Organic:
A Photographer’s Journey Through Documenting, Learning, and Teaching

Molly Otte
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University of Wisconsin-River Falls

David Heberlein
Plan B Advisor
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Fox and Fawn Farm and Gale Woods Farm
Future Farm Food and Fuel and Minnesota Food Association
Minnesota Food Association
Minnesota Food Association
Chapter 1

“So often it’s just sticking around, not swooping in and swooping out in a cloud of dust; sitting down on the ground with people, letting children look at your camera with their dirty, grimy little hands and putting their fingers on the lens, and you let them, because you know that if you will behave in a generous manner, you’re very apt to receive it.”

-Dorothea Lange

I have always been inspired by the artistic philosophy and photographic work of Dorothea Lange. I especially love the dramatic black and white images of farming that she took for the Farm Security Administration during The Great Depression. It is clear from her pictures that she had a gift for capturing the stories, emotions, and scenery that surrounded her without invading her subjects’ privacy or making them feel uncomfortable. Because of this, her photographs tell the story of her subjects and their experiences in a timeless and meaningful way. She was a master in her field during her career and as I have developed as a photographer, I have always admired her.

My enthusiasm for photography started in college when I took a film photography class as a part of my art education major. I fell in love with the challenge of using my camera as a tool to capture what surrounded me. Once I mastered working in the darkroom, I photographed at every opportunity I had. I joined the campus newspaper as a staff photographer, completed a summer photography internship at my hometown newspaper, and got a job in the college photo lab where I learned how to take and edit digital photographs. With my camera in hand, I traveled to both Jamaica and France where I learned the joy of photographing cultures and places different from my own. Upon graduating from college, I was hired by friends and family members to shoot weddings and portraits. Eventually I built up enough work to turn my love for photography into a business named Paper Lemon Photography. Although I have worked
full time as an art teacher since 2005, I have also been able to shoot weddings, family portraits, and other events for a second income and a creative outlet.

Not only has photography been an important part of my life outside of school, but I have also been able to integrate it into my job as an art teacher. For a number of years, I instructed a ninth-grade digital arts class in which I taught students the artistic and technical aspects of digital photography. I have also integrated a digital photography unit into the sixth- and seventh-grade general art classes I teach. I have learned how much students enjoy photography and am always searching for new ways to evolve the curriculum to meet their needs and interests.

Since I began working with photography in college, I have consistently had opportunities to either make photographs or teach students how to do so. It has become an extremely fulfilling creative outlet outside of teaching and is easily one of my favorite pieces of curriculum at school. Because of my love for the medium, I am constantly looking for ways to further develop my skills as a photographer and as a teacher. I have become accustomed to taking pictures of engaged couples, weddings, families with new babies, or graduating seniors. I love the way this type of photography allows me to capture the emotions of different life stages and establish relationships with the people who hire me, but I have always been intrigued by the broad range of subjects involved in photojournalism and documentary photography projects. After reading Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits by Linda Gordon a couple of summers ago, I wanted to try my hand at a photography project where I studied one subject in depth through photographs. I knew that completing a documentary photography project would give me greater insight into my own photography and into how to better teach my students the subject.
Dorothea Lange’s work and artistic philosophy sparked several questions in my mind about my own journey as a photographer and the process that one goes through to create a body of documentary work:

- How does a photographer complete a documentary photography project of a subject? What is involved in the process?
- In a documentary setting, how does the photographer make the subjects feel comfortable?
- How does a photographer tell a story with pictures?
- How might my photographic work change if I focus on a subject other than weddings and portraits?

Ultimately, my question became this:

- Based on what I find after creating my own body of work, how can I change my current curriculum and teaching methods to further implement documentary photography into my classroom?

Once I settled on my thesis, I began to consider what my documentary subject should be. After plenty of consideration, I decided to focus on local organic farming. Dorothea Lange and the entire FSA photography project have always been fascinating to me not only because of its iconic place in history but also because of the subject matter. Creating a project based on one aspect of today’s agriculture would allow me to bring my love for the FSA photographers’ work into modern times and give me a chance to create my own images of a similar subject.

Furthermore, a documentary photography project on organic farming would allow me to learn more about it. Having grown up in the midst of cornfields in southern
Minnesota, I have a deep appreciation for agriculture, but little understanding of the process that farming entails. I know that organic food and community sustained agriculture have gained popularity in recent years for a variety of reasons. As a proponent of shopping locally and supporting organic farmers, I was curious about the process these farmers follow, and knew that photographing it would prove to be educational for myself and for those who view my photographs.

In addition, I wanted my project to examine a subject that was local and accessible. I think it’s important for me to know about the community where I live and teach. I encourage my art students to find beauty and interest in the things that surround them each day and to gain artistic inspiration from them. In an effort to practice what I preach, I wanted to do the same.

Finally, I thought the subject of organic farming would provide a variety of photographic opportunities that are completely different from anything I’ve done before. There is a certain innate beauty in farmland and the process of planting, growing, and harvesting the food that sustains us. I wanted to portray the stories of farmers and their work in a meaningful and truthful way.

My overall hope with this project is to immerse myself into a subject that is unfamiliar and to capture images that show the beauty, passion, and interest behind it. Like Dorothea Lange, I want to use my camera to learn about the people, places, and stories behind farming. I believe that by using my art to better understand their work I will, in turn, be better able to understand mine and be more equipped to teach it to my students.
Chapter 2

Photography can be traced back to the fifth century B.C. when Chinese philosopher Mo Ti recorded the upside-down image projected by a camera obscura. Throughout the decades that followed, many people experimented with the science of projecting and printing an image. The first permanent photograph, however, is credited to Joseph Niépce in the 1820s. His primitive process involved using oiled copies of engravings and a form of asphalt that hardened when exposed to light. The images created were generally unclear, but they marked the beginning of photography as we know it (Gustavson 4-5).

Not long after Niépce’s early images, a man named Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre brought photography to a new level with his invention of the daguerreotype in 1839. Daguerre’s process involved exposing a plate coated with light-sensitive silver iodide to create a faint image, and then exposing the plate to mercury to permanently set that image (Gustavson 6). He fixed the image on the plate by bathing it in hyposulfite and washing it in water, a process still used in darkrooms today (Sandler 9). People were amazed at the details captured by the daguerreotype, and to this day they remain the photographic process with the highest resolution (Gustavson 6).

By 1843, daguerreotypes were catching on worldwide. Photo studios were opening in big cities and wealthy people jumped at the opportunity to have images made of themselves and their loved ones (Sandler 12). But it wasn’t just family portraits – the public enjoyed seeing images of the people and world around them. Suddenly everyone could see images of famous people. M.B. Brady, a famous portrait photographer at the time, made more than 10,000 celebrity portraits (Gustavson 41). In addition,
photographers began carrying daguerreotype cameras with them and producing images of things like “mill fires, operating rooms, battle scenes, Niagara Falls, London’s Crystal Palace, the Cincinnati riverfront, and Egyptian monuments” (17). Daguerreotypes became the first way for people to create a permanent visual document of the world in which they lived.

While daguerreotypes gained popularity, photography was still an expensive, time-consuming, and inconvenient art form practiced by a wealthy few. It became an activity for the common masses in 1888 when George Eastman introduced his Kodak camera: a small hand-held box that contained a roll of flexible film. Suddenly, photography was much less cumbersome than ever before. For twenty five dollars, people could buy a camera loaded with enough film to capture one hundred images. When all of the film had been used, the owner sent ten dollars and the camera back to the Eastman Kodak factory where it was developed, printed, and returned along with a new roll of film to the amateur photographer. Eastman also created smaller, less expensive versions of his camera to appeal to the working class and one to five dollar Brownie cameras designed for children. Suddenly, nearly everyone could make photographs of their life at just the press of a button. Eastman’s business boomed as millions of people worldwide clambered to get their hands on their own camera and begin documenting their lives (Sandler 21).

By the turn of the 20th century, some photographers began to make a name for themselves documenting the world around them. Among the first of these to rise to fame was Jacques-Henri Lartigue. Lartigue began practicing photography at a young age, and captured some of his most lasting images between the ages of ten and twelve. He is
known for photographs of objects in motion, such as his brother experimenting with kites and early forms of airplanes (Sandler 78). Lartigue was also fascinated with the elegantly dressed women of his day. His photographs of women on morning strolls, or attending horse races have become iconic images of his era. According to Lartigue, photography is “catching a moment which is passing, and which is true” (Editors of *Time Life Books* 28). Lartigue’s early attempts to capture everything about the world around him made him one of the artists to pave the road for documentary photographers to follow.

Around the same time that Lartigue was working, another photographer by the name of Eugene Atget was capturing images of Paris. Atget didn’t start making photographs until he was over forty years old, after he wasn’t able to earn enough money as a sailor or as an actor. His version of photography was “to create a collection of all that which both in Paris and its surroundings was artistic and picturesque” (Sandler 79). His photographs of Parisian culture such as parks, storefronts, and horse-drawn vehicles have become historical documents of Paris as it appeared in Atget’s lifetime, but they were also able to convey his outlook for the city that he called home: “ Shots of empty parks, when made by Atget, blended the reality of the scene with its deeper meaning as a part of the city, and with his own feeling for the city” (Editors of *Time Life Books* 13). Atget was one of the first to take the permanency of photographs and imbue them with his own artistic moods.

Atget’s work was known at the time for establishing modern photography as its own art form, but he was quickly recognized as one of the earliest true documentary photographers (Hambourg 25). In 1928, art promoter Florent Fels helped to organize a show called *Salon de l’Escalier* in which many of the best photographers of the time
were showcased. Those in charge of the exhibit avoided artistic photography that mimicked paintings, or specific artists and styles, and instead chose photography that portrayed subjects directly. Fels felt that “a good photograph is, above all, a good document” and he enthusiastically included Atget’s images (29).

Around the same time that Atget’s work was circulating, photography that served a social purpose began to appear. Jacob A. Riis is known as the first American to use photography as an instrument for social change (Rosenblum 359). Riis emigrated from Denmark to the United States in 1870. He eventually landed a job at the New York Herald, where he was assigned to write stories about the slums of New York. At this time in history, hundreds of immigrants were living in tenement houses: “terribly crowded, dirty, multistoried buildings” (Sandler 84). At first, he used writing to describe what he witnessed on his frequent trips into poverty-stricken neighborhoods, but he soon realized that adding some sort of visual element to his stories would more effectively raise awareness of the issues he was covering. Riis knew he had a solution when flash photography was invented in 1887 and he was able to venture into the darkest corners of New York to capture the appalling surroundings in which people were living (Newhall, The History of Photography 133).

Once his photographs were published, other American citizens saw the realities of slum life for the first time. In his art, “the faces of the people he photographed reflected the pain and bewilderment of the life they were forced to endure” (Sandler 84). Not only were Riis’ photographs published in the newspaper, he also used them as slides during his lectures describing his experiences in the slums and included them in his first book, How the Other Half Lives (Rosenblum 359). Eventually, his work spurred others to
implement child labor laws, eliminate contaminated waterways, and create small neighborhood parks.

Throughout Riis’ career, he made a point of portraying his subjects in a dignified way. He “selected appropriate vantage points and ways to frame the subject…at times transcending the limitation implied in the title – that of an outsider looking at slum life from a deep chasm separating middle from lower-class life” (Rosenblum 360). His photographs were meant to show reality but not to belittle his subjects. He composed his images in a way that communicated the truth that he observed, but also showed his subjects as people. According to photo historian Beaumont Newhall, “the importance of these photographs lies in their power not only to inform, but to move us. They are at once interpretations and records; although they are no longer topical, they contain qualities that will last as long as man is concerned with his brother” (Newhall, The History of Photography 133). Riis was a pioneer of a new form of photography. His work showed that this medium could serve as a crucial tool in the efforts to make society more aware of its most neglected citizens.

Lewis W. Hine was another photographer working at the turn of the century to reveal the sad realities that surrounded him. Like Riis, Hine started by photographing the thousands of immigrants who came to New York. Eventually, Hine began to focus his work on the children of the slums, particularly those who worked long hours in unbearable conditions at factories. In 1908, the National Child Labor Committee hired him to document child workers nationwide. Once presented to congress, his photographs helped to lead toward the implementation of child labor laws and have made a lasting impact on both the history of our country and the history of documentary photography.
Like Riis, Hine also made it a priority to photograph his subjects in a respectful way: “Unbothered by unnecessary details, his sympathies were concentrated on the individuals before him; throughout his pictures this harmony can be felt” (Newhall, *The History of Photography* 235). He treated his subjects as human beings with dignity in an effort to portray their stories honestly and effectively.

In addition to these socially minded photographs, Hine also created work that showcased important aspects of American life. One noteworthy project he completed was a series of photographs published in a book called *Men at Work*. One of Hine’s subjects for this book included men constructing the Empire State building. He spent months documenting the enormous project from start to finish, and even had the workers swing him out on cables to capture some of the activity from interesting angles. This series of photographs highlighted Hine’s desire for honesty in his work:

> From his first reverential portraits of immigrants at Ellis Island, taken in 1904 and 1905, to the exciting view of the construction of the Empire State Building made between 1930 and 1931, Hine emphasized the ‘human element’…A firm believer in the power of knowledge to vanquish evil, Hine in his photographs illuminated not only conditions but the human spirit that until then had been invisible to middle-class Americans (Rosenblum 384).

Similar to his photographs of child laborers, Hine was passionate about his subjects for this series and wanted to show them honestly and effectively.

Atget laid the foundation for documentary photography as an art form. Riis and Hine took this new art form and imbued it with a social conscience in an effort to
document the lives of Americans in dire situations. Walker Evans, a famous photographer from the Great Depression era, defined modern day documentary photography as this:

A cultural necessity foretold by Atget, a photographic editing of society effected by a camera looking in the right direction. Ostensibly mechanical and intentionally clinical, documentary photography nonetheless might transcribe a certain poetry, the projection not of the thing seen but of its seers (Hambourg 36).

Evans, and other photographers of the 1930s and beyond held Atget’s work in very high regard. Atget’s desire to document his daily life, coupled with the eye toward humanity of Riis and Hine, directly influenced the photography that would become a social force during The Great Depression.

By the 1920s, photography was a well-established way to document the lives of everyday people, but it would become an even more powerful tool after the stock market crash of 1929. Among those hardest hit by the financial crisis and national drought were American farmers. In an effort to provide them with the funding and support they needed to get back on their feet, Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Farm Security Administration (Sandler 86). A group of photographers was organized within the FSA to document the work the project was doing and American life at that time. Originally, the photography project was meant to be a small portion of the FSA’s overall mission, but it soon became one of its most influential aspects (Gordon 196).

Roy Stryker, a professor at Columbia University with a background in economics, was appointed head of the FSA photography project. Although he wasn’t a photographer
himself, Stryker valued the fact that photographs could keep accurate records and convey powerful messages. He hired some of the nation’s top documentary photographers and told them he wanted nothing more than “images of land, machinery, crops…as well as pictures that promoted FSA programs” (Gordon 196). Stryker soon realized that the photography project could go much deeper and could have a much greater impact: “Such an array of photographic talent, combined with government support and funding, presented the unique opportunity to capture nothing less than a portrayal of people and a nation” (Sandler 87). He wanted the photographers not only to show what the FSA was doing, but also to illustrate the faces of Americans during one of the most trying times in the nation’s history.

Among the first photographers Stryker hired was Walker Evans, who built his style on the method of Atget, Riis, and Hine. In his early twenties, Evans had a passion for literature. In 1927, he moved to New York to become a writer, but started taking pictures as well. By 1935, Evans began his work for the FSA. He made it his goal to portray beauty in American life at the time. In describing his work, “his photographs of roadside architecture, rural churches, small-town barbers, and cemeteries reveal a deep respect for the neglected traditions of the common man and secured his reputation as America's preeminent documentarian” (Department of Photographs). Like his predecessors in social documentary photography, “much of what Evans photographed was squalid, but his interpretation was always dignified” (Newhall, The History of Photography 238). In many of his photographs, he documented artifacts to tell the story of people and their way of life without actually including people in the image. Whether or not people are the subjects of his photographs, his work is extremely narrative and full
of life. They depict places and information in an emotional and eye catching way and have become an important part of American history.

Another well-known name from the FSA project is Dorothea Lange. Lange was a portrait photographer in San Francisco before Stryker recruited her to be a part of his FSA team. She had a big heart for people, which made her a natural at capturing images that told stories and inspired change.

Lange made it a priority to treat her subjects with dignity and compassion. “Lange’s gaze, even in her rare frontal compositions, showed more mercy but avoided sentimentality by its emphasis on individual personality and complexity” (Gordon 263). She took endless notes about her subjects and spent time talking with them before she took their picture. “Lange became known for the sensitivity she brought to each of her images. She was able, better than any other FSA photographers, to gain the confidence of her subjects and to produce pictures that directly connect the viewer with both the humanity and the emotions of people undergoing desperate hardship” (Sandler 88). She wasn’t only interested in producing quality photographs, she wanted to respectfully convey the stories of Americans who were hit the hardest by The Great Depression.

One of her most well known photographs is Migrant Mother (Figure 8, Page 50). For this image, Lange stopped at a pea picker’s camp in Nipomo, California. She passed a sign for the camp on her way home from a long month of shooting in California but turned around, sensing it might be an important photo opportunity. Upon visiting with the families, Lange learned that the pea crop at Nipomo had frozen and there was no work for any of the harvesters. Florence Thompson, the mother photographed for this picture, couldn’t feed her children anything but frozen vegetables from nearby fields and birds the
children had killed (Gordon 237). Lange made five exposures of Thompson and her children from various angles (Figures 4-8). Two of them were published about a month later in the *San Francisco News*. As a result, about $200,000 was raised to help the pea pickers of Nipomo (Sobieszek 300). When it was printed, *Migrant Mother* was a powerful tool to show the reality of how many people were living in America, and it has since become an iconic image of The Great Depression.

By the time it was complete, the FSA photography project produced over 270,000 photographs. Nearly sixty years after most of them were taken, the assessment made by photographer Edward Steichen remains true: They are “the most remarkable human documents that were ever rendered in pictures” (Sandler 89). It has become known as one of the most powerful collections of images ever created, “extraordinary because of the quantity and quality of the photographs; eccentric because of its administrative location; capacious because Stryker included social and even political aspects of life as well as agriculture” (Gordon 197). It became a collection of well-composed documentary photographs of places in America, but also an honest humanistic look at the individuals and families who lived during the tumultuous economy in the 1930s.

Both amateur and professional photographers had been documenting their world for many years by this point, but the FSA group was the first to be officially known by the name documentary photographers. The term was coined by a group of British filmmakers who created motion pictures of the reality that surrounded them during The Great Depression. John Grierson, a spokesperson for the group, defined the new medium:
This type of motion picture in the recording and the interpretation of fact was a new instrument of public influence which might increase experience and bring the new world of our citizenship in the imagination. It promised us the power of making drama from our daily lives and poetry from our problems (Newhall, *The History of Photography* 238).

Grierson stated that documentary films served “a larger purpose than a simple recording of reality. He believed that documentaries should educate and persuade” (238).

Although photographers had been doing this since the turn of the century, Grierson’s group put a name on the profession of documenting through film. Because of the similarities of their work, the term was applied to the FSA group and to the genre of still photography.

There are several qualities that define documentary photographs. First, documentary photos must be eye-catching and aesthetically sound to get their point across. There is much debate over whether or not documentary photographs should be considered art, but many experts agree that while their intention is to inform and raise awareness of a particular subject, it has to be done in an aesthetically pleasing way in order to perform that purpose. In essence, “like images captured by all those who mastered the documentary photography approach, they make us aware that the most outstanding photographs are those that not only appeal to the eye, but touch deeply the emotions of the viewer as well” (Sandler 89). Similarly, photo historian Beaumont Newhall noted that “while the social documentary photographer is neither a mere recorder nor an artist for arts sake, his reports are often brilliant technically and highly artistic – that is, documentary images involve imagination and art in that they imbue fact
with feeling” (Rosunblum 341). A photograph that catches the eye of the viewer is more likely to draw them in, giving them the desire to know more.

In addition to being aesthetically pleasing, documentary photographs have to be set within a time and place. The term documentary “actually describes how a picture is used rather than what it is in and of itself” (Hulick 14). According to Beaumont Newhall, a documentary photograph cannot stand on its image alone. He states, “Before a photograph can be accepted as a document, it must itself be documented – placed in time and space” (*The History of Photography* 246). There are many different ways to do this. One way is to group images together in a particular order. Walker Evans used this method at a 1938 Museum of Modern Art exhibit called *American Photographs*. He arranged his work in two separate groups, hoping to show “the physiognomy of a nation” and “the continuous fact of an indigenous American expression” (246). Placed alone, his photographs would have held less meaning than as a group in a particular order.

Another way to place images within a context is by including captions. Dorothea Lange’s work is a prime example of this method as she kept copious notes about the people and places she photographed. Anne Whiston Spirn compiled many of Lange’s notes in her book *Daring To Look: Dorothea Lange’s Photographs and Reports from the Field*. The notes were often short, but included vital information on her subjects. For example, this was written after taking *Member of Congregation Named “Queen”* (Figure 1):

> Member of congregation of Wheeley’s Church called “Queen”. She wears the native old-fashioned type of sunbonnet. Her dress and apron were made at home (Spirn 134).
Or this after taking *Paymaster on Edge of Pea Field, Imperial Valley, 1939 (Figure 2)*:

Near Calipatria, Imperial Valley. Feb. 1939. Paymaster on edge of pea field pays a quarter for every hamper of 30 lbs. brought to the scale (78).

Some photographers also use the title of the image to place their photograph in context (Newhall, *A Backward Glance at Documentary* 5). For instance, the title of Lange’s iconic photograph *Migrant Mother* explains exactly who is in the photograph in two words; similarly Lewis Hine’s title *Carolina Cotton Mill, 1908* tells us what we need to know about the time and place of his photograph. A straightforward title paired with a picture tells us more information and can help to define the image as documentary.

Over time, documentary photography has been divided into two main categories: social and historical. According to Ansel Adams in his book *Making a Photograph*, social photography “treats the individual, singly or in mass, in relation to contemporary civilization and social conditions” (Newhall, *A Backward Glance at Documentary* 2). Historian Martin Sandler defines social documentary photography as depicting “a specific social subgroup…to deal with the immediate problems of their lives” (Sandler 73). On the other hand, historical documentary photography “records the material evidence of culture, architecture, art and other forms of expression and fabrication, also in terms of commentary” (Newhall, *A Backward Glance at Documentary* 2). Similarly, Sandler defines this type of documentary photography as “pictures taken to capture specific ways of life before they have vanished from an ever-changing world” (Sandler 73).
Although this distinction between two types of documentary photography has been prevalent since the 1930s, Beaumont Newhall argues that the two categories are irrelevant. Instead, he states that “a far more appropriate term for most of the work done under the name documentary can be best described less categorically and more accurately as being concerned with the human condition or, in a word, humanistic” (Newhall, A Backward Glance at Documentary 2). Instead of breaking documentary photography into two realms: one that seeks to record straightforward scenes from a time in history and one that tries to persuade and make the viewer aware of a social situation, Newhall broadens the view and creates a definition that contains more: “With their focus mainly on people and social conditions, images in the documentary style combine lucid pictorial organization with an often passionate commitment to humanistic values – to ideals of dignity, the right to decent conditions of living and work, to truthfulness” (Rosenblum 341). In Newhall’s view, all documentary photographs have this element of humanism or a deeper meaning and feeling, regardless of the subject. Both of these subgroups have a common goal of portraying stories and moments from the world in a way that can be understood by viewers.

In her essay Photographic Facts and Thirties America, Anne Wilkes Tucker takes this line of thinking one step further and argues that most documentary photography has deep social themes, regardless of the intention of the photographer. She writes:

Social facts were more important subjects for the documentary than environmental, psychological or historical facts. By measuring the fact ‘in terms of human consequences,’ they meant that the individual should be shown undergoing the social forces that shaped his life. These artists
intended not only to reveal operative social forces, but also to suggest ways to deal with them (Tucker 42).

She goes on to say that photography is not a fact-finding instrument, but a means of communicating conclusions about fact (42). Documentary photography has a unique and distinct purpose to relay factual information about a situation, no matter what the circumstances of the subjects portrayed. In turn, documentary photographs have the opportunity to reach a deeper level of meaning than other photographs. In summation, “the documentary photograph tells us something important about our world – and in the best examples, makes us think about our world in a new way” (Editors of Time Life Books 7).

By the time the 1940s hit, documentary photography had been established as a crucial medium. Photographers became an integral part of magazines and newspapers worldwide and the field of photojournalism grew at a rapid pace. One of the most influential of photographers of this time period was Robert Frank. Frank started as a fashion photographer and then ventured into the field of photojournalism working for magazines such as Life, Fortune, and Look. Eventually, he became tired of working for corporate publishers and ventured into independent photography. In 1955, Frank was awarded a Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship that allowed him to tour the United States with his thirty-five millimeter camera for two years. He made images of every day American events such as “roadside bars, parades, automobiles, highways, gas stations, and billboards” (Sandler 135).

The body of work he created during his two-year project was first published in Paris in a book called Les Americains. A year later, The Americans was published in the
United States. Frank’s photographs didn’t depict the vision of the American dream that many people idealized in the 1950s. Instead, his photographs showed a side of life that included loneliness, despair, and uncertainty, and the book received a great deal of criticism. Frank brought a new perspective to the world’s view of America and the world of photography. Perhaps the heaviest criticism came from American photographers, editors, and museum curators who didn’t appreciate Frank’s unique compositions. The “new quality in Frank’s pictures was their equivocating indirection, their reluctance to state clearly and simply either their subject or their moral…Frank seemed to photograph around the periphery of the true subject, show us things tangential to it, but seen in its reflected light” (Szarkowski 259). Because of their dispirited emotional hues and deflated view of America, many did not accept his photographic style.

Eventually, younger photographers started to see value in Frank’s pictures and the new direction his work brought to photography. During the 1960s a surge of young people rebelling against the corporate culture of America grew to respect Frank’s style and even mimicked his travel routes with their own cameras, documenting the every day scenes they encountered. This new generation realized that there was tenderness among the desperation portrayed in Frank’s photographs. There was both hope and despair embedded in his work and it helped to shed new light on the possibilities that photography could hold.

In the 1970s, a photographer named Sebastião Salgado began his work documenting social situations worldwide. Salgado was born in Brazil, but fled to France because of the Brazilian military dictatorship of the late 1960s. He worked as an economist for several years. While on a business trip for the International Coffee
Otte 28

Organization, he learned how beneficial photography could be in showing the people and places he was reporting about. By 1977, Salgado began traveling the world documenting things like famines, wars, and impoverished workers (Light 108). He prefers to focus on one long term project at a time and has published several books depicting collections of photographs from his projects. Through his mission to expose a myriad of different cultures and social situations he has received worldwide praise as both a photographer and a humanist.

Salgado’s first book, Other Americas, shows indigenous life in Latin America. For this group of photographs, he returned to his native land of Brazil and neighboring countries in South and Central America to depict the people living there. When his work was complete, he purposefully omitted captions from the book to provoke the viewer’s “imagination to wander and speculate” (Riding 7). He considered not listing the location and date next to each photograph as well to “underline the irrelevance of both national boundaries and the passage of time” (7), but ultimately left them in, deciding that the faces and places in the photographs tied one culture to the next.

Salgado spent seven years making images for his Other Americas project and to this day continues to photograph people, places, and situations that he feels need to be seen. He has visited cultures so remote that he was the first foreigner to set foot in their village. His method is to spend time in each location he photographs talking with the native people, learning from them and about them. Alan Riding’s words in the introduction to Salgado’s Other Americas book rings true for all of his work: “In black and white, Salgado’s photographs capture alternating light and darkness of skies and lives, the harshness and cruelty that coexist with tenderness and sentimentality” (Riding
9). His photographs show us groups of people that otherwise would not be seen. They provoke feelings of curiosity, wonder, pain, sadness, and discomfort, but ultimately give us enlightenment into our world.

Wing Young Huie is a photographer who has done much of his work in the upper Midwest. His father emigrated to America as a teenager and after moving back and forth between Minnesota and China several times, he eventually opened Joe Huie’s Café in Duluth. In 1955, Wing Young Huie was born in Duluth, the only one of his siblings to be born in America. Huie grew up as the only Asian-American in his school, among just a handful of other minorities. He became interested in photography and journalism as a college student and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a journalism degree in 1978. He worked as a freelance writer and photographer for several years and eventually began focusing his photographic work on diverse neighborhoods in Minneapolis and St. Paul (Huie, *Frogtown* 2-3).

In 1993, Huie ventured into the Frogtown neighborhood. Huie was impressed with the variety of people he found and has since reflected, “It was intoxicating to witness such an exotic mix in such common place surroundings. I felt as though I had discovered a strange new territory” (Huie, *Frogtown* 4). Huie decided to make Frogtown into a photographic project. He spent several weeks walking around without a camera and eventually began to tell the residents he met about his project and asked to take their picture. By 1994, Huie applied for and received four grants that allowed him to photograph in Frogtown a few times a week for two years. Through his photographs and interviews, he got to know the mixture of people who made up Frogtown and the exhibit
and book that became the products of the project allowed him to introduce the people he met to others. Huie reflects:

I don’t know what combination of personal traits – curiosity, arrogance, stubbornness, genuine interest, or just an absorption in photography – made me want to intrude on people’s lives for the sake of a picture. Not that people necessarily minded that kind of intrusion. In fact, most were flattered by it. And it amazed me what intimate details were offered with that camera lens beckoning (6).

Huie has completed dozens of other documentary photography work in the Twin Cities and beyond. His images consistently center on urban areas, diversity, and introducing people and places that might otherwise go unnoticed. He continues to work as an independent artist and runs a gallery in Minneapolis where he manages his own photographs and brings in other local artists to exhibit and perform their work. (Huie, Wing Young Huie).

From the beginnings of Daguerre and Atget’s simple reflections of daily life to its evolution into a social force, the photographic medium has always been used as a way to chronicle life. It has evolved from a primitive process that produced unclear images to an art form that makes permanent records of the events that surround us. Photographs have captured historical moments and daily events by well known professionals and every day amateurs, and has proved to be a lasting medium that makes us all more aware of the world in which we live.
Chapter 3

The idea for my Plan B project began after reading *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* by Linda Gordon. I have always been inspired by Lange’s photographic work for the Farm Security Administration and was eager to try a documentary project of my own. I knew that going through the process of creating documentary photographs would not only allow me to grow as an artist, but it would also give me the opportunity to improve the photography curriculum that I teach my students.

Once I decided on local organic farming as the focus of my photography, I compiled a list of farmers in the area. I spoke with my advisor and talked to the produce manager at the local organic food cooperative for suggestions on farmers to contact. I made phone calls and presented my project to several farms in August 2010, and started the bulk of my photography work when the new farming season began in Spring of 2011. Throughout the winter months as I prepared to take pictures, I examined the work of dozens of historical and current documentary photographers to gain insight into how other artists have completed similar projects. I looked at photography journals that featured photoessay works, online blogs and websites by current photojournalists, and books about documentary photography. I looked more closely at the work of Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and other photographers from history and considered the process that they went through to make photographs and compile bodies of work.

As I looked at photographs, I kept notes about the ones that stood out to me. Here is what some of those notes looked like:

*Delage Racer at Full Speed* by Jacques Henri Lartigue (Figure 3)

- Great action shot. I love the way this one feels like it’s moving with the blurry background and the car half cut off.
Migrant Mother Series by Dorothea Lange (Figures 4-8)
  - Classic. I love the expressions in this piece. It’s interesting to see all of
    the angles Lange worked from and which picture has become the iconic
    image. I love the black and white.

Wake County, North Carolina. July, 1939 by Dorothea Lange (Figure 9)
  - Excellent perspective and expression. I like the way the texture of the
    field contrasts with the sky and how Lange framed the person so squarely.

Migratory Cotton Picker by Dorothea Lange (Figure 10)
  - I have always loved this one. I love the angle, how close up it is, the detail
    of the lines on the man’s hand. It makes me want to know more: what is
    the context behind this photograph?

Power House Mechanic Working on Steam Pump by Lewis Hine (Figure 11)
  - I love the symmetry on this one.

Man Atop Girders by Lewis Hine (Figure 12)
  - What a perspective. I like the way the clean bold lines of the girders draw
    my eye through the picture and contrast with the faded lines of the city
    below. This is an example of a photo that is made more interesting by
    having a person in it.

Parade- Hobaken, New Jersey and Political Rally–Chicago by Robert Frank
  (Figures 13 and 14)
  - I am intrigued by these. The photo is partly made more interesting by the
    missing faces, but it also bothers me that I can’t see the subject.

Trolley, New Orleans by Robert Frank (Figure 15)
  - I love all of the expressions of this one. Is it hopeful or sad?

Rake Leaves, 1971 by Bill Owens (Figure 16)
  - I love the caption for this one: “My dad thinks it’s a good idea to take all
    the leaves off the tree and rake up the yard. I think he’s crazy.”

Among all of these photographs, I became particularly interested in current
photographers who have created a body of work on one subject. I fell in love with
Sebastiao Salgado’s photographs for his project Other Americas. As I learned about
Salgado’s life and career, I grew to appreciate his philosophy about photography: he
made it his goal to spend time with the people he photographed. In an essay about
documentary photography, Salgado writes, “You don’t go to do one picture. You go to build a story. In the end I believe that documentary photographers are people that love to tell stories” (Light 112-113). Although the images in Salgado’s Other Americas book aren’t printed with titles or detailed captions, they sensitively and truthfully convey the beauty he found in the people he met.

In images such as Brasil, 1983, for instance, he depicts a close up of three feet (Figure 17). Although we can’t see the people, we can imagine details about their lives by observing the wear shown on their feet. I love the composition in photographs like Guatemala City, 1978 (Figure 18) and Ecuador, 1982 (Figure 19). We can see the faces and expressions of the people photographed, but there remains a sense of mystery about who the people are and what they are doing. In Ecuador, 1982 (Figure 20), Salgado captures a group of people walking through a field. Artistically speaking, this photograph has exquisite textures in the rustic grass contrasting with the dark solid clothing of the people walking away from the camera. The only facial expression we can see is that of a little boy turned back to look at the photographer, adding to the intrigue of the photograph.

Another photographer whose projects I looked at in great detail was Wing Young Huie. As I paged through Frogtown, one of his books, I was especially fascinated by the images that included written information about the people photographed. For instance, here is the text that accompanies the image Snakes, Frogtown (Figure 21):

We call each other “Bubba,” you know, like brothers. But we don’t want to be confused with the blacks in the neighborhood because they call each other brother and sister. We’re not a gang. It’s not a race thing. We don’t
even have a name for our group. We’re just really good friends. We don’t go out looking for trouble. We just sit here and have fun.

From left to right: Caveman, Hobbit, Face, Chunks, Chief, and Girlie Boy (Huie, Frogtown 20).

Or this, next to Incident, Frogtown (Figure 22):

The neighborhood is run down. I think a lot of people from the Selby area of St. Paul moved over here. We have gangs, prostitutes, shootings. But they aren’t going to intimidate me. I’m not going to move. We were here first. The children see the prostitutes and gang people, and it doesn’t seem to bother them. We just try to keep them in after dark (Huie, Frogtown 44).

These photographs are already visually captivating, but the written information paired with them gives them more of a context and makes them more personal.

While viewing all of these photographs, I found myself most drawn to the ones in which the photographer attempted to expose a story that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Migrant Mother (Figure 8), Wake County, North Carolina (Figure 9), Migratory Cotton Picker (Figure 10) and many others by Dorothea Lange all show us specific people and their lifestyles during The Great Depression. From Lange’s FSA photographs we gather a sense of sadness, despair, adversity, and poverty. But themes of the hopefulness, joy, and perseverance of the human spirit also come through in much of Lange’s work. Her images have withstood the test of time because of these universal themes. In the 1930s, her images made Americans more aware of the dire situations in
which many people were living. Today, her photographs have become symbols of a trying time in our nation’s history that should not be forgotten.

Similarly, Robert Frank’s work comments on American life in the 1950s. Upon its publication, the photographs in his book *The Americans* were widely criticized because of their unfavorable portrayal of American life. At a time when citizens were supposed to be living the American dream, many of Frank’s images depicted themes of loneliness and despair. In *Trolley, New Orleans* (Figure 15), for instance, none of the people in the streetcar look particularly happy. In addition, the photograph shows the presence of racial tension based on the fact that the African American people are seated in the back of the trolley. This photograph and many of Frank’s other images exposed a view of America that many didn’t want to see, but they gave the world a glimpse into the realities of American life at the time.

After reviewing the work by all of these photographers, I felt ready to embark on my own documentary photography journey. In Spring of 2011, I re-contacted the farms I planned to work with and set up times to photograph. Throughout the spring and summer, I spent most of my time at *Minnesota Food Association (MFA)*, a non-profit organization in Marine On St. Croix, Minnesota that assists immigrants and minorities in establishing and maintaining their own organic farms. Their mission is to “provide farmers with the skills and knowledge to operate their own viable organic and sustainable vegetable farms, while providing fresh, organic produce to local consumers by the farmers-in-training and promoting a more sustainable food system” (“Welcome”). At the *MFA* farming site, about a dozen farmers grow and sell their own produce while receiving the support and training necessary to operate their farm and business until they
are ready to transition to their own land elsewhere. The farmers are all from different backgrounds, making MFA a myriad of different cultures, languages, and traditions operating with the common goal of growing organic produce.

I spent smaller amounts of time at four additional farms: *Rising Sun Farm* in River Falls, Wisconsin, *Fox and Fawn Farm* in New Germany, Minnesota, *Gale Woods Farm* in Mound, Minnesota, and *Future Farm Food and Fuel* in Baldwin, Wisconsin. *Rising Sun Farm* and *Fox and Fawn Farm* are independently owned organic farms run by individual farmers and their interns. They both supply produce to local groceries and restaurants and sell shares in their farm to individuals who receive their goods throughout the growing season. *Gale Woods Farm* is a part of the *Three Rivers Park District* on the western side of the Twin Cities. They house dozens of farm animals such as sheep, pigs, cows, and chickens and have plenty of land for growing organic produce. Consumers in the area can purchase vegetables from the farm and are encouraged to visit the site and learn about the planting, growing and harvesting of the food they eat. In addition, *Gale Woods* runs youth education and volunteer programs that help kids to learn about “agriculture, food production, and stewardship” (“Gale Woods Farm”). Finally, *Future Farm Food and Fuel* uses aquaponic and hydroponic technology to grow vegetables and herbs and raise fish. They take pride in the fact that they produce healthy, chemical-free food, using a minimal amount of energy (“What We Do”).

These five locations provided me with the breadth and depth I needed for my body of photography work. By visiting *Minnesota Food Association* several times throughout the season and the other farms once or twice, I gained a greater understanding
of different styles of organic farming, and a better picture of what it takes to produce a group of documentary photographs on a topic.

As I took pictures, I considered what I had learned in my research. I thought about the process that Dorothea Lange and her counterparts went through as they photographed their subjects and tried to mimic some of the tactics that were important to them. Like Lange, I kept notes about the places that I visited. I found it important to jot down the names of the people I photographed and the things they taught me about farming and their lives. After each farm visit, I wrote a journal entry in a notebook and posted photographs on my blog with a brief written synopsis of my visit. These methods helped me to reflect about my time at the farms and to examine my photographic work each time I had a new set of pictures. I also continued to look at images made by established photographers and allowed their work and methods to be integrated into my own.

As I visited the farms, I talked with farmers about their crops and their methods of growing their vegetables. I tried not to rush through any of my visits but took the time to examine my surroundings before making pictures. As a way to thank each site, I sent a CD with all of the pictures I took. I also made prints for several of the farmers at Minnesota Food Association so they could see the photographs I had taken of their farms. I made every attempt I could to establish a relationship with the people I photographed so they would feel comfortable with my camera and me.

Throughout the course of the spring and summer, I took well over two thousand photographs, but narrowed my work down to a final group of twenty for my show. My hope was to include pictures that portrayed the process of organic farming and all that it
entails, while emphasizing the beauty and emotion behind it. As I talked with farmers throughout the project, I learned how deeply they love their work and how passionate they are about it. My hope was to convey the joy, artistry, skill and hard work that goes into their craft.

Through my research, I came across a quote that summed up the intention I had with my documentary photography project: “Much social documentary work has the positive intent of making viewers aware of good and successful social conditions and programs that deserve support and encouragement” (Sandler 73). Like Lange, Hine, Frank, Salgado and other photographers who have attempted to portray an aspect of the world that they found to be important, I wanted my work to do the same. Ultimately, I hope that the photographs I took will shed positive light on organic farming and that my work will teach others about what I learned.
Chapter 4

The findings from my thesis are threefold: an art show featuring twenty of the pictures I took, a bigger body of photographs that helped me to learn the process that a documentary photographer undergoes from start to finish, and a new photography unit that I will be able to use with my students.

My hope with the twenty photographs included in my show is that they portray organic farming in a meaningful and aesthetic way and that they lead to deeper insight into the topic. I purposefully chose many images that show people at work. These are the people that I met and with whom I built relationships throughout this project. They gave me a greater appreciation of their profession and showed me why organic farming is so important to them. They allowed me into their lives for a period of time to showcase their work, and I hope that my final photographs portray the beauty and dedication of the moments that I observed.

Beyond the twenty final photographs in my show, I compiled a body of work that includes several hundred images. While speaking with farmers in the initial stages of my project, I explained that I wanted to document what they do. In the beginning, the theme of my project was somewhat vague, but developed more as I learned from the people I met. Joci Tilson, assistant director at Minnesota Food Association where I spent the majority of time, was particularly excited about my project since MFA had been wanting more photographs of their organization. She explained the desire they had for images that captured the joy behind organic farming. In many ways, this theme became my goal as I visited MFA and other farms.
I made it a point to give each farm that I visited a CD of the pictures I took, hoping that they would be able to use them to promote what they do or as a personal keepsake of their work. I was pleased to learn that Minnesota Food Association has used my photographs in several places, including brochures and posters that educate others about the farm, slideshows on their website, and in a holiday card that they sent out to their supporters. I feel good about the fact that MFA and other farms found my photographs helpful in illustrating their sites to those who may not be able to visit. I am glad that my photographs can act as a window into the world of sustainable farming.

Perhaps one of the most important results from this study is a new photography unit that I will be able to use in my classroom. I have taught photography in the past, but have usually focused strictly on fundamental aspects such as composition and how to edit a photograph. This project inspired me to devise curriculum that would allow my students to create a group of documentary photographs on a topic of their choice. Having completed my own documentary project on a larger scale, I can more successfully teach my students documentary photography. The unit can be found in Appendix B on Page 54.

Through my findings, I have been reminded of the important role that photographs can have for both professional photographers and students. Photographs can tell a story in a direct way and teach people about a topic that they know little about. It can be an effective avenue for showcasing an important subject and can be a powerful tool to grow in others the desire to learn more about a given topic. Through this project, I learned that creating a body of work focused on one topic can be a powerful experience for both the artist and the viewer. As an artist, it is a meaningful way for me to share an
experience about which I feel strongly, while viewers are offered a window into a world that they may be experiencing for the first time or through a new lens. It is my hope that, through my experience, I can better help my students to understand the satisfaction earned through a documentary project as well as the power that a single focused body of work can have on those who view it.
Chapter 5

This project started as a way for me to create work different from the wedding pictures and family portraits I have become accustomed to taking. It turned into an avenue that rejuvenated my love for photography. As I attempted to meet the challenge of documenting moments in time in a meaningful and artistic way, I remembered how much I love to create photographs. While my business of shooting weddings and portraits will always be an important part of my photography work and something that I enjoy, this project allowed me to see more possibilities in what I could do with photography. One of my greatest joys is creating photographs that help people and this project reminded me that there are dozens of organizations and places in my community that deserve recognition for the good work they do. As a photographer, I can play an important role in helping to promote topics that I feel others should experience. I am inspired to do more photographic work in these areas alongside the work I am hired to do for my clients.

Additionally, this project gave me the opportunity to review the work of photographers I have always loved and discover new photographers whose work inspires me. I have an even deeper appreciation for Dorothea Lange and her keen eye for capturing people and their stories. As I created my photographs of farmers and agriculture, I often thought of her images and I let her work and humanistic philosophy influence my own. I became fascinated with the projects of Sebasião Salgado and Wing Young Huie, photographers with whom I wasn’t familiar before starting my research. I share their passion for photographing people in their everyday lives and letting their work
teach their viewers about what they have observed. As I put together my body of work, I chose images that might have a similar impact on my audience.

Beyond the ways that my Plan B has influenced my photography, it has also helped me to become a better visual arts educator. After completing my own documentary project, I have discovered methods that will bring my photography curriculum to a more meaningful level for my students. Instead of just teaching them the mechanics of photography, I now have a unit that will allow them to go deeper into the medium. By focusing their work on documenting something that is important to them and giving them more freedom to create images on a wide variety of documentary topics, I believe my students will get more out of the photography unit I teach and feel a greater sense of personal success and satisfaction in the end.

I am reminded of a quote by well-known photo historian Beaumont Newhall that I came across while researching:

To many contemporary photographers – the magic of photography is its all-seeing eye, capable of capturing more than the human eye can possibly observe the mere fraction of a second when the shutter is open and allows the film to absorb the fleeting image. In this sense the camera is more than an instrument to record an image already seen in all its details: it is a tool for sharpening our vision (Newhall, *The History of Photography* 292).

In its best form, photography is more than just a way for us to capture and preserve images and memories. It offers us – both professional and amateur photographers – a way to help sharpen and focus our understanding on the world around us. In turn, that allows us to showcase this deeper understanding to those who view and enjoy our work.
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Appendix A: Figures

Figure 1
Member of Congregation Called Queen
Dorothea Lange
http://collections.mocp.org/

Figure 2
Paymaster on Edge of Pea Field
Dorothea Lange
http://www.historicalstockphotos.com/

Figure 3
Delage Racer at Full Speed
Jacques Henri Lartigue
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Figure 4
*Migrant Mother Series*
Dorothea Lange
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Figure 5
*Migrant Mother Series*
Dorothea Lange
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Figure 6
*Migrant Mother Series*
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Figure 7
*Migrant Mother Series*
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Figure 8
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Figure 9
*Wake County, North Carolina*
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Figure 10
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Figure 13
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Figure 16
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Figure 17
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Figure 18
*Guatemala City, 1978*
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Figure 19
*Ecuador, 1982*
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Figure 20
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Figure 21
*Snakes, Frogtown*
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Figure 22
*Incident, Frogtown*
Wing Young Huie
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Appendix B: Documentary Photography Lesson Plan

Documentary Photography Unit
Mrs. Otte
Lake Middle School
April, 2012
Timeline: 12 class periods

Objectives:
Students will:
- Become familiar with current and historical documentary photographers.
- Become familiar with terms related to digital photography and photo editing.
- Become familiar with technical use of digital cameras and editing software.
- Create documentary photographs on a subject of their choice.
- Post their photographs for display either in the school, or on the school website.

Unit Overview:
Day One – Day Two: Introduction to Documentary Photography
- Explore the definition of documentary photography.
- Examine the work of historical photographers (Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, FSA photographers, etc.)
- Look at current photographs from newspapers and magazines such as National Geographic.

Day Two – Day Three: Composition/Basics of Photography
- Discuss the rule of thirds and compositional guidelines.
- Discuss camera angles, lighting, and good practices of photography.
- Critique newspaper photographs.

Day Four: Introduce Project
- Discuss project requirements and timeline.
- Brainstorm.

Day Five – Day Six: Introduction to Taking Pictures, Uploading, and Editing
- Discuss the technical basics of digital photography (how to work the camera and how to upload pictures).
- Demonstrate the basics of editing a photograph.
- Practice taking, uploading, and editing photographs.

Day Seven – Day Nine: Independent Work
- Students take pictures, upload pictures, and edit their work.
- Students add captions to photographs and complete writing components.

Day Ten: Present and Critique Work
• Students share their work and give constructive feedback to each other.

**Day Eleven – Day Twelve: Display Work**
• Prepare artwork for display and post photographs.

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**Curriculum Overview:**

**Day One – Day Two: Introduction to Documentary Photography**
• Smartboard presentation of documentary photography
• Students complete the following assignment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ________________________________</th>
<th>Hour: ________</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documentary Photography Hunt</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Find 3 documentary photographs in a newspaper, or in a National Geographic magazine.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. For each one, write down the name of the photographer and the caption that appears by the photograph.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In 2-3 sentences, describe each photograph. Write about who is in the picture, what you think is happening, and any details you think are important to note.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Based on the information you learned about documentary photography, do you think these photographs are good examples of documentary photography? Why or why not? Write 2-3 sentences for each photograph.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day Two – Day Three: Composition/Basics of Photography**
• Smartboard presentation on the following terms, including photography examples of each:
  - Composition
  - Rule of Thirds
  - High Angle Shot
  - Low Angle Shot
  - Eye Level Shot
  - Long Shot
  - Medium Shot
  - Close up Shot
• Smartboard presentation on “How to Take a Good Photograph” including information on the following topics:
  - Lighting
How to avoid camera blur
Framing a photograph

- Students complete the following assignment:

| Name: ___________________________ | Hour: __________ |

Take another look at the photographs you found for the Documentary Photography Hunt assignment and answer the following questions for each of the THREE photographs you chose:

1. Based on the information you saw in the presentation, what camera angles were used in the shot? Describe in 2-3 sentences.
2. Does the photograph use the Rule of Thirds? Why or why not? (Use complete sentences.)
3. Did the photographer use good technique? Why or why not? (Think about lighting, composition, and blur.)

Day Four: Introduce Project
- Show examples
- Give time to brainstorm

Documentary Photography Project

1. **Choose a subject that is important to you.** One about which you feel strongly, or one which you have an interest.

2. **Determine what message or story you want to share about the subject.**
   - Do you want to show the beauty or humor of the subject?
   - Do you want to persuade your audience to come to your belief?
   - Is your goal to make a strong statement?
   - Do you want to do your part in changing something in the world?
   - Do you want others to appreciate the beauty in your topic like you do?
   - Do you want to say something about cultural identity?
   - Do you want your photos to be looked at as a work of art?

3. **Take a variety of pictures of your subject or theme.**
   **Consider:**
   - What to photograph.
   - Where to place your subjects in the frame.
   - What to include or crop from the frame.
   - What angle, format, and distance to place your camera.
   - Where the light is coming from.
   - When to click the shutter.

4. **Select 5 of the best photographs from the shoot.** Each photograph must be edited and in final form when submitted to me. You must write a caption for each of the photographs that briefly
describes who, what, where, when and why of the photo.

Example: Molly Otte, art teacher at Lake Junior High, smiles as she teaches her students about the rule of thirds and composition during her 1st hour Multimedia Productions class.

5. You will also write a narrative essay which describes and elaborates on your subject.
   - Minimum of 1.5 pages, Times New Roman 12 point font, Double Spaced

Here are some things you might want to write about:
   - Why did you choose this subject?
   - What point did you want to get across with your subject?
   - What is important for people to know about your subject?
   - What challenges did you face during this project?
   - What are some of your favorite photos and why?
   - What is this history behind your topic?

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Photo Essay Rubric

Name: ______________________ Hour: __________

Give yourself 2, 1, or 0 points for each

Photos:
__5 photos are handed in correctly___
__5 photos are technically edited well____
__Use of Composition and Rule of Thirds___
__Overall VARIETY (wide variety of shots)___
__Overall QUALITY of photos (good light, no camera blur, quality editing)___
__Overall CREATIVITY of photos____
__Overall ATTENTION TO DETAIL___

Essay:
__1 page, double spaced, 12 point, Times___
__Essay is thorough and informative___
__Grammar, spelling___
__Overall QUALITY___

Cutlines:
__Cutlines are numbered to correspond with photos___
__1-3 sentences in length___
__Who, what, where, when, and why, is included ___
__Overall QUALITY__

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Day Five – Day Six: Taking pictures, Uploading, and Editing

- Introduce the following terms:
  - JPEG
  - Pixel
  - Edit
  - USB Cord
  - Upload
  - Memory Card
  - Point and Shoot Camera

- Introduce the cameras and the controls
- Introduce editing and demonstrate how to do the following things:
  - Upload
  - Levels
Give students time to practice.

**Day Seven – Day Nine: Independent work**
- Students take pictures, upload pictures, and edit their work.
- Students add captions to photographs and complete writing components.

**Day Ten: Present and Critique Work**
- Students share their work and give positive feedback to each other.
- Students complete the rubric and hand it in.

**Day Eleven – Day Twelve: Prepare artwork for display and post photographs.**
Appendix C: Artist Statement

If I could, I would eat, sleep, and breathe photography. I fell in love with the medium while taking a film photography class as a sophomore in college. The smell of the darkroom, the anticipation of waiting for a roll of film to develop to see my images for the first time, the magic of watching pictures appear on paper while soaking in developing chemicals: all of these things were exhilarating for me. As I was learning the process of film photography, digital technology was growing at a rapid pace. Before I graduated from college I was working primarily with digital cameras and editing in Photoshop, a new process that I found just as intoxicating.

Although my artistic interests span many subjects, photography is my true love. Through my business, Paper Lemon Photography, I am blessed with the opportunity to make images of people, my favorite subject. Whenever possible, I incorporate digital photography into my art classroom, teaching my students the technique of creating photographs. As an art education graduate student, I wanted the opportunity to sharpen my own photography skills and explore new possibilities of how to best teach my students.

*Organic: a Photographer’s Journey Through Documenting, Learning, and Teaching* is the study I completed for my Master’s thesis project. The project started as a way for me to take pictures of places and people outside of my normal photography realm of weddings, senior pictures, and family portraits, but it became much more. It reinvented my love for all aspects of photography and allowed me to re-think the essentials of teaching it to my students. The process challenged me to discover new ways to document moments in time in a meaningful, informative, and artistic way.

The farmers I met are passionate about their trade. I witnessed the long hours they put into their work: rising with the sun to plant, weed, and water. I observed the thoughtfulness that goes into planning the layout of vegetable beds, harvesting the best of their produce, and washing and packaging their goods with utmost care. From the beginning to the end of the season, they work with tenacious dedication and I was inspired to follow suit while I showcased their work through my photography. Above all, it is my hope that viewers of this project will see the beauty, devotion, joy, and downright hard work that goes into organic farming and walk away as a more informed citizen of our community and world.
Appendix D: Farm Descriptions

*Rising Sun Farm*

*Rising Sun Farm* is located just a few miles away from River Falls, Wisconsin. Roger Browne has been operating the farm with his friends and family since 1976 and supplies produce to local food co-ops and restaurants.

When I met with Roger to explain my project, I was impressed with his expertise on the topic of organic farming. Amidst completing his tasks of uncovering the strawberry crop (pictured above) and planting seedlings with his intern, Roger spent the better part of a morning showing me the hoop houses, green houses, chicken coops, germinating room, and washing station that are part of his farm. As we walked, he told me more information about farming than I could ever remember. Roger has been in the business for years and as seen it all. His farm is an example of one that has stood the test of time and has become a pillar for organic farming in this area. Roger and his interns are passionate about their trade and I am lucky that I got the chance to learn from them.

Oh, and did I mention that *Rising Sun Farm* runs a “Clothing Optional” policy? Lucky for me, both of my visits were on cold, cloudy days.

*Fox and Fawn Farm*

My friends Red and Nina Kirkman run *Fox and Fawn Farm* in New Germany, Minnesota. They began operating the farm in 2009 after completing several internships on organic farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Their farm functions as a Community Sustained Agriculture program, or a CSA. Interested patrons purchase shares in *Fox and Fawn Farm* and receive a box of in-season produce each week from roughly June through October. This method of Community Sustained Agriculture encourages a relationship of collaboration between the farmer and the members. Members are invited to visit the farm to watch the vegetables grow and are kept up to date on the happenings of the farm during the growing season.

The day I visited to photograph last June was cloudy, wet, and cold enough to warrant wearing a few layers underneath my raincoat. It had been a long time since I tramped through mud puddles that deep and treacherous. Red and Nina told me that because of the weather, the start to the season last year was one of the hardest they, and other farmers they know, had seen. Despite the setbacks, *Fox and Fawn Farm* was already looking green as lettuce, garlic scapes (pictured with Nina above) and a few other goods were already ready to harvest.

Although unassuming and soft-spoken, my visits to *Fox and Fawn Farm* have taught me just how passionate, skilled, and thorough head farmer Red is. Red, pictured with his
trust scythe above, remains hard at work all year long to maintain his farm. Nina, who is a middle school science teacher most of the time, is equally as dedicated when it comes to the farm and serves as a loyal sidekick to Red’s operations. Together, they have created a farm that, with the help of their shareholders, produces excellent produce, educates others about agriculture, and sustains the environment.

**Gale Woods Farm**

On the same day as my visit to Fox and Fawn Farm, I also made my way to Gale Woods Farm in Mound, Minnesota. Gale Woods Farm is a part of the Three Rivers Park District on the western side of the Twin Cities. They house dozens of farm animals such as sheep, pigs, cows, and chickens and have plenty of land for growing organic produce. Consumers in the area can purchase vegetables from the farm and are encouraged to visit the site and learn about the planting, growing, and harvesting of the food they eat. In addition, Gale Woods runs youth education and volunteer programs that help kids to learn about sustainable agriculture.

I was impressed by size of Gale Woods and the number of staff and volunteers it takes to run such an operation. I was greeted heartily by the farmers and farm animals alike on my quest to document the activities of the farm. It truly is a place that teaches others about the benefits of organic farming and the importance that agriculture holds in our society.

**Future Farm Food and Fuel**

This site was the most unique of the five I visited. Future Farm Food and Fuel farms using aquaponic and hydroponic technology to raise tilapia fish, lettuce, and herbs. The plants and fish live in a symbiotic relationship, sharing the same water to flourish. The nutrient rich water from the fish tanks is cycled into the lettuce and herb beds where the plants have a chance to soak up it up as a natural fertilizer. The produce is literally growing in water—a phenomenon I didn’t know was possible before I saw it for myself. In turn, the clean water from the plant beds is cycled back to the fish to keep them healthy and thriving. Future Farm sells their fish on site and supplies their produce to local food co-ops and eateries. River Market Co-op keeps a steady supply of butterhead lettuce right below these photographs.

In addition to the food they produce, Future Farm works hard to keep their energy consumption to a minimum. When I visited, they were running a portion of their electricity from methane gas provided by the cows from Baldwin Dairy, located across the street. Because of this, their carbon dioxide emissions are minimal. They have established themselves as leaders in the farming industry, producing healthy and chemical free food while keeping their carbon footprint to a minimum.
Minnesota Food Association, or MFA, is about a twenty-minute drive north from Stillwater. I spent the majority of my time for this project here and was completely impressed by the entire operation. MFA’s mission is unique in that they assist minority and immigrant farmers in establishing and maintaining organic farms. MFA houses several small farms within its property and offers training programs and one-on-one guidance for farmers who are starting out and need assistance before opening farms on their own. Many of the MFA farmers work other jobs as their main source of income at this point, but dedicate evenings and weekends to learning the ins and outs of organics in hopes of someday operating their own farms full time.

As I walked through the fields I observed diversity not only in the vegetables that were growing, but also in the people who were planting and harvesting. The farmers I met were Bhutanese, Vietnamese, Hispanic, Hmong, and Sudanese. They spoke a myriad of languages and came from a wide variety of backgrounds, but all shared a common love for farming and supported the same goal of creating a more sustainable environment.

Before I began photographing at MFA, I spoke with Joci Tilson and Glen Hill, directors of the site. They both expressed the desire they had for photographs that captured the joy of farming. In many ways, this became my mission for the entire project and I learned quickly that finding the joy behind the trade was not hard to do. The passion on the faces of the farmers I met was evident right away.

Most of the photographs from MFA that became a part of this show depict families working together at their trade. I observed a mother teaching her daughter the difference between weeds and tomato plants; a family whose kids treat the site as their second home because of how frequently they are there; and a couple who assist their son in his work as a farmer. In my photos, I attempted to capture the beauty that exists behind their teamwork and the happiness they find in their vocation.
Appendix E: Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date of this Press Release: 4/4/2012
Name of artist: Molly Otte
Name of Exhibit: Organic: a photographer’s journey in documenting, learning and teaching
Name of Location: River Market Co-Op, 221 N. Main St. #1, Stillwater, MN 55082
Dates of Exhibition: April 14-May 14, 2012

Molly Otte, a graduate student at University of Wisconsin – River Falls, will exhibit photographs from her Master’s thesis project at the River Market Co-Op in Stillwater, MN. The show will run from April 14th-May 14th, 2012. Otte, a photographer and art teacher, spent a year documenting organic farming in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Otte spent time on five farms in the Twin Cities and River Falls area throughout the 2011 growing season, getting to know farmers and their families, learning the joys and challenges behind organics, and taking pictures along the way. She hopes that her photographs shed light on the dedication, joy, and downright hard work that goes into organic farming and that those who view her show will gain a deeper understanding of the topic.

River Market Co-Op is located at 221 N. Main St. #1 in Stillwater, MN. The Co-Op is open Monday-Friday 8am–9pm, Saturday 9am–8pm, and Sunday 9am–7pm. For further information, contact Molly Otte at molly@paperlemonphotography.com, or the River Market Co-Op at (651) 439-0366. This exhibit is free and open to the public.
Appendix F: Postcard Invitation

**ORGANIC:**
a photographer’s journey in documenting, learning, and teaching.

**Show Details:**
April 14–May 14th, 2012  
River Market Co-op  
221 North Main Street #1  
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082

Questions? Contact:  
nm@brycehinsonphotography.com

From:

To: