

ARTH | CHTE 323 | Photography and Archaeology: The Art of Documentation Spring 2025

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Course Description

When we look at photographs of antiquity we often privilege the subject over the photograph. In fact, one of the unwritten tenets of archaeological photography is that of impartial depiction. This effectively implies that the "hand" of the photographer should be invisible. But can it actually be made invisible, and to what extent? Perhaps we have desensitized our vision when examining archaeological photographs, considering only the subject and not the photograph that delivers it? In recent years, the photograph itself has become the focus of study, thus transforming it from being a mere document to a cultural object in its own right.

By their nature, photographs and archaeological evidence may appear to document "the facts." Reading a photograph or an artifact at face value, however, can be misleading. In truth, "the facts" are often presented by people with varying agendas. Therefore, one of the primary objectives of this course is to learn to interrogate images to discover their broader context, since photographers and archaeologists are as much cultural producers as they are observers and scientists.

The study of the relationship between photography and archaeology requires a multi-disciplinary approach. We must be practitioners and theorists, researchers and analysts, approaching the depiction of archaeological subjects from a variety of angles. Through lectures and through viewing the work of major figures in the field you will become familiar with the development of the medium alongside the discipline of archaeology. Through site visits, classroom activities and hands-on experience you will gain insight into the mechanics of photography and how it shapes vision. Through examining case-studies and conducting your own research you will discover how photography has often held up a mirror to the greater cultural contexts of archaeology.

Greece is an ideal setting for this course: photography and scientific archaeology were born at roughly the same time and the histories of both disciplines are intricately connected. To explore this relationship, the class will visit archaeological sites, photographic archives and museums. Students will also be required to conduct visits in their own time to complete a photography-based research project.

Course Approach

In this course, key topics, issues, and questions will be explored through a rich and varied approach that combines theoretical readings, practical experiences, and hands-on methodologies. Students will begin by engaging with foundational texts on the history of archaeology and the role of photography as an artistic medium. Furthermore, we will be using the cultural context of Greece which will provide a comprehensive backdrop for understanding the intersections of these fields. Visual culture theory will further enhance this understanding, offering critical frameworks for analyzing visual representation. Case studies of archaeological photography will be examined to illustrate best practices in documentation and interpretation, supplemented by technical readings that introduce essential skills in photographic recording techniques.

Fieldwork will play a crucial role in the learning process, with students participating in site visits where they will photograph using large-format analogue equipment at an actual archaeological site. This hands-on experience will deepen their appreciation for the intricacies of capturing archaeological contexts. Additionally, class sessions will involve research work at a photographic archive, allowing students to engage directly with historical materials. A dedicated studio class will focus on the methodologies of artifact photography, equipping students with the practical skills necessary for professional documentation. The course will also explore innovative approaches, such as using photographic collage to visualize archival images creatively. Finally, a site visit to an active archaeological excavation will provide students with a real-time experience of the excavation process, enhancing their understanding of the dynamic relationship between photography and archaeology. Through this multifaceted approach, students will develop a nuanced perspective on the role of photography in archaeological practice and visual culture.

Key academic skills will be developed through a variety of assignments that emphasize reading, writing, speaking, and research. Students will write an illustrated midterm essay and a final research project, requiring them to synthesize

information and present their arguments effectively. Throughout the course, they will engage in hands-on tasks such as cataloging historic photographs for an archive and conducting research on these images, enhancing their analytical skills and attention to detail. Additionally, students will scout and execute images of an archaeological site based on specific briefs, fostering practical application of their knowledge. Each assignment will require students to analyze their findings and articulate their results clearly in written form. This multifaceted approach will not only build critical thinking and interpretation skills but also improve their ability to communicate complex ideas through various mediums, preparing them for both academic and professional contexts.

Students will work individually on their written assignments, such as the illustrated midterm essay and final research project, allowing for personal exploration of topics. However, they will also collaborate in small groups for all coursework, engaging in discussions and sharing insights to deepen their understanding. Group projects will encourage teamwork and collective problem-solving, while in-class presentations will provide opportunities for students to present their research findings, fostering communication skills. This combination of individual and collaborative work will enhance their knowledge and skills, promoting a dynamic learning environment that values both personal reflection and group engagement.

Learning Objectives

- Reflect on the influence of individual perspective in visual and textual documentation, assessing how this perspective can shape the interpretation of any cultural, historical, or scientific material.
- Explain the evolution of photography and documentation as tools that contribute to both historical record-keeping and cultural interpretation, articulating their broader impacts on knowledge construction across fields.
- Recognize and critique the presence of biases and agendas in various forms of documentation, from photographs to written records, identifying how these may affect perception and public understanding of “facts.”
- Analyze evidence from multidisciplinary perspectives, synthesizing cultural, historical, and technical information to build well-rounded interpretations of materials in diverse contexts.
- Compare and contrast traditional and contemporary methods of documentation and interpretation, assessing the advantages and limitations of each in terms of accuracy, bias, and effectiveness.
- Interpret and discuss theoretical frameworks for analyzing visual representation, applying these critical tools to diverse media and disciplines to evaluate how visual culture shapes meaning.
- Evaluate the role of technical tools and methodologies in shaping documentation and representation, gaining insights through hands-on experiences that develop critical thinking and technical proficiency.
- Apply acquired skills to create a research-based project that integrates technical, historical, and theoretical knowledge, producing a cohesive, well-supported argument or narrative that contributes meaningfully to a chosen field.

Course Requirements

This course requires students to complete readings, written assignments, image production and analysis, a group project, and a final exam. Each assignment is designed to develop skills in critical analysis, research, and practical application of photography in archaeology.

Reading:

Students are expected to read 40–50 pages per week from assigned articles and book chapters, accessible on Moodle. These readings will provide essential background for class discussions and assignments. The Moodle calendar includes specific reading assignments and due dates.

Individual Assignments:

Students will work individually to produce and analyze photographs according to specific briefs, emphasizing various visual and technical approaches in archaeological photography. Each assignment will be accompanied by a brief written analysis that discusses photographic choices and techniques. Assignments will be due throughout the semester, as specified in the Moodle calendar.

Group Research Project and Presentation:

Working in small groups, students will research and analyze a set of historical images, focusing on their cultural and historical contexts. Each group will present a 15-minute analysis of their findings, supported by visual references and historical documentation.

Midterm essay:

A 1,500-word illustrated essay analyzing a selected case of archaeological photography will be due during midterm week. Students will critically assess the image's historical and cultural context, applying theories discussed in class.

Final Research Project:

A 2,500-word research project will require students to integrate theoretical, historical, and technical knowledge from the course in analyzing an aspect of photographic documentation in archaeology. This project should include research on historical materials and independently gathered visual sources.

Topic proposal will be due after midterms and a first draft due in two weeks prior to the deadline.

Final submission will be due during finals week.

Classroom and On-Site Participation

Participation includes attending all classroom sessions and on-site visits (to archaeological sites, photographic archives, and museums) and actively engaging in discussions and activities. Attendance and participation are critical and will be recorded. Unexcused absences will affect the final grade.

Class Field Work

Students will participate in a photography session using a professional grade large format analogue field camera at the Temple of Olympian Zeus in central Athens. This field work offers students a hands-on experience at one of the most significant archaeological sites in central Athens and ties directly into course objectives by combining historical methods with practical skills. Working with an analogue field camera, students gain insight into the challenges of early archaeological photography, learning how factors like light, equipment, and technique shape visual representation. Furthermore, the experience cultivates appreciation for the deliberate process of early photography, where each shot required planning and precision—skills essential for accurately capturing and interpreting cultural artifacts and just as crucial today as they were in the past.

This experience builds on objectives related to understanding and comparing traditional and modern documentation methods, as well as analyzing how technical choices impact interpretation. Photographing a culturally significant site also reinforces theoretical aspects of the course, encouraging students to consider how their biases and decisions influence the portrayal of the site. Additionally, this session complements archival studies and image production assignments, bridging practical skills with critical analysis to prepare students for their final projects where they integrate technical, historical, and interpretive insights.

CYA Field Study

A field study session at the Photographic Archives of the American School of Classical Studies will provide students with invaluable hands-on experience with primary historical sources. In this setting, they will catalog photographs from a historic collection and conduct on-site research to deepen their understanding of these images. Exploring rare and original materials, students will gain insight into the technical limitations, stylistic choices, and cultural biases that influence photographic documentation. This experience sharpens their critical thinking as they analyze the physical characteristics and preservation needs of archival materials, interpreting the images within broader socio-historical frameworks.

Additionally, the archive visit cultivates an appreciation for the importance of preserving visual records and the role of archives in historical research. Engaging with historical images in this way enhances students' analytical and observational skills and fosters a more nuanced understanding of how history and culture are visually represented and documented. This experience will be essential to their research projects, where they'll apply these methods to interpret and analyze visual materials with greater depth and accuracy.

Evaluation and Grading**Final grades will be based upon the following:**

- 10% Attendance and Informed class participation
- 20% Class Assignments
- 30% Midterm paper
- 40% Final paper

Evaluation Criteria - Course Assignments

Assignment: Class Assignments throughout the Semester

- **Analytical Depth and Application of Course Concepts:** Assignments will be evaluated on students' ability to analyze images and materials in relation to key course concepts, focusing on the intersection of photography and archaeology. This criterion assesses the effective application of theoretical frameworks and terminology from readings to interpret visual evidence and critically engage with biases in documentation.
- **Creativity and Technical Execution in Image Production:** Students will be assessed on their creativity and technical proficiency in producing and sourcing photographs for assignments. This includes evaluating their understanding of photographic techniques and composition, as well as how well they articulate their artistic choices and the sourcing of images in the accompanying written analyses.
- **Detail Orientation and Precision in Work:** Assignments will be evaluated on the attention to detail and precision demonstrated in both written and visual components. This includes thoroughness in research, accuracy in citations, and clarity in presenting visual elements, ensuring that all aspects contribute effectively to the overall argument and presentation of the work.

Assignment: Midterm Essay

- **Depth of Analysis and Contextual Understanding:** The essay should demonstrate a comprehensive analysis of the selected images, effectively exploring their meanings within the frameworks established by the course readings. This includes contextualizing the images within the history of archaeology, the archaeology of Greece, modern Greek history, and the photographic processes involved, drawing connections to relevant theoretical concepts from authors such as Marita Sturken, Frederick N. Bohrer, and Yiannis Hamilakis.
- **Integration of Visual References:** The paper must effectively incorporate and analyze the six chosen images, demonstrating how they support the thesis and contribute to the overall argument. The discussion should clearly explain how each image represents archaeological subject matter, utilizing insights from class discussions and ensuring that the selection of images is relevant and well-researched.
- **Clarity and Coherence of Argumentation:** The essay should present a clear thesis and maintain logical organization throughout, with well-structured paragraphs that articulate the argument coherently. Clarity in writing, proper academic formatting, and adherence to citation standards will be essential for conveying ideas effectively and demonstrating scholarly rigor.

Assignment: Research Paper

- **Research Question and Thesis Development:** Students will formulate and articulate a unique research question that aligns with the course themes of photography and archaeology. The clarity and focus of the thesis statement will be evaluated, including how effectively it encapsulates the central argument and connects to course objectives.
- **Integration of Theoretical Frameworks and Class Readings:** The paper should demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of key theoretical frameworks discussed in the course, such as those proposed by Sturken and Cartwright, Bohrer, and Hamilakis. Evaluation will consider how well students incorporate these theories to support their argument and critically engage with course readings in relation to their research question.
- **Depth of Analysis and Critical Engagement with Visual Material:** The analysis should reflect a thorough examination of the selected images, emphasizing their historical and cultural contexts within archaeology. Students will be assessed on their ability to interrogate the implications of photographic techniques and biases, connecting these insights to the course's emphasis on the critical interpretation of visual culture.
- **Quality of Research and Effective Use of Sources:** The evaluation will focus on the quality and relevance of both primary and secondary sources utilized in the research. Students are expected to demonstrate effective sourcing strategies, proper citation practices, and adherence to academic writing standards, ensuring that their work is well-supported and aligns with the course's emphasis on historical documentation.
- **Organization, Clarity, and Presentation:** The overall organization of the paper should exhibit a coherent structure, with clear transitions and a logical flow of ideas. Evaluation will also include the clarity of writing, grammatical

accuracy, and attention to detail in formatting, ensuring that the final paper meets professional standards of presentation while effectively communicating complex ideas relevant to the course content.

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences.

ePolicy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided.

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Class Schedule

Class Day	Place	Date	Title	Assignment	
1	CYA	27 January	Intro - Ways of Seeing		Marita Sturken, Lisa Cartwright , Images, Power and Politics
2	CYA	29 January	Methodologies	Library image analysis	Frederick N. Bohrer , Travel, or Presence
3	CYA	3 February	Early photographers	Exposure and focus photo assignment	Yiannis Hamilakis , The Producers of Archaeological Matter-realities
4	Benaki Museum	5 February	The "Western" gaze	Benaki photo assignment	Yiannis Hamilakis , From Western to indigenous Hellenism
5	CYA	10 February	Photography and Archaeology in Greece, Part I	Working with the lens assignment	John Stathatos , Three Way Mirror Process videos
6	CYA	12 February	Photography and Archaeology in Greece, Part II	Typology photo assignment	Alexandra Moschovi , Greece as Photograph: Histories, Photographies, Theories
7	Ancient Agora Excavations	17 February	Photography at the Agora Excavations	Research Group Images	Craig Mauzy, John Camp , Agora Excavations: A Pictorial History
8	CYA	24 February	Interrogating an image	Present Images	Michael Shanks , Photography and Archaeology
9	CYA	26 February	Introduction to Photographic Archives		Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor , Reading and Researching Photographs, Chapter 1
10	Archives of the ASCSA	5 March	Photography Archive Visit		Allan Sekula , Reading an Archive
11	Archives of the ASCSA	10 March	Investigating an Archive - Cataloging	Catalogue assignment	Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor , Reading and Researching Photographs, Chapter 3
12	Central Athens	12 March	Investigating an Archive - On site research	Central Athens research assignment	
13	CYA	17 March	Perspective and the Photographic Image	Scout archaeological site Midterm due	Hans Rupprecht Goette , The Arch of Hadrian and the Olympieion, Athens, Attica and the Megarid Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas , Olympieion Area with the Illinois River Banks

14	CYA	24 March	Archive Presentation		Marita Sturken, Lisa Cartwright , Perspective
15	Temple of Olympian Zeus	26 March	Working with a field camera		Ansel Adams , The Camera, "Large-Format Cameras," "Lenses," Pages 43-46, "View-Camera Adjustments," pp. 141-161, illustrations only
16	Temple of Olympian Zeus	31 March	Working with a field camera	Field camera photo assignment	Marita Sturken, Lisa Cartwright , Visual Technologies, Reproduction, and the Copy
17	The Roman Agora in Athens	2 April	The Palimpsest of Archaeology - Roman Agora	Create a photo collage	Yannis Hamilakis, Fotis Ifantidis , The Other Acropolises: Multi-temporality and the persistence of the past
18	CYA Art Studio	7 April	Object Studio I	Final paper abstract	Peter Dorell , Photography in Archaeology And Conservation
19	CYA Art Studio	9 April	Object Studio I		Frederick N. Bohrer , Photography and Archaeology, Meaning, or the Archive
20	CYA Art Studio	23 April	Object Studio II		Ian Farrell , Complete Guide to Digital Photography, pp. 244-247 (Histograms), 310-311 (Resizing), 344-351 (Layers)
21	CYA Art Studio	28 April	Object Studio II	Final paper outline	
22	CYA	30 April	New Technologies and New Ways of Seeing	Studio class photo assignment	Frederick N. Bohrer , Science, or Truth
23	Ancient Athenian Agora	5 May	Vrysaki - A neighborhood preserved in photographs		Niki Sakka , The excavation of the Ancient Agora of Athens
24	TBA - A visit to a temporary exhibit relevant to our subject	7 May	Art and Artefacts for the Future		Frederick N. Bohrer , Art, or Reframing
25		14 May		Research Paper Due	

N.B.: The course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and to keep up to date with current research.

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