Niagara Suspension Bridge, 1859 [looking north from the Maid of the Mist dock], albumen print from a glass plate negative by William England, chief photographer for the London Stereoscopic Company, London, UK

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The course will examine photographs as art, fact, and artifact through images, readings, and field research. In our focus on materiality, meaning, and institutional discourse, we will look at how photographs are created, circulated, and viewed across time and space, paying particular attention to how they function as “working objects in their own time” (Frizot).

Readings and assignment topics will be geared to student interests wherever possible. For example, the first photographically illustrated art text published in Canada (1863) and two subsequent publications may be used as the basis of a collaborative research project and potential exhibition. Equally, the work of Edward Burtynsky and other contemporary photographers may be examined. As a way to study the way in which the meaning of a photograph is shaped by institutional discourse and professional practice, visits to collections on campus and to major collections in Ottawa, Toronto, and/or Montreal are planned.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
This course will be a seminar, with weekly written critiques and/or discussions led by seminar participants. A detailed list of readings and requirements will be developed in collaboration with the class. A major paper based on original research and shorter critiques will be assigned. Visits to major photography collections, weekly oral participation and/or presentations, and a final “conference” paper will be scheduled.