

Hello. My name is Kate Jordahl and I am a professor of photography at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, California. I thank the Stanford Human Rights Education Initiative (SHREI) for making today possible. Today I will talk about “Navigating the image stream” and about the power of photography in the world today. In this regard, I will first present some of my personal work of the past 10 years photographing UNESCO World Heritage Sites. World Heritage is a recognition of what we, as people of the world, should value and protect. These 962 sites are of such value that we acknowledge through them both the beauty of the earth and the power of human creativity and inventiveness. I believe this balanced recognition is essential as we make choices for government, environment and everyday life. By photographing these natural and human spaces, I strive to encourage us to value and preserve both the nature and the cultures around them. When I share my work with my students, I hope to encourage them to see photography as a way to speak about important topics like Human Right and caring for the earth. In teaching photography, my great challenge is to get students to make photographs with meaning – to take responsibility in the use of this powerful and important medium of expression. Students are making and seeing an unprecedented number of images. Their ability to understand and use the power of photography requires a new visual literacy. Instagram and other social media means and with ever present mobile devices, students are seeped in images when they come to study photography. These are instagram images from a wonderful young photographer, Sonja Chen. These are my images on “Eye Em” and Facebook. The image steam is an important aspect of community and

connectivity. Yet, it is like the difference between texting and English 1A. To put it another way, with a pen I can make a laundry list or a poem and with a camera I can make an instagram or an expressive photograph. I am looking to help student make images that are conscious and effective.

Encouraging the use of the camera, to quote Gordon Parks, “as a weapon” for change and justice and to understand how images are utilized, is essential for full and responsible participation in society. The skill to express in images is empowering. When students focus these skills on their community and the world, they improve the world and deepen their sense of connection and responsibility.

With the seemingly unending image stream and when photographers are now “content creators” when newspapers are firing photographers and training reporters to use iPhones – the use of photography to make a difference in the world is shifting on so many levels. Students to be “visually literate” must understand how images affect us and one of the most effective ways to understand this is to make images and to make images consciously and purposely.

In my introduction to photography class, I am working to guide students to an understanding of the power of photography and the potential of photography to express complex and important ideas through the use of role models. I am striving that this sequence of learning will help them to be image-makers but also be better, more thoughtful consumers of images.

We start in the class with learning to use cameras and make photographs and this is essential both to get them in the door and to engage their learning beyond just information they will soon forget and into the experiential as a visceral part of their experience. In tandem with the technical learning, I use my lectures entitled *Photographer of the week*. Each week in the class we have a photographer that is used to inspire and focus the student work, a photographer to whom we look for inspiration. Some examples:

From Gordon Parks the photographer/filmmaker and composer who chose to combat racism and poverty with photography to

Edward Steichen who after a brilliant career as a artist and portrait photographer, volunteered to photograph war and returned to affect our view of the world with his family of man Exhibition to

Dorothea Lange who over came polio to make some of the most lasting images of the Great Depression and timeless images of the human condition

Ansel Adams who while known for his important environmental work also work for human right in work with Japanese interment camps and his censored book, "Born Free and Equal"

Sebastiao Salgado whose tireless and timeless documents of the displaced and the workers of the world let use see things anew to

Martin O'Grady who perhaps you have not heard of before, my father, who was an Associated press photographer and takes wonderful, useful and interesting photographs that serve his community and his family.

He may never be famous or in history books, but he has contributed to our communal photographic legacy. Sharing his photographs after Salgado has always been an effective way to ground the students in the possible and practical.

Two assignments that I have used in the efforts to have students understand photography to make a difference “Myself and My World” inspired by Edward Steichen’s Family of Man Exhibition and “Concerned Photographer” inspired by the work of Parks, Sebastião Salgado, Dorothea Lange and others.

Myself and My World

Steichen’s Family of Man was an immense exhibition where he literally tried to combat war with images of our communal customs and parallel lives. Steichen’s vision was of an exhibition with hundreds of photographs by hundreds of photographers all illustrating his belief in the goodness of humanity and the hope for the future. This hope and belief in goodness came out of his wartime experiences in WWII and a response to the devastation of the use of nuclear bombs. The exhibition, *The Family of Man* was a massive undertaking of well over three years of incredible effort with scores of hours of planning and organizing. From the millions of photographs reviewed, Steichen and his staff edited them down to thousands. Each one was printed to Steichen's almost impossible standards. The book, which many publishers turned down, finally sold 5 million copies.

From the “Myself and My World Assignment.” *We are always recording our life and the life about us. This week, I am asking you to consciously try*

to tell your story, to tell who you are in photographs. Like many stories, you must edit to the essential parts and tell a story that is succinct and clear.

Here is my sample assignment. Part introduction, part warm up, this first effort of making photography consciously leads to the “Concerned Photography” Assignment. After looking at Salgado, Parks and Lange and other photographers, students are asked to pick a concern and photograph it.

From The assignment:

Photographers who work in the genres of “photojournalism” and “documentary photography” are sometimes identified as “concerned photography.” This type of image has an effort to be factual while still having a point of view and wishing to change the mind of the viewer and perhaps call the viewer to action. Think about the effect images have in your life. Think about things in the world that you wish would improve or change. How can you use your photographic skills to make a difference?

Justin Erdmann Plastic “Plastic Vortex: Over 60 billion tons of plastic are produced each year, only less than 5% of that is recycled each year.”

Linda Nguyen Graffiti “I shot this photo at my high school. The graffiti was abundant. It’s concerning to me because often times graffiti is linked to violence and gangs. “

Maria Jose Molfino Sewage “For my concerned photography project, I decided to focus on the issue of sewage and

waste on a local level. These pictures were taken in two areas which are literally located next to each other: Palo Alto's Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQC, Photos 01-02) and the Baylands Nature Preserve (Photos 03-05). “

Melanie Lambert Animal welfare “What inspired me to take these images are from the homeless kittens, cats and puppies everywhere. Many homeless animals are living without food to eat or proper medical care. “

Ashley St. Germain Self Expression

Nichole Merrilees Foster Youth “As of right now there is not even a percentage for foster youth continuing their education to graduate school. Most Foster children are homeless when they turn 18 because they age out of the system.

REACH is designed to create equal opportunities in education for children in foster care in order to break the cycle of homelessness.”

Serena Mak Price of education “I am concerned about the increasing price of education. I took pictures of easy access and affordable sources of education”

Shelly Chuyuan Zeng “Food and cultural connectionAs for an international student like me, our native country/ethnic group become a very weighted and special part of our emotion. ...my own culture's food: they are memories, they are love, they are stories.”

Tahia Moseley Food waste “The last couple weeks I started taking photographs of the food I would be disposing of

(composting). I am concerned with my own excessive waste of food. For this project, I'm basically exploring people's consciousness about food."

Daniella Torreano Homeless "For my concerned photography assignment, I was interested in taking pictures of homeless people. I went to San Francisco today and went around the lower mission area because there are a lot of homeless people there. My dad drove me and let me borrow his Canon EOS Digital Rebel XT since my compact camera doesn't have a good telephoto lens. His camera was great because I could take pictures far enough away so that the people were mostly unaware that I was taking their picture. I didn't want to get too close to them since I didn't want to make them feel awkward or uncomfortable. Like a person cleaning his home, I saw him organizing his items in these 3 shopping carts. When he was done, they were all covered with blankets."

Jose Cruz Companion animals for homeless "At first I didn't know how to tackle this assignment because after seeing Salgado's photographs, I was a little discouraged. But after some thought I decided to go out to San Francisco and take pictures of not the less fortunate but of their companions. It always worried me and made me upset to see people who were barely surviving dragging along animals with them. I just thought of how selfish the people might be to make the animals suffer along their side. So I set out to learn more about the different situations of these individuals and why it was that they had "pets". I didn't want to take pictures from a distance because I wanted to learn the reasons why someone who barely has anything to eat would consciously add the burden of feeding another mouth. I didn't want to

pry into their past and how they got where they were, all I asked was how long they had been with their animal companions, their breeds, ages and names. As soon as they got comfortable with me, they shared more information than I had asked and I got a better understanding for their reason to have a dog.

There is a reason why dogs are considered man's best friend. They are loyal companions who will stick to your side through thick and thin. These people have nothing in their lives except the other persons in their camps who they share a connection with but not the type of bond they share with their animals. The company and security they provide are essential to their existence. Sleeping out in the open puts them in a vulnerable position and the dogs provide that discouragement to others who might have bad intentions.”

Sebastiao Salgado says “If I were speaking to the students who want to go into documentary or human photography, I would tell them we need more people to do this kind of work. I'd encourage them” As I worked on this presentation I reflected on both the successful and less successful assignment for “Concerned Photography” I am assessing ways to go deeper in the understanding of Human Rights through the making and study of photographs. I will bring back the experiences from today and also share with the students the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I will remember that this is a process where as teachers we are always learning and in this also act as role models for our students. Thank you.

Kate Jordahl, Journey to World Heritage:

<http://jordahlphoto.com/PDL2012/>

Gordon Parks <http://www.gordonparksfoundation.org/>

Edward Steichen

<http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1669998,00.html>

Dorothea Lange

http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=3373

Ansel Adams

http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/interactive_features/22

Sebastiao Salgado <http://www.amazonasimages.com/>

Martin O'Grady

<http://jordahlphoto.com/photofive/05module/05module01.html>

Family of Man

http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/archives_highlights_06_1955