COMM 400: Surveillance and Power (4 Units)

Fall 2024 –Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:50am
Section: 20609R
Location: ASC 328

Instructor: Hector Amaya
Office: ASC 305
Office Hours: Tue, Thu 11:00am to 12:20pm
Contact Info: hectoram@usc.edu

Course Description

This course explores the ways surveillance technologies are shaping society, the economy, and governance. From fitness trackers, biometrics, CCTV technologies, and credit card transactions, surveillance technologies are constituting new forms of power and control, and are transforming what it means to be a citizen, a worker, and a consumer. These power effects shape everybody's life, but they are unevenly distributed. Surveillance more dramatically affects individuals and communities marginalized due to sex, gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, and national origin. As important as understanding surveillance and the power effects surveillance generates, we need to also understand the way communities and individuals use political and technological tactics to push back against surveillance regimes. The class is designed to give you the social and technological literacy necessary to understand and respond to our current surveillance regime.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will understand key concepts, theories, and debates in surveillance studies.
- Students will produce a toolkit to educate a wider public about a specific surveillance technology.
- Students will be able to evaluate and analyze the effects of surveillance on marginalized or minoritized communities.
- Students will learn and use textual and visual analysis to understand cultural representations and narratives of surveillance regimes.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- Rettberg, Jill Walker. *Machine Vision: How Algorithms Are Changing the Way We See the World*. Polity Press, 2023.
- Gilliom, John and Torin Monahan. 2013. *SuperVision: An Introduction to the Surveillance Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Most assigned texts are available electronically via USC Libraries, but alternately you can also purchase them from your favorite independent bookstore. Required course readings not available via USC Libraries will be made available via the content section of Blackboard. Lecture PowerPoint presentations

will be posted to the content section of Blackboard following each class session. *The instructor may change the syllabus at any time during the course in order to better serve the intellectual mission of the course.*

THEMATIC SCHEDULE BY WEEK

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO SURVEILLANCE AND POWER

Week 1: Models of Surveillance – Discipline and Control

Igo, Sarah E. *The Known Citizen: A History of Privacy in Modern America.* Harvard University Press, 2018. doi:10.2307/j.ctv24w653v.
Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed.* Yale Agrarian Studies. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. doi:10.12987/9780300128789.
Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism : The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power.* First edition. ed. New York: PublicAffairs, 2019.

Week 2: Crisis in the Post-9/11 (In)Security State

Marx, Gary T. *Windows into the Soul : Surveillance and Society in an Age of High Technology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. doi:10.7208/9780226286075.

Week 3: Racializing Surveillance

Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters : On the Surveillance of Blackness.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. doi:10.1515/9780822375302.

UNIT 2: TECHNOLOGIES, SYSTEMS, SITES

Week 4 & 5: Algorithms – Proxies, Patterns, Discrimination

John, Cheney-Lippold. *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves.* New York: NYU Press, 2017. doi:10.18574/9781479888702.
Koopman, Colin. *How We Became Our Data : A Genealogy of the Informational Person.* Chicago Scholarship Online. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. doi:10.7208/9780226626611.
Berthier, Thierry, and Bruno Teboul. *From Digital Traces to Algorithmic Projections.* San Diego: ISTE Press Limited - Elsevier Incorporated, 2018. doi:10.1016/C2017-0-00806-6.

Week 6: Policing – Data, Prediction, Blackness

Brayne, Sarah. *Predict and Surveil : Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Week 7: Borders – Biometrics, Screening, Mobility
López, Iván Chaar. 2024. *The Cybernetic Border: Drones, Technology, and Intrusion*. 1 ed. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 8: Drones – Evidence, Violence, Testimony

Mishra, B., Garg, D., Narang, P., & Mishra, V. (2020). Drone-surveillance for search and rescue in natural disaster. *Computer Communications*, *156*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comcom.2020.03.012

Choi-Fitzpatrick, A. (2020). *The Good Drone: How Social Movements Democratize Surveillance* (1st ed.). The MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11739.001.0001

Week 9 & 10: Biometrics, Data Tracking

Crawford, Kate, Jessa Lingel, and Tero Karppi. "Our Metrics, Ourselves: A Hundred Years of Self-Tracking from the Weight Scale to the Wrist Wearable Device." *European journal of cultural studies* 18, no. 4-5 (2015): 479-96. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549415584857.

Moore, P. V. (2017). *The Quantified Self in Precarity : Work, Technology and What Counts* (First edition.). Taylor and Francis.

UNIT 3 | RESISTANCE

Week 11: Politics + Art

Monahan, Torin. "The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance." *Communication and critical/cultural studies* 12, no. 2 (2015): 159-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2015.1006646.

Week 12: Grassroots Organizing, Action Networks, and Protest

Crawford, Kate. "Regulate Facial-Recognition Technology." *Nature (London)* 572, no. 7771 (2019): 565-65. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-02514-7.

Ananny, Mike. "Toward an Ethics of Algorithms: Convening, Observation, Probability, and Timeliness." *Science, technology, & human values* 41, no. 1 (2016): 93-117. https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243915606523.

Week 13 & 14: Anonymity versus surveillance

Levmore, Saul. "The Anonymity Tool." *University of Pennsylvania law review* 144, no. 5 (1996): 2191-236. https://doi.org/10.2307/3312652.

Marx, Gary T. "Identity and Anonymity: Some Conceptual Distinctions and Issues for Research." In *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, edited by Jane Caplan and John Torpey. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Nissenbaum, Helen. "The Meaning of Anonymity in an Information Age." *The Information society* 15, no. 2 (1999): 141-44. https://doi.org/10.1080/019722499128592.

Ponesse, Julie. "The Ties That Blind: Conceptualizing Anonymity." *Journal of social philosophy* 45, no. 3 (2014): 304-22. https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12066.