Franklin University Switzerland
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Forum-Nexus Program
Course Syllabus

PHO 790-SIS

Travel and Adventure Photography

Course Description

In an era where visual storytelling shapes how we understand and share the world, travel photography has evolved far beyond simple vacation snapshots. Students in the Forum-Nexus program are uniquely positioned to explore Europe's rich tapestry of cultures, architectures, and landscapes while developing their skills as authentic visual storytellers.

This Supervised Independent Study (SIS) course empowers students to capture the essence of their European journey through compelling photography that tells genuine stories. Students will learn to create meaningful images that reflect real cultural experiences with a personal artistic vision. Students will master both traditional photography fundamentals and cutting-edge mobile techniques to document their transformative summer abroad.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand camera operation, exposure triangle, and composition principles for both traditional and mobile photography
2. Create compelling visual narratives that capture cultural experiences and personal connections
3. Optimize content for contemporary sharing platforms while maintaining artistic integrity
4. Apply responsible travel photography ethics
5. Master exposure, depth of field, and movement techniques
6. Apply advanced composition rules including rule of thirds, leading lines, and frame-within-frame techniques
7. Photograph effectively in varied conditions
8. Use modern editing tools and mobile apps to enhance rather than distort authentic moments
9. Curate and present work across multiple formats and platforms
10. Approach street and portrait photography with cultural sensitivity and genuine curiosity
11. Use modern apps and tools for location scouting, lighting prediction, and shot planning
12. Understand the impact and responsibility of visual storytelling in our connected world

Course Requirements

This course requires independent research, organization, and academic discipline. Students are expected to complete the required and additional readings in pace with their assignments and the course outline. Each student is required to participate in a minimum of three professional visits and eight independent cultural visits (ICVs). Students are expected to meet with their SIS Coordinator regularly throughout the course for consultation and assistance. Please note that your SIS Coordinator may ask you to attend a regularly-scheduled class when that material is relevant. Grading will consist of four essay assignments, a midterm, an oral presentation, and a final, handwritten exam. Each essay should be in the range of 1500-1800 words and include critical analysis, synthesis of sources, and original thought and application to previously-acquired knowledge, in line with expectations for graduate students.

Participation in "Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar"

All students also attend **Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar**, a daily session with occasional distinguished guest lectures. In this seminar, students learn about the culture of each country, gain an understanding of essential European geography and current events, discuss their experiences and cross-cultural interactions, get language tips, and identify ways to have an even more immersive study abroad experience. The material covered in the seminar complements the syllabus for this course, and there will be some exam questions based on the seminar. Knowledge from and participation in the International IQ Seminar is factored into the grade for this course.

Assignments and Grading:

Essays

After completing the reading assignment for the unit, students are expected to write essays responding fully to the prompts listed below. Students are expected to make explicit reference to the readings and to cite their references properly (Chicago footnotes style). An essay should have an introduction and conclusion.

Assignment #1 – Photography Foundations Essay

Write a focused essay addressing TWO of the following topics:

- Technical foundations: Camera operation, exposure triangle, and file formats for travel
- Light and composition: Working with natural light and composition principles across Europe
- Mobile photography: Smartphone capabilities, apps, and mobile editing workflows
- Ethics and cultural sensitivity: Respectful photography of people and sacred spaces
- Social media and authenticity: Balancing genuine storytelling with platform optimization
- Professional workflow: Organization, backup, and portfolio presentation strategies

Deliverable: Written essay of 1500 words maximum describing each chosen topic and explaining how you expect these concepts to enhance your photography experience while traveling through Europe.

Assignment #2 – Barcelona: Mastering Light and Color

Create a visual study focusing on Mediterranean light and vibrant urban culture:

- Golden Hour Series: 5 photos showcasing Barcelona's unique lighting during sunrise/sunset
- Street Life Documentation: 3 candid moments of daily life that tell authentic stories

- Architectural Details: 4 photos highlighting Gaudí's textures and patterns using different focal lengths
- Color Study: 3 photos experimenting with Barcelona's vibrant color palette

Deliverable: Photo collection with technical notes on settings, lighting decisions, and cultural observations for each image. Your portfolio should be accompanied by a 1000-1500-word analysis of the portfolio and your work. Do not edit any of your photos.

Assignment #3 – Italy: Mastering Composition and Movement

Document your Italian experience (Rome, Milan, Como) through advanced composition techniques:

- Rule of Thirds Mastery: 3 photos from Rome demonstrating effective use of this technique
- Leading Lines: 2 photos using Italian architecture to guide the viewer's eye
- Depth of Field Experiments: 4 photos showing shallow, medium, and deep focus in different Italian contexts
- Motion Capture: 3 photos freezing or blurring movement (busy piazzas, transportation, daily life)
- Reflections and Symmetry: 2 photos using water, windows, or architectural elements

Deliverable: Annotated portfolio explaining composition choices and technical approach for each image type. Your portfolio should be accompanied by a 1000-1500-word analysis of the portfolio and your work. Do not edit any of your photos.

Assignment #4 – Paris: Advanced Techniques and Cultural Sensitivity

Focus on environmental adaptation and respectful cultural documentation:

- Landscape Mastery: 2 photos showcasing light and natural beauty
- Environmental Portraits: 1 photo of a local person in their natural environment (with permission)
- Urban Photography: 3 photos capturing Parisian daily life without tourist clichés
- Night Photography: 2 photos utilizing artificial lighting and longer exposures
- Cultural Documentation: 2 photos showing authentic Parisian culture (markets, neighborhoods, local traditions)

Deliverable: Portfolio with reflection on cultural sensitivity, permission processes, and environmental challenges encountered. Your portfolio should be accompanied by a 1000-1500-word analysis of the portfolio and your work. Do not edit any of your photos.

Assignment #5 – Amsterdam: Mobile Photography Mastery & Final Portfolio

Demonstrate advanced mobile photography skills and portfolio curation:

Mobile Photography Focus:

- Advanced Mobile Techniques: 4 photos shot entirely with smartphone utilizing advanced camera apps
- Mobile Editing Showcase: 3 before/after examples showing mobile editing workflow
- Instant Sharing: 2 photos optimized for different social platforms with appropriate captions

Portfolio Curation:

- Select your best 15-20 images from the entire European journey

- Create a cohesive story arc showing your growth and experiences
- Include variety in subjects, techniques, and emotional tones
- Write artist statements for 5 key images explaining their significance

Deliverable: Digital portfolio with mobile workflow documentation and platform optimization notes.You should also submit a 1500-2000 word essay detailing your selection process.

Presentation

Deliver a 15-minute presentation summarizing your photographic journey and growth:. Required components include:

Required components:

- Personal Evolution: How your photographic vision developed throughout Europe
- Technical Mastery: Before/after examples showing skill progression
- Cultural Insights: How photography helped you connect with European cultures
- Portfolio Highlights: Present 8-10 of your strongest images with stories behind them
- Future Applications: How you'll apply learned skills beyond the program

Required Equipment

Camera Options:

- Any camera with manual control over aperture and shutter speed
- High-end smartphone with advanced camera features (recommended as backup/primary)
- Lightweight tripod or mobile stabilizer for longer exposures

Essential Mobile Apps (see recommended list in course modules)

Editing Software:

- Adobe Lightroom Mobile (subscription recommended)
- Free alternatives: Snapseed, VSCO (basic version)

Required Reading

"The Photographer's Eye Remastered 10th Anniversary: Composition and Design for Better Digital Photographs"
by Michael Freeman
Ilex Press, 2nd Edition, 2007
(Available as digital/Kindle edition)

"Travel Photography, 2nd edition: The leading guide to travel and location photography"
by Steve Davey
Footprint Travel Guides, 2014
(Available as digital/Kindle edition)

Recommended Online Resources

Books (Supplementary)

"The Art of Travel Photography" by Susan McCartney (Allworth Press, 2018)
"Digital Photography Outdoors" by James Martin (Mountaineers Books, 3rd Edition, 2022)
"Street Photography Now" by Sophie Howarth (Thames & Hudson, 2021)

Apps & Tools:

- PhotoPills - Advanced planning and calculation app
- Adobe Lightroom Mobile - Professional mobile editing
- VSCO - Film-inspired editing and community
- Snapseed - Free powerful editing by Google
- Sun Surveyor - Light prediction and planning

YouTube Channels (2+ hours weekly viewing):

- Sean Kitching - Daily photography tutorials and travel tips
- Pierre T Lambert - Street photography and cultural sensitivity
- Joe Allam - Creative travel content and storytelling
- PhotowalksTV - Practical location photography advice
- Brendan van Son - Travel photography business insights

Instagram Accounts for Inspiration:

- @bradengunem - Authentic travel storytelling
- @jordanhammond - European architectural photography
- @bradengunem - Sustainable travel photography
- @streets.in.color - Street photography techniques

Course Outline

Module 1: Foundations for Travel Photography
- Understanding your tools (traditional + mobile)
- ISO, aperture, shutter speed for travel scenarios
- RAW vs JPEG, cloud storage, backup strategies
- Ethical practices
- Photographing people and places respectfully

Module 2: Light and Color
- Planning and execution
- How different cities influence palette choices
- Rain, fog, snow, and harsh sunlight techniques
- Street lamps, neon, architectural lighting

Module 3: Composition Techniques
- Advanced composition principles
- Using architecture effectively
- Creating depth in urban environments
- Showing grandeur and intimacy
- Decisive moment in busy European locations

Module 4: Cultural Documentation and Street Photography
- Building confidence and connections
- Showing people in their context
- Legal and moral considerations across countries
- Storytelling Through Details: Hands, expressions, everyday objects
- Finding fresh perspectives on famous places

Module 5: Mobile Photography Revolution
- Smartphone Camera: Manual controls and advanced features
- Computational photography advantages in mobile
- Essential mobile editing workflows
- Platform optimization and audience engagement
- Combining mobile and traditional techniques

Module 6: Post-Processing and Sharing
- Professional editing on mobile devices
- Improving without losing truth
- Instagram, TikTok, portfolio websites
- Writing compelling photo stories
- Building Your Brand: Developing a consistent visual voice

Module 7: Portfolio Development and Professional Practices

- Selecting and sequencing images
- Website and social media integration
- Copyright: Protecting your work in the digital age
- Stock photography, prints, and licensing
- Staying current with trends and technology

Components of Final Grade

Assignment #1	8%
Assignment #2	8%
Assignment #3	8%
Assignment #4	8%
Assignment #5	8%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Final Presentation	20%

Grading Scale

93-100 %	A
90-92.9 %	A-
87-89.9 %	B+
83-86.9 %	B
80-82.9 %	B-
77-79.9 %	C+
73-76.9 %	C
70-72.9%	C-
67-69.9 %	D+
63-66.9 %	D
60-62.9 %	D-
Below 60 %	F

Attendance Policy

Attendance is a critical component of this course. Students are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions throughout the program, including International IQ as well as meetings with your SIS professor. Excused absences are granted only under specific circumstances: documented illness, physical injury requiring medical attention, or other situations that Forum-Nexus staff determine to be valid and appropriate reasons for missing class. Any unexcused absence will lead to a reduction to the overall grade.

Academic Integrity

Franklin University Switzerland, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore place a high value on the integrity, good conduct, and academic honesty of all students. Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity at all times. Any instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a grade of F for the course.

AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, Grammarly, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your creative ideas for specific writing assignments;
- Finding information on relevant topics related to the course;
- Checking spelling on your writing assignments and presentations.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Generating a draft of your writing assignments and final presentation.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or responses to complete class assignments.

In sum, any content that you hand in must not be generated by AI software, but it has to represent your intellectual contribution. Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence tools to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course and will result in a failing grade on the assignment.