

Photojournalism

COMM 3328 Fall 2026

Texas A&M University-San Antonio Department of Sociology and Communication

Instructor: Donna Pazdera

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Please DO NOT send me emails through Blackboard

Office: CAB 320E

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Class meets: 3:30 -4:45 pm Monday CAB 320F*

this is different from what the online schedule says

Office Hours: 2:45pm-3:30 pm, Mondays; TR 2-3 pm, and by appointment

Course Description

Photojournalism builds on skills acquired during COMM 2312 or its equivalent.

Students will continue improving their composition, outline writing and storytelling skills through weekly and other assignments. Students will learn and be expected to use a DSLR camera and how to shoot photos with manual settings. Assignments build in complexity, culminating with an 8-10 photo story/essay produced by the end of the semester. Students will improve photo editing skills through assignments and ending with instructor meetings toward the semester's end. There will be one class meetup, determined by the students and instructor, where students will shoot a short photo story as a practice assignment for the photo story. There will be discussions about ethics, a possible guest speaker and other activities as time permits.

Learning Outcomes

Foundational Knowledge and Theory

- **1.1:** Differentiate between photojournalism, snapshots, documentary photography, and other forms of photography (e.g., fine art, commercial).
- **1.2:** Articulate and apply the ethical principles of photojournalism, including issues of objectivity, manipulation, privacy, and informed consent.
- **1.3:** Critically evaluate the role of photojournalism in society, including its impact on public opinion, social change, and historical documentation.

Technical and Practical Skills

- **2.1:** Demonstrate proficiency in operating a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) or mirrorless camera, including manual control of aperture, shutter speed, and ISO.
- **2.2:** Compose compelling and visually impactful photographs that effectively tell a story, utilizing principles such as the rule of thirds, leading lines, and light.
- **2.3:** Master various lighting conditions and techniques, including natural light, available light, and flash photography, to create mood and enhance a narrative.

- **2.4:** Utilize industry-standard software (e.g., Adobe Lightroom, Photoshop) to organize, edit, and export images while maintaining journalistic integrity.
- **2.5:** Develop a personal photographic style and vision while adhering to journalistic standards and best practices.

Storytelling and Narrative Development

- **3.1:** Identify and research a compelling news or human-interest story suitable for a photojournalistic approach.
- **3.2:** Develop and execute a multi-image photo essay or a single-image narrative that effectively communicates a specific idea, event, or issue.
- **3.3:** Craft accurate and informative captions and cutlines that provide context for photographs and adhere to AP Style or other professional journalistic standards.
- **3.4:** Conduct and incorporate interviews with subjects to enhance the depth and accuracy of a photo story.
- **3.5:** Present a cohesive photo essay with a clear beginning, middle, and end, demonstrating an understanding of visual sequencing and flow.

Professional and Ethical Practices

- **4.1:** Develop a professional portfolio of photojournalistic work that showcases technical skill and storytelling ability.
- **4.2:** Practice professional conduct in the field, including establishing rapport with subjects and respecting cultural differences.
- **4.3:** Understand the legal issues relevant to photojournalism, such as copyright, fair use, and public vs. private property rights.
- **4.4:** Collaborate with editors and fellow journalists in a constructive and professional manner.
- **4.5:** Discuss and defend ethical decisions made during the creation of a photojournalistic project.

MATERIALS

2 – 16GB SDHC class 10 smart media cards or Ultra High Speed 1 or 2

Access to an SLR or DSLR camera (or a camera where you can change the settings and focus) We have cameras available to be checked out for 72 hours.

To check one out, please see Valeo, our student worker who can help you during his office hours at the front desk in CAB 320.

ASSIGNMENTS/ASSESSMENT

****Full instructions, examples and due dates will be posted on Blackboard****

1. Photo of the Week: You are expected to shoot photos daily. I want you to pick your best shot each week and post it on Google Drive. (link will be posted on Blackboard.) Total number of POW: 10, 10 pts/shot. These can be shot with a smartphone. All other assignments should be shot with a DSLR
Mandatory part of POW: Two of those photos must be assignments for The Mesquite, the student-run campus news site. (We will address this on the first day of class.)
2. Mesquite Photos: I will post a link on Blackboard to look at the photo requests for The Mesquite. You HAVE to shoot at least two photos for the student-run online news site. This is win-win: you get possible publication and help our student-run news site.
3. Alphabet in Nature: shoot five consecutive letters of the alphabet as they appear in nature. This will be explained further in class. (50 points)
4. Other assignments – (50 pts x 10 --- this number could be less.) These will be announced in class with instructions posted under “Assignments” on Blackboard. ****These are skills-based assignments that will help you refine your abilities.****
5. Sports Photo. Turn in one excellent sports action shot. Make sure you have the person and the ball (if it's that kind of sport) filling the frame. This should sum up the experience. (This could also double as a Mesquite assignment)
Worth up to 75 points.
6. Environmental Portrait. Show us someone in their environment. This is the **only** time in this class that you may set up the shot – meaning it is staged with lighting and how the subject is positioned. You should be able to understand the essence of this person just by looking at the photo. Worth up to 100 points
7. Tourist in My Town. Take a walking/riding tour of a familiar or unfamiliar place. Find the moments that best capture that area. Find things that surprise you. Find colorful people or places. Turn in your best six photos. worth up to 100 points.
8. Photo Essay: This will be gathered over a course of time. You will need to pick a subject/topic and spend a little time each week, just shooting to gather material. You will do two edits with your instructor during the two last weeks of class This means you have to begin shooting early and often. Maximum of 8-10 photos. The final edit is worth 150 points. You will make a 5-minute presentation to the class on the last class day.

ASSESSMENT: You will be graded on a straight average of total points.

Technical & Artistic Criteria

- **Image Quality**: This is a foundational criterion. Evaluators look for proper **exposure** (not too dark or too light), sharp **focus**, appropriate **depth of field**, and correct **white balance**. A good photo is not just about what's in the frame, but also about the technical execution that makes it clear and compelling.
- **Composition**: This refers to the arrangement of visual elements within the frame. Strong compositions often use techniques like the **rule of thirds**, leading lines, framing, and negative space to guide the

viewer's eye and create visual interest. An effective composition serves the story, making the image more impactful.

- **Lighting:** The use of light is crucial. A student's work is evaluated on their ability to use natural or artificial light to create mood, highlight subjects, and add drama to an image.
 - **Editing/Post-Processing:** Grades assess how well a student uses editing software (like Photoshop or Lightroom) to enhance an image without altering its reality. This includes adjusting tone, color, and contrast while maintaining the integrity of the scene. Over-editing or making changes that misrepresent the subject is typically penalized, as it violates journalistic ethics.
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Journalistic & Storytelling Criteria

- **Storytelling & Content:** This is arguably the most important criterion in a photojournalism course. The photos must tell a clear, concise, and compelling story. Evaluators look for a narrative, a central theme, and emotional resonance. The images should capture a newsworthy event or an insightful moment that goes beyond a simple snapshot.
- **Captions & Writing:** Photos in a photojournalism context are rarely presented without text. The ability to write accurate, detailed, and objective captions is essential. Captions must provide context, identify subjects, and answer the "who, what, when, where, and why" of the story. A student's writing is also assessed on its grammar, clarity, and adherence to journalistic style.
- **Ethics & Accuracy:** Photojournalism is governed by a strict code of ethics. Students are graded on their adherence to this code, which includes not staging scenes, not digitally manipulating photos to alter the truth, and treating subjects with respect and dignity. Factual accuracy in both images and accompanying text is non-negotiable.
- **Effort & Execution:** This criterion considers the student's overall process. It includes their research, planning, and execution of a project. Did they show initiative? Did they take risks? Did they invest the necessary time to produce a professional-quality body of work? These are all factors that contribute to a final grade.

SCHEDULE (Subject to revision. Any changes will be announced on Blackboard and in class)

Aug.24: Course introduction. Camera basics. Photo basics. Get yourself set up in the class drive on Google Drive. Assign POW and Alphabet in Nature.

Aug. 31: First Photo of the Week and Alphabet in Nature due. Photoshop and cutline basics. Look at Photos of the Week. Critique. Aperture, shutter speed and ISO assignment discussion.

Sept. 7: No class, but Photo of the Week due.

Sept. 14: Look at homework assignment and POW. Cutline exercises. How to use Lightroom – basics.

Sept. 21: How to tell a story with photos. Look at Photos of the Week and the work of professionals and peers for information and inspiration for the final photo story at the end of the semester.

Sept. 28: Discussion about environmental portraits: what makes a good one. Lighting. Assign Environmental Portrait. Lighting homework assigned

Oct. 5: Look at lighting homework and discuss/troubleshoot issues regarding the Environmental Portrait. (subject ghosting you, for instance.)

Oct. 12: Look at Environmental Portraits. Discuss sports photos. Possible guest speaker.

Oct. 19: Assign Tourist in my Town. Discuss the photo essay. Brainstorm ideas for photo essay.

Oct. 26: Tourist in my Town assignment day. No class meeting. We meet as a group.

Nov. 2: Tourist assignment due. Critique. Assign sports photo.

Nov. 9: Sports photo due. Pitch photo story. If approved by professor, please start shooting.

Nov. 16: First edit of photo story. Meet with professor

Nov. 23: No class. Thanksgiving week.

Nov. 30: Second edit of photo story, Meet with professor

Dec. 7: Presentations of Photo Essay.

Special note: You are expected to submit your work on time as we work in a deadline-driven environment. Photos of the week must be submitted on time. If there are extenuating circumstances and you need an extension, you **MUST** communicate with me beforehand to be given consideration.

No Use of Generative AI Permitted

COMM 3328 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via university email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the [website](#) or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodations with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center

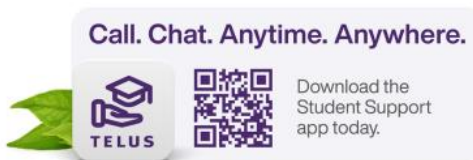
All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance. While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours for MATH in the ALC are as follows:

	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
MONDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
TUESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
WEDNESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
THURSDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
FRIDAY	8 am – 5 pm	11 am – 4 pm

Counseling/Mental Health Resources

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. *Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.* The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>. More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found [here](#).

Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC)

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments.

Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our [website](#). The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a [CARE report](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click [here](#) for hours and contact information.

Military Affairs

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots’ Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student’s GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as “F” grades and will impact the student’s GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University’s Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio’s Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university’s Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students

Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or visit the resources available in the [OSRR website](#)

Use of Generative AI Permitted Under Some Circumstances or With Explicit Permission

There are situations and contexts within this course where you may be asked to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, to explore how they can be used. Outside of those circumstances, you should not use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any student work (assignments, activities, discussion responses, etc.) that is part of your evaluation in this course. Any student work submitted using AI tools should clearly indicate with attribution what work is the student's work and what part is generated by the AI. If any part of this is confusing or uncertain, students should reach out to their instructor for clarification before submitting work for grading. Use of AI-generated content without the instructor's permission and/or proper attribution in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

NOTE: Guidance for how to cite AI-generators, like ChatGPT, can be found here <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Important Spring 2026 Dates

August 24	Monday	First class day
August 28	Friday	Last day to withdraw from all classes to receive an 80% refund of tuition and fees
August 31	Monday	Last day to register
September 4	Friday	Last day to withdraw from all classes to receive a 70% refund of tuition and fees
September 7	Monday	Labor Day Holiday - No Classes / University Closed

September 9	Wednesday	Census Date - Students not paid in full or enrolled in a payment plan by 4:59PM may be dropped for non-payment
September 11	Friday	Student enrolled will receive a billing statement
September 14	Monday	Last day to withdraw from all classes to receive a 50% refund of tuition and fees
September 21	Monday	Last day to withdraw from all classes to receive a 25% refund of tuition and fees
October 5 - October 16	Monday-Friday	Midterm grading period
November 13	Friday	Last day to drop with an automatic grade of "W"
November 25	Wednesday	Study day - No Classes
November 26 - November 28	Thursday - Saturday	Thanksgiving Holiday - No Classes / University Closed
November 30	Monday	Last day to withdraw from the university
December 4	Friday	Last day of scheduled classes for weekday classes
December 5 - December 11	Saturday - Friday	Final examinations