Course Title: A History of Photography: The Innovations of Six Iconic Photographers
Course Code: ARTH 155
Instructor: Diane Zuliani

Tentative Weekly Outline:
Week One
Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre: The Innovation of Verisimilitude

We call Daguerre “the inventor of photography,” though he was only the first to go public with photographs, not the first to make them. But by being first in the public eye, Daguerre not only unleashed this astonishing new medium, he set it on a very particular course—that of highly delineated data-gathering—due to the characteristics of his materials and method. Had other photographers, such as Joseph Nicéphore Niépce or William Henry Fox Talbot, been the first to go public with their own approaches to photography, the medium might well have acquired an altogether different personality than the one we know today.

Week Two
J.M. Cameron: The Disruption of Verisimilitude

Once William Henry Fox Talbot’s photographic process entered the photographic spotlight next to Daguerre’s, budding photographers—especially English ones—had two distinct technical systems to choose from, each resulting in very distinct kinds of pictures. The English artist Julia Margaret Cameron’s personal vision and subject matter was incompatible with the stringent verisimilitude of the Daguerreotype, so she pursued Talbot’s more painterly method. If some nineteenth century viewers found her photographs ill-defined, another Englishwoman, Anna Atkins, proved that photography could successfully present nature on her own terms.

Week Three
Eadweard Muybridge: The Innovation of Motion

By the early 1870s, one remaining technological deficiency still remained in the making of photographs: to capture forms in motion. English photographer Eadweard Muybridge overcame this deficiency in 1878 while working on stop-motion experiments he carried out for Leland Stanford on his Palo Alto Stock Farm (eventually the home of Stanford University). Ultimately, his success yielded volumes of human and animal
forms frozen with crystal clarity and caught in mid-motion, made as an image bank to serve as an aid to both science and art. And from these experiments came an irony: perfectly stopping an instant in time is the secret of “moving pictures,” i.e., cinema.

Week Four
Alfred Stieglitz: The Innovation of Modernism

With the late nineteenth century movement of Pictorialism (a descendent of English photographic ideas), the medium of photography was fully embraced as an art form in its own right. But one Pictorialist photograph looked much like the next, and scores of amateur photographers imitated the basic “look” of these pictures with little regard to actual concerns of art or content. How did photography respond when the modernizing world of art demanded images displaying individualism and purity of means? The photographer we will look to is Alfred Stieglitz, who began as a Pictorialist but abandoned that movement’s sleight-of-hand artifice in favor of pictures untainted by techniques then considered impure.

Week Five
Ansel Adams: The Disruption of Uncertainty

Nature awaits every landscape photographer, and hundreds of thousands of them sought—and seek—to record her beauties. Why do Ansel Adams’s landscapes stand out, more than half a century after they were made? Nature is a complex subject, and the long distance from exposure to print is rife with hazards. Before Adams, there were photographers who sought to eradicate chance by gaining complete control over their medium—most notably the Englishman Peter Henry Emerson—but failed to achieve such hoped-for dominance. Adams, working as much like a mechanical engineer as an artist, studied his camera and the process of printing so infinitesimally that he discovered, and eventually taught, reliable ways of diminishing the unexpected in photography, so that landscapists could more correctly portray the unexpected—and astonishing—in nature itself.

Week Six
Diane Arbus: The Innovation of Self

While some photographers use their cameras as a tool of understanding the world around them, Diane Arbus used her camera as a tool to understand herself. That isn’t to say she was her own subject, in the sense that she made self-portraits, like photographers Jo Spence, Francesca Woodman, or Cindy Sherman. Raised as a white-glove-wearing debutante on the Upper East Side of New York City, Arbus eventually came to feel at home among the homeless, anomalous, and eccentrics she found residing around the country at large. She recorded them—not just their portraits but
their ways of being human—which she felt compelled to study and to learn from, especially when she sensed they resonated with her own disrupted, divergent persona.

Grade Options and Requirements:

- **No Grade Requested (NGR)**
  - Come and enjoy.
- **Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)**
  - Regular attendance and participation.
- **Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)**
  - Regular attendance and participation plus one completed photogram project and one three-page essay comparing two photographs currently on view at a local museum, analyzed in terms of the themes and ideas discussed in class.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*