

BCB SPRING SEMESTER 2026

FA106 Beginners Black and White Photography : The Slow Photo

Seminar Leader: April Gertler

Course Time: Tuesdays: 9 - 12.15pm

Email: a.gertler@berlin.bard.edu

Mobile: +49 177 617 1652 (iMessage / WhatsApp / Signal / Telegram)

Office Hours: by appointment - please contact me!

Course Description

Using the backdrop of Berlin, this class will explore the history of photography by Berlin based photographers while learning how to use a manual camera and also finding one's way around an analogue darkroom through acquiring the techniques of printing black and white photographs.

This class is designed for beginning photography students interested in learning to effectively use photography as a means for self-expression or cultural comment. Course structure is based on the assumption that students are coming into the class with little to no experience. Mastery of basic skills and conceptual principles is key to the student's success. This class aims to provide students with a rigorous training in the mechanics of the 35mm camera, darkroom technique (photographic printing), basic composition and photographic history. We will also explore critical issues surrounding photography as artistic medium, and cultural product through selected readings, presentations made by students and class discussions. Though technical skills are stressed in this course, image content is equally important.

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Use the designated printing times given to each student at the beginning of the semester. If the time is not used, please contact the Professor.
- Be prepared to present artworks / assignments / presentations without reminder.
- Engage in critiques and discussions.
- Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff outside of class time when assistance is necessary.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails and/or text messages from the Professor in a timely manner.
- Inform Professor at beginning of semester if photos of student, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and any personal belongings before the final inspection of the arts spaces during completion week. Failure to remove works and / or clean spaces used will result in final grade penalization. Donating artworks or art materials (unrequested) at anytime is not permitted and will still be considered

- student's property that will be expected to be uninstalled and removed.
- Students are expected to purchase 36 exposure Black and White film and photographic paper as needed for class assignments.

Attendance and Special considerations for SPRING 2026:

All students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill.

- 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.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where the Professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it must be submitted within two weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than a C.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown & Assessment

As it is almost impossible to make an overall grading structure that would apply to each student, I feel it most important to make the grading scheme based on each student's individual ability. What plays a vital role in this is doing the best you can in class.

There are some standard points that will be checked off in creating your grade which Include: coming to class on time, handing your work in on time, participating in class and cleaning / maintaining the darkroom and finally, being prepared and ready when in class starts. During the semester, all assignments will be graded and commented on by way of an email. If you feel that you are unsure of your grade and want clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me, I am always happy to discuss.

Corita Kent, the artist and former nun wrote a very apt list titled:

10 RULES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

I follow this list quite closely - (see the rest of the list at the end of the document)

Rule Number 7 says; The only rule is work. If you work it will lead to something. It is the people who do all the work all the time who eventually catch to things.

You can fool the fans — but not the players.

Keep this in mind during this class. Although you are needed to be in class to get grades and pass the course — much more importantly you are needed to help make the class what it is. The structure is there for you and you are also part of the structure; your contributions help shape the class.

Students are also assessed on their ability to work independently and responsibly. They will be graded on their ability to communicate with the Professor as well as 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. This assessment also includes preparation, production, and cleaning up of spaces used at P98 at Bard College Berlin.

Anticipated Costs for this Class

Each student will be expected to purchase their own film and paper for this class. We suggest buying materials with other students - it's cheaper! The total cost for this class can run between 100€ - 250€ - this completely depends on each student and how they use their materials.

Materials list

- +6 (-/+) rolls of film > 400 ASA film : €7 - €15 per roll
 - +(depending on where film is purchased - buying film in bulk ('10 roll bricks') can be cheaper)
- + Photographic paper - see below for suggestions & specifications
- + Binder to keep your negatives organized and clean!

FILM (prices based on Fotoimpex prices as of Jan 2024)

FOMA Fomapan 400ASA 135/36 = €5.80 (*only at FOTOIMPEX)

> if you buy 10x of this film it's €5.62 per film

ILFORD Delta 400ASA 135/36 = €10.95

KODAK TRI-X 400ASA 135/36 = €14.51

ROLLEI RPX 400 135-36 = €7.90

Price at Foto Kotti: AgfaPhoto APX 400ASA = €7.00

PAPER*

The amount of paper you use in this class is dependent on you, but you can count on at least 150 sheets of paper.

Most important: MULTIGRADE/Variable paper! RC (resin coated!)

Paper surfaces: Hochglänzend (high gloss), Seidenmatt (silky matt), Pearl (pearl), Matt (matt)

> I highly suggest starting off with HIGH GLOSS paper - it's easier to use

Paper brands:

Cheaper: FOMA Fomaspeed, ADOX Easy Print RC 311

More expensive: Ilford

Paper size: 18 x 24cm (a little bit smaller) or 24 x 30cm (a little bit bigger = which is best for contact sheets)

*Another tip would be to buy paper on eBay - when doing so, PLEASE make sure the paper is Resin Coated or RC paper ONLY!!

You are not allowed to print with any other papers in the darkroom!

PHOTO STORES

Aperture Film Lab, www.apertureberlin.com

Schlüterstr. 68, 10625 Berlin-Charlottenburg

Opening times: Tues to Sat, 2 - 7 pm

Film.Speed.Lab, Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Str. 32, 10407 Berlin (5 min walk from U2 Eberswalder)

Opening times: Mon - Sat: 11 - 7pm

FOTOIMPEX, www.fotoimpex.de

Alte Schönhauser Str. 32b, 10119 Berlin-Mitte (U2 Weinmeister Str. - south exit)

Opening times: Mon - Sat: 11.00 – 7pm

Foto Kotti, www.fotokotti.de

Skalitzer Str. 134, 10999 Berlin-Kreuzberg (U8 Kottbusser Tor)

Opening times: Mon – Fri 10 - 7pm, Sat – 10 - 3pm

Safelight Berlin, www.safelightberlin.com

Schivelbeiner Str. 9, 10439 Berlin (U2 - Schönhauser Allee, 3 min walk)

Opening times: Tues- Sat: 10 - 5pm

PROCESSING / LABS

Processing film is very, very challenging. Everyone goes through the experience of damaging or losing a roll of film due to the way they have processed the film. I have made a series of videos of myself processing a roll of film which you can use to accompany you during your film processing experience. Please find them here:

Part 1: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X7rQo8YPOk0R42xjGVIDosB_GDRJPh_8/view

Part 2: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JWj1afm4Yu9dEdjevFDBSKDBX3eBrj4/view>

Part 3: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tu_p3YDLG5tvMnCQNb5zJwaFOqDyXKO_/view

If you don't want to process yourself - you can go to one of these labs BUT the turn around time can be up to 3 days when it only takes 30min to do it yourself! (All of these labs also sell black and white film, but mostly do not sell photo paper)

Viertel vor 8 (<https://vv8.de>), Pappelallee 7/8, 10437 Berlin (nr. M1 / U2 Eberswalderstr.)

Opening times: Mon - Fri: 10 - 7pm

Film.Speed.Lab, Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Str. 32, 10407 Berlin (5 min walk from U2 Eberswalder)

Opening times: Mon - Sat: 11 - 7pm

Jetfoto, Dircksenstraße 89, 10178 Berlin (nr. Alexanderplatz)

Opening times: Mon - Fri: 9 - 8pm, Sat 11 - 8pm

Pixel Grain, Rosenstraße 17, 10178 Berlin (nr. Alexanderplatz)

Opening times: Mon - Fri: 10 - 7pm, Sunday 2 - 7pm

Das Foto, Dietzgenstraße 39, 13156 Berlin (10 min walk from P98)

Opening times: Mon - Fri: 9.30 - 6.30pm, Sat: 9.30 - 12.30pm

Safelight Berlin, Schivelbeiner Str. 9, 10439 Berlin (3 min walk from U2 Schönhauser Allee)

Opening times: Tue - Sat: 10 - 5p

ONLINE

FOTOIMPEX, www.fotoimpex.de

CALUMET, <https://www.calumetphoto.de/category/schwarz-weiss-filme>

RECIPES

Please note : every film has it's own developing times.

<https://www.digitaltruth.com/devchart.php>

Check this website when you are using your own film

We use Rodinal 1+25 as our developer

or scan this QR code:



SPRING 2026 WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

*There may be adjustments to the timing of assignments as course progresses. All students will be informed of any new expectations and/or deadlines. It is the sole responsibility of each student to be in charge of getting their own film developed at the lab close to campus.

Every assignment requires you to hand in test strips for your prints and contact sheets in addition to your prints.

ANYTIME you submit more prints than what the assignment calls for, you will ALWAYS receive extra credit!

January 27: Week 1

Introductions, expectations, and rules. Assignment of printing times in the darkroom.

Introduction to the darkroom and some photogram printing!

For next class:

Bring 3 digital prints of casual portraits you have made with your phone within the last 3 months. Print the portraits in 10x15cm at DM or Rossmann near you and make sure the images have been converted to black and white!

February 3: Week 2 - In class shooting assignment and film processing demo

Cameras handed out

Review printed out images that you brought to class

Tutorial on how to use an analogue camera.

Assignment #1 (due 10 Feb):

Work in pairs — Shoot one roll of film during class!

Fill in documentation form for each shot taken, starting with frame number 37 which must be included when you submit your assignment.

Assignment #1 should include:

- A. Processed negatives
- B. Filled in log sheet of each frame.

February 10: Week 3

Assignment #1 due today!

Tutorial on how to use an enlarger and process film

Demo: Make a contact sheet

Assignment #2 Due 24 Feb:

Two (2) prints, plus contact sheets for each roll of film, are due on **24 Feb!** The prints should include the following: a bracketed image, one should be a panning shot, one should shallow depth of field and one should include everything in focus) from the film you have shot so far (3 rolls)

1. Copies of all of your test stripes for each image you have printed
2. Your name and all relevant information about printing (exposure time, F-stop of your lens at enlarger station) **MUST BE WRITTEN** on the back of your print with PENCIL

February 14: SATURDAY DARKROOM CLASS

6 hour processing and printing workshop

2 Sessions: 10 - 1pm (Morning) and 2 - 5pm (Afternoon)

Pls sign up for the workshop that is the best fit for your schedule

This important workshop will go over the details of printing in the darkroom. We will break the class up into two smaller groups and work doing contact sheets and printing.

February 17: Week 4

Bring 1 print to discuss printing issues

How to critique a print.

Introduction of first section of the class:

SECTION 1: FAMILY PORTRAITURE

Assignment #3 Due 24 March!

Shoot 2 rolls of film of 5 different people and one of those people has to be YOU!

Focus on portraying each person the best way you can.

Four (4) prints will be due on 24 March in class. (More prints = extra credit!)

This assignment focuses on the family portrait. You most likely can't photograph your blood family, so this assignment is asking you to consider who you consider your new or current family now that you are in Berlin. Please interpret this assignment how you see fit, but three of the 4 photographs you include must be the following:

+ a self-portrait

+ a reproduction of the print you have gotten from someone else in class

+ a family portrait - with at least 3 people in the image

+ the last images must only include on person

Assignment #4 Due 10 March!

Slide presentation of an assigned photographer who works with portraiture.

February 24: Week 5

Assignment #2 and #4 Due Today!

Critique day - How to critique a photograph? What to look for? How can composition be analyzed? How do we analyze the technical elements of a print?

7-10min Slide Presentations of assigned photographers due today

March 3: Week 6

Meet at 9am in front of the Dorothee Cemetery on Chausseestrasse in Mitte.

<https://tinyurl.com/sn23byus>

A 3 hour walk through the city talking about the history of photography in Berlin.

March 10: Week 7

Bring 1-2 prints/contact sheet & 7 - 10 min presentation on a photographer that has been assigned to you

March 17: Week 8

Bring 1-2 prints & 7 - 10 min presentation on a photographer that has been assigned to you (in case we didn't cover everyone's presentations from last week)

March 24: Week 9

Assignment #3 Due Today!

In-class photo critique

/

Photo Sleuth Assignment - due immediately after Spring Break!

Assignment #4: The Photo Sleuth*

***The Photo Sleuth Assignment will come with a special handout about the assignment today**

SPRING BREAK —> MARCH 30 - APRIL 6!

April 7: Week 10

Assignment #4 The Photo Sleuth Due Today!

SECTION 2: SETS, STORIES AND SITUATIONS

In class slide show for inspiration and historical information

Assignment #5 Due: 21 April

Shoot up to 2 rolls of film of:

A staged event that you create

Three (3) of the prints you submit must include people.

A total of four (4) prints are due. (More prints = extra credit!)

Focus on portraying various types of street scenes or scenes (based on a story or situation that you set up) - this assignment is about staged photography.

From the MOMA website about this topic:

Building and reflecting upon the legacy of early staged photography, many contemporary artists make their own elaborately structured photographs—with a twist. Their images are carefully constructed and meticulously photographed, but in ways that consciously reveal their artifice. By showing the ease with which images may be set-up or manipulated, these artists challenge the commonly held perception of photography as an objective medium.

Some photographers to consider:

Laurie Simmons, Pierre et Gilles, Duane Michaels, Jon Henry, Robert Capa, Nikki S. Lee, Thomas Demand, Isabel Wenzel, and so many others

April 14: Week 11 - Sets, Stories and Situations

Bring 1 print to class for work in progress review for Assignment #5

Each student **presents a photographer** who uses in Sets, Stories and Situations, to class and the photographer will be assigned to each student

Presentations due today

April 21: Week 12 - Sets, Stories and Situations

Assignment #5_Due today Bring all four (4) prints to class (more prints = extra credit): prints should be spotted, dodged/burned and printed with perfect borders, contact sheets should also be presented for each roll that was shot for this assignment.

SECTION 3: PHOTO COLLAGE IN A ZINE FORMAT

Assignment #6 Due: 5 MAY - Three (3) prints are due for this assignment!

A small collaged book will be made in class and we will go from there! Bring to class all of your test strips, any old magazines or books you might have found on the street, and anything else, scraps of pieces of paper in different colors, product newsletters/ magazines from REWE, or flyers that you might have found. If you have pencils in a variety of colors or water colors, bring them to class! If you have ribbons or threads or small objects - bring them to class!

April 28: Week 13 - Collage in Book Form

Bring your collaged book to class in addition to 1-2 prints for a work in progress review for Assignment #6

*** extra credit, make a copy of your zine to give to everyone in the class (12 copies) - one copy will live in the Zine Archive in the classroom**

May 5: Week 14 - Final Class!

Return your cameras today!

Assignment #6 is due today!

Final Critique!

May 12: Week 15 - Install Open Studio exhibition

Overview of what's due when :

3 Feb: Bring 3 digital prints to class of portraits you have shot with your phone

10 Feb: Bring film you have shot in class from the week before + shot list

17 Feb: 1 print

24 Feb: 2 prints + contact sheet

10 March: 7 - 10 min presentation on a photographer that has been assigned to you

17 March: 1-2 prints

24 March: Family portraiture assignment is due; 4 prints, contact sheet(s), test strips for all prints you made for this assignment

7 April: Photo Sleuth assignment due; 5-7 min presentation on your findings & 1 print

14 April: 1 print for the Sets, Stories and Situations assignment & 7 - 10 min presentation on a photographer that has been assigned to you

21 April: Sets, Stories and Situations assignment is due; 4 prints, contact sheet(s), test strips for all prints you made for this assignment

28 April: Bring collaged book + 1-2 prints to class for review (* **extra credit, make a copy of your zine to give to everyone in the class (12 copies) - one copy will live in the Zine Archive in the classroom**

5 May: Final assignment due; 3 prints & contact sheet(s), test strips for all prints you made for this assignment

++Extra credit will always be given if more than the required prints are submitted for any assignment.++

IMMACULATE HEART COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT RULES

- Rule 1 FIND A PLACE YOU TRUST AND THEN TRY TRUSTING IT FOR A WHILE.
- Rule 2 GENERAL DUTIES OF A STUDENT:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR TEACHER.
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS.
- Rule 3 GENERAL DUTIES OF A TEACHER:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR STUDENTS.
- Rule 4 CONSIDER EVERYTHING AN EXPERIMENT.
- Rule 5 BE SELF DISCIPLINED. THIS MEANS FINDING SOMEONE WISE OR SMART AND CHOOSING TO FOLLOW THEM.
TO BE DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A GOOD WAY.
TO BE SELF DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A BETTER WAY.
- Rule 6 NOTHING IS A MISTAKE. THERE'S NO WIN AND NO FAIL. THERE'S ONLY MAKE.
- Rule 7 The only rule is work.
IF YOU WORK IT WILL LEAD TO SOMETHING.
IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO DO ALL OF THE WORK ALL THE TIME WHO EVENTUALLY CATCH ON TO THINGS.
- Rule 8 DON'T TRY TO CREATE AND ANALYSE AT THE SAME TIME. THEY'RE DIFFERENT PROCESSES.
- Rule 9 BE HAPPY WHENEVER YOU CAN MANAGE IT. ENJOY YOURSELF. IT'S LIGHTER THAN YOU THINK.
- Rule 10 "WE'RE BREAKING ALL OF THE RULES. EVEN OUR OWN RULES. AND HOW DO WE DO THAT? BY LEAVING PLENTY OF ROOM FOR X QUANTITIES." JOHN CAGE

HELPFUL HINTS: ALWAYS BE AROUND. COME OR GO TO EVERYTHING. ALWAYS GO TO CLASSES. READ ANYTHING YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON. LOOK AT MOVIES CAREFULLY, OFTEN. SAVE EVERYTHING-IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY LATER.
THERE SHOULD BE NEW RULES NEXT WEEK.

Photo Darkroom Facilities

Platanenstrasse 98

** Guidelines given during orientation

Facility Policies: Photo Darkroom – Plantanenstrasse 98

- 1) The BCB Darkroom has facilities available only to BCB students who are currently enrolled in the photography class
- 2) Chip access to the building will only be granted to those students currently registered for the analog photography class - please note we have limited materials each semester and if the materials are used up by an unusual amount of usage (meaning non students are using the facilities) students will be responsible for purchasing their own chemistry.
- 3) No smoking is allowed anywhere inside the building.
- 4) Fire exits and lanes (black-taped areas) must be kept clear of any obstructions.
- 5) DO NOT EAT ANY FOOD IN THE DARKROOM! Food must be always cleaned up and removed immediately. Any food used for an art project requiring refrigeration must be labeled with one's name, and disposed of after presentation. All food must be disposed of in trash cans.
- 6) All students are to always be respectful of other student artworks and personal property.
- 7) No sandals, flip-flops, or bare feet will be allowed inside the darkroom
- 8) Students should always use the ventilation fan in the darkroom while working in the darkroom
- 9) If there is any problem within the darkroom, please contact either Janina or April right away.
- 10) Students must be aware of who else is working in the building after dark. Any curfews established by Bard College Berlin must be respected. Finishing production and cleaning up must happen before the curfew time.
- 11) Students must make sure all lights are turned off and doors are closed when leaving the building. No windows or doors are to be left opened or cracked. All electrical items must be unplugged when not in use.
- 12) Any unidentified property left in any common space is subject to either be taken or thrown out, without restitution. All private property MUST be labeled and stored in its proper location.
- 13) All students must respect signage posted in the darkroom that may involve rules that are not mentioned in this document.
- 14) During completion week, any space used by a student must be cleaned including walls and floors. All students must accept the penalty of grades being affected and / or fines imposed if items are left by the inspection deadline.

Contact AV Manager: Janina Schabig with questions: j.schabig@berlin.bard.edu