

# Photography & Truth

CONTEXTUAL STUDIES

*Week 3-4: 20<sup>th</sup> Sept – 4<sup>th</sup> Oct*

## TASK

**RESEARCH:** Look through these Powerpoints [Photography & Truth](#) and [Issues of truth, representation, propaganda](#) for a historical and contemporary overview. Read also this text for further context: [issues in photojournalism](#)

**ANALYSIS:** Choose one image that questions the notion of truth and explain why. Follow this method of analysis: *Description – Interpretation – Evaluation – Theory/Context*

**ASSIGNMENT:** Based on your chosen themes, FAMILY or ENVIRONMENT make two images, one that you consider truthful and one that is not.

**EXTENSION:** Include case study on Drowned Syrian boy. Consider if photographs can change the world or change people's perception? Read article: [PHOTOGRAPHS WON'T CHANGE THE WORLD](#) by Lewis Bush on his blog Dispothic.

**DEADLINE: Wed 4<sup>th</sup> Oct**

# Truth or Fiction?

- Can a photograph lie?
- Are all photographs reliable?
- A certain delivery of facts?
- Claims of truth that most people take for granted?
- 'The camera was there and recorded what I saw', says the photographer?
- Photojournalism is based on assumptions that the photograph represents a one-to-one correspondence with reality, which is nearly accurate and adequate, and that the photographic image is capable of conveying information objectively.
- Traditional documentary believes the viewer to be a receptive subject taking in the objective information of the world through the photograph
- Can we rely on its ability to capture a moment in time accurately as historical evidence or as a witness to the world?
- Postmodernism points out that all forms of representation is subjective?  
How? Why?
- Digital photography has made manipulation much easier?

# Representation

- Who took it?
- When was it taken?
- What does it tell us? Describe, interpret, evaluate.
- What was their intention or purpose in taking it?
- A particular point of view or angle on a story?
- Is it politically motivated?
- Can a photograph show bias?
- Would looking at other sources (context) help to explain it?
- Who commissioned the picture-story or is it an independent project?
- Who is publishing the story?
- How is the picture-story being used? And where?
- In the printed media, internet, book, exhibition in gallery/ museum?
- What audience is it intended to reach?

# Propaganda

- Photographs are used to raise awareness (good or bad) of particular issues.
- They can be made to represent a particular point of view.
- Used in politics, charity and voluntary organisation etc.
- In war, governments (and the media) use propaganda as a 'weapon' to encourage patriotism and promote national interests.
- But some images can also change the public 's attitude and opinion e.g. photographs from the Vietnam War, abuse in Abu Ghraib, war in Iraq etc.
- Photographs, film and TV are censored before being published or broadcasts.
- But digital technology, the internet and do-it-yourself media; amateurs using camera-phones, bloggers and web-sites has broken old monopolies and changed the ways images and news are being made, distributed and seen.



**Robert Capa**, *Death of a Loyalist Soldier*, 1936, gelatin silver print



**Dmitri Baltermants**, *Kerch, Crimea (Grief)*, 1942, gelatin silver print



**Joe Rosenthal**, *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*, February 23, 1945, gelatin silver print





**Huynh Cong (Nick Ut), *Trangbang, Route 1, South Vietnam, 8 June 1972***  
Also known as the Napalm Girl



**Eddie Adams, *Street Execution of a Vietcong Prisoner*, 1968, gelatin silver print**

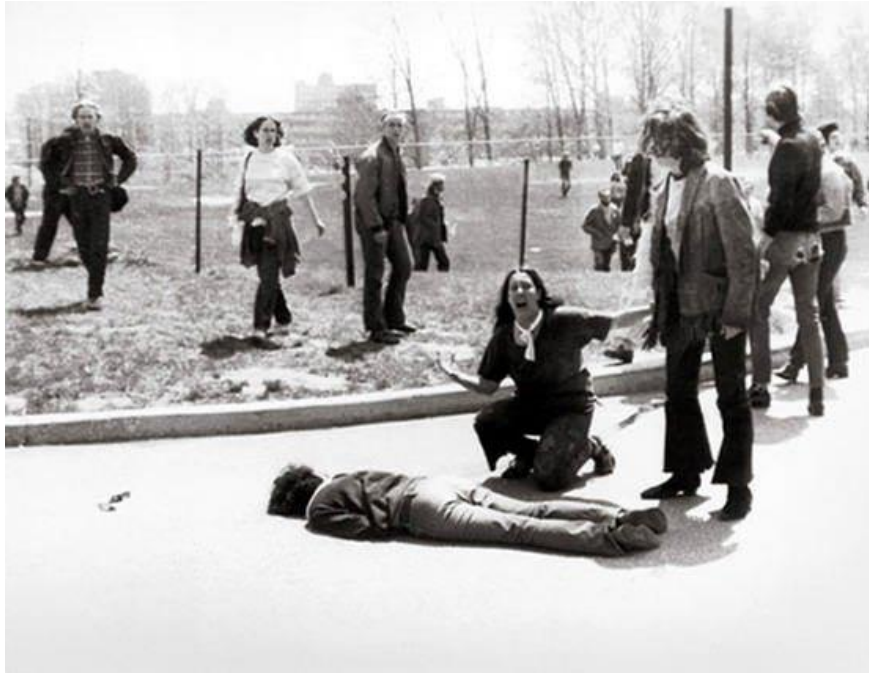


**Francisco Goya** (1746-1828), *The Third of May, 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid,* 1814, oil on canvas, 266x345 cm



Mary Ann Vecchio screams as she kneels over the body of Jeffrey Miller\* during an anti-war demonstration at Kent State University, Ohio, May 4, 1970. Four students were killed when Ohio National Guard troops fired at some 600 anti-war demonstrators. A cropped version of this image won the Pulitzer Prize.



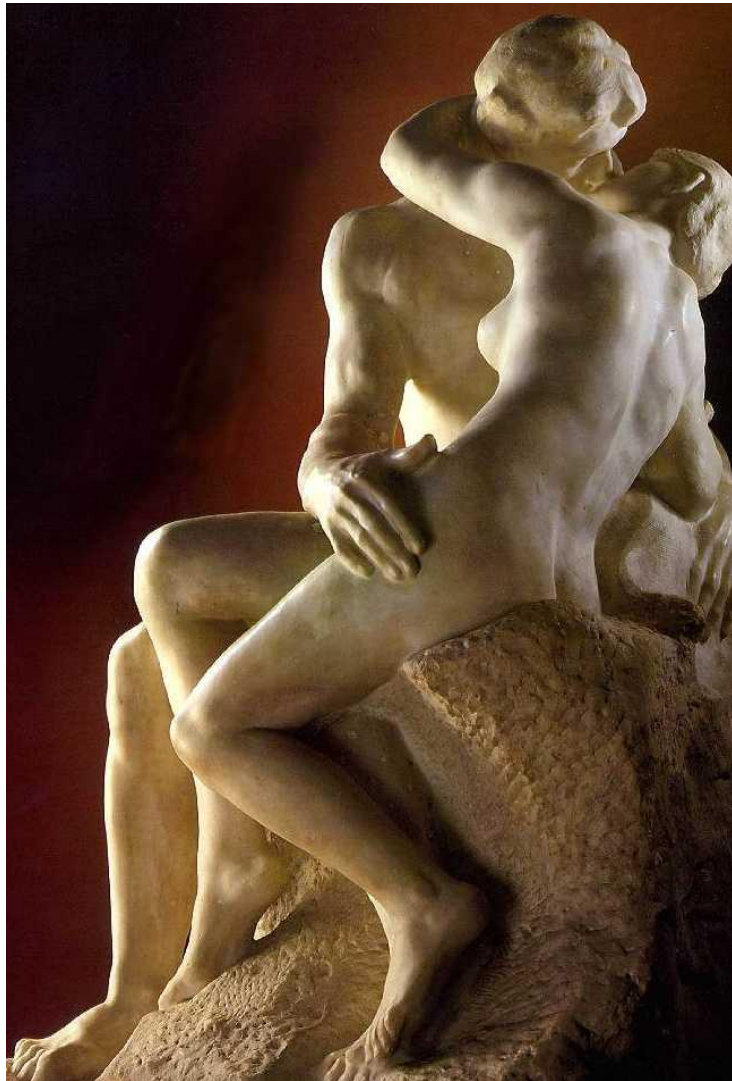




Abu Ghraib abuse photos by American soldiers and hoax story of British soldiers brutalising Iraqi prisoners, published in the Daily Mail, 2003



**Robert Doisneau** (French 1912-1994) *The Kiss by the Hôtel de Ville*,  
taken in Paris in 1950.



**Auguste Rodin** (French 1840-1917), *The Kiss*, 1901-4 Pentelic marble, executed by Ganier, Rigaud and Mathet. 182.2 x 121.9 x 153 cm.





**Gustave Klimt** (Austrian 1862-1918)) *The Kiss*, 1907-08 Oil and gold on canvas, 180 x 180 cm, Österreichische Galerie, Vienna



**Alfred Eisenstaedt** (German-American 1898-1995) Photograph of a sailor kissing a nurse in Times Square on V-J Day in 1945. (Time-Life/Getty Images)







**Henri Cartier-Bresson** (French 1908-2004) the Seine in Paris



David Hoffman, poll tax riots Trafalgar Square, London, May 31<sup>st</sup> 1990



**Richard Lam** (freelance photojournalist), picture taken during Vancouver street riots June 2011





Second picture taken by **Richard Lam** seconds after the first one.  
Vancouver street riots June 2011

# Extension Task

Include case study on Drowned Syrian boy. Consider if photographs can change the world or change people's perception?

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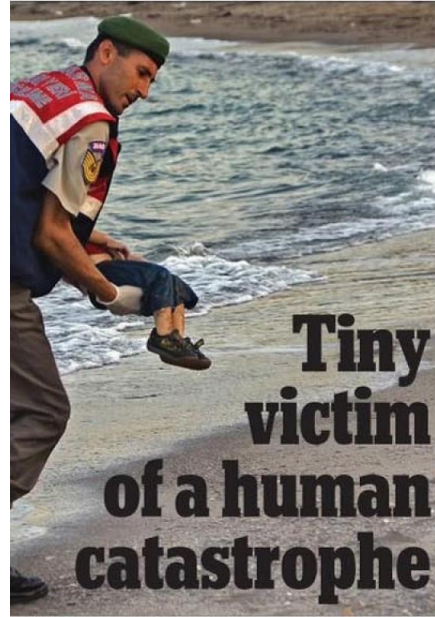
A paramilitary police officer carries the lifeless body of Alan Kurdi off the coast of Bodrum, Turkey, where he was found. Photographer: Nilufer Demir from Turkey's Dogan News Agency







**MR CAMERON, SUMMER IS OVER... NOW DEAL WITH THE BIGGEST CRISIS FACING EUROPE SINCE WW2**



man, this little boy was drowned during his refugee family's desperate bid to reach Greece. The image is not seen to comprehend the gravity of the migrant crisis engulfing Europe

**IT'S LIFE & DEATH UNDEARABLE**

**THE Sun**  
 SAYS ON A TURKISH BEACH FESTIVAL!

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**DEAD**

**Two little brothers. One epic tragedy**

**Europe could not save him**

**METRO**  
 Lab

**SOMEbody's CHILD**

**EUROPE'S REFUGEE CRISIS**



**UNDEARABLE**

A three-year-old boy washed up on a holiday beach in Turkey... the heartbreaking human face of a tragedy the world can no longer ignore

**THE TIMES**  
**Europe divided**

**Boy among 12 rians who died boat tragedy**

**Picture raises questions over U's response**

**THE TIMES**  
 Europe divided

**THE TIMES**  
 Europe divided

**theGua**

**The shocking, cruel of Europe's refugee**



**Boy among 12 rians who died boat tragedy**

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