Online Photo Course Is a Hit with Students
THE FIRST FULLY ONLINE COURSE IN PHOTOGRAPHY AT MSU, STA491, is designed for students enrolled in any MSU Study Abroad program anywhere in the world, says course developer and CAL Department of Art, Art History and Design Photography Professor Peter Glendinning.

“This course has no pre-requisites, and was offered as an ‘enhancement’ of the Study Abroad program,” says Glendinning. “But, in some ways, it was transformative in its expansion of the traditional site-specific and content-specific boundaries of the Study Abroad experience.”

Glendinning says that STA491’s goals are to educate students in basic technical, compositional, and art-oriented aspects of digital photography, in the context of the exploration of the new “worlds” they discover in Study Abroad experiences. An additional goal is to broaden the individual international experience to one that is shared with “classmates” across the globe, through online sharing of photographs and comments from a diverse range of places and perspectives.

While a main point of innovation in this course has nothing to do with technology, Glendinning says, it was made possible by technology. “The goal was to create a shared experience for broadly diverse students who, by the very nature of MSU’s Study Abroad structure, are generally quite focused on a narrow range of subjects studied in specific (albeit ‘overseas’) geographic and cultural venues,” he says.

“Technology played a huge role, as the online and other technology aspects were vital in all respects, but it was the human element of connection that proved most important.”

To make that idea of transformation of the Study Abroad experience through photographic education a reality required development and organization of materials that could only be offered successfully through online teaching and learning. Completely online lessons, quizzes, and student/teacher interactions enabled participating Study Abroad students to prepare for successful photography prior to departure for their programs, regardless of diverse spring class schedules.

Students studied assigned readings in their textbook, “A Short Course in Digital Photography,” (Pearson Education) and registered in the class section associated with the publisher’s companion website for the book. They viewed instructor-produced MSU-ANGEL PowerPoint and video lectures, and publisher-hosted online lessons and chapter quizzes.

“Where and how to accomplish the sharing and discussing of images, usually done in a classroom setting with actual prints, was also a major problem to be solved,” says Glendinning. “Flickr (www.flickr.com) assignment group pages provided the forums in which students and the instructor shared images and comments. After reviewing their photographs in their ‘home’ Flickr site, and considering any suggestions or comments the professor had made to them, students decided on a select number of pictures to put forward for group discussion.”

Photo credits: Eve Avdoulos, London (above), Neveen Elias, London (top right), and Danielle Abbott, Kenya (bottom right).
Photo credits: Ben Owen, Australia (above), Lauren Tremblay, Italy (top right), Nick Perles, Nemia (middle right), and Kyle Keener, Costa Rica (bottom right).
Study Abroad: Online Photo Course Student List

Eve Avdoulos
Neveen Elias
Amy Dust
Chris Sponcer
Ania Pathak
Erica Treais
Danielle Abbott
Alexandra Lasky
Lauren Tremblay
Yao Lu
Nick Perles
Clara Schoonmaker
Kyle Keener
Nura Firdawsi
Scarlet Schertzing
Lauryn Schroeder
Jeremy Shaba
Pauline Wendzel
Makena Schultz
Kaylei McGaw
Jessica Makowski
Ben Owen
Rundong Mao
Makena Schultz
Mark Albery
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Glendinning notes that there were 25 possible assignments organized into categories (people, landscapes, things, activities, and essence of my world) from which students were required to complete a minimum of 15. All but three students chose to contribute to at least four more, and some contributed to all 25.

An exhibit of 50 prints that were selected from the more than 12,000 photographs produced for the assignments (two pictures from each of the 25 assignment topics) was mounted in Kresge Art Center’s Gallery 114. At the opening reception, students wore “picture tags,” identifying themselves by one of their photographs in the exhibit rather than their names, and enjoyed sharing the show with their friends (many of whom had never set foot in Kresge Art Center before, being students in other majors across campus) and families. The students also had the opportunity to meet many of their online classmates for the first time, and exchange experiences and ideas.

Following Kresge, the exhibit traveled to the Crooked Tree Art Center in Petoskey, and thereafter has been used to enhance the education of high school art students on a free-lending basis.

Glendinning notes that the course was an eye-opener for everyone involved, and taught a good lesson about humans and technology.

“Technology played a huge role, as the online and other technology aspects were vital in all respects, but it was the human element of connection that proved most important.”

Photo credits: Eve Avdoulos, Athens (left and top left), Erica Treais, London (top right).

Directly above: Art, Art History and Design Photography Professor Peter Glendinning holds his portrait from the Broad Art Museum’s art exhibition.