OUTLINE

We live in surveillance societies. Almost all aspects of everyday life are subject to multiple forms of surveillance. Often these experiences are especially connected to security practices: from CCTV cameras to security screening at airports to the need for and use of ID cards at places like businesses and border crossings. Yet surveillance also occurs in more mundane activities like with online monitoring, consumer loyalty cards, routine medical check-ups and more. Surveillance has become so ubiquitous in our cultures that many of us now participate willingly if not enthusiastically in surveillance systems. Yet the continuous attention paid to our personal information through these practices has a dramatic effect on our social experiences, not to mention our private lives.

Surveillance however concerns more than our personal experiences. These systems add up to an information infrastructure, which has become essential in the broader functioning and structuring of contemporary societies. Surveillance is about the integration of surveillance technologies into the infrastructure and built fabric of cities. It is part of the transnational networks of satellites and telecommunications from the Internet to mobile telephones. Surveillance is intimately involved in the prevention, perpetuation, making and ending of wars and conflicts, the monitoring of climate, ecosystems and the lives of other species, and the maintenance of a global economic order.

AIMS

The course aims to provide a critical introduction to surveillance and the transdisciplinary field of Surveillance Studies. It offers a historically-grounded, theoretically-informed and empirically-illustrated survey of the practices, technologies and social relations of surveillance from different perspectives. Students will learn how theoretical understandings of surveillance connect with its empirical practice, and a particular emphasis will be given to the sociopolitical dimensions of surveillance by looking at comparative case studies. A critical understanding of both theories and practices of surveillance will be examined drawing from an analysis of surveillance processes (such as social sorting and data flows) and its potential drawbacks (i.e. privacy and ethical issues).

OUTCOMES

By the end of this course students should have a good understanding of:

1. Surveillance Theory. By the end of the course, students will be able to distinguish between theories of surveillance, identify their assumptions and core arguments, and apply them to empirical examples.
2. Surveillance Analysis. Students will develop analytic skills that will help them understand and critically assess contemporary developments of surveillance systems.
3. Communication. Students will be able to communicate both to other academics and to lay persons how contemporary surveillance systems work and how they impact social life.
COURSE READING

The required reading listed for each week will be provided on OnQ for students to read online or print. No paper handouts will be provided. Those who need special assistance should contact Disability Services, who can make arrangements to accommodate your needs.

Key Texts:
There is a Reader now available from Oxford University Press, which was based partly on this course and is designed for it. I think it would be unethical to force you to buy a book I edited, so it's not required but if you get this, it’s the foundation for everything in the course:

The most current introductory texts available are:

Although, it’s slightly older, this one is also recommended:

There is an absolutely awesome Handbook, from which I will be using excerpts throughout the course. This is very expensive but if you intend to go on to do a thesis on the topic of surveillance or do graduate studies in the area, you should get it:

One excellent resource for all Canadians is our FREE e-book available in English and French:

Journals:
The following journals are recommended, although you should not limit yourself to these – articles on surveillance appear in many disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals:
- **Surveillance & Society** – this is absolutely essential, and easy to access from anywhere because it’s open access: [https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/](https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/)
- Big Data and Society
- Information, Communication & Society (ICS)
- New Media & Society
- Media, Culture & Society
- Theory, Culture & Society

Please note that there are plenty of readings listed below for each section – you are not expected to read all of them. Every week I’ll advise you on making selections.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is in roughly four parts, after the introductory lecture. The first part, including Weeks 2, 3, and 4 is broadly theoretical. The second part, consisting of lectures 5 and 6, considers the sociopolitical and the sociocultural aspects of surveillance. The third part, the largest of the course, consisting of lectures 7, 8, 9 and 10, deals with empirical contexts of surveillance: social institutions, cities, social media, and conflict. The final part, weeks 11 and 12m considers the futures of surveillance, dealing with surveillance capitalism, and ubiquitous and planetary surveillance.

In this time of pandemic, all lectures will be provided on mp4 video format on YouTube linked from OnQ, and on mp3 audio on OnQ.
I

INTRODUCTION

In the first week, the course will be outlined, and the expectations, outcomes and assessment introduced. We will then look at the various definitions and understandings of surveillance, and try to arrive at our own preliminary definition(s) of the concept. We survey the contemporary prominence of the subject in politics, media and popular culture, with the use of many examples from different media sources. We also examine the growth of the study of surveillance and the need for, and rise of, ‘Surveillance Studies’ as one of a number of transdisciplinary fields (e.g. Gender Studies, Science and Technology Studies, Urban Studies) that do not necessarily attempt to replace traditional academic disciplines but rather identify key organizing principles or points of analysis around which scholars of many disciplines can come together. Finally, we will look at the way in which surveillance has been deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic as a way of highlighting a number of themes that will come up throughout the course.

Reading:

PART I: THINKING SURVEILLANCE

2

THE PANOPTICON AND BEYOND: Theories of Surveillance

In this introduction to surveillance theory, we examine the multiple ways in which one might conceptualize surveillance. The module is divided into two lectures. The first is on the more classic traditions of sociological theory, particularly Max Weber and more recent thinkers in that tradition from Anthony Giddens to David Lyon; and political economy (Karl Marx and neo-Marxists). The second considers post-structuralist and contemporary development of surveillance theory, via Michel Foucault’s concepts of panopticism, biopolitics and governmentality; their development and critique by Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben and contemporary Surveillance Studies scholars including Kevin Haggerty and Kirstie Ball.

Reading:

3

SOCIAL SORTING: Race, Gender and Surveillance

Missing from many older and more mainstream theories of surveillance is very much consideration of race and racialization, and gender and sexuality. This week’s lectures will reconsider surveillance theory and history through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), feminisms of various kinds, and queer theory, centering the experience of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), women and trans* folk.

Reading:
EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE: Autonomy and Privacy

In the fourth week we look at the place of surveillance in relation to social values, whether the morality that derives from philosophy and religion, the social norms that guide social relations, or the formal institutions of law. It considers first how practices of surveillance have been guided by religious and ideological considerations and normative expectations, looking at the way in which surveillance has been and is used to produce ideal societies, good conduct, safety, welfare, and so on. It also looks at the way in which surveillance has challenged or transformed other norms and values, and in particular at the complex relationship between surveillance, privacy and trust. Finally, it considers the arguments that contemporary forms of surveillance attack the very basis of moral or normative considerations of surveillance.

Reading:


PART II : POLITICS & CULTURE

PAPERS, PLEASE! The persistence of authority

For many, surveillance is equated with ‘Big Brother’, Orwell’s fictional dictator, and the operation of surveillance is bound up with both intentional and unintentional forms of social control, and has a complex and ambiguous relationship with authority and power. The fifth will consider surveillance in relation to the political form of societies, particularly authoritarian regimes, concentrating first on the Fascist period of the 1920s to 40s, and the former East Germany, before moving in to consider the contemporary ‘authoritarian turn’. It will also consider the relationship between surveillance, power and authority in democratic states and the role surveillance plays in distinguishing between different forms of governance.

Reading:

• Country reports from Amnesty International and Privacy International
YOU LOVE TO SEE IT: Surveillance (and) Culture

In Week 6, we consider the ‘bright side’ of surveillance, where both watching and being watched provides new forms of empowering and pleasurable social relations. Dealing with the reconsideration of surveillance based on ‘desire’ and ‘performance’ advocated by Weibel, McGrath, Andrejevic, Koskela and others, this session considers why so many people enjoy surveillance and participate in it actively and willingly, and what this means for future social development. We will also discuss several popular and artistic cultural responses to surveillance (films, literature, art etc.).

Reading:

PART III: SURVEILLANCE CONTEXTS

7 BIRTH, SCHOOL, WORK, DEATH: Everyday Surveillance and Institutions

Most of us experience surveillance in mundane ways and the settings of our everyday lives, whether we are aware of it or not. This week’s lectures will look at the social institutions in which and through which much of modern life is lived, focusing particularly on 1. schools and universities, examining how these institutions have instituted unproven commercial surveillance technologies in the name of preventing cheating during the COVID-19 pandemic; and 2. the workplace, where both online and wearable technologies and smart IDs are increasingly being used not only for safety but also to measure performance and even attitude.

Reading:

8 URBAN EYES: Surveillance in the City

Whilst this course tries to steer students away from technologically-determinist views of surveillance, it is still crucial to understand the interaction of technologies and surveillance, and the material consequences
of surveillance relations. This section examines the visual technologies of surveillance, from photography through film and video, to face recognition and other biometrics, and how they interact with urban space and urban life. This will return us to themes of social sorting and racism from Week 3.

Reading:

9 WE ARE THE PRODUCT: Social Media and Surveillance 2.0

In Week 9, we consider one of the most ubiquitous features of contemporary societies: social media. We consider social media as a predominant way of ordering social relations, but also as the vector for new forms of surveillance capitalism, harnessing the affective labour of users, and productive of data, big and small, an issue which will be built on in Week 11. Linking to the previous week’s theme, we also look at the coming together of social and spatial media and the increasing harnessing of location and movement in tagging and tracking technologies.

Reading:

10 FULL SPECTRUM DOMINANCE: Surveillance, Militarism and Borders

The tenth week considers the contemporary nexus of surveillance, war and espionage. Militarism has always had an intimate relationship with surveillance, here we seek to unpack that relationship further in the context of the world where the ‘state of emergency’ is, if not constant, at least always a possibility. These lectures look military surveillance practices and technologies as they have been used in an effort to produce a ‘closed world’ from the Twentieth Century to the present; the interaction between militarism, modernism and managerialism in contemporary societies; and the schemes for increased surveillance for reasons of ‘national security’ in the ‘war on terror’, particularly around travel and border control in an age of mass migration.

Reading:
- Greenwald, G. (2014) *No Place to Hide.* (+ see archive of Snowden revelation articles from *The Guardian* newspaper and *The Intercept*)
PART IV : SURVEILLANCE FUTURES

11 SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM (or something worse?)

This week we will discuss the political economy of surveillance now and into the near future. Building on previous weeks, we will examine the contradictions of a world both moving to a platform model of economics, with the scale which surveillance operates is now shifting from the local and national to the transnational and global, at the same time as nation-states are hardening their borders and sinking back into authoritarianism and nationalism. We examine the relationship between surveillance, capitalism, globalization and neoliberalization, arguing that there is a shift to the global, for the management of circulations that are seen as disorderly or undesirable, be those movements of immigrants, viruses and bacteria, or Internet data. But, drawing on Mackenzie Wark’s provocative work, we ask is this really surveillance capitalism, or indeed any kind of capitalism, or something worse?

1. Surveillance Capitalism(s)
2. Platform Surveillance and the End of Capitalism

Reading:


12 THE WATCHED WORLD: Planetary Surveillance

In the final week, we examine:

1. the convergence of politics, technologies and social processes towards a society of ubiquitous computing (ubicomp) or ambient intelligence (AmI), which is inevitably also a society of ubiquitous surveillance (ubisurv). It examines the various utopian and dystopian portrayals of such a society, from the transhumanist ‘singularity’ to technological authoritarianism and dehumanization, and sketches out possibilities for its emerging socio-technical relations.
2. The surveillance of the planet and non-human beings. These lectures both use futurological thinking, what I call ‘speculative sociology’, to encourage students to develop more critical understandings of the trajectories of surveillance societies and how we shape them and live within them.

Reading:


ASSESSMENT

There are two short pieces of assessment, each worth 25% and one final essay worth 50%. So it is essential that students attend class regularly and keep up with course readings. Each one is also targeted at developing different research and writing skills and styles. All pieces should be researched and referenced according to Queen’s Sociology standards.

1. Technologies of Surveillance

For the first assignment, choose a contemporary surveillance technology you’ve already heard about, research it, and write a piece of long-form journalism, which considers its history and use. This should be practice in both sociotechnical analysis and also research communication.

*Format:* 1500 words, double-spaced.

*Value:* 25% of the final mark; there should be at least 6 references, more than half of which should be to scholarly articles or books.

*Submission:* By 11:30pm, Friday 5th February, to the SOCY309 OnQ site (electronic submission).

2. Surveillance on Screen

For the second assignment, please watch one of the list of movies I will put on OnQ, and write a critical review. The film should be placed in an academic and sociocultural context, and deal with the issues considered in the course. This is not (just) about your personal opinion of the film!

*Format:* 1500 words in length, double-spaced.

*Value:* 25% of the final grade; at least 6 references, more than half of which should be to scholarly articles or books.

*Submission:* By 11:30pm, Friday 5th March, to the SOCY309 OnQ site (electronic submission).

3. Problems of Surveillance

Answer the following question:

“What is the most urgent problem of surveillance? How should we understand and deal with it?” Answer with reference to surveillance theory, empirical studies of surveillance, and news media, approached in a critical manner.

*Format:* 3000 words, double-spaced.

*Value:* 25% of the final mark; at least 15 references, more than half of which should be to scholarly articles or books.

*Submission:* By 11:30pm, Friday 9th April, (the last day of teaching term) to the SOCY309 OnQ site (electronic submission).


Course Grading

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average, weighted as noted above, to a letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Course Average (Range)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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Course Grading Appeals
If you feel that your work has been unfairly graded, you should carefully read the feedback, wait for 24 hours then, first, please seek to meet the TA who graded your work for further feedback.

If afterwards, you still feel there is a genuine grievance, you should then send an e-mail to the Module Leader, with no more than a paragraph explaining your case. The Module Leader will then re-read the work and respond in no more than 3 days (and probably within 24 hours). This decision is final, and no further correspondence will be entered into (see also Communication policy below).

Good reasons for appeals:
• your existing Accommodations or Extenuating Circumstances (see below) have not been fully considered in the grading of your work;
• a key argument has been missed or misunderstood by the grader;
• the grade given does not reflect the full grading rubric issued on OnQ for the assignment.

Poor reasons for appeals:
• you wrote enough words or listed enough references;
• the grade is not what you usually get, or expected to get;
• the grade is not compatible with your ambitions or the GPA you want;
• the grade won’t get you into Law School / Grad School / etc.

Academic Integrity
Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1), on the Arts and Science website (see http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen’s. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Turnitin Policy
Turnitin is a suite of tools that provide instructors with information about the authenticity of submitted work and facilitates the process of grading. Turnitin compares submitted files against its extensive database of content, and produces a similarity report and a similarity score for each assignment. A similarity score is the percentage of a document that is similar to content held within the database.
Turnitin does not determine if an instance of plagiarism has occurred. Instead, it gives instructors the information they need to determine the authenticity of work as a part of a larger process.

This course does not use Turnitin as a matter of course or expected all students to submit through Turnitin. However, if plagiarism is suspected in specific cases, a student’s work may be submitted to Turnitin. In doing so, a student’s work will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. A student will be notified in advance if the Module Leader intends to put their work through Turnitin.

Please read Turnitin’s Privacy Pledge, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Service, which governs users’ relationship with Turnitin. Also, please note that Turnitin uses cookies and other tracking technologies; however, in its service contract with Queen’s Turnitin has agreed that neither Turnitin nor its third-party partners will use data collected through cookies or other tracking technologies for marketing or advertising purposes. For further information about how you can exercise control over cookies, see Turnitin’s Privacy Policy:

Turnitin may provide other services that are not connected to the purpose for which Queen’s University has engaged Turnitin. Your independent use of Turnitin’s other services is subject solely to Turnitin’s Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, and Queen’s University has no liability for any independent interaction you choose to have with Turnitin.

ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMMODATIONS

Queen’s University is committed to achieving full accessibility for people with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2016 (see https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/ACADACCOMMPOLICY2016.pdf). If you are a student with a disability and think you may need academic accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Queen’s Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at: http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION FOR EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Queen’s University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time, not to exceed three months. Students receiving academic consideration must meet all essential requirements of a course. The Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Students in Extenuating Circumstances was approved at Senate in April, 2017 (see http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/Academic%20Considerations%20for%20Extenuating%20Circumstances%20Policy%20Final.pdf) Each Faculty has developed a protocol to provide a consistent and equitable approach in dealing with requests for academic consideration for students facing extenuating circumstances. Arts and Science undergraduate students can find the Faculty of Arts and Science protocol and the portal where a request can be submitted at: http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations. Students in other Faculties and Schools who are enrolled in this course should refer to the protocol for their home Faculty.

If you need to request academic consideration for this course, you will be required to provide the name and email address of the instructor/coordinator. Please use the following Instructor/Coordinator Name & email address: David Murakami Wood, dmw@queensu.ca
OFFICE HOURS, MEETINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS

There are no required tutorials for this class, and no formal office hours. I’ll be available online on the Teams site of the course during the designated course hours, if you need to talk to me. Teaching Assistants will post their availability before the first class.

E-mails will be responded to within 3 days (and probably within 24 hours). However, please do not expect a response after working hours or on the weekends; the Module Leaders and TAs have lives, and other responsibilities!

Please note that although I am highly sympathetic to all students facing adverse circumstances (and myself live with mental illness), I will not be able to communicate with students about their accommodations and / or extenuating circumstances and / or personal problems more generally. You must go through the official channels (see above).

ATTENDANCE AND CONDUCT

A lot of work goes into developing lectures and in these difficult in times, in some ways, even more work goes into recording and making lectures available in multiple formats. So, please watch or listen to them!

This course should challenge your pre-existing views and ideas, but the course leader and lecturers are not the sole voice of authority. You will not be downgraded for making well-reasoned and supported arguments that go contrary to the views put forward by the lecturer(s), but unsupported views, racism, sexism, homophobia, or attacks on any other marginalized group of people will result in a failing grade.

Finally, what you will get out of this course will be in proportion to the effort you put in. In particular, please keep all communications polite and respectful. Disrespectful, intimidatory or abusive behaviour towards the Course Leader, Teaching Assistants, Administrators and other students will not be tolerated and, if such behaviour continues, may result in the offender being reported to the Faculty Office. However you may feel, please just be nice!