

B&W + TONING = MYSTERY

The first Topic of this Smartphone photography class is to shoot in black-and-white, primarily to better learn **framing and composition**, and then so we can present a subject with a sense of **mystery**. Mystery is the key to make interesting photographs. If the subject of a photo is easily identifiable then people will not look at it very long. Make propel work at getting the meaning of the photo.

Then we will add some warm tonality to the photos to impart a sense of **passion** into the photographs.

Shooting B&W

Both the iPhone and Android phones have a built-in black-and-white option in the standard Camera app. There is little or no room for adjustment with these apps however, so something better should be found. We need apps that will allow us to adjust several aspects of the photograph.

Tonal Range (Exposure) Control

Our first challenge is to find apps that will give us some control over the tonal range of our shots in general. This is sometimes know as 'adjustments'. The dark end of the photo should be a rich deep black. The white end of the photo should be bright but not 'blown out' (completely white). Some people see high-contrast as a matter of style, but excessively contrasty photos with either no shadow detail or highlight detail are technically not right.

The other extreme is not good either. If the dark shadows are not really black the photo will look washed out. If the highlights are too grey, the photo will look flat. You have to find the sweet spot of a full-range tonality without going over or under.

[When I was taught how to make 'proper negatives' the most important quote was 'If there is no photographic information in either the shadows or highlights then there is no picture, and this is incorrect processing.]

Today with Smartphones people seem to get away with doing almost anything in the name of style, and I am willing to accept that, up to a point. This new Smartphone medium is really changing the way photographs are seen, and this is really great! So let's see how far we can go in the name of creativity and still make 'quality' photographs.

Toning Control

Our next challenge is to find a good app that will add a subtle sepia tone effect. This a more specific adjustment and is not so readily available by name. It may require using something called 'aged' or 'vintage' or 'drama' but some of these also play with the tonal range as well to make their effect. So be careful but be adventurous.

The most important advice with this type of adjustment is: Don't over do it. Just add enough color to warm up the photo. If the effect is too strong and people see the effect before they see the photo it has been overdone.

BASIC SMARTPHONE PHOTO APPS

Some of the best known apps are listed below, but your challenge is to find something else in addition to these. This is where this class acts as a Research Team. Everyone will post the results of their research in a Recipe at the end of the critique period. If you find something good you should post your Recipe before the critique so your classmates can benefit from your work. Once everyone has successfully joined the Smartphone Photo blog you will be invited to join the Smartphone Recipes blog.

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SnapSeed from Google (iPhone and Android) gives you the ability to alter the photo into B&W with numerous controls. It will not really give you a direct way to add some warm tone called sepia tone but by blending effects such as B&W and Vintage you can get there. It does have a wide range of other effects, all of which are very controllable. The list includes Selective Adjust, Tune Image, Straighten, Crop, Details, Black & White, Vintage, Drama, Grunge, Center Focus, Tilt-Shift, Retroflex and Frames. See the SnapSeed web page for full details. <https://support.google.com/snapseed/>

VSCO Cam (iPhone and Android) works with presets that are tweakable. Not the greatest range of control. Maybe better with color than B&W photos.
<http://vsco.co/blog/category/tutorials>

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Camera+ (iPhone only) Has 4 banks of 'Filters'; Color, Retro, Special, Standard,(plus Analog and Hollywood for an additional fee), each with 9 variations, that are all controllable. Plus 'The Lab' including Rotate, Straighten, Tint, Duotone, Soft Focus, Film Grain, Sharpen, Blur, Saturation, Temperature, Exposure, Brightness & Contrast, Highlights & Shadows, and Vignette. DuoTone allow adding separate tints or tones to the shadows and highlights.
<http://campl.us>

Photo FX (iPhone only) from Tiffen, the camera filter company, is a very professional app that is very controllable. It has 77 filters organized into eight groups, 934 preset settings and 65 different color or black-and-white film looks.
<http://www.tiffensoftware.com/products/iphone-ipad-apps/photo-fx>

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Camera ZOOM FX (Android only) More an app for composition and shooting control than creative control, but a good app.
<http://www.androidslide.com>

Camera FV-5 (Android only) brings DSLR control to the smartphone.
<http://www.camerafv5.com>

GREYSCALE & TONING

The first Topic involves shooting in Greyscale. This is important if you want to learn how to compose photographs. Color just seems to get in the way when trying to organize visual space.

[terminology: 'Grayscale' refers to a photograph having a full range of monochrome tonality, black to white. 'Black & White' technically refers to an image that has only black and white tones, i.e. a very hard contrast image. But since the first film was called Black & White film, the term is now used to refer to Grayscale photos.]

The first question that arises is, why make photographs in black-and-white? If you look at the history of modern photography the first photograph taken with a camera was shot by Daguerre in 1838 with an exposure that was several minutes long. It wasn't until 1935 that Kodak introduced the first commercial color film called Kodachrome. That gives us a history of almost 100 years of black-and-white photographs.

The difference is that early photographs were made with light sensitive material that was sensitive to all the light that was hitting the film. The prints worked the same way and rendered images in shades of gray from black, being the most dense, to white, where there was no pigment at all.

The Kodak color process is a three layer film with different layers responding to different portions of the visible spectrum, namely red, green and blue. This same processes used today. To make prints from this film subtractive color theory is used that employs the colors cyan, magenta and yellow. The technology we are using today, consisting of a computer screen and an inkjet printer, uses the same basic theories. The screen is made of very tiny red, green and blue pixels. The ink in our inkjet printers is cyan, magenta and yellow plus black.

Yet even today with all of our technology we find that black-and-white photographs still have an enigmatic quality. They can transform a somewhat normal scene into one with drama. The photographs from the first century of photography had 'feel' because the chemistry was not really perfect back then. The early photographs were not really cold dead black. They had a warmer brownish tonality that added another layer of 'feel' to the prints. It wasn't until the 1950s they we really had good neutral tone black-and-white photo paper.

Many photo artists today turn to the black-and-white image to satisfy their desire to make highly emotive photographs. Then they treat their photographic prints with special chemicals that render them warm tone and even more evocative. Some just see it as the pure form of photography and shoot this way out of reverence.

Our smartphone cameras have the ability to reduce a full-color world to black-and-white by using special software. We can also easily add a bit of warm tone quality. Shooting in black-and-white also makes it much easier to learn how to frame the subject in the viewfinder (aka screen) and compose the shot in a way that organizes the scene and creates a visual geometry. When you shoot in color all the resulting reality seems to get in the way. People's attention gets seduced by the color and we forget about the more formal qualities of the photograph.