

In his class, instructor requires students to keep cellphones on

WASHINGTON – Most colleges require students to put away their cellphones during class. However, for one class at The Catholic University of America, not bringing a cellphone to class can result in loss of points from their participation grade.

Cellphone photography is a new class at Catholic University in Washington that allows students to see photography in a fresh way and explore a device they carry with them every day in a different way. Students are told to turn their everyday lives into a book of photographs. For example, one assignment was to take photos on their phone at their Thanksgiving dinner celebration with their families.

Only a handful of other universities offer a class like the one taught at Catholic University. The class encourages students to post the photos taken in class on their social media sites and is taught by professional photographer Matthew Barrick.

“The goal of this class is to show the true creative art of photography using a cellphone. You have your camera with you 24 hours a day,” Barrick said.

The class assignments consist of weekly blog entries that must include pictures students took that week on their phones, as well as ongoing work on their final project.

The class’s final project is called “100 photographs in 100 days,” and the students can take pictures of anything they want with their phones over the course of the semester. Then, they pick the best photos and put them into an online photo book for the professor to review and grade.

Barrick emphasizes that it does not matter what type of phone students use, as long as it has a camera. He thinks the most important part is that students use their eyes and imagination to take the best photos possible.

Models range from brand new iPhones to old flip phones with cracked screens. Students who have newer phones are allowed to download applications to help them

edit the photos they take.

“One student has an old flip phone and it actually produces very nice photos,” Barrick said.

Said student Maggie Sanborn, “I don’t have a smart phone, but I still find myself taking pretty decent photos with my Verizon Envoy.”

The class has similarities to a regular photography class, because it focuses on the general knowledge of photography. Barrick said the general message and goal of the class is the same as a regular photography class: to learn the rules of composition and take good pictures.

The class also has some differences. Photos taken with cellphones can be immediately uploaded to social networking sites and blogs, unlike those taken with digital cameras. Also, the cameras on cellphones do not have the same features as regular digital cameras, so photos come out differently.

“Cellphone photography allows for a natural form of picture taking, and photography with a digital camera is more forced,” Barrick said.

Along with being a lecturer on the adjunct faculty of Catholic University’s art department, Barrick works as a commercial photographer in the home health care and hospice industry. He travels around the world taking pictures of people who are suffering from an illness and depend on home health care to stay alive. He then posts the pictures to a site where publications and agencies can purchase them.

Barrick came up with the cellphone photography class accidentally. He was teaching a digital photography class at Catholic University last year when his students started complaining about not being able to finish their final projects. To prove to his students they could do it, he completed in one week the exact project they had a full semester to do. The only difference was that he used an iPhone to take the photos for the project.

Barrick realized that a class on cellphone photography might be of interest to students. He talked to university officials and they agreed. Since last year when the first cellphone photography class was taught at Catholic university, it has had a

growing waiting list and students continue to inquire about making the class bigger.

Currently, the class holds 16 students, the maximum number of seats in the photo lab.

Barrick is hopeful the class will spread to other universities and that people will see how a cellphone can be a great vehicle in the world of photography.

“This class is unlike anything I have ever experienced before. I look at my cellphone camera in a whole new light and I find myself taking pictures on it all the time now,” said Kathryn Murphy, a student in Barrick’s class.