



## **Module Specification**

### Photography and Visual Culture

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## **Part 1: Information**

**Module title:** Photography and Visual Culture

**Module code:** UPCPBQ-30-3

**Level:** Level 6

**For implementation from:** 2021-22

**UWE credit rating:** 30

**ECTS credit rating:** 15

**Faculty:** Faculty of Arts Creative Industries & Education

**Department:** ACE Dept of Creative & Cultural Industries

**Partner institutions:** None

**Delivery locations:** Frenchay Campus

**Field:** Cultural Studies

**Module type:** Standard

**Pre-requisites:** None

**Excluded combinations:** None

**Co-requisites:** None

**Continuing professional development:** No

**Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements:** None

## **Part 2: Description**

**Overview:** Not applicable

**Features:** Not applicable

**Educational aims:** See Learning Outcomes

**Outline syllabus:** Since the middle of the nineteenth century, photography has saturated the world and our experience with images. One set of strands in this

module is concerned with what is distinctive about photographic images, how photography is related to perception and the conditions of seeing, but also touch and the invocation of 'presence' - of objects and people in the frame.

But photography as a technology emerged alongside other developments relating to modernity, including increased circulation (including of images) and the destruction and rebuilding of the modern city. Some authors have used 'dust' – as metaphor and material – as a way in to these relationships, as well as the particularity of our relationship to the fragile and perishable photographic image.

This takes us to consider the materiality of photography – both how a photograph comes to be formed as a material object and also how it represents the material world.

In relation to the first of these aspect, photography as a material object, we will be particularly concerned with what is referred to as 'photographic abstraction', which is the way photography speaks of its basic elements, light and time (and a layer of light sensitive chemicals). We will look at the co-mingling of these elements creates an idea of 'of that has been', in Roland Barthes words, through the processes of photographic 'indexicality'. How does photography come to signify some kind of 'presence' through that process?

In respect of the second aspect, how photography represents matter, or the material dimension of existence, we will take up two themes:

- first the materiality of human existence, ie existence in space-time, the physical body and the 'feeling states' that are often referred to as states of mind but which resonate (and perhaps even start) at the level of the body; and
- secondly, the materiality of planetary existence, considering both the impact of human experience and activity on the various ecologies that make up our environment, and the autonomous existence of the natural world with its own material processes and forms, looking at the 'matter' of a planet that has been formed over millennia, well before (and possibly well after) human life evolved.

Above all, we will see these as intermixing, looking at the entanglement of the human and the natural world, and how we address our mutual futures and the threats to the sustainability of each.

These are no random themes: photographic technology developed alongside the telescope and the X- Ray – offering the ability to see that which the human eye cannot, both deeply within the body and out at the universe. And digital imaging is now being used to remap human experience, perception and cognition through neurological research and at the level of the planet is both ‘territorialising’, mapping human activity and facilitating interventions by the military-industrial complex and charting the melting of the ice cap and the erosion of the structure of land masses.

Dust will offer us a way into these investigations of existence, change, and entanglement. For the idea of dust points to a substance made from the decayed remains of other objects – including stars - that accumulates (over time) and is susceptible to be disturbed (blown, dispersed, redistributed) – which can be likened to the process of image production and the making of cultural meaning. In this respect, as sediment of the liveliness of the past, it also alludes to the mechanisms of memory and as well as to the constant remingling of atoms which we now understand is happening in objects seen as inert, and the ‘substance’ of human existence, expressed in the notion of ‘vibrant matter’ (Bennett, 2010).

We will carry out our researches exploring some critical writing on the theory and history of photography, but above all by a close focus on photographers and their projects, and through production work. In the first semester we will do that through a guided programme, and in the second semester we will help you identify your own areas of interest from our investigations and develop a project incorporating writing and photographic practice.

One of the approaches we will take is to develop the practice of writing alongside image making. We will ask you to write short instinctive, free writing pieces, writing from a variety of photographic perspectives such as eye, as object or as observer.

So we will make space for you to record your notes so that your writing, thinking and development of ideas becomes part of the outcome of the module.

### **Part 3: Teaching and learning methods**

**Teaching and learning methods:** Topics will change every year and will be designed to allow for student-led sessions that stimulate research towards assessments, which will be developed in Research Workshops and Poster Presentations, with Individual Project Tutorials supporting the individual research project submissions.

#### **Module Learning outcomes:**

- MO1** Identify and discuss the main historical, social and cultural uses of photography
- MO2** Discuss and apply some key theories about photographic representation and visual representation more generally
- MO3** Understand the main technological, aesthetic, and social factors in the production and reception of photographic images
- MO4** Locate and discuss the significance of photography within the history of visual culture
- MO5** Demonstrate an informed and critical perspective on technological change in the production, distribution and reception of images and information

**Hours to be allocated:** 300

#### **Contact hours:**

Independent study/self-guided study = 228 hours

Face-to-face learning = 72 hours

Total = 300

**Reading list:** The reading list for this module can be accessed at [readinglists.uwe.ac.uk](https://uwe.rl.talis.com/modules/upcpbq-30-3.html) via the following link <https://uwe.rl.talis.com/modules/upcpbq-30-3.html>

## Part 4: Assessment

**Assessment strategy:** For the essay, the presentation and the research project, students will be asked to make use of theoretical ideas relating to photography and visual culture, and demonstrate an engagement with the materiality of photographic practice as a means to examine course themes.

In the essay students will outline key course themes, showing evidence of sufficient reading and research to indicate a good understanding of key theories and issues studied, and examining contemporary photographic practice and projects in related areas.

In the presentation they will outline key theoretical sources and arguments that have informed the development of their project and outline work in progress and a plan for completion.

For the research project students should demonstrate their ability to use photographic practice as a research tool (practice-based research) exploring course themes. In their supporting essay, students will show their engagement with contemporary photographic practices through a selection of projects that have informed their own practice, and define concepts and outline their engagement with course themes. They should demonstrate that the topic they are investigating is appropriate and well-chosen, showing evidence of sufficient reading and research to indicate a good understanding of key theories and issues studied. The conclusions will have to be carefully developed from the analysis of the practice-based process. For a passable project all these things have to be in place; an excellent one will show originality, theoretical / conceptual sophistication, and a persuasive and rigorous argument.

Practice based projects for the final submission may include photobooks; curated exhibitions; interactive documentaries; self-produced photography collections, films and installations. The relative weighting between practice and an accompanying text

will be equal but an overall grade will be given.

Student-led design and research conducted and tested in discussion with the module leader, as well as an outline of research design, research question and process as part of the submission, will limit the opportunity for plagiarism.

### **Assessment components:**

#### **Presentation - Component A (First Sit)**

Description: Assessed presentation 10m + 5m for Q&A. Work in progress and plan for completion of final practice-based project, outlining the conceptual framework.

Weighting: 30 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO2, MO3, MO5

#### **Project - Component B (First Sit)**

Description: Research Project incorporating, Practice-based Project (2000 words equivalent) and 2000 word supporting essay.

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5

#### **Written Assignment - Component B (First Sit)**

Description: Essay 2000 words

Weighting: 20 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5

#### **Presentation - Component A (Resit)**

Description: Recorded presentation outlining the conceptual framework which informs the final project.

Weighting: 30 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested:

**Project - Component B (Resit)**

Description: Research Project, incorporating practice-based project (2000 words equivalent) and 2000 word supporting essay.

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested:

**Written Assignment - Component B (Resit)**

Description: Essay 2000 words

Weighting: 20 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested:

**Part 5: Contributes towards**

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Media and Cultural Production [Sep][FT][HKUSpace][2yrs] BA (Hons) 2020-21

Media and Cultural Production [Sep][FT][Frenchay][3yrs] BA (Hons) 2019-20

Media Culture and Communication [Sep][FT][Frenchay][3yrs] BA (Hons) 2019-20

Media Culture and Communication {Foundation}[Sep][FT][Frenchay][4yrs] BA (Hons) 2018-19

Media Culture and Communication [Sep][SW][Frenchay][4yrs] BA (Hons) 2018-19

Media and Cultural Production [Sep][SW][Frenchay][4yrs] BA (Hons) 2018-19



Media and Cultural Production {Foundation} [Sep][FT][Frenchay][4yrs] BA (Hons)  
2018-19