

CDES 206: Introduction to Photo Communication and Digital Imaging

This document contains answers to some frequently asked questions for the course. Please read it carefully before contacting your instructor with questions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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THE PLUMAS DIGITAL PHOTO LAB USES MACS. CAN I WORK ON A WINDOWS BASED MACHINE AT HOME AND BRING MY FILES IN?

HOW DO I GET INTO THE CLASS?

Please try to add the course through the Portal. You will need to add the lab section that you want and should then be automatically be enrolled in the lecture (section #1). If the class is full, please attend any lab sessions that fit your schedule. If there is space, you will be added to the class list.

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DO I NEED A CAMERA FOR THE COURSE?

You will need to supply your own digital camera for the duration of the semester (sorry, digital video cameras are not yet appropriate for this course). The camera must have a minimum resolution of 5 megapixels and have **manually adjustable shutter and aperture controls**. A very basic model with these features will cost about \$200 and go up from there. You will not be able to use a “point and shoot” camera for this course. You will also be unable to use 35 mm film-based cameras.

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WHAT ARE THE BASIC CAMERA REQUIREMENTS?

A minimum of 5 megapixels (in general, more is better).

Manually adjustable shutter speed from 1 to 1/1000 second, adjustable in 1/3 stop increments.

Manually adjustable aperture control in 1/3 stop increments. There are several models out there that say they have manual aperture control but don't let you choose in fine increments. Instead they make you select either a MAXIMUM or MINIMUM value - but nothing in-between. You want more control, so avoid these cameras.

If a camera's specifications indicate that it has both Aperture and Shutter priority modes, it can usually (but not always) operate in fully manual mode.

Here are two examples from the camera specification charts on dpreview.com

GOOD	Aperture priority	?	Yes
	Shutter priority	?	Yes
BAD	Aperture priority	?	No
	Shutter priority	?	No

A camera with Manual control usually has an “M” on the control dial (though sometimes cameras with an “M” aren't true manual cameras. It's crazy, I know.)

You'll need an extra memory card for your camera. At a minimum, you'll want 512 megabytes - possibly more depending upon the camera you get. I have a 5 megapixel camera with a 512 card, a 7 megapixel camera with a 1 gig card, and an 8 megapixel camera with a 2 gig card.

You'll also need a portable memory device to which you'll transfer your pictures. It can be USB or firewire.

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CAN YOU RECOMMEND A SPECIFIC MODEL FOR ME?

I'm reluctant to recommend specific models as they change so fast and what's important to one person may be a nuisance to another. That being said, what follows are some cameras I think work well for this class. Ultimately, I'd recommend that you consult dpreview.com as a way to more fully research digital cameras. If you find a camera you think might work, but want to be sure, please send your instructor a link to a web page **that includes a full description of the camera specifications**, and we'll check it out.

BASIC MODELS: These models work well for the class at the lowest possible price.

There are many, many other appropriate models available.

Canon Powershot A590 IS
Canon Powershot A710 IS / A720 IS
Canon Powershot SX100 IS

A STEP UP FROM BASIC: These cameras will offer a step up in quality and features.

There are many, many other appropriate models available.

Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX2 / DMC-G1
(Byron has a version of this camera made by Leica and loves it)
Canon Powershot A650IS
Canon Powershot G7 / G8 / G9 / G10
Olympus E-620

TOP OF THE LINE: In general, I would only recommend these cameras if you know you're serious about continuing with photography. While they're fantastic (I've used a Nikon 70D for a few years, now), I would have trouble justifying their expense for your use in this course. ***There are many, many other appropriate models available.***

Nikon D40, D70, D700, D80, D90, D5000
Canon Rebel 400 XT
Canon EOS 5D / 20D / 30D / 40D / 450D / 500D / 1000D
Pentax K200D
Pentax K20D
Nikon D70s
Olympus E-Volt E-510
Olympus E-30
Sigma SD-14 / SD-15

OVER THE TOP: For the most serious photographer only, and certainly beyond what you need for this course.

Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III
Nikon D2X
Nikon D300
Nikon D3
Nikon D40X

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ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL CAMERA RECOMMENDATIONS?

Yes, a camera with a real-time or review HISTOGRAM is strongly recommended.

Also, a camera with the ability to capture a RAW file is a very, very good thing, though I'll only provide a brief demo on how to work with these specific file types this semester. If you continue in photography in any serious way, you'll certainly want a camera that can create and store RAW files.

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ARE THERE CAMERAS I SHOULD AVOID?

Yes. I would strongly recommend that you AVOID digital cameras made by Kodak, Sony, Dell, Gateway, and Hewlett Packard. They tend to make models that only function as "point and shoot" cameras. What's even more confusing is that they may advertise their cameras as working in "Manual" mode, but they often cripple most of the true manual features - particularly in aperture control.

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WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO BUY A CAMERA?

Generally I'd recommend that you try to purchase locally so that you can get your camera immediately and aren't at the mercy of a shipping company. A bird in the hand, so to speak. Please consult the [EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES](#) link here or on the home page.

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SHOULD I BUY A USED CAMERA?

Cameras are effectively computers with lenses attached and they have all the inherent properties of computers with fragile circuitry and rapid obsolescence. You generally wouldn't want to buy a used computer, and the same argument could be made for a digital camera. That being said, you might be able to find a nice digital SLR for about the cost of a new compact digital camera - but be aware that there's an inherent risk in purchased old electronic equipment.

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SHOULD I BUY A CAMERA ONLINE?

In general, this is an OK thing to do, but there's a big caveat for this course - you'll need your camera **next week at the latest**, and most places will either take too long to process and ship your order (some students have waited as long as eight weeks on cameras that were promised in seven days or less - and they've had to scramble to find a substitute in the meantime - or drop the course).

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CAN MY FRIEND/ROOMMATE/BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND/BROTHER/SISTER/MOTHER/FATHER/PET/HOUSEPLANT/OTHER USE THE

SAME CAMERA AND SHARE IT THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER?

No, that doesn't work. You'll need a camera that you alone have access to all semester long.

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DO I NEED TO OWN PHOTOSHOP TO TAKE THE CLASS?

No, this class was designed with the assumption that you do not own Adobe Photoshop (Photoshop CS3 is available in our "state-of-the-art" digital photo lab for your use). That being said, you'd likely find it convenient to do some of your class work on your own computer if you own Photoshop CS2 or CS3. If you do work at home, you will still need to print in the Plumas photo lab.

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HOW MUCH WILL THIS CLASS COST FOR EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES?

It depends. You'll need a camera and related supplies (additional memory, some form of portable memory storage, some blank CD-Rs). In general, though, you're likely to spend between \$200 - \$400. You can always spend more, but that's roughly the range. You paid a \$50 course fee when you registered that covers all the ink and paper you'll use throughout the semester.

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THE PLUMAS DIGITAL PHOTO LAB USES MACS. CAN I WORK ON A WINDOWS BASED MACHINE AT HOME AND BRING MY FILES IN?

Yes, it's usually not a problem. Talk to your instructor if you have specific questions about how to move files between different computers.

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