

CO 305 Photography Fundamentals C1 Spring 2026

Peter Smith, Master Lecturer

Class meets: Thursday 3:30 – 6:15 p.m.

Office hours: Tuesday: 2-4 p.m., Thursday: 1-3 p.m., or by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course welcomes all students from the College of Communication and Boston University. It teaches students traditional shooting and editing skills using a mirrorless camera. CO 305 Photography Fundamentals covers camera operation, image processing, tagging, caption writing, and publishing. Assignments will be processed in black and white during the first half of the semester; color is introduced later in the course. We will cover the basics of file management and producing a photo portfolio.

Teamwork will help create a productive environment; partners will act as peer editors and support. We will focus on aesthetics, light, and moment, and complete ten assignments to strengthen photo technique and editing skills in preparation for documentary challenges.

The ten shooting assignments in CO305 Photography Fundamentals cover portraiture and essential lighting, panning and stop action, controlling depth-of-field, advanced lighting (with and without flash), color, night photography, photographing an environmental portrait and a selfie, producing a ten-picture photo essay, and creating an Adobe Portfolio.

CO 305 Photography Fundamentals covers the basics of Adobe Lightroom Classic and Adobe Portfolio during class workshops. We will learn about digital hygiene, nondestructive editing, color correction, image toning, sharpening, caption writing, and understanding resolution.

We will also review great photographers of the 20th Century who helped establish many of the principles, norms, and techniques that we continue to use today.

RULES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Photoshop tools may not be used in this class to alter the meaning of an image. Cropping is not allowed, but students must straighten the image's horizon. Students will upload assignments to the class [Smugmug](#) account.

We will use a mirrorless camera, which requires an SD media card (minimum 32 gig). A 50mm prime or zoom lens can be set to a 50mm focal length. Students are **required** to have a suitable laptop computer, purchase an external hard drive, and bring an SD card reader. Please bring gear to the second class. Handouts are available for all assignments.

REQUIRED READING:

Handouts designed for this class will cover shooting and editing techniques.

Daily read – pick one from below,
or substitute any large city paper/news site.

[New York Times](#)

[Washington Post](#)

[SouthChinaMorningPost](#)

REQUIRED SOFTWARE provided by Boston University

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom

Adobe Portfolio

Gear

Laptop & External Hard Drive

- Bring a **laptop** that meets [Boston University's recommendations](#).
- Purchase an **external hard drive** following this guide.
- Format your external drive properly with Apple Disk Utilities.:
 - **Mac:** Journaled format
 - **Windows:** Appropriate Windows format, FAT32

Adobe Creative Cloud

For this course, you need:

- Adobe Premiere Pro
- Adobe Photoshop Lightroom
- Adobe Portfolio

Get your **free BU subscription** (**NOT THE ADOBE 30-DAY FREE TRIAL**) by signing up for Adobe Creative Cloud with your Kerberos username and password.

Camera Gear

Cameras, lenses, tripods and flash units are available for checkout through FPS. Get a camera and a 50mm lens, in addition to the kit lens that comes with the camera, to get started.

You will need to purchase an **SD card**. One **SD card** for your camera, 32-64gb should be fine. If your computer does not have one, you will also need a **card reader**.

WEEK-TO-WEEK SCHEDULE

Week One — January 22

Topic: Introduction to Photography

In Class

- Meet and greet, discussion: Who would you like to photograph? Describe the scene
- Review syllabus

- Introduction to basic camera settings: aperture (f-stop), shutter speed, ISO, lens speed
- View gallery of past student work
 - [Best of CO305 Gallery](#)

Resources

- Canon Camera Settings
- Camera equipment reservations via [FPS](#) (COM basement)

Homework

- Bring a camera and SD card to class next week
- Learn the [exposure triangle](#)
- Review Canon camera settings presentation

Week Two — January 29

Topic: Camera Operation & Portraits

In Class

- Review camera operation
- Mirrorless camera operation:
 - Menu settings
 - Exposure
 - File system
 - Color management
 - Digital hygiene
- View [Portraits gallery](#)
- Review [Portraits handout](#)

Workshop

- Photograph the face of an individual:
 - (a) Bright sunlight
 - (b) Cloudy day
- Use your camera's light meter to make exposure decisions

Homework

- Finish Portrait assignment

Assignment

- Portraits — 10 pts
(*Exercise: lighting, aesthetics*)

Week Three — February 5

Topic: Editing Workflow

In Class

- Review editing workflow
- Lightroom Classic:
 - Tagging
 - Black & white conversion
 - Exporting high-resolution JPEGs
- Browser and catalog management

Required Materials

- SD card
- External hard drive

Week Four — February 12

Topic: Depth-of-Field

Due

- Assignment 1: Portraits

In Class

- Learn depth of field
- View [Focus gallery](#)
- Review [Focus handout](#)

Homework

- Choose a general scene that shows infinity in the background.
- Subject placed 6 feet from the camera.
- Shoot:
 - (a) Wide aperture (like f 2)
 - (b) Small aperture (like f 16)
- Use camera meter; adjust shutter (no slower than 1/50)
- ISO may be used for adjustment

Assignment

- Depth-of-Field — 10 pts
(*Exercise: aesthetics*)

Week Five — February 19

Topic: Creative Shutter

Due

- Assignment 2: Depth of Field

In Class

- Lecture: Action and motion
- Creative Shutter gallery
- Creative Shutter handout

Homework

- Photograph stop action and panning using fast and slow shutter speeds:
 - (a) Person walking down steps
 - (b) Bicycle in motion
 - (c) Car on Storrow Drive

Assignment

- Creative Shutter — 10 pts
(*Exercise: documentary, aesthetics*)

Homework

- Reserve a flash for next class
- Purchase four AA batteries

Week Six — February 26

Topic: Flash Photography

Due

- Assignment 3: Creative Shutter

In Class

- Lecture: Understanding light
- View [Flash gallery](#)
- Review [Creative Flash handout](#)

Homework

- Submit three flash techniques:
 - (a) Two heads using direct or bounce flash
 - (b) Fill flash in backlit situation
 - (c) Interior bounce flash portrait
- Mirrorless camera hot-shoe flash required

Assignment

- Flash Photography — 5 pts
(*Exercise: documentary, aesthetics*)

Homework:

- Reserve a tripod for next class

Week Seven — March 5

Topic: Night Photography

Due

- Assignment 4: Flash

In Class

- Lecture: Night photography
- Incident vs. reflective light

- [Night Photography gallery](#)
- [Review Night handout](#)

Homework

- Photograph night scenes:
 - (a) Incident light
 - (b) Reflected light
- Tripod required
- Dress warmly

Assignment

- Night Photography — 5 pts
(*Documentary: lighting, aesthetics*)

March 10 — NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Week Eight — March 19

Topic: Silhouette & Portfolio Basics

Due

- Assignment 5: Night

In Class

- Lecture: Silhouettes and backlighting
- Create “About Me” page in Adobe Portfolio
- View [Silhouette gallery](#)
- Review [Silhouette handout](#)

Homework

- Photograph a silhouette:
 - Backlit subject
 - Expose for the brightest point of the background
 - Maintain the subject's separation from the background

Assignment

- Silhouette — 5 pts
(*Exercise: lighting, aesthetics*)

Week Nine — March 26

Topic: Color – shooting with intention.

Due

- Assignment 6: Silhouette

In Class

- Color gallery
- Color handout
- Lecture:
 - Color contrast
 - White balance
 - Mood and color temperature

Homework

- Shoot color with intention for a professional look

Assignment

- Color — 5 pts
(*Documentary, lighting, aesthetics*)

Week Ten — April 2

Topic: Environmental Portraits & Portfolio Development

Due

- Assignment 7: Color

In Class

- Create a “Best Of” gallery
- Upload images to Adobe Portfolio
- Introduction to:
 - Self-Portrait
 - Environmental Portrait

Resources

- [Self-Portrait gallery & handout](#)
- [Environmental Portrait gallery & handout](#)

Homework

1. **Environmental Portrait**
 - Two views

- Subject must be someone you do not know and does not work for BU

2. Self-Portrait

- Indoors, two views.
- No flash

Assignments

- Self-Portrait — 5 pts (*Exercise: lighting, branding*)
- Environmental Portrait — 10 pts (*Documentary*)

Week Eleven — April 9

Topic: Video Portrait & Photo Essay

Due

- Assignment 8: Self-Portrait & Environmental Portrait

In Class

- Review online portfolio requirements
- Add Photo Essay page
- Introduction to video portrait

Homework

- Shoot a 7-second video portrait:
 - Subtle motion
 - Simple or lush background
 - Finish Photo Essay Shoot
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Week Twelve — April 16

Topic: Video Editing & Photo Essay

Due

- Video Portrait: Export and publish video portrait in class.

In Class

- Edit video portrait in Adobe Premiere
- Lecture: Shooting, editing, exporting video
- Add video to portfolio
- Review [Photo Essay handout](#)

Case Study

- Chinatown photo essay examples: [one](#) and [two](#)
- Password: 515

Week Thirteen — April 23

Topic: Photo Essay Production

In Class

- Lecture: How to shoot a photo essay
- Edit video portrait in class
- Export to class folder and portfolio

Week Fourteen — April 30

Topic: Final Review & Submission

Final Deliverables

- Adobe Portfolio Review — 10 pts (*Publishing*)
 - Ten images uploaded to SmugMug
 - Presented as a gallery on Adobe Portfolio
 - Final Photo Story — 20 pts (*Documentary*)
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GRADING:

There are a total of 11 projects due during the semester. They are weighted as follows:

1. **Portraits:**10pts (exercise: lighting, aesthetics)
2. **Focus:**10pts (exercise: aesthetics)
3. **Creative shutter:**10pts (documentary: aesthetics)
4. **Night:**10pts (documentary: sense of place)
5. **Flash:**5pts (exercise: lighting: aesthetics)
6. **Silhouette:**5pts (exercise: lighting, aesthetics)
7. **Color:**5pts (documentary: lighting, aesthetics)
8. **Self:**5pts (exercise: lighting, branding)
9. **Environmental Portrait:**10pts (documentary)
10. **Video portrait** (documentary)
11. **Final photo essay:**20pts (documentary)
12. **Adobe Portfolio:**10pts (publishing)

- Grades are based on quality, content, and punctuality of work submitted.
Late assignments lose one grade point (A to B) each week they are late.
- Assignments that are not turned in receive an F.
- The final grade averages all weighted grades received during the semester.
- Assignments are DUE at the end of class.

GPA conversion

A: 4.0
A-: 3.7
B+:3.3
B : 3.0
B-: 2.7
C+:2.3
C : 2.0
C-: 1.7
D : 1.0
F : 0.0

Percentage based Scale

A : 93-100
A-: 90-92.99
B+:87-89.99
B: 83-86.99
B-: 80-82.99
C+: 77-79.99
C: 73-76.99
C-: 70-72.99
D: 60-69.99
F: 0-59.99

GRADING RUBRIC:

Each assignment is graded on the following:

- Technical (40%): Camera (exposure) settings and focus. Toning adjustments and sharpening.
- Demonstration of assignment concept (40%)
- Captioning and other metadata (20%)
 - For the final photo essay – technical, concept, and text/metadata will be weighted equally.
 - Adobe Portfolio will be graded on two galleries (best work and photo essay): the About Me page.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: After shooting 10 assignments, students will be able to:

- Shoot portraits, freeze action, create motion through panning, photograph incident, and reflective light at night with a tripod, and use a flash.
- Produce well-toned, tagged images and publish them online.
- Produce well-framed, strongly composed images that are properly exposed and use lighting well, all to industry standard.
- Communicate with strong black-and-white photographs and be capable of producing a color image that is color-corrected and thoughtfully uses color.
- Understand the broader concepts of photography.
- Gain photographic visual literacy, with the ability to deconstruct how an image was created and to better understand a photograph's manipulations, biases, and narrative.
- Develop a strong visual awareness and strong observational skills.

HUB Learning Outcomes

Communication: Digital/Multimedia Expression (one unit)

Throughout this course, students will learn the fundamentals of visual communication through digital photography. Students will use a scaffold approach to build visual storytelling skills using a digital toolkit they will work with throughout the course. They will learn to produce and manage digital assets and to shoot and edit digital photographs. Students will produce digital images and sequences to publish in an online portfolio.

Students will develop skills and concepts to produce photo stories in their area of interest. Their creative skills will progress during the semester through class exercises, assignments, and in-depth visual projects.

- Learn Digital workflow: assignments one, two, and three.
- Learn Visual Storytelling: assignments ten and eleven.

Intellectual Toolkit: Creativity/Innovation (one unit)

Students will learn to step out of their comfort zone and communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds to complete their assignments. They will build visual communication skills throughout the course and must use a creative approach to connect with their subjects. Students will also acquire creative skills as they learn to compose a photograph, understand the properties of color and light, create a visual story, and edit/produce a final creative product that will connect to their audience.

Creativity and innovation involve risk-taking and the consideration of multiple strategies. By following composition, framing, and lighting rules, students' work will begin to take professional form and improve in aesthetic value. While students are encouraged to view online examples and follow the assignment criteria and concepts outlined during class lectures, there will still be a need for some trial and error when completing photo assignment work. Students should allow time to shoot multiple situations of each assignment to improve outcomes and to make the editing process more valuable.

When documenting people in various situations, creative results will sometimes depend on your ability to communicate with your subject to connect with them, create a comfortable working relationship, and capture decisive moments. So, taking the time needed to communicate with your subject and shoot multiple situations is important.

Through the iterative process, when students might re-conceive/revise/reshoot in response to feedback, here is the methodology used in CO 305 to learn and continue to improve skills and concept understanding:

As each assignment takes a scaffold approach, the weekly evaluation comments that students receive allow them to re-conceive their approach on the next assignment. With each assignment, students continue to build their skill sets to improve the quality of their work. Students are encouraged to attend office hours if there is any confusion about assignment expectations and may also come to office hours to have work reviewed. This will allow you to reshoot or re-edit work before the assignment is due. Students are also encouraged to drop in during office hours to say hello. My office door is always open during office hours, as posted at the top of your syllabus.

During class lectures, students will see examples of successful work shot in prior classes. A link on the syllabus will take you to assignment examples. In many cases, we will workshop key concepts, allowing you to receive immediate feedback on your work. After each workshop, we meet back in the class to answer follow-up questions on camera settings, color and lighting, framing, and assignment concepts. Class

workshops are provided for portraiture, depth-of-field, stop-action and panning, flash, color, environmental portraits, photo essay, and online portfolio building. The workshops are held in the classroom, on the BU campus, or throughout Boston's neighborhoods, such as the North End, Chinatown, Fort Point Channel, and the Boston Common. Students receive immediate feedback on their work during the workshops, and all workshops are preparation for assignment work.

In addition, students will post the best assignment work to their online portfolio, due at the end of the semester. While the portfolio assignment is only worth 10 points, if you take the time to redo any assignments for your portfolio, students will see an improvement in their work and final grade.

If a student has difficulty in shooting, editing, or submitting assignment work due to illness, equipment failure, or any reasonable issue they have had with the assignment, a re-do may be possible.

Further, students are encouraged to text or send an email if they have any follow-up questions.

HUB FOCUS:

- Creativity outcome with compositional concepts: assignment one, portrait.
- Innovation outcome in connection with the subject: assignments nine, environmental portrait; assignment 10, photo essay.
- Creative aesthetics outcome, including lighting: Assignment Four, night; Assignment Five, flash; Assignment Six, silhouette.

Policies

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

-Boston University is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct – including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the

support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy resources can be found with the Center for Sexual Assault Response & Prevention (SARP) at <http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/>.

*Note: Your department may have additional language they require or recommend you include. Please follow those instructions when appropriate.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

-BU has strict guidelines on classroom behavior and practices when it comes to treatment of students and guests based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, genetic information, military service, national origin, or due to marital, parental, or veteran status. Discrimination for any of these reasons is prohibited. Please refer to the [Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy](#) for more details.

*Note: Your department may have additional language that they require or recommend you include. Please follow those instructions when appropriate.

POSITIVE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

-At your discretion, please alert me to anything related to preferred pronouns, preferred name or nickname, or any extenuating circumstances or trigger warnings (personal, medical, etc.) that might impact your classroom experience. I want to make sure you have the most positive experience in the classroom possible. If work that gets shown in this class, professional or student-generated, offends you in any way, please mention it in class or talk to us privately about it so that we can all learn from each other. This is not to say we will ever restrict freedom of speech or water down an aggressive or edgy idea, but we want to discuss anything that someone deems troublesome or offensive.

DISABILITY AND ACCESS SERVICES

-If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the [Office of Disability and Access Services](#) (DAS) at 617-353-3658 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. DAS is located at 25 Buick Street, on the third floor.

STUDENT ATHLETICS

-All student-athletes should be provided with a sheet from Student-Athlete Support Services regarding absences throughout the semester. These sheets should be handed

in as soon as possible to avoid potential conflicts and so arrangements can be made to provide for missed lecture notes, classwork, or discussion.

ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT

-All BU students are bound by the [Academic Conduct Code](#). Please review to ensure you are acting responsibly and ethically in regard to your academics.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Support services:**
<https://www.bu.edu/com/resources/current-students/student-support/>

o In addition to the resources on this site, please know that we are here to help you find the resources to help you get through stressful times.

- **COM Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:**
<https://www.bu.edu/com/about-com/diversity-equity-inclusion/>
- **BU Newbury Center for First-Generation Students:**
<http://bu.edu/newbury-center>
- **COM Writing Center:**
<https://www.bu.edu/com/for-current-students/the-com-writing-center/>
- **BU Dean of Students office:** <https://www.bu.edu/dos/>; any student who is experiencing food or housing insecurity and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support.

In addition, please notify the professor if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable us to provide any resources that we may possess.