



STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY Minor Two | Level 4

Institution: Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

Department: Communication Design | 6th Semester

Focus: Fundamentals of Studio Lighting

*“Photography, as a powerful medium of expression and communications,
offers an infinite variety of perception, interpretation and execution”*

~ Ansel Adams ~

Course Objectives & Outline - *Fundamentals of Studio Lighting*

The sixth semester class is, for the most part, concerned with gaining further technical control of the 35mm camera in the studio, light ratios exposure, studio lighting and the production of professional product photography with an emphasis upon experimentation and design.

Detailed Course Description:

By now the students have covered various aspects of photography, as they move on from the intermediate level to the advanced. The “fundamentals of studio lighting” as a minor has longer class durations, due to the studio sessions incorporated into the course. With a very limited number of students selected the instructor has an opportunity to provide the students with a wider range of topics to cover.

The school has a professional working studio equipped with several strobe lights (electronic flash) and other studio accessories; this is an incredible opportunity for experimentation and growth. The material, which was not available in earlier classes, will be on hand for exploration. Through alternative days’ demonstrations, lectures, and assignments, the student will learn various studio lighting methods for still life. This course is designed to prepare the student with basic knowledge and the techniques of tungsten lighting and strobe as applied to people and tabletop photography.

Students will experiment with different electronic flash equipment, while learning how to control contrast, direction, and color balance. We will explore a myriad ways to modify light using reflectors, umbrellas, snoots, projectors, spots, gobos and various diffusion materials. Color temperature will also be discussed, as well as ways to take advantage of the various color properties of light and film combinations. In addition, students for this course are to use a handheld flash and expand on their basic knowledge and learn new techniques to realize how versatile it can be as an added camera accessory.

A studio environment is ideal for product and portrait photography, although in this part of the minor the instructor concentrates more on product photography. They now make the transition from “seizing the moment” to “making the moment.” The still life photographer builds photographs from the bottom up, taking a tabletop as the blank slate and adding substance and light until the photograph says entirely what the photographer wants it to say. Even more than usual, the photographer student learns to be responsible for everything in the picture.

The Visual Journal:

Students must maintain this journal as part of their creative process.

The Visual Journal should contain:

- A collection of ideas and inspirations
- Documentation of your research efforts, both in terms of process and content
- Reviews, critiques, quotes, clippings, tear sheets.
- An information sheet for each workshop and folio assignment
- Technical requirements and equipment used
- Lighting, camera and subject diagram, detailing position, angle etc

The Assignments:

These assignments should only be attempted after the successful completion of all the ten mandatory assignments practiced in class as a group. Studio still-life photography is a medium for creative expression and visual experimentation. The assignments that follow cover a range of professional experiences particular to advertising and editorial still-life photography. They encourage the student to use the tools and techniques of studio still-life photography and to concepts of visual communication natural to the still life. Topics include working with light, selection of lenses, advertising concepts. Moreover, there are special manipulations possible—choice of lighting, perspective, camera angle, surface propping, multiple exposures, front projection and other esoteric techniques which can be applied. Overall basic to advanced skills in studio lighting techniques taught to the minor students. The shooting sessions are done in either black and white and color or both films.

1. Assignment - *Still life on a Seamless White Background*



The simplest of photographs: a single object on a white shooting surface background. For our first assignment we're going to work with the simplest of photographs. This type of photograph is one of the most common used in advertising; a glance through almost any magazine will reveal at least a few ads where the product is shown, by itself, on a white ground usually with a drop shadow.

Even if this isn't the main shot, you will often find a picture like this somewhere else in the advertisement, at the bottom perhaps near the copy. Although a client will often agree to a concept that doesn't notably feature their product, they understandably want the consumer to see the product somewhere in the ad.

For this assignment, you are going to pick a single object and photograph it using three different lighting variations. We want this to be a product photograph, and it should be removed from any packaging that is included with it. An example: you could shoot a bottle of perfume, but not the cardboard box it typically comes in. **Your product should be something used by consumers.**

This should be a clean photograph no extra props unless necessary. Overall sharp focus, plane-separating lighting—you may use three different lighting set-ups for this project:

1. **Hard (direct) light.** Typically, light coming through a grid spot, or directly from the strobe head. Shadows will be hard-edged and the image, typically, will be fairly high-contrast.
2. **Soft (indirect) light.** Diffused or bounced light. Shadow edges will be less distinct, and image contrast will usually not be as high
3. **Lighting for a front, drop-shadow.** This is a staple of advertising photography. Typically, in many ads these will be airbrushed in but the art director loves it when you can provide it on film.

Obviously, this means your main light will have to come from somewhere behind the subject, making at least one fill light a necessity. You can use either a hard or soft light for your main source. The only other requirement is that you must have a white background; no gradations, no grays, it must be edge-to-edge/top-to bottom white. This may sound easy, but be careful. Use any surface necessary to achieve this.

Submission: 2 select the best ones from the three varying light styles.

2. Assignment - *Numeral Expression*

In the photography studio, you are to create a still life in digits, figures or numerals and illustrate the last digit of your national identity card. You may use any still life approach you wish. The assignment is an opportunity to exercise your studio skills conceptually, visually and mechanically. The only requirement is that your audience must understand the number when they see the image. Do two different versions.



Submission: 2 final images from this assignment.

3. Assignment – *Metallic Objects*

Create a graphic play of light & shadow for your still life. This assignment relies on your ability to produce an image that speaks of design, graphics, light and simplicity. Your intentions should not be concerned with the reproduction of reality, but more with the alteration of the subject for the final look which has a strong graphic element. Your photograph should bring to mind a sense of attitude, excellence, and style that the client would like to project to its customers. The photographs should contain only one or two objects, to help complete the look and feel of the final image.



Submission: 2 final images from this assignment.

Consider: The appropriate background. The shadow is as important as your subject. Color, shape, line, and spatial relationships. What does the photograph communicate?

For ideas, refer to the works of: [RJ Muna](#), [Zeke Berman](#), Jan Groover, Barbara Kasten, [Olivia Parker](#), [Dan Winters](#) .

4. Assignment- *The Layouts:*

Layouts are a necessity in an advertising agency, and it's unlikely that print media will cease to exist even in this technology driven world. Layouts come to a photographer in a variety of ways: the paper napkin scribbled over a cup of tea, the thumbnail sketched on the ride to the office and now, more typically, via the computer in JPEG, or GIF files. The communication between the photographer and the advertising agency art director is an essential aspect in working out the final product layout. For this purpose your instructor is your make-believe art director; discuss your ideas with her before your photo shoot.

In this assignment you have been given **four** layouts to look over. Each layout has its own set of procedures and conventional problems. Please take note; you will be required to follow the layout as closely as possible. Props will be needed; various backgrounds styles and, most essential of all, the lighting will have to be decided by you.



Parameters: Select any 2 layouts and shoot the assignment according to the requirements of the layout as it is shown in the thumbnail images.

Submission: 2 final images from this assignment.

5. Assignment - *The Creative Darkroom Project Part 1: Toning*

This course helps students refine the techniques and ideas presented in the Basic B/W Photography course. There is importance given to the relationship between exposure, film development, and the finished print. Students have the opportunity to enhance darkroom skills, experiment with toners and other manipulative techniques, and explore different photographic papers and chemistry.

Childhood Nostalgia: A daily newspaper's weekend color supplement requires an editorial photograph for a double page spread to remark favorably on an article on 'Childhood Memories'. The photography session that commences has to bring to mind melancholy, warmth, security, tenderness and the fun or the complete opposite, depending upon the photographer's mood. Regardless of interpretation, the result depends greatly on the interpretive use of light to fulfill the brief.



Submission: 3 **black and white** images that you touchup and tone in **sepia, iron blue toner, and split-tone**. Select and submit only 2 toned photos.

Darkroom and Equipment and the Rules to Follow:

- Each student will leave each workstation in clean condition and neat order.
- The last person to leave a work session is responsible for cleaning the lab, turning off all lights, turning off water, and locking the door.
- Cleaning the darkroom means: 1) Returning all chemicals to their containers or disposing of them if they are exhausted, 2) Rinsing all trays, tanks, reels and beakers used, 3) Rinsing down the entire sink, 4) Sponging off all counters, 5) mopping the floor.
- Never leave the darkroom alone with water running.
- Washing and drying film and prints are the responsibility of each student.
- Never turn on the white light in the darkroom without every current user's permission.
- Respect other people's work in the darkroom.
- Dry prints may be taken off screens and placed in a print box for pick up.
- There are two Nikon cameras with macro lenses and a strong 600mm telephoto lens available for checkout from the library. In addition, there is a studio lighting kit with accessories that may be used by each student.
- Studio lighting equipment must be repacked at the end of each photo session
- Care must be taken to not damage this valuable and limited equipment MATERIALS: Many materials are supplied as part of the lab fee. These materials will not last all semester. It is expected that the student purchase sufficient materials to complete all the projects for the course.

6. Assignment - *Five Colleagues Literal Presentations or Reinventions*

Create studio portraits of any five colleagues from your present minor class. Use the studio's medium format camera or your personal camera and photograph the subject for a formal or informal studio portrait with frontal or 3/4 lighting set-up.



Attention is to be paid to:

- Studio preparation for sitter
- Discussion of image with the sitter
- Viewpoint and lighting
- Sitter's expression and pose

Also negotiate and discuss your aims with the sitter, making them feel comfortable and knowledgeable of the photographic process of a portrait.

Learning Resources:

Curriculum information, image gallery and web links can be accessed in the "Virtual Matter" section of the website: <http://www.farahmahbub.com>

For further inspiration and ideas, visit

<http://www.farahmahbub.com/ApprenticeAnthology/index.htm>

Also checkout suggested web links within

<http://www.farahmahbub.com/ApprenticeAnthology/Level4.htm>

The School Library and the Department Studio have a wide-ranging collection of material available for student research. For this course the prime subject text for study and reference is:

- Essential Skills: Studio Photography - John Child - Focal Press. London. 1999
- Essential Skills-Photographic Lighting - Child & Galer - Focal Press. London. 1999.

Equipment & Materials List

35mm manual camera

The brand of the camera is not important but consideration should be given to a camera that has the potential for integration into a full system to a professional level and that lenses are compatible with the student's digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera.

The **film camera** you choose must have the following minimum features:

- Single lens reflex (SLR) with interchangeable lens capability.
- Variable shutter speeds between 1 second and 1/500 second or faster
- 'B' shutter speed settings
- **PC Sync Cord connection or hot-shoe PC sync adapter**
- Depth of Field preview (recommended)
- Fixed or zoom lens or a combination of both with an approximate combined focal length range of 28 mm to 200 mm
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Camera Bag containing the following accessories:

- **Cable Release:** Preferably, this should have a locking function so you do not need to keep your finger on the release for the entire length of the exposure
- **Camera-Cleaning kit:** Lens-cleaning liquid and anti-static cloth.
- **Portable TTL Electronic Flash** with bounce light capabilities.
- **Tripod:** Essential, because you will need to take long exposures.
- **Filters: UV filter, polarizing filter and close-up filters** (diopter lenses) in a set of three or less. All should fit the lenses you intend to use.
- **Films** (approx.): **5** rolls of color transparency/chrome **slide film** and **5** rolls **color print film**. At this point it would be wise to experiment with different brands and various ISO film speeds.
- **Spare Batteries:** For all pieces of equipment that require them.
- **Masking Tape & Permanent Markers:** To label the film cartridges
- **Pocket Torch:** Light painting/adjusting the camera at night.
- **Notebook and Pen:** For keeping a record of the photography done.

Please Note: The amount of film used in this course is conditional to each person's trial and error learning method, due to which the suggested number of film rolls can vary from student to student.

Final Work Submission:

From the first five assignments select the best two images and five images from the “Five Colleagues Assignment”. **A total number of 15 images**, your work is to be submitted in a durable portfolio case (buy one from an art supply store locally) along with a CD containing high-quality jpegs of the images. **The overall quality of the execution and presentation of the work will have a considerable impact on the outcome of the grade.**

Additionally, **5 images** are to be **revived** from old negative files or slides. Once converted into a digital file they are to be imported into the computer for digital enhancement and /or manipulation. The original components of any manipulated image must be included at folio presentation. The finished artworks of these images are to be submitted as 8"×10" proof prints.

- Print size: 12" ×16" (remember to retain the 2:3 ratio of the 35mm format)
- Mounts: Use 20" square, white/off-white window mounts and visually centralise the image; paste typed labels on the reverse identifying yourself and the assignment.

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