GOA
Student Program

Digital Photography

LENGTH OF COURSE : 14 WEEKS

Course Overview

Just about everyone has a camera, and more and more people are interested in learning how to take amazing photos.

Let's start at the beginning. What if there were a device that allowed you to collect a record of your unique visual world? What are the qualities of a story that emerge from a single moment, frozen in time? How would such a device work, and how could you, as an artist, harness its potential?

The camera as a widely accessible tool has only existed for about seventy years, and its function and operation are an enigma to most. Even as a freshman in college, having spent years in a high school darkroom and about to enter another one, I was still mystified by a camera's ability to freeze a moment in time. I didn't fully understand the chemistry of film and photo paper, the physics of light that dictated lens construction, or the biology of my own eyes, and our collective human appreciation that determines which images are beautiful and which are not. I was, however, well aware of the creative, artistic, storytelling power of a camera, and I made time and space in my life to familiarize myself with it.

As a photographer, you can choose from a variety of subjects and disciplines: portrait, landscape, travel, street, fashion, wildlife, and more. A photographer can choose to create like a painter, constructing and arranging scenes from a blank canvas. Alternatively, a photographer can adventure into nature to discover beautiful sunsets, waterfalls, and the plants and animals that live there. Downtown, one can run across even mundane sights that an unusual camera angle and just the right natural light can elevate into an iconic image. People's faces are infinitely interesting and beautiful.

With a camera, you can go treasure hunting: who knows when you'll be at the right place at the right time to capture an image that the media will pay you handsomely for? You can go mining: I make a living in part by delving into the spaces and culture of events to procure images that tell their stories. Fashion, architectural, and commercial sectors rely on photography to fulfill artistic and business goals.

Ultimately, photography is about telling stories for audiences to come together around, learn from, and enjoy. Let's all improve our skill levels in using our cameras to capture stories that make an impact on those we share them with.

As photographers, we'll take on a new photography project each week, as well as incrementally take semester-long projects through a series of steps. We'll set our own goals to fit individual schedules. Making a college visit? Turn that into a photography project! We'll keep process journals to take note of new learnings, and together we'll critique each other's photos. This feedback from yourself and others is crucial to skill development. There will also be weekly lessons on technical aspects of the artform and exposure to legends of the medium, both classic and contemporary. Finally, at the end of the term we'll participate in Global Online Academy's Catalyst Conference, where we will all have the opportunity to make change in our local communities through photography.

Finally, we will continually learn from each other, and about each other, because art teaches us about the artist. We are a supportive photographers' collective brought together online from all over the globe. How exciting is that?!

See my photography on Instagram @brendangillphotovideo

Skill Circles:
Your assignments, which in most cases you'll choose, are organized into skill sets, delineated in the diagram below as concentric circles radiating out of the camera itself. There's the Camera circle (manipulating the camera), the Subject circle (manipulating the subject and scene), and Purpose (working as a photographer in your greater community). You get to move between these circles each week and choose which skills to build.

In our course, there are 15 unique challenges in all, but you'll choose five to complete.

What path will you take? In nearly every course assignment, including skill circles, you can choose your photographic focus from the following list:

Portrait
Landscape
Event
Documentary
Travel

Street
Fashion
Wildlife
Still Life
Architectural
Food
Astro
Sports
Macro
Abstract
Commercial
Other (no need to specify)

Pre-requisites

There are no prerequisites required for this course.

Competency-Based Learning

GOA courses use a competency-based learning approach in which students build both GOA core competencies and course-specific ones. Throughout the semester, we assess outcomes tied to each competency to track student progress with the goal of students leaving the course able to use and apply these competencies well beyond the final day of the semester.

GOA Core Competencies

GOA students learn in practical, hands-on ways, which include the following core competencies:
- Collaborate with people who don't share your location.
- Communicate and empathize with people who have perspectives and experiences different from your own.
- Curate and create content relevant to real-world issues.
- Reflect on and take responsibility for your learning and that of others.
- Organize your time and tasks to learn independently.
- Leverage digital tools to support and show your learning.

[For detailed outcomes, click here](#)

Digital Photography Course-Specific Competencies

Students in this course also develop and strengthen competencies specific to course topics:

Operate your camera with intention
- Photos demonstrate intentional use of focus and exposure
- Photos demonstrate control of shutter
- Photos demonstrate intentional use of depth of field

Capture your subject with intention
- Photos demonstrate camera angles & composition that serve the story
- Photos demonstrate intentional use of setting, lighting, and context
- Photos demonstrate intentional use of wardrobe and/or makeup

Choose projects that have a purpose beyond the photographer
- Provide photography services for another individual, event, organization, or business

● Share work with the greater photography community through contests, festivals, or exhibition

Course Outline

ORIENTATION (three days)
This orientation is designed to introduce us to one another as well as to online learning skills and Canvas, our classroom. Assessment for each of the assignments below is both authentic and student-selected. Filmmakers will receive recorded video critiques from their peers and/or teacher, and they will also specify how they'd like to be graded by choosing which outcomes to assess

Week 1-2	Interiors & Exteriors
DESCRIPTION: This first project asks students to capture, share and critique photos they've taken themselves, and to identify stories from individual images, as well as broader themes from our pooled collection. **Skills Tree:** The skill tree assignments are a table of mini photography challenges that students navigate through self-selection. Each tree is a separate skill focus and contains five challenges. Each week, students survey the options and choose one. Photographers who are more interested in ISO, shutter speed, and aperture can focus on that, while other students passionate about fashion can jump into lighting, make-up and wardrobe. Those who want to make connections with other photographers via online contests can take that path.	
EXAMPLE ASSESSMENT: Our first assignment introduces us to each other in terms of how we inhabit spaces and ideas. For Week 1, introduce us to your interior world: ● Take a picture of one place you feel most at home: your room, a favorite park, a library you go to with your grandmother, the spot you watch movies, etc. ● Take a picture of your workspace from above. Maybe it's a desk, or the dining room table, or a bar at a cafe. ● Take a picture of yourself holding a sign with a quotation of wisdom that you live by. For Week 2, embark on a street photography excursion: Step right outside your front door and start snapping shots, or go into the city, or into nature, or all of the above, as long as you consider it home. Walk down the sidewalk/road/path/trail and introduce us to your world.	

Week 3-7	Skills Circles

DESCRIPTION:

Photographers choose assignments from three paths in skill-building and thematic development with our Skill Trees:

Inside - manipulating the camera itself
Outside - manipulating the outer environment
Everywhere - participating in a greater photographer's community

All assignments are assessed by peers and teacher according to outcomes chosen by the photographer

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EXAMPLE ASSESSMENT:

Catalyst Conference Preparation Step 1: Sparking Change: The Catalyst Conference is a GOA-wide online event where hundreds of students share presentations on web pages about a topic they care about that could spark change in their local community. Thousands of audience members visit the Catalyst Conference, and awards are given to students with exceptional presentations that made an impact.

Research that issue locally, finding folks who are already working to make the change you want to see. Develop a thesis argument for that cause, and then support that thesis with photographic examples and evidence. Construct a photo essay.

Week 8-9	**Thesis Research and Photo Essay Assignment - assessed by peers and teacher**

DESCRIPTION:

Catalyst Conference Preparation Step 2: Changemakers: As we prepare to contribute photography to this event, we'll venture into our communities to make (or deepen) a connection with someone working to make the changes we want to see. This person (or people) will present to us a photography challenge to capture portraits of their hands and face that tell their story. These changemakers can help students identify a thesis for their Catalyst Conference presentations. The assigned portraits can become a part of the students' presentations.

Week 10	**Portrait Photography assignment, assessed by peers and teacher.**

DESCRIPTION:

Catalyst Conference: Build your Catalyst Conference presentation, share it with peer feedback, and revise it. Aim to make your page competitive for a Catalyst Conference award!

Virtually attend the conference, interacting with visitors to your page, as well as with the pages of your classmates and those from other GOA courses. Share links to the conference widely in your online networks, attracting visitors from multiple contexts to help make change for your cause and also expose them to your photography.

Week 11-13	**The Catalyst Conference is assessed by self, peers, conference attendees, judges, and teacher**

DESCRIPTION:

Who I Am: Revisit the self-portrait you took at the start of the class by taking another and comparing the two. Bring your newfound skills to the project.

Week 14	**Photographers self-assess this final assignment**

Course Materials

Title	Model	Website
Camera	A dedicated camera, DSLR or mirrorless. (A smartphone camera is a great supplemental tool but should not be your primary camera)	If you plan to invest in a new camera, I recommend you buy a used Canon Rebel DSLR in your price range.
Tripod	Any tripod will do as long as it has three legs and your camera mounts securely to the top	
Photo Editing Software	Adobe Lightroom is ideal, Adobe Photoshop is great, Pixlr X (Photoshop alternative) is great and free, so is RawTherapee (Lightroom alternative)	Adobe Photoshop CS2 free for windows computers https://www.pcsteps.com/10474-download-photoshop-download-free-adobe/ Pixlr X https://pixlr.com/x/ RawTherapee https://rawtherapee.com/downloads
Twist Mobile App	This is where we'll be conversing, holding class discussions, asking questions, and more	(Find it on your mobile app store)
Zoom	This is where we'll do synchronous video chats	https://zoom.us/download

Google Suite/Photos	This is where you'll store your photos	