Having an SLR is neither necessary nor sufficient for taking good photographs.
unretouched pictures from Nokia N95
(5 megapixels, Zeiss lens, auto-focus)
Choosing a camera

✦ if you have the money, get an SLR, not a point-and-shoot
  • larger sensor = less noise, especially in low light
  • larger aperture = more control over depth of field

✦ don’t worry about
  • megapixels - most cameras have too many
  • brand - any major brand is good enough
  • body - inexpensive ones are fine (and lighter)

✦ worry about lenses
  • variable-zooms are convenient but the quality varies
  • avoid large focal ranges (18-250mm) - they’re “soft”
  • maximum aperture (lowest f/stop) matters

• for this course, need manual control over shutter and aperture
Extra goodies

✦ 50mm f/1.8 “fast” “prime” lens for low-light work
✦ tripod
  • sturdy is good, but heavy to carry
  • look at mini-tripods, flexible tripods, etc.
✦ flash
  • external flash aimed at ceiling takes much better pictures than a built-in flash aimed at the subject
✦ count on ≥ $500 for SLR + standard zoom + tripod
✦ CS 178 loaner cameras are
  • Canon A590 point-and-shoot (takes surprisingly good pictures!)
  • Nikon D40 (or D3000) with 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 (28-88mm equiv.)