Commercial Photography - Unit 1 - Introduction to Commercial Photography/Portraiture

Unit Focus

This intensive unit provides the essential technical and practical expertise required for high-level commercial photography, bridging the gap between simply taking a photo and intentionally creating art. As a STEM-credited course, the curriculum integrates the technical precision of optics and digital processing with the principles of the creative design process. Students will gain photographic fluency across the entire image-capturing process, from phone photography fundamentals and advanced DSLR operation to achieving high-quality results through studio lighting and industry-standard post-production in Photoshop and Lightroom. Students will also explore how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are influencing the field of photography from concept development to post-production, while learning to navigate these tools in an ethical and responsible manner. Success will be measured not only by final images but by growth in the Profile of a Graduate (POG) capacities. Specifically, students will engage in Design through strategic planning by developing concepts via mood boards and analyzing the physics of lighting and posing before the shutter is released. Furthermore, students will cultivate Self-Awareness by mastering the Creative Cycle, utilizing peer feedback and technical reflection to refine work from a rough capture into a professional-grade final image.

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

Standard(s)

Connecticut Goals and Standards
Technology Education (CTE)

- Evaluate a shooting location in terms of lighting, sound, production equipment needs, and electrical essentials. (TE.DV.C.13)
- Describe, plan the use of, and apply 3- point lighting, source light, white balance, scrims, and reflectors using the appropriate techniques. (TE.DV.D.14)
- Describe white balance, iris, aperture, auto and manual focus, audio settings, and levels in camera operations. (TE.DV.E.18)
- Create graphics and titles appropriate to the project. (TE.DV.F.22)

National Core Arts Standards
Visual Arts: HS Proficient

- Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas. (VA:Cn10.1.HSI.a)
- Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress. (VA:Cr3.1.HSI.a)
- Analyze, select, and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation. (VA:Pr.4.1.HSI.a)
- Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works. (VA:Re9.1.HSI.a)

MPS AI Literacy Framework

Transfer

Students will be able to independently use their learning to...
T1 Independently navigate complex technology (DSLRs, Studio Lighting, and Computer Software) to solve visual problems. They will move from taking a photo to creating an image by intentionally manipulating the Exposure Triangle (Aperture, Shutter Speed, ISO) and Compositional Principles to achieve a specific calculated result.
T2 Apply the Creative Cycle (Plan, then Shoot, then Critique, then Refine) to any project they encounter. They will view failure or a bad shot not as an end point, but as something to refine before submitting it as the final version. This fosters a growth mindset where they learn to seek out and utilize constructive criticism to elevate the quality of their work.

Meaning

Understanding(s)	Essential Question(s)
Students will understand that... **U1** A photographer's creative choices (lighting, lens choice, composition) are driven by the specific "job assignment," the historical context of the medium, and the intended response of the audience. **U2** Professional quality is achieved through a recurring cycle of shooting, technical critique, and post-processing refinement (The "Re-Shoot" process).	*Students will keep considering...* **Q1** How do I manipulate the image in my viewfinder match the vision in my head? **Q2** How do I balance creative risk-taking with the strict technical requirements and ethical protocols of a professional contract? **Q3** What distinguishes a "snapshot" from a "professional photograph," and how does peer critique help me see what my eye missed?

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

AI Literacy
- The capability of generative AI, particularly large language models (LLMs), to generate humanlike content can make it difficult to distinguish fact from fabrication, increasing the potential to generate misinformation, deepfakes, or manipulative materials. (K4.3)

Madison Public Schools Profile of a Graduate
- Design: Engaging in a process to refine a product for an intended audience and purpose. (POG.2.2)
- Self-Awareness: Examining current performance critically to identify steps/ strategies to persist. (POG.4.1)

U3 Students will understand the Policies and Procedures to create a cohesive and safe environment for everyone in the studio
U4 Success in commercial photography relies as much on professional conduct (on-location protocols, model releases, and equipment stewardship) as it does on the final portfolio.
U5 Effective digital asset management (sd card, website, etc.) is essential for establishing a unique photographic "brand" and voice.
U6 Commercial photographers integrate creative vision, technical skill, professional conduct, and workflow management to successfully communicate a client's message to a target audience.

Q4 How do commercial photographers balance creativity, technical skill, and professional responsibility to effectively communicate a client's message?

Acquisition of Knowledge and Skill

Knowledge	Skill(s)
Students will know... **K1** The difference between ambient, strobe, and natural light, and how reflectors and shadows create form in portraiture. **K2** The relationship between Aperture (depth of field), Shutter Speed (motion), and ISO (digital noise/ sensitivity). **K3** the necessity of Model Releases and "On-Location" protocols. **K4** The Rule of Thirds, leading lines, cropping, and the "Angle of View" as they relate to specific projects and desired outcomes	*Students will be skilled at...* **S1** Manually adjusting DSLR settings to achieve "Stop Action," "Motion Blur," and "Deep/Shallow Depth of Field." **S2** Setting up strobes, using handheld light meters, and positioning reflectors for a portrait "set." **S3** Using Lightroom and Photoshop to perform non-destructive edits (exposure, color correction, cropping) and adding graphic design elements for the PBA. **S4** Designing a Google Site that functions as a professional archive, utilizing typography and layout to showcase technical and reflective growth. **S5** Articulating technical justifications for artistic choices during formal and informal peer critiques.