Photograph New York Coastal

Down by the water’s edge we find the color contrast delineating wet and dry to the rhythm of nature’s tidal flux. The ebb relinquishes 12 hours of waterborne mystery; the flow’s 12 hours blanket refreshes the shore’s human impositions. New York City’s 578 coastal miles inspire this photographic documentary workshop to explore ongoing changes in commercial development, social recreation and environmental climate. The gradual cleansing of New York City waterways has encouraged neighborhood communities to revive their historical, artistic, and literary traditions along shorelines once occupied by industry. Now attracting vibrant cultural, educational and tourist activity, New York City coastal communities are again looking at the water, seeking inspiration in its beauty.

Embarking on a photographic project of their design, students will develop their own personal viewpoint on society’s relationship to New York waterlines. How are Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx redesigning their coasts to increase public space, support green energy and foster social, historical and environmental awareness? As they document the past, present and future from the waterline to two blocks inland, students will create their position as photographers: they will determine their own perception (vantage point, angle, point of view, framing) and establish a particular relationship with the audience (through scale, rhythm sequence, position, color). Classes will offer on-site picture-making, technical instruction, critiques of student work and visual analysis, and will be highly collaborative. Open to highly motivated students with or without experience in documentary photography; digital or film cameras welcome.

Project Areas

1. From the Battery to 14th St East
2. From the Battery to 14th St. West
3. From 14th to 72nd St. East
4. From 14th to 72nd St West
5. from 72nd St. to 125th St. East
6. from 72nd St. to 125th St. West
On-site Picture-making Locations

Brooklyn Bridge
Staten Island Ferry
79th St. Boat Basin
Coney Island – Mermaid Parade (optional)
Williamsburg
Hudson waterline from a sailboat

On-site picture-making: Mermaid's Parade in Coney Island (optional) (6/23)

Week 1 ~ Viewpoint: Under the Brooklyn Bridge

(5/21)
Introduction: New York Coastlines, Photographing New York Distribution of areas, Choice of Project Themes, Camera technique
Film: Rudy Burckhardt, ‘Under the Brooklyn Bridge’ (1955, 15mn.)
~ Initial Assignment (due on 5/25): travel to the water’s edge closest to your location, make photographs of your trip to it, your findings, your return.

(5/23)
Review of Initial Assignment, discussion
~ Project Assignment 1 (due on 6/4): photograph your area from waterline to two blocks inland. Document also Memorial Weekend festivities along the waterfront or your own celebration.

Week 2 ~ Color: Summer at the Water Edge

(5/28)
Memorial Day: Holiday, no class

(5/30)
Review of Project Assignment 1, discussion.
Introduction to color theory and depth of field
~ Project Assignment 2 (due on 6/8): photograph your area* from waterline to two blocks inland. Consider depth of field and make a series of photographs that emphasize one color.

Week 3 ~ Depth of Field: Staten Island Ferry

(6/4)
On-site picture-making: Staten Island Ferry
Meet at Castle Clinton in Battery Park (6 train to Bowling Green)
Review of Project Assignment 2, discussion.
Introduction to shutter speed
~ Project Assignment 3 (due on 6/15): photograph your area* from waterline to two blocks inland. Practice shutter speed choices to freeze movement and create blur.

Week 4 ~ Movement and Blur: 79th St. Boat Basin

(6/11)
On-site picture-making: 79th St. Boat Basin
Meet at the center fountain (1 train to 79th St)
Walk from 79th St. south along the waterfront

(6/13)
Review of Project Assignment 3, discussion
Introduction to composition and scale
~ Project Assignment 4 (due on 6/22): photograph your area* from waterline to two blocks inland. Set up compositions where you have two objects that define a scale relationship.

Week 5 ~ Composition and Scale: Williamsburg

(6/18)
On-site picture-making: Williamsburg
Meet in Bedford (F train)
Discover the Williamsburg Waterfront and the changes occurring from an industrial site to an artistic neighborhood beaming with galleries, restaurants, and a newly-developed waterfront. Walk on bridge on the way back

(6/20)
Review of Project Assignment 4, discussion
~ Project Assignment 5 (due on 6/29): photograph your area* from waterline to two blocks inland. Incorporate all the photographic techniques you have explored.

Week 6 ~ Photographing the Hudson Under Sail

Photograph the Hudson shoreline from a sailboat
Meet in North Cove Marina (by Winter Garden)
Embark on Adirondack or Shearwater (TBA) for a sunset sail

(6/27)
Final review, discussion
Suggested Readings

Philip Lopate, Waterfront, A Journey Around Manhattan
Ann Buttenwieser, Manhattan Water-Bound
Allan Keller, Life Along the Hudson
Jeffrey S. Levinton, John Waldman, The Hudson River Estuary
Robert Adams, Along Some Rivers
Robert Adams, Beauty in Photography

Images


Films / Visual Texts

Van Bruen Corporation, Manhattan Waterfront
Rudy Burckhardt, Under the Brooklyn Bridge
Chris Marker, La Jetée

Requirements

• Attendance to every class is mandatory.

• Weekly preparedness and class participation.

• Create a personal visual journal recording the perceptual rhythm of everyday life (if you so wish, you may include images from this visual record in your workshop project).

• Workshop project:

  Develop a workshop project that explains your theme focus; a one-page written proposal is due on June 1. Your project in progress will be discussed in class during five review sessions.

  Project Presentation 1: Show your work and listen to the class critique of your images.
  Project Presentation 2-5: Describe your project, show additional images and join the class discussion.
• Project presentations include waterline area images, personal visual journal and on-site picture-making photographs.

• A final digital portfolio including a brief artist statement is due by June 27.

Grading

Class participation and preparedness, image presentations: 50%
Semester project: 50%

NYU Policy on academic integrity

This class follows NYU’s zero tolerance policy with regard to plagiarism. Taking the writing of someone else, in whole or in part and presenting it as your own will result in serious academic consequences.

In your assignments you will always make clear the difference between your thoughts or ideas and those belonging to someone else. Great scholarship is the ability to use the ideas of others to build your own unique argument on a topic.