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# Photography 1: The Art of Photography

A first level photography course for OCA written by Michael Freeman

The course helps students to:

- visualise and select images and translate them into photographs
- make successful use of composition, exposure, lighting and other forms of image control
- analyse and apply the conveying of information through visual means
- develop observational skills through a wide range of projects.

## Course content

The course is an introduction to the application of established art and design principles to photography. It is designed to help students to use their imagination and to compose well structured and satisfying images. The course covers:

- understanding the basics of exposure so as to be able to deal with a wide range of subjects and lighting
- exploring the camera's potential to combine focus, shutter speed and aperture settings so as to control depth of field
- effective framing, balance and proportion
- cropping for composition and interpretation
- the theory and practice of visual contrasts using the elements of design - points, lines, shapes, rhythms and patterns - to give structure to an image
- understanding the qualities of colour and colour relationships
- picture making in a wide range of natural lighting conditions and the use of filters with colour and black and white

- working in artificial and restricted light conditions
- using flash and studio lights
- narrative and illustration.

## Teaching methods

The course provides you with a series of projects that are supported by distance learning techniques. At certain points in the course your work will be seen by your tutor, and answers to any specific questions you have.

## You can get credits for your course too

If you want to have your work recognised you can gain credits towards a full qualification in art. To



Steve Meyfroidt

do this you present a portfolio of your work on the course, including work on specific projects, for assessment.



## Cameras

The ideal camera is a single-lens reflex (SLR) camera with either a zoom lens covering a wide-angle to telephoto, or interchangeable lenses, and in which aperture and focus can be adjusted manually. This does not mean that you cannot take the course unless you have one, but you may find a few of the projects beyond the capability of some automatic cameras, for example one with a fixed-focus lens and no manual override.

## Basic minimum equipment

This varies according to whether you are using a film or digital camera.

### Film

- a 35mm camera, preferably SLR (single lens reflex), although you can use a compact camera. In either case, if possible it should have a standard lens (about 50mm). A manual over-ride to exposure and focus is an advantage
- sufficient film for the projects and assignments
- blue tungsten-correcting (80B), magenta fluorescent-correcting (CC30M), and straw-coloured (81B) filters. These can be in glass, plastic or thin gelatine squares that you can hold in front of the lens if your compact camera does not have the fitting for a filter. The numbers given above are for the Kodak Wratten series.
- a light box with a magnifier for viewing negatives and slides, or a hand-held illuminated viewer
  - plastic mounts for slides
  - thin transparent slip covers to keep mounts clean
  - plastic sheets to file your final selection of slides
  - acetate sheets to store negative strips
  - china graph or wax pencil for marking film and print sleeves.

### Digital

- an entry-level digital camera (at least 5 megapixels), preferably with some manual functions (the ability to alter the aperture/shutterspeed)
- a memory card for your camera, and a card-reader or USB data transfer cable to transfer your image files from the camera to your computer
- a folder on your computer's hard drive to store all the images
- a desktop ink-jet colour printer (or a local bureau that can print from your digital files)
- image browser software (often supplied with the camera).

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## Both

- a tripod, even if small
- a table or desk on which to sort out your prints
- a board on which to pin or tape the prints you are working on
- a field notebook to write up details of your photographs and your comments on them
- sleeves to hold individual prints
- a ring-bound folder, a plastic or metal drawer, or a box for storage. Any good photographic dealer will advise you about storage materials. The aim is to keep your prints, slides and negatives in order and to protect them from dust and scratches. For digital files, software is available for cataloguing your image files, but a simple folder and file-naming system will suffice.
- some means of storing notes, cuttings, commentary, postcards, catalogues and so on. This will become a logbook that can be posted to your tutor if you intend to submit your work for formal assessment.

## Optional additional equipment

- a zoom lens that covers a range from wide-angle to telephoto. The greater the range (known as the zoom ratio), the more choice you will have in composition and in how much of the scene you include, but it should cover at least 35mm to 100mm for a 35mm camera, or the equivalent for a digital
- cable release if your camera can take one
- lights - the choice here is between flash and tungsten photo-lamps
- for digital photography, you will find an image-editing program extremely useful for performing various operations, from removing dust to straightening up tilted compositions and adjusting colours and brightness. Although Adobe Photoshop dominates the market, the full version has many more features than are needed for photography and is expensive. There are a number of alternative image-editing programs that are less costly and just as useful.