

Module 1 Transcripts - The History and ethics of photojournalism and documentary photography.

Hello everyone. Welcome to the first week of our MOOC Visual Journalism: Looking at the other in the age of selfie. And this week we're going to start our course by doing a historical overview of photojournalism and documentary photography with a special focus on the 1930s and 40s, which in my opinion are when quite a few events happened that created the rules and the grounds for what is are our norms today as photographers and photojournalists operating in the 21st century.

And to start with I would like to speak about the Food Security Administration after the Great Depression in the 1920s. How the U.S. government created a body of 10 photographers probably the two most well-known being Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange. To document the struggle and the outcome of this enormous crisis that the U.S., the United States, lived. And systematically the United States were photographed by these 10 photographers to create an archive of this crises. And you probably know some of these images already. But let's look at some others too. And how the humanistic tradition was created or enlightened throughout these years.

At the same time that this was happening in the U.S., The Spanish Civil War started. And a number of photographers and journalists were sent. And some of them went on their own to photograph this war. On one side the Reds or the Communists or the socialists. On the other the Francoist regime or what then became the Francoist regime, the dictatorship, led by Francisco Franco, a fascist dictator. And there was a war from 1936 to 1939. And the three, probably three most well-known photographers, that actually worked very close to each other or together were Gerda Taro, a woman photographer, who actually died in Spain. Robert Capa and David "Chim" also. David Seymour also known as Chim. And they worked very close to each other to document the war and some icons were created. In this war.

Probably the most controversial and well-known one is the photograph by Robert Capa of the Falling Soldier. When until today we don't we're not absolutely certain that this photograph happened or if it was a setup by Robert Capa. Different people defend different things. But it is a very iconic photograph that laid the grounds of the action photographer, the the frontline photographer that Robert Capa became. Starting in the Spanish Civil War, but then continuing into the second world war, where him and a number of other photographers documented both frontlines. Some images in black and white, some images in color and very famous D-Day photographs by also Robert Capa, who gained access and disembarked in Normandy with the American soldiers. Making a few photographs and then retreating to send those photographs to the media.

Back then, in the 1940s, one of the most important photographs, one of the most important magazines was Life magazine that published widely photo essays by a number of photographers. And every week they would publish photo stories, photo essays. Many of them

based on the human condition. And this created. This goes along with philosophical, historical and literary movements in the 1930s and 40s that enlightened the human condition and how together we could change things. So this was all part of a movement and Life magazine certainly was a pioneer of that movement of showing other stories, other people, other conditions in order to for us as readers to be there to know what was going on in Africa what was going on in the frontlines of the Second World War. And the readers in the United States would read and learn from that with visuals.

This was very interesting because back then the notion of copyrights and the ownership of photos by the photographers was something very fluid. And some photographers would simply give their work away to the magazines and the magazines would buy the rights to those photographs. And back just after the Second World War a very important event in the photojournalism community happened which was when four photographers, all men, all veteran photographers from the Second World War, got together and funded an agency that defended their rights. Defended their rights as authors. It was owned by the photographers themselves. And this agency was created around the name of a big bottle of champagne that they created to celebrate. So the bottle was a Magnum bottle and they they were toasting with it to the beginning of the news new agency. And the agency which is now 70 years old is Magnum.

Magnum Agency is one of the most respected and well-known agencies of photographers, owned by the photographers, defending the photographers rights including the copyrights, the licensing agreements and the rules that the ethical rules that encompass the work of professional photojournalists. So the way that the in the setup the images cannot be setup. The way that you need to respect people who you are photographing. The way that you need to respect people and what you tell people you're going to with those images. Those are ethical grounds that were defined back then and are still valid and very valuable these days, especially in times where everybody has a camera and they can do whatever they please with those photographs. It's important for the photo journalistic community to stick with our word, to stick with the truthiness. There is what. And that is discussable that if I decide to frame certain as certain events in a certain way. But there is a purity of what's happening there and that's the standard rules of journalism today.

So that was created with or that was created and implemented with a foundation of Magnum in 1947 just after the Second World War ended. And that has created a tradition of photography and concerned photographers throughout the years until today.

So that that compass of the FDA Food Security Administration, the Spanish Civil War, World War 2, the role of Life magazine and the way of how photo essays were being portrayed and published every week created sort of like golden moment in the 50s, 60s and 70s for photography and the role of photography in the media.

And with that an immense visual tradition was created and magazines such as National Geographic, Time magazine, Stern magazine, Paris Match created a need to the readership to

see visuals every week, to see what's going on with that week's events or those stories that are relevant to the media. Those weeks. So we are in those years where tremendous photographers are starting to appear. Dorothy Lange that I already mentioned Walter Evans, Robert Capa who died later on in the front line. Henri Cartier-Bresson, David Chin and George Roger the founders along with Robert Capa of Magnum. They continued to work on their own. But he also opened for new generations of photographers to come.

So take time to look at this works. Study well and it doesn't necessarily mean that that's the kind of photographs that he want to go and take. But it's important to understand what was the foundations of these grounds where where we are today. Robert Capa, for example the famous frontline war photographer, also created work in color very until recently not known to the public at all where he photographed actors and actresses, glamorous lives around the world. So there were sort of like always two ways of working. And Robert Capa certainly did a good job of exploring and enjoying those until he died in Indo-China in the 1950s. But I would like to invite you to look at these works to on your own go and explore. I'll put some links for you on the web page to explore and read more. And then don't forget to answer the quiz and the questions about these week's issues.

I would also like to invite you to take a look at our guest speaker this this week it's James Welford Jamie Welford is a very talented senior photo editor now working at the National Geographic. He was for many years at Newsweek magazine is their international photo editor. And he has a very wide experience at looking and selecting photographs doing design layouts, discussing with text editors and how to marry text and photography. But also he has been a great helper of many photographers to develop their own voices. He's gonna be our guest speaker today and I'm like to invite you to watch our interview in the platform. Also I'll be waiting for your comments and your questions online. I hope you do all the readings and seeing the photographs and see you next week.