

St. Francis Xavier University  
Department of Sociology

**SELECTED TOPICS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF SURVEILLANCE AND SOCIAL  
CONTROL (SOCI 435)**

Fall 2011

Lecture Room: Annex 113A

Mondays 8:15am – 9:30am; Thursdays 9:45am – 11:00am

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Marmura

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Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Friday 10:00am – 12:00pm

Office: Annex 111C

**Required Texts:**

David Lyon (2007) *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*, Polity Press.  
Course Reader: available in bookstore

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Surveillance – watching and being watched – has always been integral to human societies. However, only during the modern period have its applications and techniques become so wide-ranging and multi-layered. In contemporary, information-based societies such as Canada, digitized forms of personal data-collection and observation have become implicated in virtually all aspects of life. In the course of activities as mundane as shopping, Web surfing, obtaining health care, or simply walking down the street we invariably expose ourselves to some form of surveillance, providing others with information about such matters as our physical characteristics, patterns of movement, personal tastes and financial standing. At the same time, surveillance often remains invisible or obscure. We are rarely certain as to who is collecting information about us or why, what state agencies or corporate institutions might gain access to it, or what such access might ultimately mean in terms of our life experiences. Likewise, privacy has become an elusive concept, with greater personal ‘visibility’ the apparent cost of full participation in society. This course will consider the changing character of surveillance practices from a critical, sociological standpoint. We will explore their historic origins, primary drivers today, relationships to processes of social inclusion and exclusion, and the related opportunities and risks posed for individuals and groups in their varied roles as workers, travelers, citizens and consumers.

**Evaluation:**

Class Participation: 20%

Mid-term exam: 20%

Student Presentations: 20%

Research Paper: 40%

*Detailed descriptions of the above components are provided at the end of this syllabus.*

### COURSE OUTLINE

Note: all readings (except Lyon) are included in the course reader

#### Week 1) Introduction to Course

Sept. 8

#### Week 2) What is Surveillance (and why study it)?

Sept. 12, 15

Lyon: Introduction

Lyon: The Watched World Today

#### Week 3) Dystopian Visions: Surveillance and Totalitarianism

Sept. 19, 22

Harris: The Hydraulic Trap

Los: The Technologies of Total Domination

#### Week 4) Surveillance and the Modern State

Sept. 26, 29

Lyon: Spreading Surveillance Sites

Lyon: Explaining Surveillance

Week 5) Surveillance in Everyday Life

Oct. 3, 6 (take home test)

Walby: How Closed-Circuit Television Surveillance Organizes the Social: An Institutional Ethnography

Gad & Lauritsen: An ethnographic study of fisheries inspection in Denmark

Week 6) Surveillance Online

Oct. 10 (no class), 13 (take home test due; first presentation)

Bennett: Cookies, web bugs, webcams and cue cats: Patterns of surveillance on the world wide web

Week 7) Attitudes to Surveillance and Privacy

Oct. 17, 20

Marx: Varieties of Personal Information as Influences on Attitudes

Gandy: Public opinion surveys and the formation of privacy policy

Week 8) Surveillance as Social Sorting

Oct. 24, 27

Bowker & Star: The Case of Race Classification and Reclassification under Apartheid

Stalder and Lyon: Electronic identity cards and social classification

Week 9) Surveillance in the Workplace

Oct. 31, Nov. 3

Parenti: The New Taylorism: Surveillance, Work and Discipline

Goold: Public Area Surveillance and Police Work: the impact of CCTV on police behaviour and autonomy

Week 10) Social Sorting Revisited: 'Legible Landscapes' and Mobile Consumers

Nov. 7, 10

Phillips & Curry: Privacy and the phenetic urge: geodemographics and changing spatiality of local practice

Andrejevic: Monitored Mobility in the Era of Mass Customization

Week 11) Surveillance after 9/11

Nov. 14, 17

Parenti: Fear as Institution: 9/11 and Surveillance Triumphant

de Lint: The Security Double Take: The Political, Simulation and the Border

Week 12) Surveillance, Media and Popular Culture

Nov. 21, 24

Mathiesen: The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault's 'Panopticon' revisited

Andrejevic: The Webcam Subculture and the Digital Enclosure

Week 13) Surveillance and Information: Unintended Consequences

Nov. 28, Dec. 1 (last class)

Haggerty: Visible War: Surveillance, Speed, and Information War

Holm: Conspiracy Theorizing Surveillance: considering modalities of paranoia and conspiracy in surveillance studies

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Class Participation: 20%**

Small, seminar-style classes provide students with a unique opportunity to engage in class discussion and reflect in depth upon the content of lectures and readings. To benefit fully from this opportunity, it is essential to attend class regularly and keep up with course readings. Students will be expected to arrive in each class with two talking points pertaining to the reading for that day. These will not be handed in. Rather, this is an informal way to help ensure that all students have the opportunity to share ideas, pose questions and contribute to discussion. Talking points should take the form of questions which you feel are raised by the readings, or could take the form of observations or comments concerning examples or arguments from readings which you think hold particular significance (and why!). Some readings are quite challenging and your talking points may sometimes take the form of requests for clarification concerning a particular concept or line of thought. There is nothing wrong with this as it may lead to productive class discussion. My main concern is that you are taking the readings seriously and reflecting thoughtfully on their content. At times I may also ask you to come to (the next) class with more specific types of information, examples or ideas drawn from the media or from life experiences.

### **Take-home mid-term test: 20%**

A mid-term take-home test will be handed out in class on October 6<sup>th</sup> and will be due *in class* on October 13<sup>th</sup> (Oct. 10 is a holiday). This gives students more than ample opportunity to complete the test regardless of other commitments. Further instructions and comments regarding the test will be discussed in class.

***Late policy:*** Please note that unlike the case of assignments where extensions may sometimes be granted and where a penalty is deducted for late papers, *no take-home tests will be accepted after the due date.*

Only hard-copies will be accepted.

### **Student Presentations: 20%**

Each student will give a presentation of roughly 20 minutes based on a reading from the course. Presentations will take place during and after week six with one presentation per class. Students may present their material how they wish (e.g. through use of overheads, power-point, black board or simply by talking), but must create a 2-3 page handout for distribution in class. The latter should include main summary points and highlights pertaining to the most important

substantive, theoretical and/or methodological issues raised in the reading. Be as explicit as you can in this regard and organize your hand-out carefully as it will provide me with a key source of reference and recall when evaluating your presentation. You should also include at least one question designed to generate class discussion. The professor and students will also ask questions of presenters. The idea is that the presentation will provide a starting point and lead-in for class discussion

Please note that as with the take-home exam, the Lyon text will likely prove to be an essential resource when preparing your presentation.

**Research Paper: 40%**

Due date: Dec. 12, 2011

Each student is required to hand in a 10 –12 page research paper dealing with a surveillance topic which holds particular interest to them. This paper is to be handed in to me during my office hours on Monday Dec. 12 (hard copies only will be accepted). The topic may, but need not, relate to the topic of the reading which you presented on. At least five academic sources (books or journal articles) must be consulted for this assignment. These may include articles or chapters (and/or the books from which they came) used in the course reader.

A good paper should include attention to specific case studies and/or examples pertaining to the topic you have chosen, relevant controversies surrounding it, and attention to the theoretical and (possibly) methodological approaches most relevant to it. In particular, students should make clear which approaches to the issue they consider to be the most insightful and productive.

**Late policy:** Barring exceptional circumstances, 5% will be deducted from the final grade for any assignment per day late including weekends. No papers will be accepted after Dec. 16, 2011.

POTENTIAL TOPICS

Below is a list of topics which are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, but which may help provide ideas for your paper.

the growth and applications of CCTV or another surveillance technology  
medical surveillance  
national ID cards  
customer relations management (CRM)  
surveillance at the airport  
changing conceptions of privacy  
surveillance on university campuses (e.g. of activists)

surveillance and trust in institutions  
surveillance and gender  
interactive television  
grassroots resistance to surveillance (privacy activism)  
surveillance and social problems (e.g. crime, delinquency)  
reality TV  
surveillance and warfare  
social networking Web sites  
children's interactive Web sites  
surveillance and colonialism  
policing and/or global policing  
computer-based surveillance and privacy  
researching surveillance; methods and dilemmas  
surveillance, social sorting, and race  
public 'watchdogs' and grassroots surveillance (e.g. via camcorders, blogs, etc.)  
surveillance in virtual environments  
surveillance of children (by parents)

## **Resources:**

The resources referred to below will help you locate information concerning your specific research interests. Of these, the online journal *Surveillance & Society* will likely prove to be your single most useful and extensive resource. It features articles about many aspects of surveillance, dealing with theoretical, substantive and methodological, issues. Visit this Web site early in the course as it will likely prove invaluable in helping you select a topic and gather useful material for your research paper.

In addition to S & S, the following academic journals are available online and sometimes include surveillance related articles:

Information, Communication & Society (ICS)  
Ethics and Information Technology (see Issue 3)  
Democratic Communiqué  
New Media & Society  
Media, Culture & Society

Other academic (non-journal) online resources:

The Surveillance Project  
Roger Clarke's Dataveillance and Information Privacy Home-Page  
Web site of Gary T. Marx

Web sites offering an activist, public interest, and/or civil rights perspective:

Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)  
Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic (CIPPIC)  
Privacy International  
Privacy.org (news page jointly sponsored by EPIC & Privacy International)

**Please note:** *Surveillance Studies an Overview* (Lyon, 2007) is required course material primarily for use as a resource and study guide (most of the course readings come from your reader). This is a highly accessible book which will provide a useful companion for lectures and readings. For titles of major books and articles on surveillance be sure to look in the bibliography of this text since Lyon cites some of the most important of these. While surveillance is a relatively new field of social scientific investigation, a growing number of books on the topic (monographs and edited collections) are being published each year. Recently, a number of these have been added to the STFX library collection while others are available through inter-library loan and/or Nova Net.