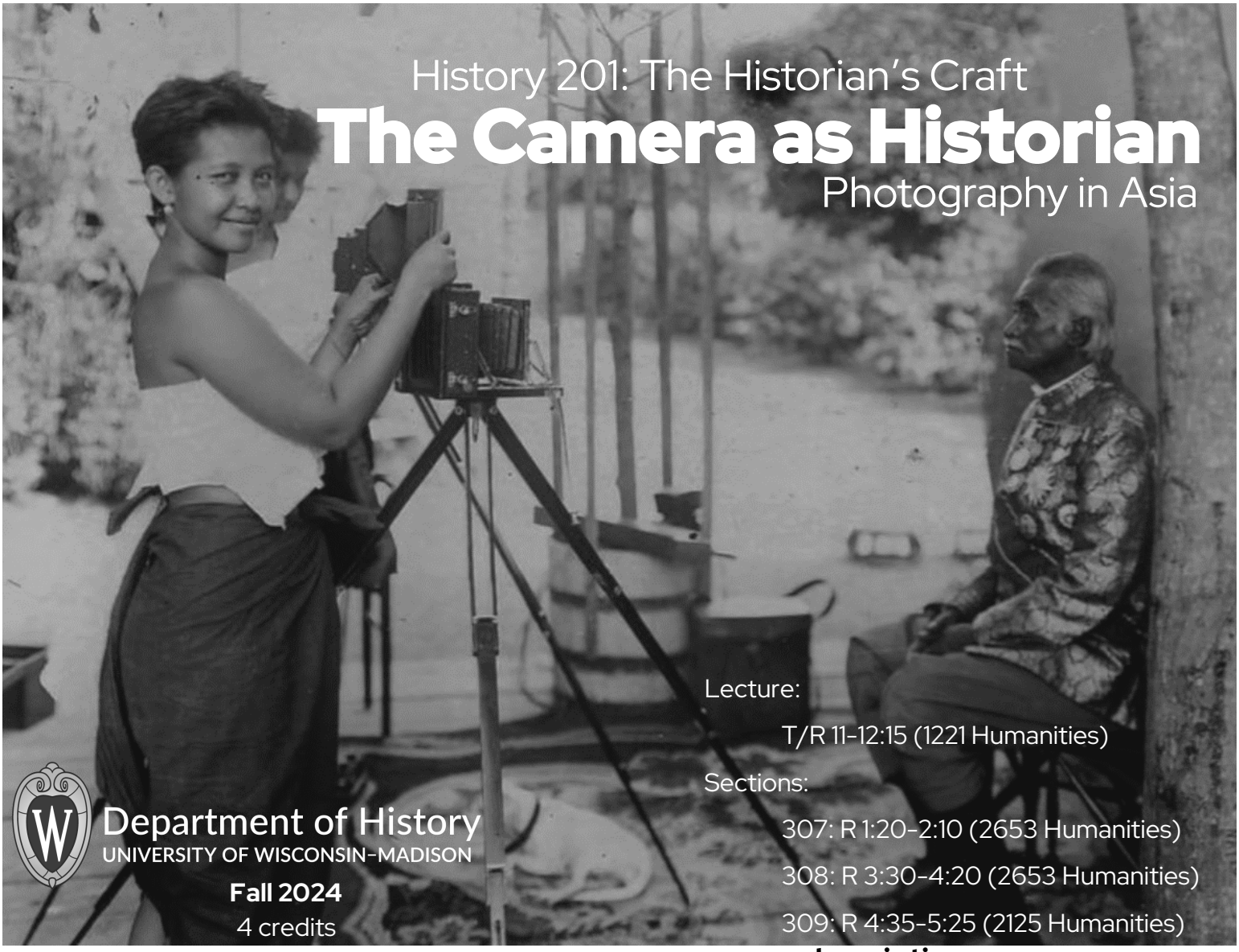

History 201: The Historian's Craft

The Camera as Historian

Photography in Asia

Lecture:

T/R 11-12:15 (1221 Humanities)

Sections:

307: R 1:20-2:10 (2653 Humanities)

308: R 3:30-4:20 (2653 Humanities)

309: R 4:35-5:25 (2125 Humanities)

Department of History
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Fall 2024
4 credits

instructors

Juan Fernandez
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5116 Humanities
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Wednesdays, 1–3 p.m.
and by appointment

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attributes

Comm. Part B
Humanities Breadth
Intermediate Level
L&S Credit

course description

We will look at photographs taken in Asia during the 19th and 20th centuries. We will learn how to analyze these photographs, not merely for the "look of the past," but for what we can read in them about ideals of power, desire, and modernity. We begin with the premise that photographs themselves *have* histories. We will ask, through these photographs, what it means to perform modernity for audiences both domestic and foreign, what it means to exercise power and be subject to it; and who is desiring what, and why. We will approach the material thematically across East, South, and Southeast Asia. These photographs provide a useful and unique source of historical understanding that we will critically examined not just for what the image shows—its surface and content—but also for why the photograph was taken in the first place, who made it, where it was taken, and for what ends was it used. That is, how do we read photographs to see them not just as images but as arguments? In this course, we shall develop skills in historical analysis, writing, and research through a critical engagement with colonial-era photographs from Asia.

content warning

The photographs we will examine, analyze, attempt to historicize and (if at all possible) comprehend, in this course are from the colonial period in Asia. They are visual artifacts that bear lasting imprints of power-relations whose histories are difficult and contentious, and in many cases create portrayals that possess continuing consequences. A small number of the images we will analyze are graphic in nature. They involve, in some cases, extreme physical violence—torture and execution, and battlefield photographs. In other cases, they may involve male and female nudity, though without explicitly sexual content. Any explicitly graphic content will be noted by the instructors in the readings and before they are projected in class sessions. The task of analyzing these images for their less apparent, though no less pernicious, claims about the histories of Asia and its peoples is the task of historical interpretation, which is the purpose of our course. Part of our engagement with these visual histories is the question of looking at the images, or looking away, or refusing to look. All are legitimate ways of engaging with the visual artifacts of the historical past. Your instructors are always available to discuss and meet about these circumstances as they arise.

outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be prepared to undertake substantial historical research and writing in a variety of courses, including the History 600 seminar required for the undergraduate major.

Specific goals for this course include learning to:

- **Ask questions**—by developing the habit of asking questions that may generate new directions for historical research;
- **Find sources**—by learning the logic of footnotes, bibliographies, search engines, libraries, and archives, and consult them to identify and locate source materials;
- **Evaluate sources**—by analyzing the perspective, credibility, and utility of source materials;
- **Develop and present an argument**—through the appropriate use of sources to create, modify, and support tentative conclusions and new questions;
- **Plan further research**—by drawing upon preliminary research to develop a plan for further investigation;
- **Communicate findings effectively**—by making formal and informal written and oral presentations tailored to specific audiences.

format, credit-hours, interaction

Our class meets in person, three times a week: two seventy-five-minute lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and one fifty-minute discussion section led by the teaching assistant, Thursday afternoons.

The standard for this four-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 180 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which includes the lecture and discussion sessions outlined above, in addition to weekly readings, writing exercises, drafting and revising the components of a research essay, individual consultations with the instructors, as well as other student work as described in this syllabus.

required texts

Only one book is required for our course, Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, which is available on physical reserve at the College Library, or for purchase at the University Bookstore, and a great many used copies are available for cheap through various online resellers. We shall be reading the whole book—in discrete chunks—across the length of the semester. Always bring your copy to class.

All other readings will be available on our course Canvas site as pdfs.

fundamental principles of our course

We will always treat each other with respect and courtesy. We will offer arguments in good faith and personal honesty. We will approach ideas offered by others with the intellectual generosity and openness that makes for good scholarly and professional and civic conduct. We will provide feedback and criticism—and accept these—without transgressing boundaries of respect. We will approach the interpretation of the past with the humility of the present, with the growing understanding that our judgment of the past reflects the concerns of our present, which will then be, inevitably, revised by those who come after us.

academic integrity

"[We] are expected to uphold the core values of academic integrity which include honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. These core values, combined with finding one's purpose and passion and applying them in and out of classroom learning, produce students who become extraordinary citizens. This unique path of opportunities, created by each student, is commonly known as the Wisconsin Experience and impacts our campus community and beyond in significant and positive ways. The value of a University of Wisconsin-Madison degree depends on the commitment of our academic community to promote high levels of personal honesty and respect for the intellectual property of others."

(From the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards)

generative AI

We, as a learning community in our class, need to think critically and deeply about the advantages and risks of using generative AI as an aid to our learning and teaching. We may, of course, consult these models about class material as we might have used Wikipedia in the past, in full knowledge that these generative AI models are not citable authorities. The tendency for these models, likewise, to hallucinate and provide false data is a necessary consideration when using generative AI services. With these in mind, we will not pass off text generated by AI as our own writing, and submitting these texts for class assignments is plagiarism.

diversity

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

disability accommodations

We support the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act, Wisconsin State Statute, and UW-Madison policy require the university to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities to access and participate in its academic programs and educational services. We share responsibility in the accommodation process. Students are expected to inform their instructors of their need for instructional accommodations during the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after being approved for accommodations. The instructors will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to provide reasonable instructional and course-related accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

religious observances

Students are responsible for notifying instructors within the first two weeks of classes about any need for flexibility due to religious observances. Reasonable accommodation shall be provided by the instructor.

attendance and participation

Attending the lectures as well as the weekly discussion sections are crucial to the social contract of any course at the university. We all (students and instructors) will attend all sessions prepared, having done the readings, open and willing to contribute to discussion, and ready to participate in in-class writing exercises. That is, of course, the ideal scenario; there will be times that we cannot live up to those expectations. That is fine; shit happens sometimes. In those rare cases, even just showing up ready to listen is sufficient. Let's not make a habit of it, though.

The participation grade (15% of the final grade) will be determined primarily by active engagement during discussion sections, and more minimally during the lectures. Because of the importance of active participation in discussion sections, absences from those class meetings will serve as gatekeepers. To be eligible to receive A-level participation points, you may only miss two section meetings, and so on through a sharp descending scale. (That is, 3 absences = max participation grade B; 4 = BC; 5 = C.) More than 5 absences imperil your final grade significantly.

Since we will be doing a lot of in-class writing and group exercises to have a better grasp of the historian's craft and to practice historical thinking, missing lecture days means likewise missing the opportunity to do this work, which contribute 20% to the final grade.

Exceptions will be made for reasonable accommodations defined elsewhere in this document.

coursework

Over the course of the semester, we shall be writing approximately 30 pages, divided into several categories. (See table below.) Most of the writing will be in the form of short in-class exercises, which individually are for low stakes, but because we're doing a lot of these exercises in thinking and writing like a historian, collectively these exercises comprise a significant part of the grade. There are also three short essays (9-12pp total), and a final project (5-8pp). In addition to writing, we shall also have a small group presentation once during the semester.

In-class writing exercises are due at the end of the class. The three essays will all be due on a Sunday at midnight Central. Late essay submissions will be docked a letter-grade equivalent for each 24-hour period after the deadline. Exceptions will be made for reasonable accommodations defined elsewhere in this document.

All assignments are to be submitted through the course Canvas site

grading

Scale	
A	92.5 – 100
AB	87.5 – 92.49
B	82.5 – 87.49
BC	77.5 – 82.4
C	70 – 77.49
D	60 – 69.99
F	below 60

Assignment Weights	
Essays	
1. Image Analysis	10%
2. Source Criticism	15%
3. Analytic	15%
Final Project	15%
Writing Exercises	20%
Presentation	10%
Participation	15%

course schedule

Week 1: The Camera as Historian **4—8 September**	**Week 2: Reading Photography** **9—15 September**
	Readings: Flusser, 2000 - from *Philosophy of Photography* (13p) Elkins, 2013 - "Visual Analysis and Torture" (6p) Thomas, 2009 - "The Evidence of Sight" (19p)
Due: Sunday 8 September *Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism* **https://plagiarism.iu.edu/index.html**	

Week 3: The Evidence of Photography **16—22 September**		**Week 4: Making Up Peoples** **23—29 September**
Reading: Hevia, 2009 - "The Photography Complex" (41p)		**Reading:** Rafael, 2000 - from *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (46pp)
Tues: 17	**MEMORIAL LIBRARY RM 126**	
Due: Sunday 22 September **Essay 1**		

Week 5: Bodies in the Archive **30 September—6 October**	**Week 6: The Ambivalence of Images** **7—13 October**
Readings: Sen, 2006 - "Savage Bodies, Civilized Pleasures" (16p) Van Schendel, 2002 - "A Politics of Nudity" (33p)	**Reading:** Pinney, 2008 - "Photography as Poison" (50p)

Week 7: Landscape and Power **14—20 October**	**Week 8: Portraiture and Portrayal** **21—27 October**
Reading: Protschky, 2011 - from *Images of the Tropics* (42p)	**Readings**: Wue, 2005 - "Essentially Chinese" (23p) Cary, 2000 - "The Image of the King" (20p)
Due: Sunday 20 October **Essay 2**	**Due: Sunday 27 October** **Mid-semester self-evaluation**

Week 9: Family Frames **28 October—3 November**	**Week 10: Modern Subjects** **4—10 November**
Readings: Protschky, 2012 - "Teacups and Cameras" (23p) Pattynama, 2015 - "Interracial Unions" (29p)	**Reading:** Natanaree, 2019 - "The Siamese 'Modern Girl'" (39p)

Week 11: Regarding the Pain of Others 11—17 November	Week 12: In-Class Prep 18—24 November
Reading: Lee, 2013 - "No End to the Image War" (34p)	**[In-class preparation for presentations]**
Due: Sunday 17 November **Essay 3**	

Week 13: Thanksgiving Break 25 November—1 December		Week 14: Presentations 2—8 December	
Tues: 26	**In class prep for presentations**	**Tues: 3**	**Presentations**
Thurs: 28	**THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS**	**Thurs: 5**	**Presentations**

Week 15: Conclusions 9—11 December	
Tues: 10	**Summary Lecture**
Due: Monday 16 December **Final Project**	