

# PHOTOGRAPHY: IS SEEING REALLY BELIEVING?

Davis Honors Challenge, HNR-094-03, CRN#27933: Winter 2011, 4 credits, T-TH 9:00-10:50, 1352 Surge III

**Instructor:** Terry Nathan, 239 Hoagland, 752-1609 (voice), 752-1552 (fax), [trnathan@ucdavis.edu](mailto:trnathan@ucdavis.edu)  
**Office hours:** M,W,F (11am-noon); W (3-4), when my door is open, or by appointment.  
**Required text:** None

## Course Description

Photography pervades our lives. From the moment we awake to the moment we fall asleep, we are immersed in photographic imagery. The expanse of photographs that we view everyday may inform, document, persuade, entertain, shock, or inspire. Irrespective of what a photograph may evoke, implicit in our viewing of a photograph is the notion that “photographs don’t lie.” This notion dates back to 1839, when Francois Arago first announced the invention of photography at a meeting of the Académie des Sciences in Paris, France. At the meeting, Arago described the camera as a mechanical device, void of human intention, which could faithfully fix an image in what we now call a photograph. Yet even in the nineteenth century, photographic manipulation was commonplace, a fact that did little to diminish the public’s view that the photograph was a true representation of reality. Despite today’s ease of photographic manipulation using Photoshop, the veracity of photographs often goes unchallenged. Studies have indeed shown that “doctored” photographs have a profound affect on how people remember past public events. In this seminar, we will explore realms of photography where fact and fiction often become difficult to distinguish. We will examine examples from fashion, advertising, journalism, politics, and science. To frame our discussions, we will consider the following questions: To what extent does a photograph represent reality? How much photographic manipulation is permissible? And does a person’s education, life experience, gender, or race affect how a photograph is interpreted?

## Course Objectives

- to learn how to think critically and analytically
- to work collaboratively in teams
- to develop strategies for addressing real-world issues
- to enhance research skills
- to improve oral and written communication skills
- to become more familiar with electronic communication.

## Course Structure

Attendance (5% deduction for each absence; max deduction=20% of grade)	20%
One individual writing assignment	15%
One subgroup writing assignment	15%
TRN, peer, and self-evaluation	20%
Convocation presentation	30%

## Important Dates

January 11: Library resources workshop at library (with David Michalski)  
January 20: individual writing assignment and 1<sup>st</sup> peer and self-evaluation of progress due  
January 25: no class meeting (focus on collaborative research)  
January 27: no class meeting (focus on collaborative research)  
February 10: each subgroup submits written progress report at start of class  
February 17: each subgroup gives PowerPoint presentation on their topic and progress to date  
February 24: each subgroup submits written progress report at start of class  
February 27: subgroup writing assignment and 2<sup>nd</sup> peer and self-evaluation of progress due  
March 12: Convocation (Saturday, location and time TBD)

Assignments are due on the announced date by 5:00 p.m. (unless stated otherwise). Assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class (unless stated otherwise). The individual assignment must be your personal work and completed in your own words. The group writing assignment must be a true collaborative effort. All written work must be typed; handwritten work will not be accepted. The written work must be clearly and concisely presented using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation. Use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style for citations. [Assignments submitted within 24 hours after the due date and time will be assessed a 50% penalty. Twenty-four hours after the due date and time, assignments will not be accepted \(exceptions only for verifiable emergencies\).](#)