Course description (topics)

Title of the course: **History and Philosophy of Photography / Photography in Theory**				
Tutors of the course, contact details: Gábor Pfisztner, pfisztner.gabor@g.mome.hu, +36 20 2280667				
Code: M-FT-202	Related curriculum (programme/level): Photography MA	Recommended semester within the curriculum: 2	Credit: 5	Number of class hours: 20 (48) Student working hours: 102
Related codes:	Type: seminar/lecture/class work	Can it be an elective course: -	In case of elective what are the specific prerequisites: -	

Course connections (prerequisites, parallelism): History of Photography

Aim and principles of the course: The aim of this course is to scrutinise and discuss recent theories on photography as an art form, or photography in art (respectively). We try to conceptualise photography as an art form, or, maybe rather, in art. We will also inquire into different approaches towards photography as a 'medium' and as a 'tool' to convey a message about it or with it. To better understand the differences, we will examine some contemporary art works with different aims and approaches. Through this process, students need to reflect on their existing concepts and their own artistic practice, but they also can learn how to be critical of others' concepts and different theories. It is essential that the students learn how to express their thoughts in writing when studying such theories.

Learning outcomes (professional and general competences to be developed):   **Knowledge:** They understand the importance of analytical, critical, and historical thinking. Their knowledge is characterised by a broad spectrum of knowledge and a high level of literacy.   **Ability:** Based on the experience gained during their studies, they are able to analyse, process, and manage basic knowledge, and to express their own opinions and critical approach within their own field of art (photography). They have the ability to collect and interpret relevant data for the development of their creative concept.   **Attitude:** They think critically, looking for correlations of contexts. They strive to be informed. They persist with their found themes, understanding the role of time in becoming independent artists and authors.   **Autonomy and responsibility:** They research and develop their professional skills independently. Committed to learning and understanding the historical achievements of photography.

Topics and themes to be covered in the course: At the beginning of the course we raise the question whether artists need to study theory and to discuss it. The objective of this initial debate is to conceptualise the difference between to concepts: 'Photography as art' and 'Photography in art'. Through this approach, we raise the problem of a medium and the problem of 'medium' in 21st century art production and we also try to answer the question why it is worth to do so. At the initial stage, we will read and discuss the 2021 book of Andrew Dewdney, Forget Photography, especially the part conceptualizing the

relation between philosophy, technology and photography. In this chapter, Dewdney discusses the relevance and impact of Heidegger, Flusser and Bernard Stiegler.

We will also consider visiting the subsite of the Photographers' Gallery titled unthinking photography as well as Still Searching, the project of Fotomuseum Winterthur with entries by Dewdney and others (Katrina Sluis, Joanna Zylinska for example).

Since photography is in the state of continuous changes, at least technologically, that also influences how we think of it (referring to Burgin's book back in 1982) and how we conceptualize its history, we will also take a closer look at the book The Networked Image in Post-Digital Culture.

With students, we will also question the relevance of such names like Post-Digital, post-photographic etc. and explicate the possible meanings of them and their relevance of today's photographic practices.

Specificities of process organisation / organisation of learning:
Course structure, nature of the individual sessions and their timing (in case of several teachers' involvement, please indicate the distribution of their teaching input:

Thursdays 13:40-15:00

22th February: Gábor Pfisztner – Introduction: Do artists need theory? Why do we discuss theory and theoretical issues regarding photography? (a 'round table' discussion)

29th February: Gábor Pfisztner – The Question concerning 'Medium', part I.

7th March: Gábor Pfisztner – The Question concerning 'Medium', part II.

14th March: Gábor Pfisztner – Technical innovations that changed photography, Introduction to Dewdney's book

21th March: Gábor Pfisztner – The discussion of Part II Chapter 4 of Dewdney's book

28th March: Gábor Pfisztner - Reconsidering Flusser and Heidegger Technic concept

4th April: Gábor Pfisztner – The discussion of the importance of Stiegler

11th April: Gábor Pfisztner – The discussion of the web projects of Winterthur Museum and The Photographers' Gallery,

18th April: Gábor Pfisztner – Revisiting Burgin's book Thinking Photography

25th April: Gábor Pfisztner – Further questioning of the entries on these sites (Dewdney, Sluis, Zylinska)

2nd May: Gábor Pfisztner – Explication and Discussion of the 'disputable' concepts of Post-digital and post-photographic

9th May: Gábor Pfisztner – Filling in the frames, forgetting, unthinking or rethinking (or even unlearning) photography and what this all means for the artistic practice

04th June: Final deadline to submit the essay

Students' tasks and responsibilities:
in class activity, completing the readings, active participation in discussions in class

Learning environment: (e.g. classroom, studio, off-site, online, in-company placement, etc.)
classroom discussion

Assessment:
Based on the essay and on the activity in class

Requirements to be met:
To qualify for a grade, students need to take part in class, complete the readings for designated classes, and to write a 1500 to 2000-word essay

Method of assessment:
discussions in class, essay writing

Assessment criteria (what is taken into consideration in the assessment):
Structure of the essay, relevance of the argumentation, critical approach, use of literature, appropriate use of references,

How is the mark calculated:
85-100%: excellent
60-84%: good
40-59%: medium
20-39%: sufficient
0-19%: insufficient

Class work (30%)
Activity (30%)
Quality of the essay (40%)

Required Literature:
Dewdney, Andrew: *Forget Photography* London, Goldsmith Press, 2021
Dewdney, Andrew and Katrina Sluis: *The Networked Image in Post-Digital Culture* London, New York, Routledge, 2023
Osborne, Peter: *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso (2013), selected parts
https://unthinking.photography/contributors/andrew-dewdney
https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/blog/?filter[]=author%3A10114#collection
Flusser, Vilém: *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, London, Reaction Books, 2000

Recommended Literature:
Osborne, Peter: The postconceptual condition: Or, the cultural logic of high capitalism today, *Radical Philosophy* 184, Mar/Apr (2014)
Heidegger, Martin: The Question Concerning Technology, The Age of the World Picture, in: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, transl. William Lovitt, London and New York, Garland Publishing, 1977.
Burgin, Victor (ed): *Thinking Photography*, London, Macmillan, 1982

Recognition of knowledge acquired elsewhere/previously/validation principle:
- No exemption from attending and completing the course will be granted,
- Exemptions from the acquisition of certain competences and the completion of certain tasks may be granted,
- some tasks may be replaced by other activities,
- full exemption may be granted

Out-of-class consultation times and location:
Based on individual appointment