

PHMD 201 - Photography I: View Camera, Fall 2013
Writing Prompt No. 1

What did you know about the view camera when you enrolled in this course? Why, do you think, would we offer a view camera class in this day and age?

"When I enrolled in PHMD 201 I was honestly not expected to be using a 4x5 view camera. With that said I had no previous experience using this type of camera. I believe that as an institute you are allowing your students to learn from the basics first. This particular camera might not be old but the history of this camera goes back to the 1840s. If you force your students to start with material that they used when photography was first invented, it allows us to learn all over again from a basic stand point."

"Before this class, I knew the view camera used large sheets of film that offered an increased amount of detail. I knew that the camera had no internal light meter nor automated shutter. Coming from a background in film that was only 35mm, the concept of the large format camera was unique. Rather than the convenience and mobility of the 35mm camera, the view camera represented a more thoughtful, professional approach to photography. Time, planning, and consideration were aspects that had to be taken into account before the picture was even taken."

The view camera represents a greater dedication to the thought process of the photograph over a SLR camera. The photographer must plan out the shot, situate the camera, meter the scene, set the camera, and make the exposure. One result of such a tedious process is that the photographer will hopefully be more conscientious of the choices they make before they take a picture."

"Before taking this class, I really didn't know anything about the view camera. I had seen it in passing and knew the basic premise of how it worked with the camera obscura method, but had never actually used one myself. I think I'm falling in love with this camera. I like that I can control every setting and make the composition exactly what I want it to be.

I think this is an excellent course to take in a photography program because it teaches you to slow down and focus on each piece of film. In a roll of thirty some odd exposures, you can take several shots of the same composition quickly, almost without thinking, but when you have one sheet, you really have to consider every aspect of your shot. You have to look at your composition closely, your settings, and your focus. This is a wonderful way to learn the process of taking a photograph and should help everyone in the course."

"Before this class, I knew basically nothing about the view camera. I had seen one used before, but it had a digital back to it as opposed to the film backs we're using. I didn't know how they worked at all. Just like learning how to use a film camera and the darkroom, I think this class is taught to teach students the basics of photography. It helps to know how film is developed and how the whole camera works since the process is so different with digital. We can just snap a photo with a DSLR but when we use regular film cameras or these view cameras, we get to learn firsthand how it all works. I think it also instills patience in students. Digital photography takes little to no patience but taking a picture with a view camera takes longer and causes us to slow down and think about what we're doing."

"While starting this course, I had no prior knowledge of the view camera. In fact, I didn't even know that it was called a view camera. I referred to it as "the big boxy chunky camera that you have to get under a black cloth to use." The only processes I've been taught and worked with are digital and 35 mm film. I took a high school course using 35 mm film, as well as a course at ASU over 35mm. Other than that, I've played around with disposable camera photography as well as polaroid. Not a lengthy process, but still

containing the film qualities I love. I think we are using the view cameras as a learning tool for many reasons. One being that, like you said, it slows us down. It complicates the process and makes us plan exactly what's going to be in the image. Also, because we're studying photography as our majors, it is important that we know where photography came from; we should investigate photography history in order to develop ourselves as photographers."

"When I enrolled into this course I did not know anything about the view camera. I only heard of it in my previous class at JCCC when learning about different type of flim cameras. I think KU offer a view camera class in this day and age is because it will help us appreciate what the past had to go through. For us to be able to know and learn the history of photography then hands on hands what they have done too."

"Entering the course, I knew a viewfinder was a large format camera and that most viewfinders were older models of cameras. Besides being a unique opportunity in education, I think the learning from a viewfinder teaches a photographer more about composition and enhances the thought process in creating a picture - especially in this day and age where a lot of people are used to taking endless pictures - because of digital storage; also being a film and process based medium, the viewfinder creates a good work ethic and appreciation for you own work. Learning with a viewfinder also helps the learning photographer grasp the roots of photography and are further able to advance."

"When I enrolled in this class I didn't really know anything about view cameras. I knew what they were but I have never used one before and I certainly never imagined I would ever get the chance to do so. I believe his class is offered because it completely changes the way you think about photographs. The whole process really makes you slow down and consider every aspect of what you are trying to do. You can't just preset the settings on your DSLR based on what you're going to take pictures of and then simply press a button to take those pictures. With a view camera you have to slow down and make sure everything is right or else you could ruin the shot. Then of course you have to process them right and edit. I think it will better anyone's photos if they take the time to do so."

"Before I joined this class I didnt even know what this class was about. It was the next step in the photo school. When I learned it was about the view camera I got excited because we would be working with film. I would much rather process film than work digitally. The only time I have really ever seen a view camera is in those old films. The first thing I thought of was the black cloth and the poof. I think we are learning about the view camera now because it is a part of history. You have to ubderstand where we started to understand how we got to where we are now. Learning about thefilm process and the view camera process teaches us things that a dslr and photoshop can't. We learn exactly how to light meter, how the film works, and how to process it."

"When starting this class I knew very little about view cameras. I knew they came in all different sizes, but dealt with large format film. The impression I had when the view finder was first introduced in the course was that of pure excitement. I always love a challenge. This challenge stemming from a purely manual camera, a camera that has an entire physical, delicate process to it. Its quite an intimate process between the view finder and the photographer. I think it was a great idea to offer this kind of class to photography majors in this day and age. It gives them the experience in the field, and much more of a respect for what we handle today. Photographers need to be immersed in the history of photography. They need to be well rounded and master the arts of photography, whether it be film or alternative processes, every photographer needs to know these processes so that they can produce successful photographs. They also need to have a physical connection to photographs, and the only way to achieve

such a connection would be to use film and manually solve things by. Personally, I think every photography major should be required to take this class.”

“Before I started this course, all that I knew about view cameras was that they were “those cameras” that involved placing a dark cloth over yourself. I also knew that it took quite a bit of time to focus them on the subject and that the people who were going to be in the picture had to stay very still for an extended period of time while the photographer was getting everything ready. Now that I am in this class, I grasp all the technical parts that went into it that I hadn't know before. I think that a class like this can be beneficial for students today simply because fo the fact that a view camera is fully manual. In today's society we all have digital cameras that can go on full automatic and so you literally just click the button and there's your picture. The view camera teaches us (hands-on) about adjusting aperture and getting the correct exposure, and through that problem-solving to get to that point to make sure everything is going correctly to get that perfect image.”

“I knew nothing about view cameras coming into this class besides the fact that it was large format and a dated camera. I think darkroom photographic processes are a lost art and need to be explored more so we don't completely lose them. I prefer film photography and darkroom processing to digital, so I'm very appreciative of this course and all that I am learning.”