

FA108 Introduction to Digital Photography - Identity Construction and Representation

Seminar Leader: Carla Åhlander
Email: c.ahlander@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed for beginners who are interested in exploring digital photography through both basic technical skills and creative expression.

Students will learn the fundamentals of the camera, including exposure, composition, and lighting. Alongside mastering technical skills, students will engage in picture analysis, examining how images communicate meaning and emotion.

Throughout the course, students will complete a series of assignments and longer projects that emphasize creative exploration. The course structure is based on regular in-class critiques and discussions. A key focus will be on different kinds of portrait photography, approached from multiple perspectives to explore the construction of identity and memory. Themes such as family, gender, history, class, stereotypes, and representation will guide the creative process.

Students will be allowed to experiment with controlled lighting, while lectures and discussions will provide inspiration from a range of photo artists who have dealt with similar themes in various ways, from Jo Spence to Juan Pablo Echeverri.

In addition, students will reflect on photography's role in shaping societal clichés, while considering the balance between uniqueness and originality in their own work.

By the end of the course, students will not only gain confidence in their technical abilities but also deepen their understanding of photography as a powerful medium for self-expression and social commentary.

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Turn off phones during class time unless asked otherwise.
- Actively participate in critiques and discussions.
- Be prepared to present artworks / assignments / presentations without reminder.
- Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff outside of class time.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.

- Respond to emails from their professors in a timely manner.
- Inform their professors at the beginning of the semester if photos of student's identity, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and / or any personal belongings before the end of the semester. Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Donating unrequested artworks and / or art materials is not permitted and will still be considered student property, expected to be removed by your inspection deadline. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

- Attendance of ALL classes is expected.
- More than one absence (that is, absence from one three-hour session per week) in a semester will affect the participation grade for the course.
- Students are expected to attend all off-campus classes punctually, from start to finish. If there is a scheduling/travel conflict, the professor must be informed in advance.
- Tardiness after five minutes will be considered an absence unless the professor is contacted at least 1/2 an hour before class.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

In this course, students will be given a number of smaller assignments to be executed in class, for the next class or over a longer period of time. Some materials may need to be purchased / acquired directly by each student. Students are also assessed on their ability to work independently and responsibly. They will be graded on their ability to communicate with professor as well amongst themselves. This also includes their ambition to create artworks as well as their willingness to budget their time for all requirements connected to this class.

The assignments required for the course are included in the syllabus but all details will be given in class. If a student misses a class, the student themselves is required to find out relevant information about missed material and/or assignments from the instructor or other students in the class.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). The Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students may make an appointment to discuss assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (includes attendance, maintenance of all common and private spaces used for production / rehearsal, communication with Professor and other students): 33.333 %

Homework and in-class work: 33.333 %

Project presentations for critiques (includes end of semester presentations / performances): 33.333 %

Schedule

Week 1 September 1 (1)	Introduction of the course, introduction of each student to the class Introduction to the course – What is photography? How is it used to express identity? If there is time, we will have a look at the students' different cameras as well as the school's cameras.
Week 2 September 8 (2)	Mandatory in-class facility orientation (could be switched to another date if necessary) Each student will be assigned a photographer to present to the class during the semester. The camera, basic functions. The Exposure Triangle: shutter speed – assignments in class For September 22: Three images showing movement (details will be given in class)
Week 2 September 13 (3)	Saturday session! (instead of September 15) Exhibition visits – details TBA (this could change to another date – will be announced in the first class)
Week 3 September 15	NO CLASS! (instead: September 13. See above)
Week 4 September 22 (4)	Due: Three images describing movement Questions on last week's class Slide presentation in class, discussion Student presentation of photographer For September 29: Assignment 1 involving the idea of the self-portrait – details will be given in class.
Week 5 September 29 (5)	Due: Assignment 1 involving the idea of the self portrait In class photo work The Exposure Triangle: depth of field Student presentation of photographer For October 6: Assignment 2 involving the idea of the self-portrait – details will be given in class.
Week 6 October 6 (6)	Due: Assignment 2 involving the idea of the self-portrait – details will be given in class. Student presentation of photographer The Exposure Triangle: ISO Light metering – exposure compensation, different light situations For October 13: Reading of a text which will be handed out in class
Week 7 October 13 (7)	Due: Reading of the text that was handed out last week Assignment in class based on the text Student presentation of photographer Slide presentation For October 27: Portrait of someone you know well (details in class)
Week 8 October 20 <i>spring break – no class</i>	<i>no class – spring break</i>
Week 9 October 27 (8)	Due: Portrait of someone you know well Student presentation of photographer White balance For November 3: Portrait of a fictitious character in 3-5 images (details will be given in class)
Week 10 November 3 (9)	Due: Portrait of a fictitious character in 3-5 images Working with family photos in class. Student presentation of photographer For November 10: Family portrait (details will be given in class)
Week 11 November 10 (10)	Due: Family portrait In class: saving images, file formats, basic image processing Student presentation of photographer

Week 12 November 17 (11)	Student presentation of photographer Watch feature film on the subject of identity in class Discussion of the film For November 24: Your individual zine page (or other equivalent assignment)
Week 13 November 24 (12)	Due: Selection of 10 images. Prints or files. (details will be given in class) Bring all your material so far in digital form Decide on final work – discuss ideas in the group, plan for each student Ways of presentation
Week 14 November December 1 (13)	PRESENTATION OF YOUR FINAL WORK (details in class) Evaluation online Preparations for the end of semester exhibition/presentation
Week 15 December 8	Completion week / Inspection of spaces Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Please note that due dates and assignment details may be subject to change during the course of the semester. If so, the changes will be announced in class and on google classroom.

Policy on the use of facilities:

1. The Factory (Eichenstrasse 43) and Monopol (Provinzstr 40-44) at BCB offer space and facilities to BCB art students. Chip access is from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, including the weekends during the semester. The buildings cannot be used outside these hours.
2. Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.
3. Students agree only to use the designated class spaces or communal workshops. Respecting the building and its facilities is crucial, as they are shared resources that need to be preserved for the benefit of all.
4. For your safety and the safety of others, smoking and drinking alcohol are strictly prohibited anywhere inside the building.
5. Unauthorized events and/or parties are not permitted. Projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) are not permitted inside the building.
6. Spray painting and handling any hazardous (chemical or combustible) material is not permitted inside the building.
7. All work surfaces (indoor and outdoor) must be adequately protected with the workshop's drop cloth before spray painting or working with plaster.
8. During completion week, any space used by a student must be emptied, with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be adequately disposed of. Final grades may be affected or withheld if any item remains by the inspection deadline.
9. When leaving the building, students must ensure all lights are turned off, all electrical items must be unplugged, and doors must be closed.
10. Contact the Studio art manager directly with any questions: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Emergency phone numbers:

Police (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 110

Fire (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Ambulance and Paramedics (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Out-of-Hours Medical Care (calling from a German landline or cellphone) : 116 117