

Photojournalism

WEEK ONE: Theoretical aspects of photojournalism

Learning Outcomes



At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Learn the overview of the scope of the syllabus
2. Understand the difference between Photography and photojournalism
3. Analyze the meaning of photojournalism and its historical development
4. Critique the qualities of a good photojournalist.

The scope of the syllabus

This unit introduces you to basic photography and photojournalism skills, which are the collecting, editing, and presenting of news material for publication or broadcast. Images are objectively created through photography in order to tell a news story. It is a powerful way to document events and convey information in a way that words alone cannot. A journalist will use their pen and paper to tell stories, a photojournalist will use their camera to capture the visual representation of a story. Photojournalists face lots challenges in their line of duty, and have educated millions of people on various social injustices that happen around the world. This course is more practical than theoretical. The course will cover the following main topics:

- i. *Theoretical aspects of photojournalism*
- ii. *Photojournalism tools*
- iii. *Digital photography exposure*
- iv. *Arranging the image to communicate*
- v. *News and features*
- vi. *Sports features photojournalism*
- vii. *The roles and responsibilities of photojournalist and editor*
- viii. *Shooting the story, writing captions and editing the pictures*
- ix. *Designing the page and selecting photos for publication*
- x. *Lighting techniques in digital photojournalism*
- xi. *Ethics and legal issues of photojournalism.*

xii. The future of photojournalism.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND PHOTOJOURNALISM

According to The New World Encyclopedia.org and Wikipedia, photojournalism is a form of journalism, which involves the collecting, editing, and presenting of news material for publication or broadcast that creates images in order to tell a news story. It is now usually understood to refer only to still images, and in some cases to video used in broadcast journalism. Photojournalism is distinguished from other close branches of photography (such as documentary photography, social documentary photography, war photography, street photography and celebrity photography) by having a rigid ethical framework which demands an honest but impartial approach that tells a story in strictly journalistic terms. Photojournalists contribute to the news media, and help communities connect with one other. They must be well-informed and knowledgeable, and are able to deliver news in a creative manner that is both informative and entertaining.

According to Wikipedia.org, journalism is the production and distribution of reports on the interaction of events, facts, ideas, and people that are the "news of the day" and that informs society to at least some degree of accuracy. The word, a noun, applies to the occupation (professional or not), the methods of gathering information, and the organizing literary styles.

The word "photography" was created from the Greek roots φωτός (phōtós), genitive of φῶς (phōs), "light" and γραφή (graphé) "representation by means of lines" or "drawing", together meaning "drawing with light" (Liddell and Scott, 2013).

According to IMMA, photography is the process of recording an image – a photograph – on light sensitive film or, in the case of digital photography, via a digital electronic or magnetic memory. The photograph is evident in nearly every aspect of modern life. As a form of communication and documentation, photographs are present in newspapers, magazines, advertisements, posters, television, the Internet, passports, ID cards, archives, security and Surveillance Systems, forensics and medicine.

Origin

Man has always had a desire to learn and expand his knowledge. This he did by travelling to new places. Man drew pictures of the new things he saw or wrote about his travels, and then printing came. Printing could make the written word more popular amongst people. The printed word was combined with hand drawn pictures to describe what was written. This added to the people's knowledge of things and they could visualize what was being written about. Before the first photographs as the early form of photojournalism arose, there were illustrations that depicted certain historical events. Photojournalism isn't the first form of journalism with the focus on pictures, but with the technological advancement of cameras, it was only logical to replace complex illustrations with photographs. The first photograph that has been attributed to photojournalism, was the Barricades in Rue Saint-Maur-Popincourt from 25th June 1848.

The photograph was taken by an amateur photographer since photography was hardly a profession in its early stages. Nonetheless, the photograph marks the beginning of photojournalism and documents the June Uprising in Paris. With the coming of photography news could be conveyed with greater authority and emphasis with photographs (Jacobitz, 2023).

According to Britannica.com, a new approach to photojournalism began to emerge with the appearance of the Ermanox in 1924 and the Leica in 1925. These two German-made miniature cameras, fitted with wide-aperture lenses, required extremely short exposure times for outdoor work and were even able to photograph indoor scenes with available light. The Leica had the added advantage of using 35-mm roll film that could be advanced quickly, allowing a succession of exposures to be made of the same subject. This capability led to photographs whose informality of pose and sense of presence were remarkable.

The Frenchman Henri Cartier-Bresson began about 1930 to develop the style that he later called the search for the "decisive moment." To him the camera was an "extension of the eye." Preferring the miniature 35-mm-film camera, he worked unobtrusively, making numerous exposures that usually included one in which all the elements come together to form a compelling psychological and visual statement

Photographs started supporting the written news in newspapers and magazines and thus photojournalism was born. The photojournalistic style popularized by Life and Look influenced

other activity in the field, in particular the exhibition “Family of Man,” which was mounted by Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1955. This highly popular exhibition presented over 500 photographs—mostly photojournalistic and documentary work—alongside texts of different sizes and formats, somewhat in the manner of a three-dimensional magazine (Britannica.com).

MEANING OF PHOTOJOURNALISM

Every morning we wake up and read the newspaper. There is always a picture on the first page which shows the important news of the day. Such a picture is a result of what we know as photojournalism.

Once photography grew popular and became easy to do, it started getting specialized in its use. By this, you must understand that soon after the discovery of photography people were very excited and busy getting their photos taken. Soon they started travelling with the camera, gathering pictures of far off places and showed them to people who could not get there.

A photojournalist uses pictures instead of words to tell a story. *This type of journalist has a skilled professional eye that is able to interpret an event or subject and communicate meaning through photographs. A photojournalist may also use words to help narrate the pictures he or she has taken* (Crystal, 2023).

Magazines, newspapers, and books can all make use of the work of a photojournalist. Sometimes, an entire book is dedicated to the work of a particular photographer. It is also not unusual for a photojournalist to hold exhibitions of his or her work. A lot of photojournalists specialize in a particular field, such as portraits, war, celebrities, or world events. The photographs themselves should be newsworthy, as that is how the majority of photojournalists make their living (Crystal, 2023).

There are a large number of employment areas available to the photojournalist, including print, television, and the Internet. If one is talented enough, one can command huge fees for his or her work. Hard to get photographs, such as those taken in dangerous war zones, are much in demand (Crystal, 2023).

According to McMahon (2023), the photojournalist is usually passionate about his or her work. Photojournalism is considered by many to be an art. These photographers are highly trained and *able to see a picture that the untrained or untalented eye may simply pass over. They should also have a good sense of timing and a great eye for detail.*

- As technology has grown, **photography** has shifted from a medium based on film to one that is based on digital computing. **Photojournalism, photography** as art, commercial **photography**, fashion **photography** and photo processing are all degree programs offered at colleges and universities, or at vocational trade schools dedicated to the craft of **photography**.
- Although both involve taking photographs which are objective, honest, and informative, **photojournalism** involves photographing specific events, while documentary **photography** focuses on ongoing situations. A photographer who follows traditional farmers in rural places is a documentary photographer, but one who takes pictures of the aftermath of a suicide bombing for publication in the news is a photojournalist.

The three main qualities of photojournalism

According to New World Encyclopedia, Photojournalism is distinguished from other close branches of photography (such as documentary photography, street photography, or celebrity photography) by the qualities of:

Timeliness — the images have meaning in the context of a published chronological record of events.

Objectivity — the situation implied by the images is a fair and accurate representation of the events they depict.

Narrative — the images combine with other news elements, to inform and give insight to the viewer or reader.

SEVEN QUALITIES OF A GOOD PHOTOJOURNALIST

According to National Institute of Open Schooling (2021), the following are roles of a photojournalist:

1. A good photojournalist is both a skilled photographer who uses the camera and other equipment to his or her best advantage.
2. He must also be a thinking creative person who mixes technique and judgments to capture images as they happen because news events do not wait for the photographer.
3. Some photojournalists attempt to make their photographs more interesting by manipulating the image (for example, by making people pose for the photograph). This is wrong as the main task of a photojournalist is to give the viewer an image that is truthful and speaks for itself. Manipulating an image is like making up a news story. It would no longer be journalism but story telling.
4. Events wait for no one, especially for photojournalists. A photojournalist must be prepared to act fast and have his camera always at hand. The interesting pictures are most often a result of the alertness of the photojournalist who is at the right place at the right time. If a photojournalist is casual about his job, he is likely to miss many important chances. It is also not just being present at an important location but it is also about being positioned at the best place with the camera ready.
5. There are some events about which a photojournalist has advance information. So he or she can be there well before the action begins. For example, a public function like a sports event or a political meeting is usually announced well in advance. Newspapers are informed about the time and the venue. If the photo editor thinks that the event is important he will assign a photojournalist to attend the event. The photographer will take pictures of the participants, the audience, the venue etc.
6. However, there are events that no photojournalist can prepare for like a terrorist attack, a riot, a train accident, an earthquake or a bridge collapse. If a photojournalist is present when something like this occurs he or she has to act quickly while at the same time ensuring his or her own safety. It is rare for photojournalists to capture terrorist attacks, serious accidents or major natural disasters as they happen. It is usually the aftermath that the camera captures. The photojournalist then tries to take pictures that convey the sense

of the event, its magnitude and its impact on people and the place where it has occurred. The best pictures are a result of the judgment and sensitivity of the photographer.

7. Only small selections of pictures appear in the newspapers each day. Why is this so? Just as not all the news stories gathered by reporters get published in a newspaper not all pictures taken by photojournalists get published, so should give their very best. A photo editor will look at all the pictures that have been submitted by various photojournalists on any given day and make a choice about what will appear and what will not.

What makes a photojournalist different from a photographer?

A *photojournalist* is a visual reporter of facts. The public places trust in its reporters to tell the truth. The same trust is extended to photojournalists as visual reporters.

To tell a story, a sentence needs a subject, a verb and a direct object. News photos need the same construction. Photojournalists tell stories with their images. Also, words are always used in conjunction with photojournalist's images. Although photojournalists can take properly exposed and well composed photographs all day long, they hunt verbs. They hunt them, shoot them and show them to their readers. Then, they hunt more. A photojournalist has thousands of pairs of eyes looking over his shoulder constantly. The readers are insistent: "What are they doing?" "What did you see?" and "What happened?" (Hancock, 2009).

A *photographer* takes pictures of nouns (people, places and things). Photojournalists shoot action verbs ("kicks," "explodes," "cries," etc.). Photojournalists do shoot some nouns. These nouns can be standard photos of people (portraits), places (proposed zoning areas or construction sites) and things (name it). However, the nouns we seek still must tell a story. Both use photographic equipment to capture their images: Both can be freelancer, although most photojournalists are usually employed. Both are skilled photographers who use their cameras and other equipment to their best advantage. They must also think creatively and mixes technique and judgments to capture images (Hancock, 2009).

Conclusion

Photojournalism is an effective way of telling stories and disseminating information to a diverse group of people. Photojournalists must make decisions instantly and carry equipment such as cameras, often while exposed to the same risks such as war, rioting, and so forth. Compared to texts or plain articles, photos are more attractive. People are drawn to them because the images are colorful and interesting. Photojournalists have a responsibility to maintain standards of ethics, both in their choice of subject matter and their relationship to those they photograph. Best of all, photojournalism works because it does not rely only in words and phrases; photographs paint real pictures of events and emotions.

Summary



Photojournalism is going to meetings week after week, snapping pictures of a community's new construction project, photographing farmers markets and checking out a protest with a camera in hand. It's a rewarding and challenging field.

New photojournalists need to be aware of new ideas, new business models and new technology.

1. Photojournalism is relevant.
2. Photojournalism is timely.
3. Photojournalism is objective.
4. Photojournalism is narrative.
5. Aesthetically Interesting

Before the first photographs as the early form of photojournalism arose, there were illustrations that depicted certain historical events.

Photojournalism isn't the first form of journalism with the focus on pictures, but with the technological advancement of cameras, it was only logical to replace complex illustrations with photographs.

FURTHER READING

Photojournalism 101

Michael Gabriel by [Photojournalism 101 | Contrastly](#)

Described in simple terms, photojournalism is a branch of photography that uses photos or images to tell a story. A person who practices photojournalism is called a photojournalist. His photos come out in newspapers and magazines, as well as in non-traditional visual media like websites or blogs.

In some cases, photographers work with a journalist or writer assigned to the news beat. This means that the photographer takes photos related to certain news stories while the journalist takes care of writing the details of the events.

Many photojournalists, however, work on their own. Their works are often published as stand-alone features in newspapers and magazines. Photo blogs are also an important medium for these photojournalists.

Characteristics of Photojournalism

Photojournalism has qualities that make it different from other branches of photography. These factors help photojournalists come up with images that stir the mind and touch the soul.

1. Photojournalism is relevant.

The main objective of photojournalism is to tell a story better than the text or write-up that usually accompanies the photos. Therefore, it should capture images that have meaning or relevance to the story being told.

For example, a story about a mother reunited with her daughter after being apart for 20 years will be more effective if it is accompanied by a photo showing them rushing into each other's arms.

2. Photojournalism is timely.

Photojournalism should tackle current issues. It should feature something that's on the news, or something people are talking about. This will make the images more interesting to the audience or reader.

After her triumph in the London Olympics, for example, numerous photos of US gymnast Gabrielle "Gabby" Douglas in action were spread throughout the Internet. These photos were accompanied by short descriptions of how Gabby captured the attention of the crowd and the judges. The images helped people from different parts of the world to experience her victory and celebrate with her.

3. Photojournalism is objective.

Photojournalism is not biased. It does not take sides. Therefore, the images should accurately show events as they are. Some photographers, however, argue that to be completely objective is quite difficult. According to them, the term "*honest*" is more appropriate in describing photojournalism. No matter what a photojournalist believes in; whether he prefers to be objective or honest, the most important thing is for him to present the images as is.

The secret is not to force the situation. For example, a photojournalist shooting a burial scene should not force his subject to shed tears because he wants to create a dramatic effect. Real emotions are captured candidly.

4. Photojournalism is narrative.

Photojournalism works best if it is presented as a narrative. The photos should come with a short write-up or article stating important facts about the incident or event. It should tell a story.

For example, a photo that shows two little girls lifting a small box of old clothes tells a clearer story than one that shows a box marked with “*Old Clothes*”.

5. Aesthetically Interesting

Photojournalists follow certain photography principles that are intended to help them produce photos that catch the attention of different audiences. Photos with the right focus, angle and color will attract more people than those that come out blurry or unfocused.

Different Fields of Photojournalism

If you are a serious photojournalist, you should be flexible enough as there are several photojournalism fields that you may be assigned to.

- **General News** pertains to any event that is planned ahead of time. Examples are press conferences, product launch ceremonies and fund raising dinners.
- **Spot or Breaking News** – refers to any event or incident that is unplanned. You don’t know where or when it will happen, and sometimes, it shouldn’t even have happened! Examples: a house or building fire, a burglary or a car accident.
- **Documentary Photojournalism** – this refers to long term photography projects like trailing a candidate during the campaign period or documenting the life of an orphaned child.
- **Sports Photography** – the most action-packed side of photojournalism. You can take photos of any sport: a basketball game, a football championship match and even a special Taekwondo tournament.
- **Portrait Photojournalism** – this is not your typical portrait photo. In photojournalism, portrait shots involve significant members of the community shown in their usual environment, like a race car driver beside his car, a doctor inside the operating room or the US President in the Oval Office.

Basic Photojournalism Tips

Even if you’ve been taking photos for years, you cannot be called a good photojournalist if you do not know the basic rules of the practice.

1. Good photos tell a story better than the text that comes with it. And in order to tell a story, your photos should have the following elements:
 1. humans or people
 2. emotions, i.e. facial or non-verbal expressions

3. action
4. something extraordinary or unusual (like a blind father braille-reading a story to his kid)
2. Your photos should focus on the faces of people, not on their backs or the backs of their heads. Take photos of people in action; of people doing things. Avoid taking photos of people shaking hands or handing out awards as these tend to bore the audience.
3. Make sure that your subject is always in focus. Know what your central subject should be. For example, when taking photos of people stranded because of a storm, your focus should be on the people, not on the torrent of rains. If you want to focus on the rain, your story should be about the storm, not the stranded people.
4. Think twice or thrice before deciding to take photos of naked people. This practice can be quite tricky as the photos might be misinterpreted by some groups or individuals. Study the circumstances first before taking the photos. For instance, when doing a story about bare-chested native women, you need to determine first how to take the photo in a manner that won't come out offensive, or in a way that can be interpreted as gratuitous. Ask yourself if the nudity can really add something to the story before making a decision.
5. Finally, always take note of the angle of the shots you are taking. To make sure that you choose the right angle, take a couple of shots in different perspectives. This is similar to what film directors do when they want to capture the scenes of their movies in different points of view.

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YOUTUBE VIDEO LINK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYu-Nc7m_ok&t=402s&ab_channel=RaphTech Introduction to Photojournalism.