

Surveillance Cultures

Course Syllabus

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Comm 490 – Fall 2021

MW: 1:25 – 2:40pm

Location: Murray Hall - Rm G205



Professor

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Office Hours: by appt.

Course Description

Surveillance is everywhere: in workplaces monitoring the performance of employees, social media sites tracking clicks and uploads, financial institutions logging transactions, advertisers amassing fine-grained data on customers, and security agencies siphoning up everyone's telecommunications activities. As a part of our everyday lives, surveillance now shapes the way we see ourselves and the way we relate to others. Many individuals eagerly generate data on their exercise routines and eating habits; they rate the films they watch and tag the photos they like; they track the activities of their romantic partners and the movement of their loved ones. In combination, these practices form pervasive surveillance cultures that govern almost all aspects of modern life.

Learning Outcomes

The goal of this course is to develop a critical awareness of surveillance cultures and their implications for society. Students will learn how theoretical understandings of surveillance connect with empirical practices with a particular emphasis on how surveillance impacts people differently based upon their racial, class, and gender identities. To meet these objectives, the course will provide an advanced introduction to the transdisciplinary field of surveillance studies.

Texts

1. Monahan, Torin, and David Murakami Wood, eds. 2018. *Surveillance Studies: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press.
2. Readings on Sakai or webpages

Grading

Current Event Analyses	30%
Book Review	20%
Final Term Paper	40%
Participation	10%

[Grading Scale: A =93-100, A- =90-92, B+ =87-89, B =83-86, B- =80-82, C+ =77-79, C =73-76, C- =70-72, D+ =67-69, D =63-66, D- =60-62]

Course Expectations

Attendance: Because we are currently in a global pandemic, there will be no required attendance. Take care of yourselves and your loved ones first and foremost. If you are feeling ill or experiencing any COVID symptoms, please do not come to class.

Reading: Complete all readings (and other assignments) prior to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. Most of the readings will be drawn from the textbook, websites, or articles posted to Sakai. You must bring readings (or copies of them) to class for the dates they are assigned. In some cases, I may distribute photocopied readings to you in class. See the course outline below for details.

Participation: Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn. The rubric for participation grades is as follows:

- Initiate (1-3 pts): you are present in class but seldom speak.
- Apprentice (4-5 pts): you actively listen and speak occasionally, but you don't explicitly connect your comments to the reading.
- Journeyperson (6-7 pts): you actively listen, contribute somewhat reliably, and usually connect your comments to the reading.
- Expert (8-9 pts): you actively listen, contribute regularly, and always make explicit connections to the reading.
- Master (10 pts): you actively listen, contribute regularly, and always make explicit connections to the reading, often identifying themes *across* weeks too. Additionally, you *quickly* zero in on correct answers, allowing plenty of space for others to expand on your points or make their own contributions.

Technology: Laptop computers, tablets, and mobile phones should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, send email, surf the web, answer mobile phones, text message, tweet, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these

practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

Course Assignments

1. Current Event Analyses:

You will be responsible to turn in **three** current event analyses throughout the semester (*Do not write current event papers during film weeks*). For these assignments, you must find a popular media story that connects in some obvious way to readings for the week. Stories should have been published within the past month. Track down and use the full original story if you found a reference to it on a blog or secondary site. Please do not conduct more than one analysis per class session.

Each analysis should be a 500-word essay that identifies the story and explains how it illustrates, complicates, or extends some of the ideas covered in the reading for the week. The goal is to show how the readings in the course help you to understand current events, so you will have to explain yourself thoroughly and provide sufficient detail to demonstrate the connections you are trying to make. Papers will be due at the start of class. Please include a bibliography for your papers. Because we will use the stories to initiate our conversation for the day, be prepared to present your analysis at the beginning of class and answer questions about the story.

2. Book Review:

You will be expected to write one 5-page book review of a surveillance studies book (due September 22). With the exception of the assigned Reader in the course, you may select any of the books listed on this website: <https://publicsurveillance.com/books.html>. Please do not read any other reviews of the book before writing your own, as they may unduly influence your interpretation and approach.

The goal of book reviews is to provide readers with an overall sense of the book's argument, contribution to the field, unique approach (methodological or theoretical), primary audiences, and limitations. Book reviews should be engaging and detailed, offering readers with an accurate sense of the subject matter covered and the tone of the book as a whole. Book reviews should also be *critical* so that readers can acquire insight into the work's deficiencies and make educated decisions about whether to read or adopt the book for their courses. That said, book reviews should also be *fair*; they should assess the book that was written, not the book that the reviewer would have preferred the author to write instead.

I recommend that you include the following elements:

- What is the book's main argument? How is it substantiated and developed across the text? What makes it novel or important? Do you find the argument persuasive? Why or why not?
- Who is the intended audience?
- How does the book fit within or extend current conversations in the field?
- How would you characterize the author's methodological approach? What materials do they draw upon? What examples are particularly compelling?
- What are the book's concepts? How do they support the book's argument?
- Given the author's stated (or implied) goals, how well do they succeed in meeting them? Where do they excel? Where do they fall short, if at all?

- Is the book's format unique in any way (e.g., does it reprint images, maps, offer discussion questions for classes)?
- What is your overall appraisal of the book?

3. Final Term Paper:

A final term paper of 10-12 page will be required in this course. The paper (due December 6) should respond to one of the following prompts:

- What is the role of surveillance in shaping identities and subjectivities today? How has that relationship changed over time?
- "If you're not doing anything wrong, you should have nothing to hide." Unpack this rhetoric and explain its inaccuracies and limitations.
- What are the potentials of surveillance to empower people? What are some critiques of those forms of empowerment?
- How has our understanding of privacy and its relationship to surveillance been altered by social media?
- Make an argument for how surveillance is racializing and/or leads to racial violence.
- In your estimation, what are the most effective ways to resist surveillance? How is your perspective informed by the many resistance efforts of others (e.g., activists, civil society organizations)?
- You may also propose a different subject, provided that it is cleared by me at least two weeks before the paper is due.

You will be expected to demonstrate familiarity with the social theories and empirical research covered in the course as a whole.

I reserve the right to distribute unannounced quizzes on the reading or lecture material. Any missed points on these quizzes will be deducted from your participation grade. Quizzes may not be made-up if you are absent.

Writing Guidelines

Please use 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, double-spaced lines, and one line space between paragraphs. Do not use cover pages or folders of any kind unless necessary to preserve your presentation (e.g., sketches or photographs). All papers must be stapled or they will not be accepted. No late or emailed papers will be accepted.

Academic Honesty

In order to avoid plagiarism, your assignments must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. Make sure you put all quotes in quotation marks and include references. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Honor Code for complete guidelines on academic honesty: <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/>. If you have any questions about how to avoid plagiarism, do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Mask Use (In-Person Instruction Modes)

This semester, while we are in the midst of a global pandemic, **everyone is required to wear a mask covering their mouth and nose entirely at all times in our classroom, even before and after class.** (No exceptions for *any* reason, including eating or drinking.) This requirement is to protect our educational community—your classmates and me—as we learn

together. If you neglect to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the [Office of Student Conduct](#). At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. If the university fails to disenroll you for whatever reason, I will assign you a grade of “F” in the course. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service may have an exception but must communicate with me in advance so that we can ensure the safety of everyone. For additional information, see [Carolina Together](#).

Gender-Fair Language

Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequalities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like “mankind” or “men” when referring to people in general; alternate between “she” and “he” instead of always using “he,” or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use “they” or “them” and avoid the problem altogether.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

The Department of Communication is committed to social justice, equity, and inclusion. This course reflects these commitments by creating an environment that fosters critical thinking, represents diverse views points and ideas, and invites thoughtful, respectful, analysis of the issues and ideas that are discussed in the course. Each of us has the right be recognized for who we are, referred to in the identities that we inhabit, and included and represented in the course.

ESL/LD Students

Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during the professor’s office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introductions

Wednesday, August 18:

Readings:

- No Readings.

Week Two: Surveillance Studies & Subjectivity

Monday, August 23:

Readings:

- Introduction: Surveillance Studies as a Transdisciplinary Endeavor (SS xix-xxxiv)
- David Lyon, Surveillance Studies: An Overview (SS 18-21)
- Stephen Castle. 2021. U.K. Leaders Hail a Return to Normal; Their Phone App Disagrees. *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/22/world/europe/pingdemic-coronavirus-uk-britain.html?referringSource=articleShare> [SAKAI]

Wednesday, August 25:

Readings:

- Society & Subjectivity (SS 27-30)
- Jeremy Bentham, The Panopticon (SS 31-35)
- Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (SS 36-41)

Week Three: Crime & Policing

Monday, August 30:

Readings:

- Kurwa, Rahim. 2019. Building the Digitally Gated Community: The Case of Nextdoor. *Surveillance & Society* 17 (1/2):111-117. <https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/12927/8483>
- Bridges, Lauren. 2021. Amazon's Ring is the largest civilian surveillance network the US has ever seen. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/amazon-ring-largest-civilian-surveillance-network-us>

Wednesday, September 1:

Readings:

- Crime & Policing (SS 173-177)
- Hille Koskela, "The Gaze without Eyes": Video-surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space (SS 195-198)
- Andrew John Goldsmith, Policing's New Visibility (SS 199-203)
- Podcast: Body-Worn Cameras: what we know and where to go (Centre for Research on Security Practices, Wilfrid Laurier University): <https://crsp-talk.simplecast.com/episodes/body-worn-cameras-what-we-know-and-where-to-go>

Week Four: Intelligence & Security

Monday, September 6:

Labor Day: No Class or Readings

Wednesday, September 8:

Readings:

- Intelligence & Security (SS 147-151)
- James Bamford, The Puzzle Palace (SS 153-156)
- Glenn Greenwald, No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State. (SS 166-171)

Week Five: Borders & the State

Monday, September 13:

Readings:

- Borders & Mobilities (SS 121-123)
- Louise Amoore, Biometric Borders: Governing Mobilities in the War on Terror (SS 125-128)
- Mark B. Salter, Passports, Mobility, and Security: How Smart Can the Border Be? (SS 129-132)
- Didier Bigo, Security, Exception, Ban and Surveillance (SS 143-146)

Wednesday, September 15:

Readings:

- State & Authority (SS 63-66)
- Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences (SS 75-78)
- Anna Funder, Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall (SS 83-87)

Week Six: *The Lives of Others*

Monday, September 20:

Film Screening (no readings)

Wednesday, September 22:

Film Screening (no readings)

Book Review due at start of class.

Week Seven: Discrimination and “Care”

Monday, September 27:

Readings:

- Identity and Identification (SS 93-95)
- Allan Sekula, The Body and the Archive (105-110)
- Shoshana Amielle Magnet, When Biometrics Fail: Gender, Race, and the Technology of Identity (116-119)

Wednesday, September 29:

Readings:

- Lyon, David. 2018. God’s Eye: A Reason for Hope. *Surveillance & Society* 16 (4):546-553. <https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/12858/8432>
- Harding, James M. 2018. Picking the Speck and Missing the Beam in the Eye of Surveillance: On the Failure to See Eye to Eye with David Lyon. *Surveillance & Society* 16 (4):554-567. <https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/13122/8433>

Week Eight: Participation & Social Media

Monday, October 4:

Readings:

- Participation & Social Media (SS 307-308)
- Mark Andrejevic, The Work of Being Watched: Interactive Media and the Exploitation of Self-disclosure (SS 309-312)
- Hille Koskela, Webcams, TV Shows and Mobile Phones: Empowering Exhibitionism (SS 313-316)
- Anders Albrechtslund, Online Social Networking as Participatory Surveillance (SS 317-320)

Wednesday, October 6:

Readings:

- Priscilla Regan and Valerie Steeves, Kids R Us: Online Social Networking and the Potential for Empowerment (SS 321-325)
- Alice E. Marwick, The Public Domain: Social Surveillance in Everyday Life (SS 326-329)

Week Nine: Ubiquitous Surveillance & Artificial Intelligence

Monday, October 11:

Readings:

- Ubiquitous Surveillance (SS 239-242)
- Dana Cuff, Immanent Domain: Pervasive Computing and the Public Realm (SS 248-252)
- Mark Andrejevic, Surveillance in the Big Data Era (SS 257-260)
- Wall Street Journal. 2021. How TikTok's Algorithm Figures You Out.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfczi2cI6Cs>

Wednesday, October 13:

Readings:

- Kate Crawford. 2021. Time to regulate AI that interprets human emotions.
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00868-5>
- In-class Video Screening: *Black Mirror*, “The Entire History of You” (2011)

Week Ten: Privacy & Autonomy

Monday, October 18:

Readings:

- Privacy & Autonomy (SS 209-211)
- Priscilla M. Regan, Legislating Privacy: Technology, Social Values, and Public Policy (SS 213-216)
- Jean-François Blanchette and Deborah G. Johnson, Data Retention and the Panoptic Society: The Social Benefits of Forgetfulness (SS 217-221)
- Helen Fay Nissenbaum, Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy, and the Integrity of Social Life (SS 222-225)

Wednesday, October 20:

Readings:

- Julie E. Cohen, Configuring the Networked Self: Law, Code, and the Play of Everyday Practice (SS 226-229)
- John Gilliom, Overseers of the Poor: Surveillance, Resistance, and the Limits of Privacy (SS 230-233)
- Colin J. Bennett, In Defense of Privacy: The Concept and the Regime (SS 234-237)

Week Eleven: Marginality & Difference

Monday, October 25:

Readings:

- Marginality & Difference (SS 357-359)
- Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., Coming to Terms with Chance: Engaging Racial Discrimination and Cumulative Disadvantage (SS 361-364)
- Simone Browne, Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness (373-376)

Wednesday, October 27:

Readings:

- Corinne Mason and Shoshana Magnet, Surveillance Studies and Violence Against Women (SS 369-372)
- Karen Levy. 2021. You Had Me at ‘Has Never Filed for Bankruptcy’. *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/opinion/tinder-match-background-check.html>

Week Twelve: Coded Bias

Monday, November 1:

Film Screening (no readings)

Wednesday, November 3:

Film Screening (no readings)

Week Thirteen: Political Economy

Monday, November 8:

Readings:

- Political Economy (SS 281-284)
- Adam Arvidsson, On the “Pre-history of the Panoptic Sort”: Mobility in Market Research (SS 285-288)
- Anthony Amicelle, Towards a “New” Political Anatomy of Financial Surveillance (SS 294-297)

Wednesday, November 10:

Readings:

- Levy, Karen and Solon Barocas. 2018. Refractive Surveillance: Monitoring Customers to Manage Workers. *International Journal of Communication* 12: 1166-1188. [SAKAI]

Week Fourteen: Resistance & Opposition

Monday, November 15:

Readings:

- Resistance & Opposition (SS 331-333)
- Colin J. Bennett, The Privacy Advocates: Resisting the Spread of Surveillance (SS 335-338)
- Laura Huey, Kevin Walby, and Aaron Doyle, Cop Watching in the Downtown Eastside: Exploring the Use of (Counter)Surveillance as a Tool of Resistance (SS 339-342)

Wednesday, November 17:

Readings:

- Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum, Vernacular Resistance to Data Collection and Analysis: A Political Theory of Obfuscation (SS 343-346)
- Steve Mann, Jason Nolan, and Barry Wellman, Sousveillance: Inventing and Using Wearable Computing Devices for Data Collection in Surveillance Environments (SS 347-350)
- Torin Monahan, The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance. (SS 351-355)

Week Fifteen: Art & Culture

Monday, November 22:

Readings:

- Art & Culture 377-379
- John E. McGrath, Loving Big Brother: Performance, Privacy and Surveillance Space (SS 381-384)
- Andrea Mubi Brighenti, Artveillance: At the Crossroads of Art and Surveillance (SS 389-293)
- Jennifer R. Whitson, Gaming the Quantified Self (SS 403-406)

Wednesday, November 24:

- **Thanksgiving Break: No Class or Readings**

Week Sixteen: Paper Developing and Drafting

Monday, November 29:

- Scheduled 1-on-1 meetings with professor
- No Readings

Wednesday, December 1:

- Scheduled 1-on-1 meetings with professor
- No Readings

Final Papers Due: Monday, December 6 @ 12:00pm