



**JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER**

COMM 207: Photojournalism

Introducing students to the art of multimedia storytelling.

FALL 2026

Mondays | 9:00-12:00pm

Professor **Federica Valabrega**

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Office Hours: by appointment

Instructor: Federica Valabrega is an Italian photojournalist based in between Rome and New York. Her photographs have been published in a number of U.S. based publications such as, The New York Times, TIME Magazine, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg News, Philadelphia Enquirer, LA Times, Npr.org, as well as in a number of European ones such as, Vanity Fair Italy, Vogue Italy, M Le Magazine du Monde, Le Monde de religions, Dummy Magazine, Haaretz, Biber Magazine, La Repubblica, L'Espresso, La Stampa, Il Corriere della Sera and Panorama.

Valabrega is also the photobook author of "Daughters of the King," a documentary photography project on the lives of Orthodox Jewish women from among five countries in the world. Selected images from the book were exhibited in Rome at the Ermanno Tedeschi Gallery in 2013 as her first solo show. The same images were also brought by Tedeschi at the MIA (Milano Image Fair) in 2014 where she won the "BNL photography prize." Later, Valabrega's images were selected for the Documentary photography exhibit at the "Visa Pour l'Image" Photo Festival in Perpignan, France in 2014 and at the Para Photo in Turin, Italy that same year, and at the International Photography Festival in Tel Aviv in 2016.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a course in basic photojournalism on location. There will be both classroom sessions and classes off campus, held on location in Rome and the surrounding area, as well as a possible visit to a photographic exhibition or gallery to emphasize student's engagement in photography from all aspect of life. Students will gain an understanding of modern photojournalism and related multimedia best practices in a bootcamp setting with an emphasis on practical experience. The course will also teach students the necessary skills to

compose, and light and image properly while shooting on location; techniques for working as a photojournalist; editing and producing photographs for multimedia websites and newspapers; and building a portfolio of images to pitch to any newsroom worldwide. Class sessions will cover learning use of a camera as well documentary and candid photographic techniques, photographic software such as Lightroom and Adobe Photoshop, and daily critiques. Classes on location include practical fieldwork.

SUMMARY OF COURSE CONTENT:

This course is meant for students who wish to deepen their knowledge of Photojournalism, but also the ideas behind taking photographs. It will review basic camera functions and introduce methods of the elaboration of photos on the computer. The course is hands-on and will include picture-taking in a variety of genres and the preparation of a photo essay to be shown in an exhibition and/or a photo portfolio to be presented to a possible Internship or job opportunities.

This is a course in basic photojournalism on location and digital imaging, composed of 14 sessions (each being 2,45 hours long), divided in two main parts:

- *Theoretical and technical*: the basic principles of photography, visualizing the photo, lighting techniques and digital workflow. How to develop your idea, understanding what an interesting subject for you is and crafting your photographic style.

- *Practical*: including fieldworks where you will be applying what you've learned in the theory lessons. This part will also include a variety of skills to be able to edit, and retouch selected images for a final project/exhibition.

REQUIRED MATERIAL:

- Digital single lens reflex (DSLR) or mirrorless camera with manual adjustments of f-stop and shutter speed
- SD memory card(s) 8GB+
- External Hard Disk or Thumb Drive

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Learn how to operate a digital camera properly.
- Learn what photojournalism is and the history behind it.
- Learn how to develop a Beat
- Learn how to interview/photograph sources
- Learn how to research and verify information

- Learn to photograph in diverse lighting conditions: natural and artificial ones.
- Develop the practical and intellectual skills to deliver a photographic essay to tell a news story within a newsroom context.
- Develop analytical skills to critique each other's work constructively.
- Learn how to use post-production tools to edit images

ASSIGNMENTS, SCHEDULE: In this class there will be individual weekly photographic assignments; a Camera Skill quiz; a Mid-term Exam where students will show their first images; a FINAL organized portfolio of your images to make-up for a photographic project (which will serve as the Final Exam).

Assignment	Guidelines	Weight
Mid-term Exam	An in-class critique of a pitch and 7-10 images to produce a newsworthy story that the students will keep following until the end of the semester.	20%
Final Presentation	Students are expected to be shooting an average of 20 images per week to produce at least 10 new images to show per critique. The final presentation consists of editing the work over the course of the semester in digital & printed form and should reflect an understanding of newsworthy topic from class lesson and suggestions from the teacher and your peers from in-class critiques. Also, a news story pitch and captions for each image will have to be delivered with the final image selections.	30%
Proficiency & Participation	Includes technical proficiency both in camera and with editing software, such as Lightroom and Photoshop in-class participation, and improvement of photographic and news vocabulary. Students should show teacher a digital contact sheets of all new images made for review and prepare news pitch weekly to support their story project with hard facts they researched. Students will also be required to bring weekly to class an article with images of their choices from the news organization they decide to read for the semester.	50%

FINAL EXAMINATION: There will be no written Final Exam. The Semester Project serves as the Final. On the last day of class (Monday, December 7) there will be an extensive individual and group critique of the semester's assignments and the Semester Project. Students will present, and attendance is mandatory.

Etiquette

Computer and device use: During class, you are expected to use your laptop for class-

related tasks only. As a courtesy to your colleagues and instructor, please mute your phones and tablets before entering the classroom.

Use of Chat GPT and AI is strictly prohibited in this course.

TEXTBOOK:

NONE

REQUIRED RESERVED READING:

The New York Times or The Washington Post.

Students are also expected to regularly read a major news publication. Sometimes students will be asked to present a brief analysis of how photography, and other multimedia, is used in an article published within the last three days to class every Monday, for the duration of the course.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

Once-a-week classes:

- After 1 absence, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 3 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

GRADING POLICY: Each individual assignment will count as one grade and the Final Semester Project counts as two grades. A written Mid-Term Exam will count as two grades.

All grades will be averaged for the final course grade. Late or incomplete assignments will be penalized by one grade (an A becomes a B, etc.). One week before the class ends, students wishing to improve their grade may have an opportunity to do so by taking on an additional assignment. The additional assignment can only improve the grade; it will not be used to compute the final grade if by including it the final grade would decrease.

Grading

94-100: A

90-93: A-

87-89: B+

84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F

Grades: A/A- = Excellent command of the photographic language, image structure sophisticated, project organization is high, software application is advanced. B+ = Very good command of the photographic language showing very few errors, image structure is advanced. B = Good command of the photographic language, competent use of image structure, evidence of development and complexity, work will generally be above average. B- = Satisfactory command of the photographic language, image structure will be simple, medium number of errors. C+ = Some evidence of ability to control the photographic language, image structure is simple, frequent but not serious errors. C/C- = Some evidence of the ability to control the photographic language, high frequency of errors. D = Little evidence of the ability to control or apply the photographic language, failure to execute a photographic project, frequent errors. F = No evidence of the ability to apply the photographic language and failure to make a photographic project.

Class Schedule:

Every Monday from 9-12 p.m. starting August 31. Fall Break will be October 9-18. While Thanksgiving break will be Nov. 26-29. The final day of class is December 7.

The fall academic calendar can be found online at
<https://www.luc.edu/rome/academics/academiccalendar/>

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (August 31) - First day of class: Introduction. What is photojournalism, what makes something newsworthy, what does the job of photojournalist entails. Overview of syllabus, requirements, class expectations, and review of students' equipment and needs. Grade and attendance policies discussion.

Week 2 (September 7)– The basic principles of photography I: basic camera controls set-ups (ISO; shutter speed; f-stop and white balance) - *please review your manual prior to class.* Small intro to Hard and Soft news photography. The ethics of Photojournalism how to tell a neutral story without a slanted angle in the proper way abiding by a Code of Ethics such as

the SPJ one: (<https://www.spj.org/spj-code-of-ethics/>) Discussion why it's not appropriate to use AI in photojournalism with some examples. Getting inspired by looking at professional photographers' work. *Weekly Photo and Reading assignment began today.*

Week 3 (September 14) - Talking about the prior week assignments. The basic principles of photography II. The basics of natural & artificial lighting, composition, framing the subject, geometrical design elements, rule of thirds and depth of field. *Framing images objectively in great light exercise at home. Article reading requirement.*

Week 4 (September 21)— Talking about the prior week assignments. The basic principles of photography III: Portraiture as a great way to connect with the subject of our stories. The digital workflow I. Data capture, file management, basic non-destructive corrections in Lightroom, working with RAW files, what's a histogram: how to create your own photography catalogue (contact sheet) and how to manage a proper photojournalist workflow. *Bring photo beat of choice for next class. Portraiture assignment at home.*

Week 5 – (September 28) – Reviewing portraitures and discussion all Photo Beats selected. The digital workflow II: how to write captions to accompany your pictures. The basic principles of photography IV: What makes a collection of images a photo essay and how to sequence them to tell a strong news story. In class editing and sequencing of images with captions in a short story format in preparation of Mid-Term Critique.

Week 6 (October 5)- The basic principles of photography V: Learn how to write a good LEDE in class and what entails for a great photo pitch. *At home assignment: prepare your Midterm with captions and a good LEDE.*

Week 7 (October 12) – Mid-Term Critique: Analysis and screening of students' photo stories and news captions and pitches to complete them. *Choose A Photojournalist to profile for after the break.*

Week 8 (October 19) – NO CLASSES

Week 9 (October 26) – Presentation of the Photojournalist of choice. The digital workflow III. In class editing, retouching, and resizing of images taken at home the prior weeks and preparing them for print. What is the right amount of manipulation to keep your images newsworthy and ethically correct. *Fieldwork assignment on portraiture all together outside of class.*

Week 10 (November 2) - The digital workflow IV. Laser ink-jet printing in class. The basic principles of photography VI: Learn how to Fact-Check your sources and interviews to start writing a full-body one page pitch to accompany your photo essays. *Write your own story pitch at home*

Week 11 (November 9) - Review news story pitches in class. Revising subject and previous images for the final project sequence and work on titling the new story and further correcting texts. *Work on second draft of pitches with fact-checking.*

Week 12 (November 16) - The basic principles of photography VII. The future of photojournalism. What are the possible outcomes for student who want to enter a career in photojournalism nowadays. Reviewing past & present photojournalists in the field. *Fieldwork assignment all together in the light studio adjacent to class or field work using flash to learn about artificial lighting.*

Session 13 (November 22) - The digital workflow V: Adobe Illustrator to build your own FINAL PDF or STORY BOARD. *Assignment at homework on your final projects in Adobe Illustrator as shown.*

Week 14 (November 30) - The basic principles of photography VIII: Talk about the difference between feature vs. breaking news outlets, how to reach out to them, presentation your work to the publication and be published. *Continue working on your final projects. Prepare your favorite news organization to present in class during Finals.*

Week 15 (December 7) -Session Completion of the final project. Presentation and review of students' photographic projects and their favorite news outlet featured. Critically evaluate the work presented by fellow students.

STATEMENT ON CHEATING & PLAGIARISM: A student whose actions are deemed by the school to be out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives or the spirit of good conduct as fostered by the school and academic community, may be subject to discipline, including dismissal, by the school. Cheating is a dishonest action out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives and spirit of the university. Cheating reflects negatively on one's personal integrity. Cheating is unjust to those students who have studied. A student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the dean, who has the final decision on the outcome of the student's grade and status.

STUDENT ACCOMODATIONS:

Accessibility Accommodations: Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Academic Affairs office at the John Felice Rome Center during the first week of classes.

Statement on Title IX: The Rome Center follows Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

