SURVEILLANCE BETWEEN POWER AND RESISTANCE

Thursday, 11:30-2:30 [Jeffrey 106]

Professor: David Lyon M-C D526 lyond@queensu.ca
Office hours: TBA

Learning outcomes: What will you learn in this course?
The special topic in Surveillance Studies is ‘Surveillance between Power and Resistance’ which is to say, how surveillance relations of power may be understood both through the operation and the experience of surveillance. How far was Michel Foucault correct to suppose that “Where there is power, there is resistance”? And more specifically, how are power and resistance evident in a number of surveillance situations in Canada and around the world? This is not a course about Foucault’s analysis; rather, he provides a statement that may be explored fruitfully in a seminar-type situation.

That exploration will connect the everyday lives of students with some of the largest social, political, economic and cultural processes of today’s globalized world. What happens to your personal data as you move through everyday life-paths? Why and with what consequences? Is everyone affected in the same ways? Is surveillance power at work in every social sphere? Are concepts such as ‘surveillance capitalism’ helpful? What responses – from complacency to engagement – are appropriate and what difference can ordinary people make, anyway? Is resistance futile? What are the prospects for legal, regulative, educative, cultural efforts to curb surveillance? Do we have ‘data rights’? Should we?

“Where there is power, there is resistance” Michel Foucault A History of Sexuality vol 1: 95.

Three critically important concepts in sociology are surveillance, power and resistance. Surveillance is as old as humanity but in recent decades has become an increasingly central mode of social organization and governance. Its association with information-handling and especially with the collection, analysis and use of personal data – and their contribution to social sorting – is crucial to its success. But it also depends on political-economic and cultural developments that have allowed it to develop with relatively little hindrance.

Questions of power have always faced humanity but in the C21st power is deeply bound up with the so-called data-driven world. What are the key features of contemporary power and how do they relate to notions of control, authority, coercion exercised bureaucratically – via information and data-handling – through agencies such as the state or police or corporations? Resistance, similarly, takes shape differently in the C21st. Think of the role of social media, for example, in numerous struggles at pipelines, in airports, during elections and so on. What happens when the same socio-technical systems that facilitate control also enable resistance?
**Weekly sessions**

**Sep 05** Introduction: issues in Surveillance Studies, the power-resistance tension

**Sep 12** Grappling with the Cambridge Analytica debacle [DL] Watch *Push* on Netflix. Read About ‘data-driven elections’ in *The Conversation*.


**Sep 19** Querying Japanese National Identification as surveillance [Midori Ogasawara]
Read***

**Sep 26** Whistleblowers against over-reaching or illegal surveillance [Midori Ogasawara]
Read***

**Oct 03** Extradition, Rendition, surveillance and resistance (or...?) [?Raziel / Midori Ogasawara]
Read***

Focus on Canada

**Oct 10** Indigenous pushback against Canadian surveillance. Read about Canada’s spying on indigenous communities in *Democracy Now*.


Reading: Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality*: 175-217

**Oct 24** Term Break

**Oct 31** Sidewalk Labs: Questioning Alphabet’s ‘surveillance capitalism’ in Toronto [DL] Read about SL in Evgeny Morozov’s *Guardian* article or Natasha Tusikov’s *The Conversation* article.

Reading:

Seminar:

Global focus
Nov 07 Countering Private Surveillance Companies? Africa/ Lat Amer / MENA [DL ?&EZ] Read ‘Hide and Seek: Tracking NSO Group’s Pegasus Spyware to Operations in 45 Countries,’ September 2018


Seminar:

Nov 14 Questioning China’s Social Credit scheme [Rui Hou?] Read Bing Song ‘The West may be wrong about China’s social credit system’ World Post November 2018.


Seminar:

Nov 21 Usha Ramanathan against Aadhaar Identification System, India [DL] Read material from an Indian blog pushing back against Aadhaar.

Reading: Silvia Masiero and Soumyo Das, Datafying anti-poverty programs: implications for data justice. Information, Communication & Society, 22 (7) 2019: 916-933 [?difficult for students]

Seminar:

Nov 28 Pulling threads together

Reading

Required


Weekly readings, as per the course outline

Recommended

Extra session? Planning to negotiate airport security, and human rights [Simone Browne]
Or ‘The feeling of being watched’ [email: Sam Brodsky]

**Assignments** Each student will participate in classes (please let me know in advance if illness or accident prevents your attending) by completing the assigned readings, leading class discussions of the readings, preparing a seminar paper (30%); based on library research and relating to your own research plans; class participation, including the reading discussions and leadership (20%); and producing a term paper (50%).

**Readings**

These are listed under each class in the program. Everyone reads the ‘**key reading**’ and will be ready to discuss it. Students will also lead discussions on the assigned readings and make presentations on their research essay. Students are also invited to attend the SSC seminars [http://www.sscqueens.org/category/tags/ssc-seminar-series/] and other related events.

**Leading Class Discussions**

Students will take turns to summarize the recommended readings on a day assigned, offer some critical commentary and ask appropriate questions to elicit class discussion. Please ensure that you are not leading the readings discussion and presenting the seminar on the same day.

**Seminar Paper**

Students will each present on a specific topic. The idea is to stimulate discussion, not to give a comprehensive account. Work done by each student should be closely related to the term paper. The presentation may be supported with slides though this is not essential. As in the term paper, clear reference should be made to sociological and related theory by which topics may be explained. This is elaborated in the term paper. Students will discuss the topic with me in advance, to have it approved and to obtain advice. You are also required to distribute an abstract of your presentation and one related reading to the class during the week before the presentation. The reading is regarded as required for the class. *Presentations occur in the last 4 weeks of class.*

**Term Paper**
Each student will prepare a 15 page (double spaced) grammatical, fully referenced, sociological essay. The bibliography is in addition to the 15 pages. A combination of good empirical evidence with thoughtful sociological reasoning will garner the best grades. This is a research essay, so sociological – and, where appropriate, other disciplinary -- sources will be sought. Students will tie the topic in with their research area. Due two weeks after seminar presentation.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (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).

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), on the Arts and Science website (see http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/sites/default/files/Academic_Regulations.pdf), 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.