DEPARTMENT OF
ART HISTORY & ART CONSERVATION
ARTH 341/3.0
Photography and Society

Molson's Brewery after the fire, Montreal, Canada East, 1852. Half-plate daguerreotype
Library and Archives Canada

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:
An introduction to the processes, practices and histories of photography; the changing topics address its
interpretation and application since the 1840s

Prerequisites: Level 3 or above. ARTH242 or ARTH342 recommended but not required.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This is a course about the evolving role of photography in society. With a focus on both images and ideas, it
investigates the production, circulation, reception, function, and meaning of photographs from the 1840s to
the present day. Designed to encourage students to think more broadly about photography, to approach
photographs in a way that is both critical and curious, and to interrogate them in a way that is both
historically grounded and theoretically informed, it will be of interest to students interested in visual culture
and visual representation, as well as those who wish to use photographs as primary sources for research
across a range of disciplines. Readings by inventors, photographers, critics, and scholars, coupled with
illustrated lectures, will be used to explore, from a variety of perspectives, developments that shaped the
role of photography in society: travel and exploration, art and printing, news and advertising, to name a few.
ARTH341: Photography and Society will nurture a fuller understanding of photography as an image-making
technology and a social practice, as an art form and documentary medium, from its invention in France,
England - and Brazil! - to its use around the world over the last 180 years.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
A schedule of lecture topics, readings, and assignments will be distributed during the first class. Attendance
is mandatory and will count toward your final grade. There will be a minimum of two written assignments
and two tests. There is no final examination.