadow, compositions that work and those that fail. These distinctions will determine the techniques you use, the tools you own, and ultimately, the images you create.

In the end, the control of light, time, and subject are the fabric out of which photographs are created. Cameras are the tools used to record these creations. Visual taste and judgement are the guide. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the tools you need to express your taste, judgement, and imagination, and to help develop both visual and verbal language to describe it.



How we see a glass determines whether it looks half empty or half full. It also determines whether it is dark or light.