

WPS Theme Assignments

2021-22

Books: A book is a set of written, printed or blank sheets bound together between a front and back cover. This mundane description does little to convey the significance of the object. Many scholars argue that the printed book is singular in its' contribution to the catapulting advancements of mankind, as it has been the primary medium of transmitting and accumulating knowledge. Virtually, everyone has a number of these humble objects in their home.

For this Theme Assignment present one or more books, in a creative way. Singularly, in a group or large collection, new or old, placed in any setting with or without the accompaniment of people, pets or other objects. So long as there is a book, or books, as the primary subject, your capture will be fit to print.

Chiaroscuro: Chiaroscuro is an Italian term that translates as "light-dark". This style emerged into artistic prominence during the Renaissance. The Italian painter, Caravaggio, is the artist who is most associated with initiating this dramatic style. The interplay of contrast is critical in giving the picture the illusion of depth and thus revolutionized painting. "Rembrandt lighting" is an example of chiaroscuro. This presentation style has been employed in the medias of painting, cinematography and photography. Just watch virtually any Film Noir movie or Casablanca and you will see a slew of examples. "Low key" photography is a more modern iteration used to describe images with impactful lighting, on the darker side. In either color or black & white you can find subjects to apply this technique in order to create a sense of contour and depth. This is a term and technique that every photographer should know and would be well advised to master.

For this Theme Assignment employ the style of chiaroscuro. Be attentive to alternating patterns of light and shadow to create a dynamic image with a sense of impactful contrast and depth. Subject matter, color, or B&W will be up to you to determine.

Balance: The term balance can have a variety of meanings, including a sense of inner meditative peace, balancing the books in accounting, or remaining upright and steady. There can also be implications of equality. In photography the term balance is often used in conjunction with the concept of "visual weight". In a balanced composition the elements are represented in such a manner that the image looks natural and pleasing. This may be achieved through the application of symmetry where both sides look alike or equivalent. Note that the use of asymmetrical balance can be equally effective in achieving a balanced composition. For example, several smaller objects on one side may balance a single larger object on the other side. Also, by virtue of shape, color and/or implied emotional significance some subject matter may be viewed as having more "visual weight" while other subjects will convey less visual weight. It is the photographer's task to find ways to juxtapose elements to create a balanced look. There are many strategies to achieve this desired result.

For this Theme Assignment strive to create a balanced image. Be mindful of the arrangement of subjects within your composition so your final production will appear natural and balanced. Subject matter, the number of elements and compositional construction are all up to you.

Rust Never Sleeps: This live album, of the same name, by singer-songwriter Neil Young is considered among his best work. His lyrics proclaim, “Hey, Hey, My My: ROCK n ROLL will never die...” However, every man-made metallic object eventually turns to rust. Many photographers express a fascination with old rusty things. Hours can be spent photographing old dilapidated equipment or doors, handles, locks, and don’t forget the interiors or exteriors of abandoned vehicles. Then there are the unique abstract patterns that emerge as rust consumes painted surfaces.

For this Theme Assignment present some rusty object or rusted surface in a unique and artistic manner. You may portray an object big or small, in whole or part. You may choose to create an abstract by selecting a section of the whole. Or, you may strive to convey a story with your capture.

Negative Space: How often have you heard a judge remark that there is “too much negative space” in the image, implying that it was a bad thing? Well, sometimes in photography it can be a good thing. Negative space, simply put, is the area surrounding the main subject of the photograph. The designation of “negative space” is based on the concept of “figure-ground”, which is one of the principles of Gestalt perception theory. The absence of subject matter, in the negative space otherwise referred to as “ground” actually prompts the viewers’ eye toward subject – the positive space or “figure”. Appreciation of the concept of “figure-ground” and its photographic applications as positive or negative space will help train your eye to see subjects within their spatial context. Grasping this concept will help you develop as a photographer.

*For this Theme Assignment, strive to place your subject (positive space/figure) effectively within the frame (negative space/ground) in such a manner that there are few distractions, so your primary subject pops. To complete this task, your subject (positive space/figure) cannot occupy more than a quarter (25%) of the total framed area – **75% or more, of the frame, must be negative space.***

Pepper No. 30: Edward Weston captured this iconic image, along with twenty-nine similar negatives, over a four-day period in 1930. Pepper No. 30 has remained one of the most recognizable photographs ever since. Note that Weston experimented with photographing a single pepper along with other “still lifes” over several years. In 1929 he took a series of twenty-six captures but remained unsatisfied. So, he tried again. I guess photographing a simple pepper is not as easy as it may first appear. The exquisite lighting, on this solitary pepper, creates a three dimensional appearance that makes the subject project. It is also about shape and form where the lines and curves seem to be continuous and thereby holds the viewer’s attention. Not familiar with Weston? Most art historians place him in the Pantheon of 20th century photographers. Original prints can be seen in major art collections. The MET is among those museums with an original print of Pepper No. 30. Familiarizing yourself with his work will help you expand your photographic knowledge base. Photographing a single object is challenging. And, a pepper will test your photographic skills. Learn how Edward successfully created his pepper image.

*For this Theme Assignment you are to photograph a **single pepper**. It may be of any type, size or color. Either whole, in pieces, alone, or in a context of your choosing; your pepper may become iconic too.*