

# Representation and Cognition in Photography

COLT 452, 22055, Spring 2013, Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30-4:50 pm, THH 214

In the class, we shall investigate photographs both as art objects and as documents and trace the history of thinking about photography. In the first section of the class, we will familiarize ourselves with the tradition of writing about photography (from Edgar Allan Poe to Walter Benjamin, from Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin to early Roland Barthes and Hubert Damisch) from Alan Trachtenberg's anthology *Classic Essays on Photography*. As we read, we will examine the work of key photographers such as Julia Margaret Cameron, Berenice Abbott, and Dorothea Lange, who represent two very different traditions we will trace in photography: theatricality and documentation. While we will not be exclusively concentrating on women photographers, their work will nevertheless be a central point of reference in this course; thus, Lee Miller's work (from Surrealist muse and model to war photographer and, later, commercial glamour photographer) will be crucial as a point of reference. We will then read three texts that have had very different impacts on thinking about photography—Barthes's *Camera Obscura* (*La chambre claire*), Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, and Sontag's much later *Regarding the Pain of Others*, in relation to which we will watch and discuss Errol Morris's documentary about the Abu-Ghraib photographs, *Standard Operating Procedure*. In the last part of the course, we will deal with photography in the digital age as we read Charlotte Cotton's provocative *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* and examine the work of contemporary women artists who work with and in photography such as Lorna Simpson, Adrian Piper, Rineke Dijkstra, and Cathy Opie.

**COLT L/M/CT Track:** This is a **Media** concentration course.



*Man in Neck Brace Posing for Daguerreotype* (19th century). Daguerreotype.

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THH 174