LARC 2012 Application: RE-COGNIZING PHOTOGRAPHS

**Faculty:**

- **Sammy Basu**
  (Politics, American Ethnic Studies)
  ‘Photo-books and Humor in Weimar Germany’

- **Catherine Ann Collins**
  (Rhetoric and Media Studies, Classics)
  ‘Vernacular Memorials as a Response to Trauma: The Case of Kyron Horman’

- **Alexandra Opie**
  (Art Studio, Film Studies)
  ‘Examining Early Portrait Photography’

**Students:**

- **Mackenzie Foster**
  (German, History)
  ‘The Portrait Photograph and its uses by Nazi scholars’

- **AnnaMaria Mencarelli**
  (Rhetoric and Media Studies)
  ‘Kyron Horman; The Development of an Iconic Photograph’

- **Ariel C. Wilson**
  (Art Studio)
  ‘Historical and Contemporary Portraits: Classifications and depictions of mental illness’
Research Community (RC) on RE-COGNIZING PHOTOGRAPHS

Rationale

This RC is united around the emergence, history, and present uses of the photograph as a medium through which ‘identity,’ ‘temporality,’ ‘memory,’ and ‘trauma’ are presented and re-presented. We anticipate engaging with these themes along three dimensions of analysis. First, the photograph is an act of re-presentation. At its inception in the mid-19th c., the photograph, literally writing with light, held out the promise of being an immediate and authentic reflection of reality. As such, typically in the form of the composed portrait, it was used to stabilize authority and special subjectivity, and more generally, to reinforce markers of identity, be it nationality, respectability, or normality. Indeed, the photograph could even become a symbolic substitute or surrogate for the real aspects, figures, or events depicted. The photograph was to record history and prompt present reflection. Second, the photograph is a socio-politically embedded artifact. Initially, the photograph (and camera) was an elite medium and instrument that, by and large, re-inscription and corroborated hegemonic political and socio-economic conceptions and narratives. However, with technological developments placing cheaper portable manual cameras, such as the 35mm Leica A in 1925, in more hands, the photograph arguably became more democratic. That is, its purview and purposes were considerably widened. More people of diverse sorts were taking photographs, capturing moments, engaging in self-representation, trying out compositional and aesthetic styles, and thereby becoming culture-producers themselves. Put differently, the ubiquity of the photograph today makes the experience of perspectivalism unavoidable. Third, the photograph is an interpretation. Through its staging, framing, and reproduction the ‘sense’ or ‘meaning’ of a photograph can be mediated and thereby manipulated. That is, the ‘perspective’ of the photograph can serve to position the viewer in spatiotemporal terms in relation to the world. It can, as such, evoke nostalgia, salve trauma, or act as an affecting call to hope, action, and arms. It can also exclude, misrepresent, and demonize. These discursive or rhetorical qualities of the photograph become all the more apparent when the disseminated image is paired with, or juxtaposed against, interpretive text, be it a hand-written note, or the printed caption, poem, or full-fledged essay. Some critical uses of the photograph serve precisely to highlight this otherwise underappreciated compelling tenor of graphic and gloss.

The faculty and student collaborators in this RC on Reading Photographs share these themes and analytic interests about the photograph and its relationship with visual and discursive norms, even as we approach them within distinct socio-historical contexts: the fate of the democratic public sphere in Weimar and Nazi Germany, the role of memory in the contemporary American context of missing children, and the impact of 19th c. photographic aesthetics and portraiture practices upon the contemporary reception of studio art photography; and with discrete examples in mind: argumentative photo-books, citizen-initiated public memorialization, and artistic experimentation with early photographic processes.
Plan of Work

We, as faculty and students, are very keen to learn from one another. We will be bringing to bear not only distinct disciplinary and methodological approaches, including visual rhetoric and language skills, but bridging the gulf between the theorist and the practitioner. In the case of each team, the student has robust academic and vocational interests in their own project, and an already established relationship with the faculty member. Our collective work will be oriented around a series of scheduled meetings of the full retinue of RC faculty and students. We will gather, initially, to discuss a limited number of potential theoretical works of general relevance – including classic surveys such as Helmut Gernsheim’s *A Concise History of Photography* (1986), and contemporary theory such as John Roberts’ ‘Photography after the Photograph: Event, Archive, and the Non-Symbolic’ (2009) – and subsequently, to discuss our respective progress on our own research.

Our RC projected schedule of meetings is as follows:

- Friday, April 13
- Wednesday, May 9
- Wednesday, June 13
- Wednesday, June 20
- Wednesday, July 18
- Wednesday, July 25
- Wednesday, Aug 1
- Wednesday, Aug 8 – deadline for student paper final draft
[ 4 ] Letters of Faculty Reference for Students

For Mackenzie Foster

For AnnaMaria Mencarelli

For Ariel C. Wilson

All emailed directly

[ 5 ] Budget

RC collective readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Text</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Total: $100

Team Budgets

Basu-Foster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Text</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frances Guerin, <em>Through Amateur Eyes: Film and Photography in Nazi Germany</em> (2011)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Pine, <em>Education in Nazi Germany</em> (2011)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Tucholsky, *Deutschland, Deutschland, Uber Alles: A Picture Book ([1929]2011)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Welch, Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945 (2011)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Willet, <em>Heartfield Versus Hitler</em> (1997)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collective readings: x2

Total: $500
Support for conference travel for AnnaMaria Mencarelli (Catherine Collins will apply for Faculty Travel support).

The perfect conference for AnnaMaria’s research is the 3rd International Conference on Trauma sponsored by Interdisciplinary-net that will be held in Prague in March 2013. I would need to check with the conference organizers to see if they would allow an undergraduate student to participate. The conference is very limited in size, but they might at least allow a joint paper presentation. Should this conference not allow undergraduates to participate, I know her work would receive serious consideration from the second conference I will attend next year, the 11th annual conference on Communication and the Mass Media to be held in Athens, Greece. I have presented papers on trauma rhetoric and visual communication at both and have had essays on photography and trauma accepted for books produced by the sponsors for each of these conferences (Interdisciplinary-net (Trauma conference) and Athens Institute for Education and Research (Communication and Mass Media conference).

Airfare to Prague is about $1100 ($1400 for Athens). Conference fees are about 250 euros for either conference. She could fund most of the food and lodging for the Prague conference with the remaining funds requested. I can pick up AnnaMaria’s additional expenses for the Athens conference if that is the only option; if students can apply for more than the faculty limit, a more realistic figure for the Athens conference is $2100.

Total: $2,090

Opie-Wilson

Books: 200
Collective Readings: x 2 200
Supplies (photographic paper, glass, metal, chemistry, etc.): 1850
Equipment (cameras, lenses, other specialty devices): 750

Total: $3,000