

Photographic Topics During COVID-19 – the “Photo Series” Assignments

Certainly these are trying times for us as a community, both locally and globally. However you view the events we are going through, you are a part of a very historic moment in the planet’s human history. The images you take as related to the COVID-19 Outbreak are a documentation of this history in the making. They may be images you share with your children or grandchildren. Additionally, this time of isolation can be very challenging for some or most of us. You can use the art of photography to express what you are experiencing emotionally, socially, and mentally. Some of the most moving pieces of art have come out of pain and discomfort. If you prefer to not focus on this topic for these assignments or vary from this topic to non-related topics, you will have that choice which will be explained below.

Here is a list of topics to photograph during this time. For lack of a better title for these tasks they will be called “Photo Series” assignments.

Topics Related to COVID-19 Outbreak

Social Distancing: This will likely be one of the most remembered phrases of our lifetime. What does this look like? Create images that demonstrate what is occurring before our very eyes. Maybe you document what you and your family are doing around the house while in isolation. If you are allowed by your parents and you maintain the proper social distancing regulations, you can maybe document what your community looks like: signs on store windows about temporary closures, deserted streets, empty restaurants, people wearing protective face masks, etc.

Positives of this social distancing time: We are all of a sudden forced to be stuck in a house with our family. What are you as a family doing to make the most of it? Playing games, cooking/baking more? Getting neglected projects done around the home? Going out on walks with your family?

Loss and Grief: While we must always keep our perspective about the loss of life going on with this crisis a great deal of loss is taking place right now in other ways: job loss, lost sports seasons, lost time with friends, lost traditions of this time of year: prom, possibly graduation, and other events. Take images that focus on loss and grief. It is natural to feel grief for these things, even if they don’t seem as serious as some of the other issues people face. This is an unprecedented event in our country’s history and to navigate all that is lost in this time is without precedent. Even during the Great Depression and World War II some of these things were not canceled. Virtually everything has been canceled for a time right now. It is truly astounding.

Solitude/Loneliness: When we see Hollywood movies about pandemics, they are often filled with high drama and while there is certainly high drama going on in health care facilities around the world with this outbreak, for most Americans the result is a sudden drop in our normal routines and activities and we are thrust into a world that is much more quiet and with a lot more solitude. This may mean less drama for you or maybe it creates more drama. Create images that illustrate how you or those you know are dealing with this quiet and slower alone time.

Distance Learning: All of a sudden students, parents, administrators, and teachers are thrown into homeschooling and distance learning with little to no time to prepare. Document what this looks like. Students on Zoom with their teachers, parents or older siblings in the role of teacher, etc.

Work: Your parents or others you know may be going through some turbulent times with their work situation. Think of creative ways to document this, while maintaining social distancing laws and the current laws of the day.

Items of the Time: there has been this sudden surge of items that have garnered a great deal of attention: toilet paper, hand sanitizer, bottled water, protective face masks, etc. These seemingly mild, humble items have a whole new meaning in our lives. Take photos that comment on these items and their significance and meaning.

Topics Not Necessarily Related to COVID-19

Some of you may prefer to not produce any images related to COVID-19. Or you may want to vary from that topic to other non-related topics. Here are some options:

Window lighting: My brother-in-law was a professional photographer for 20 years and had over \$10,000 worth of studio lighting equipment in his home to shoot portraits. He would take photos of my kids in the studio and then say “Ok, now go over here” to a regular window in the house. I’d plop my baby down by the window and he would take the images using the soft diffused light coming from the window. The images looked just as good as the studio images and it cost nothing (well except your mortgage or rent payment to keep your home). Shoot portraits or objects by a window. The best light is usually not direct sunlight on you topic, but rather light where the sun is out of view. Please see samples. If you do an image search online “photographs using window lighting,” you will get a ton of images to use for ideas and inspiration.

Revisit Photo One Topics: New images of topics we have covered in the past: line, texture, shape, portrait, freeze, blur, or pan motion. These must be new images that were not taken in photo one. You can focus on one or more of these topics. You can also turn this one in multiple times for the weekly Friday due dates as long as the images are all different – no repeated images.

Manipulations: Photo Two focuses a great deal on taking existing images you have (both film and digital) and manipulating them using special effects and advanced editing tools. Darkroom will not be an option at this time, so you can use editing software on your computer or phone/tablet to create interesting manipulations. Photomontages, creative color shifts, interesting filters and overlays, etc. I cannot give any training on this at this time due to various access issues for you as students and time for me to come up with a plan. So use whatever editing program you prefer. You may use an image you have turned in for a past assignment but now edited differently. So let’s say you turned in Image A for a portrait in photo one and now you take that same image and apply a manipulation to it that is ok to turn in for this assignment. As long as an image is edited/manipulated differently, images can be reused. Manipulations can take a longer time to produce than just a basically edited image. You can turn in fewer of these images for the assignment. You will need to contact me and show me the images and I will determine how many “straight” images they are worth.

Landscape: At the point of this writing, you are still able to go outside as long as you are maintaining social distancing rules. You can shoot landscape images. With all the rain this month, the landscapes are quite stunning.

Reflections/Refractions: Using puddles of water, mirrors, windows and the like, shoot images of interesting reflections or refractions of light.

Favorite Things/Locations/Pets Around Your Home: You are spending a lot of time at home. Take time to think about your favorite pets, things or places around your home and photograph them: favorite toys from childhood (or now), favorite corners or locations in your house/yard/neighborhood, favorite cups, tools, instruments, etc.

Open Topic: There may be a topic you wish to explore during this time. You may do this, however, please run it by me before you begin.

Written Task

For each photo series you will be turning in a brief written description of your series. This description should be at least 3 sentences but certainly can be longer. Possible discussion points: techniques used both during the shoot and/or editing, your feelings about the topic, why you shot these images, why these images are important to you. I am not picky what you write about, just be honest and give some detail/commentary.

Turning these into Google Photos and Google Classroom

You will be turning these into the Photo Series Assignments on Google Classroom. Please title your album on Google Photos with the topic you choose. For example: "Window Lighting" or "Items of the Time." Or if you choose your own topic, title the album as such.

Please turn in these albums as we did in Photo One.

To turn in the written part:

- 1) Write a private comment on Google Classroom OR
- 2) Type this on a Word/Google Doc and upload it to its corresponding assignment on Google Classroom. I would prefer it saved as a PDF, but a normal Google Doc or Word Doc is ok too.