

Capturing Experience: Using Experiential Learning to Teach Photography

*Lindsay Kennedy, Dr. Cindy Akers,
& Dr. Rachel Jackson*

Texas Tech University

About the Course: Digital Photography in Agriculture

- Offered twice a year in two different formats:
 - *Traditional 17-week spring semester*
 - *Two-week “intersession” semester*
- Same instructor, concepts, assignment structure, and grading rubric



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One Course, Two Formats.

Traditional Spring Semester

- 17 weeks
- 1 hour 20-min class periods, 2x weekly
- In-class lecture
- Students experiment with cameras and shoot assignments on their own time

Experiential Intersession Semester

- 12 days
- 4-hour to full day class periods
- Brief lectures, more in-field instruction
- Use class time to travel to farms, ranches, and outdoor locations to photograph agricultural subjects

Seven Assignments. One Rubric.

Assignments

- *Light*
- *Depth of field*
- *Action*
- *Color*
- *Black and white*
- *Editorial*
- *Portrait*

Rubric

- *Clarity*
- *Composition*
- *Creativity*
- *Artistic*
- *Expression*
- *Assignment requirements*

Comparing Student Performance

- Kolb's (1984) Theory of Experiential Learning
- “The study of photography can clearly be understood as stages of an experiential learning process” (Horner, 2016, p. 81).
- “...photographing in unfamiliar surroundings offers a high degree of potential for experiential learning” (Horner, 2016, p. 82).



Comparing Student Performance

- Data was collected from consenting students' graded assignment rubrics
 - *traditional semester (n=27)*
 - *experiential intersession (n=13)*
- Independent-samples t-tests compared instruction format by students':
 - *cumulative mean assignment scores*
 - *individual assignment mean scores*
 - *rubric criteria mean scores*



Results: Cumulative Scores

- Students in the experiential intersession course had statistically significantly higher mean cumulative assignment scores compared to students in the traditional course.
 - *Experiential (M=183.00, SD=7.33)*
 - *Traditional (M=170.70, SD=12.03)*
 - *$t(38)=-3.38, p<.01$*
 - *Cohen's effect size ($d = 1.17$) suggested a very large practical significance.*



Results: Assignments

- Of the seven assignments, the Depth of Field assignment was the only individual assignment found to have significantly different mean scores from students.
 - $t(38)=-3.38, p<.01$
 - *The effect size for this analysis ($d = .79$) was found to show a large effect.*



Results: Rubric Criteria

- Students in the traditional format course scored significantly lower than students in the experiential intersession on specific rubric criteria in four of the seven assignments.
 - *Black and White-Composition was the only rubric criterion with a higher mean score during the traditional format than for the experiential intersession.*



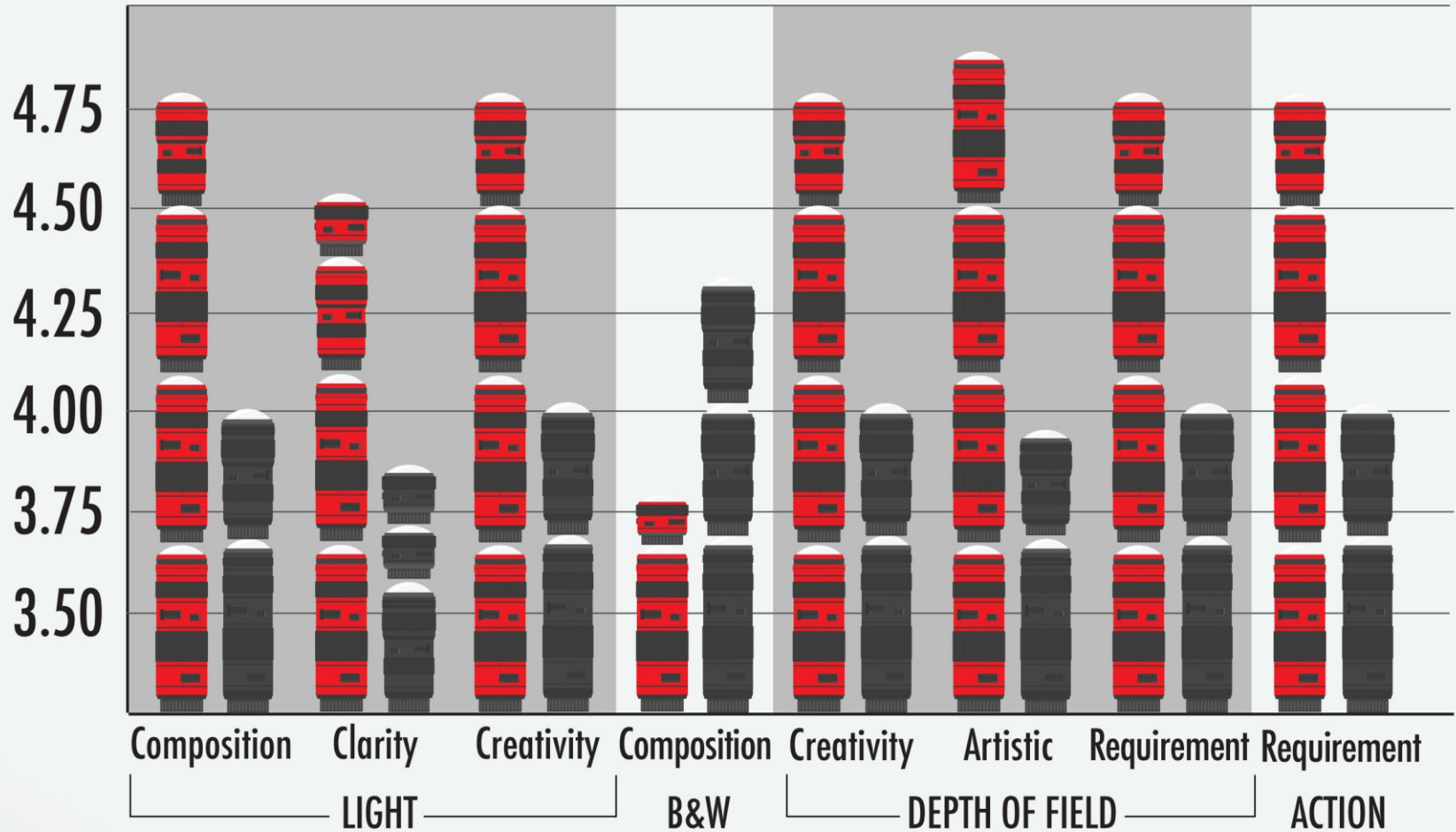
Significant Comparisons of Students' Rubric Criteria Scores by Instruction Method



Experiential Intersession n=13



Traditional Semester n=27







Spring Semester: Shooting on their own



Intersession: Shooting with field instruction



Intersession: Shooting with field instruction



Interession: Shooting with field instruction



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Conclusions

- Instruction method does have an effect on student performance in ACOM digital photography courses.
- Students' mean assignment scores increase when participating in an experiential learning course format.
- Students' **understanding** of specific photography skills (rubric criteria) was higher when in the experiential intersession format.
 - *Individual assignment performance less affected by instruction format*



Conclusions

- These findings support Horner's (2016) suggestion that an experiential approach to photography instruction is beneficial to students' understanding of basic photography skills.



Implications

- Use experiential learning activities to improve student performance and enhance their understanding of photography principles in ACOM photography courses.
- Experiential activities have been implemented in the traditional semester format of the course.
- Experiential teaching strategies will continue to be evaluated in both formats to examine the effect on student performance.





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Questions?

Lindsay Kennedy
Agricultural Communications Instructor