Photo literacy and undergraduate students

- Planning the curriculum
- Where to start?
- Student work and evaluations
- Final thoughts
Where to start?
Fiat Lux Seminars

- small groups
- open only to undergraduates
- first year students have priority for enrollment
- students from disciplines/majors across campus
• course structured in a modular fashion
• not a history of photography class
• emphasis on discovery and engagement
• something different every week
@ UCLA

- Arts Library
- Charles E. Young Research Library
- Special Collections
Digital Collections

- Large institutional archives
- Local photography collections
- Individual photographers
- Digital photobooks, digital exhibits, and e-books
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Class format

• 50 minute lecture and discussion

• students are exposed to photobooks from both circulating and special collections

• students interact with rare books
What is a photobook?

Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844-46

Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966
Thematic or historic?

The Photobook: A History, Martin Parr and Gerry Badger (3 volumes), 2004-14

Contemporary photobooks and photo-based artists' books

*Illustrated People*, Thomas Mailaender, 2014

*My Lens, Our Ferguson*, Adrian Octavius Walker, 2015


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Student work and evaluations
Students with their final projects
Carp windsocks
Boys' Festival Song

Carp windsocks are above the roof.
The biggest carp is the father.
The smaller carp are children.
They're enjoying swimming in the sky.
Artist's statements

"Motion Picture" is a play on words. A film set is a constant game of moving parts. Although there are many moments of waiting and stillness, I wanted to document the bursts of movement in coordination between production departments. This is also my first time working on a professional film, so the movement comes heavily from my new, darting, wide eyes. I used blurred photos to translate the movement because I was interested in the assumed "imperfection" of the blur, touching on my inexperience on set.
Essays

One to two page reflective essay on a photograph, photographer, or photobook.

Not a research paper!

Two wrote about photographs, nine about individual photobooks, and three about photographers.

Common theme: emotional and psychological responses to photographs.
Evaluations

• 9/14 students completed evaluations

• overall rating of seminar: 4.4/5

• overall rating of instructor: 4.56/5

• main critique: students wanted more discussion time
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Final thoughts

What did I learn?

What would I change?
• teaching a photobook class is very challenging

• students are very interested in the book as a physical object and the photograph as an artifact

• close analysis of images and collections of images helps students create their own creative work
• allow more time for discussion

• show fewer books in class

• spend more time with close analysis of photographs
Thank you!
Photo literacy and undergraduate students

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Student work and evaluations

Where to start?

Final thoughts

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