What we see in photographs are invariably what is shown to us. Implicit in this statement is the argument that a photograph embodies the eye of photographer, the ideology informing the photographic technique, and the relation of all these to the subject that is objectified and represented through the camera lens. The intent of this inter-disciplinary seminar is to develop a critical way to read and hear the ‘thousand words’ that exist behind an ‘image’. It aims to inquire how the imagination implicit in the image as argued in recent scholarship, has become a way to extract a critical history of people and cultures. Such a methodology involves a consideration of the material and visual cultures that condition the classical ‘subject and object’ relationship in photographic encounters. This course will consider a range of photographs and photography, as texts embedded in history and culture and as objects that communicate meanings beyond a specific context.

Based on readings and discussions students would be expected to generate their own ‘raw material’ that demonstrate application of ideas to understand objects like photographs that have their own dynamic histories and biographies that can be heard and seen as different realities.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

At its inception in 1839, the photograph was considered “the pencil of nature” and its images perceived as direct and unmediated transcriptions of reality. But as photography immediately began to participate in anthropology, portraiture, war, social reform, pornography, art and a plethora of other discourses, practitioners and public alike started to question its supposed objectivity and transparent truthfulness. The photograph, it seemed, could be as manipulated (and as manipulative) as any other form of representation.

This course will approach the photograph as a cultural document as well as an aesthetic object. We will examine the photographers’ intentions and stylistic strategies,
the photographs’ functions, intended audiences and reception, and contemporary theories of representation. Whether we are looking at 19th century daguerreotypes or 21st century digital images, our central concern will be how photographs convey meanings, to whom and for what purposes. By uncovering the ideologies at work, we will enrich our understanding of photography’s seductive appeal.

**BASIC TEXTS:**
Liz Wells, ed. *The Photography Reader*
Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*
Susan Sontag, *On Photography*
Naomi Rosenblum, *World History of Photography*

**NOTE**
Separate group of readings will be provided to focus on the link of photography and representation and depending on the issue emerging from class discussions readings will be provided that focus on India and its representation.

A list of the books and sections marked **RP** (reserve package) would be placed in the library reserve.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
**Response Papers (3 in all for each student):** Each week one or more students will be responsible for writing an analytical précis (approximately 2 printed pages) of the issues raised by one or several of that week’s readings and presenting it to the class. These papers must also be posted to Blackboard by the day before that class (we’ll discuss this). The papers will serve as the introduction to that week’s issues and the basis for class discussion. Please note, however, that ALL students must read ALL the required readings. Some questions to consider in your writing and reading include:

- What are the author’s main points? How do they support them?
- What kind of sources does the author use: contemporary writings (e.g., correspondence, records, critical reviews, and diaries); contemporary events; other visual images; recent art-historical or cultural historical scholarship; theoretical treatises?
- What are the author’s underlying assumptions about the nature of photography?
- Does the essay aid our understanding of the photographs under discussion?
- What alternative analyses would you suggest? How would you develop these ideas?
- How does the piece compare to others you have read for this course?

These papers count for 20% of the course grade.

**Research Paper:** Each student will produce a 15 page paper (printed, one-inch margins on all sides, double-spaced, 10 or 12 point font) on a related research topic of his/her choice. This topic must be approved by the professor BEFORE you begin research. The paper has three objectives: 1) to formally analyze the photographs being studied; 2) to examine the contexts in which the photographs were produced; and 3) to discuss how the formal elements and contexts contribute to the photos’ meanings for specific audiences.
and at particular times. The last three weeks will be devoted to student presentations and class discussion of their research projects. This constitutes 50% of the final course grade.

Class Participation: This is a seminar and class participation is crucial to its success. Class attendance is required and participation counts for 30% of the course grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Introduction and Photography’s Invention and its role in History of Representation

Identity Politics I: Early Portraiture
**Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida
**Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image,” The Photography Reader

Picturing the Other: Anthropology, Pornography and the Police
**Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Reconsidering Erotic Photography: Notes for a Project of Historical Salvage,” Photography at the Dock . . . (RP)
**Brian Wallis, “Black Bodies, White Science,” (RP)


Landscapes of Exploration
**Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Calotypomania,” Photography at the Dock (RP)
**Buerger, “Ultima Thule: American Myth, Frontier, and the Artist-Priest in Early American Photography,” (RP)

**Photography and Art I**
**Edward Weston, “Seeing Photographically,” in The Photography Reader  
**Alfred Stieglitz, “Pictorial Photography,” Classic Essays on Photography: 115-123  
**John Szarkowski, “Introduction to The Photographer’s Eye,” The Photography Reader

**Documentary**
**Alan Sekula, “Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital,” The Photography Reader  
**Martha Rosler, “In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography),” The Photography Reader

**Photojournalism**
**Becker, “Photojournalism and the Tabloid Press,” The Photography Reader  
**Miles Orvell, “Weegee’s Voyeurism and the Mastery of Urban Disorder,” (RP)  
**Berger, “Photographs of Agony,” The Photography Reader

**Recommended:** **Green-Lewis, “Framing the Crimea,” in Green-Lewis, Framing the Victorians (RP)

**Photography & Art II**
**Douglas Crimp, “The Museum’s Old, the Library’s New Subject,” The Photography Reader**
**Solomon-Godeau, “Art Photography and Post-Modernism,” The Photography Reader**


**Identity Politics II**

**bell hooks, “Photography and Black Life,” The Photography Reader**

**Annette Kuhn, “Remembrance,” The Photography Reader**


**Deborah Bright, “Mirrors and Window Shoppers: Lesbians, Photography, and the Politics of Visibility,” OverExposed, ed. Carol Squiers (RP)**


**Virtual Realities**

**Kember, “The Shadow of the Object,” The Photography Reader**


**Lavin, “Heartfield in Context,” (RP)**

11/24 **Student Presentations**