



Anna Pultar, *Scylla* (2021)

Open College of the Arts | [Short Course Course Descriptor](#)

## Photography as Language

### Overview

**Course Duration:** 10 weeks

**Scheduled Learning Hours:** 20

**Independent Learning Hours:** 60

**Credit Value:** 8

**Accreditation:** CPD

**Location:** Distance Learning

**Course Fee:** £305

## **Content**

Instead of being told what photography is, you will be introduced to key approaches to thinking in photographs and making photographic work. You will be offered theoretical and technical skills on how to think about and through photography and introduced to the nature of photographs from a historical perspective and through contemporary development.

Furthermore, you will be introduced to the key concepts which highlight the cultural importance of the photographic medium as well as the cultural impositions upon it. We will engage with the technical aspects of photography and how they extend to the way we see, perceive, and feel photographs. Most crucially we will explore the communicative potential of the photograph as a sign within the photographic visual language, an aspect at the heart of our cultural obsession with photography; a cultural obsession which becomes the crux of the fallacies on the photograph and its representative nature.

## **Learning Methods and Assessment**

Through interaction with the VLE online platform you will receive weekly lecture presentations, reading material, lecture notes and weekly tasks which will help you put your recently acquired knowledge into practice.

You will undertake a variety of tasks which range from visual research, photographic practice, academic writing skills, self reflective skills, critical skills through the weekly online forum and summative quizzes.

You will participate in a weekly cohort and tutor live discussion on the week's topics and tasks. This facilitates rich dialogue and supports the group to bond as a supportive network for study and creative work.

Regular days and times are offered for live video sessions and a forum provides a way to engage at your own time and pace.

This mode of study requires no summative assessment. Instead, students' will receive summary feedback from their tutor at the end of the short course.

## Course Requirements

This course assumes no prior knowledge and is aimed at artists, budding as well as advanced photographers, writers and anyone interested in the medium of photography.

- 10 study hours available to dedicate per week\*
- Access to desktop/laptop computer with internet access
- Must be 18 years of age at the time of submitting enrolment
- Camera
- IT literate and comfortable using web-based technologies
- For students whose first language is not English, you must evidence English Language proficiency equivalent to B1 of Common European Framework of Reference

*\* The above hours are indicative and will vary from student to student.*

## Syllabus

- **Week 1: Familiarisation** with course materials, learning platform and meet your fellow students! Introduction to the philosophy, aims and outcomes of the course
- **Week 2: The Nature of Photographs**; thinking in photographs and writing with light. Review the methodology of critical thinking in photographic practice and initial concept of photography as language.
- **Week 3: The Physical Level of Photographs & Understanding Photographs**: object and imagination. Understand the physical aspects of the photograph with an introduction to image-based research.
- **Week 4: The Depictive Level & the Phenomenology of Photographs**: look at the technical parameters of the photograph, experience and the fallacies of photography. Introduction to image making according to weekly conceptual brief.
- **Week 5: The Mental Level of Photographs and Mental Modelling**: The complexities between the described and connoted attributes of a photograph. Introduction to cultural mental models and the mental

organisation of a photograph. The meeting points of the operator and the observer. Image-based research and practice; introduction to writing reports for visual practice and building upon previously achieved skills (visual research, theoretical engagement, photographic practice, contextualisation).

- **Week 6: Reflection Week and Group Crit:** Week 6 is an opportunity to pause and consolidate what you have learnt so far. There are no presentations or additional reading for this week. Instead, you will take part in an online discussion on the course topics.
- **Week 7: Roland Barthes' the Studium and Punctum of Photographs:** 'To interest and to affect are two different things'. Analysis of Barthes' seminal work on photography as an instrument of effect and emotional engagement. Introduction to semiology. Image-based research and evaluation of the chosen images' properties and effect according to the weekly concepts.
- **Week 8: Afterall.. What is Photography?** (Recapitulative lecture) Practice-led work and introduction on the creation of a series of photographs according to the course's established debates. Evaluative work which builds on the ability to communicate students' practice, choices and conceptual underpinnings.
- **Week 9: Build upon, extend, summarise and revise.** This week will present you with the chance to revise the material of this course. In terms of the weekly task, you have the opportunity to further extend your thinking and practice and build upon the work you undertook last week. This is the time to further develop and fine-tune last week's work and to articulate it in a more formal and inclusive presentation.
- **Week 10: Summative reflection and presentation.** Reflection, discussion. Individual, summative feedback. Final presentation of a body of work to the cohort.

## Learning Outcomes

On satisfactory completion of this course students will be able to:

- Articulate their understanding of the importance of key critical debates which have shaped the photographic medium and the world of the photographic image
- Demonstrate knowledge of the basic theoretical approaches which link the photographic image with the succinct creation of meaning
- Produce photographic work which engages with and is informed by critical theories on the medium
- Evaluate their photographic work and that of others and succinctly communicate their intentions (intended message) through the medium of photography

## Reference Material

### Main Texts:

Shore, Steven. *The Nature of Photographs*. N.Y: Phaidon Press Inc., 2007.

### Supporting Texts:

Barthes, Roland. "STUDIUM and PUNCTUM." In *Camera Lucida*, 25-60. London: Vintage Classics, 1993.

Manghani, Sunil, Arthur Piper and Jon Simons, eds. "5: Semiotics." In *Images: a Reader*, 101-123. London: Sage Publications, 2006.

Sontag, Susan. "The Image World." In *On Photography*, 153-180. London: Penguin Classics, 2002.

Trachtenberg, Alan, ed. "Part Four: Some Recent Themes and Issues." In *Classic Essays on Photography*, 191-294. New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980.