AHIS 373 – History and Theory of Photography
M/W 10-11:50am
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Instagram. Snapchat. Selfies. Advertising. Google Street View. Go-Pro. Drones. CCTV. Photography is omnipresent in the twenty-first century. It structures everyday life in a way that would have been unimaginable in 1839, the year of its invention. How did we get here? This class examines the history of photography from the early nineteenth century to the present. Moving through the last two centuries, we will look at the evolution of the medium from a variety of angles: photography as an innovative scientific technology, as a supposedly truthful mode of communication, as a highly subjective form of art. How are photographs disseminated and used, and by whom? What kinds of values do we ascribe to them? How have responses to photography shifted over the years? What can photographs tell us about how we understand the world and ourselves? Looking at diverse genres and themes, we will trace how the answers to these questions have changed over time, always striving to make concrete links between historical and contemporary issues.