

Writing Assignment #1
Photography, New Media, and the Educated Viewer

“Education is ideally civil defense against media fall-out.” — Marshall McLuhan

Papers are due in class: **Thursday, March 7th**

You must submit your papers via SafeAssign on Blackboard.

This assignment gives you the opportunity to explore the role of photography in contemporary media.

Your paper should be 3 double-spaced pages, 1” margins, 12-point type (Please use Arial, Helvetica or Times).

Before you begin writing your paper, you must first do some research.

Please **read** and **analyze** the following essays (look under supplementary reading on the class website):

1. Chapter 8 (pp. 140-161), “Toward a Hyperphotography” in Fred Ritchin’s *After Photography* (2009)
2. “The Photograph, The Brothel Without Walls” an excerpt from Marshall McLuhan’s *Understanding Media* (1964).
McLuhan, renowned media theorist, coined the quotable quote “the medium is the message.”

Paper Instructions:

Give yourself ample time to do the readings, especially the McLuhan excerpt. Both raise difficult issues that require time to contemplate and analyze. Consider the significance of photography in Ritchin’s and McLuhan’s articles. Summarize each author’s opinion of photography (you must discuss **both** readings). What do the authors think are the positive aspects of photography? What are the negative ones? Discuss some examples from each reading.

Then consider whether one needs to be educated to navigate contemporary media (internet, tv, movies, etc.). Do Ritchin and McLuhan think photography contributes to

our general education? Do you think photography can contribute to our general education? Compare their views to **your own ideas** about photography and new media, and discuss whether one needs to be an educated viewer in the 21st century.

Lastly, avoid long quotes in short papers (both papers for this course are short). Lengthy quotes will weaken your paper and diminish your grade. Please look over the grading rubric for written assignments on the class website, and be sure to run spell check before submitting your final paper.

Please note that if you fail to discuss both the Ritchin and McLuhan readings, it is impossible to receive an A on the paper.

An important note on plagiarism

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM AND WILL RESULT UNCONDITIONALLY IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE.

To “plagiarize” is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as:

Take and use as one’s own (the thoughts, writings, inventions, etc., of another person); copy (literary works, ideas, etc.) improperly or without acknowledgment; pass off the thoughts, work, etc., of (another person) as one’s own. [Lesley Brown, ed., *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1993), 2:2231]

If you do additional research for the essay, you must cite all sources for your work, not just books and articles but also internet and non-traditional media sources. If you have any doubts or questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask me in class, in office hours, or via e-mail.