SOCI 346 [1]
Sociology of Surveillance
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Instructor: Dr. Midori Ogasawara

Course Description:

Surveillance has been expanding as a central means of national security, policing, marketing, governance, public health and social control, along with the rapid development of digital technologies. Both governments and corporations are increasingly collecting personal data from your everyday communications and activities through the internet, cellphone or social media, and using the so-called big data for their own purposes without your knowledge. This course unpacks often invisible processes of mass surveillance and discusses the significant impacts of surveillance technologies on your individual and collective lives, drawing on the interdisciplinary literature of surveillance studies. Starting with the global mass surveillance systems that have emerged under the War on Terror since 2001, this course will take you through the modern histories of surveillance techniques, such as fingerprinting or facial recognition systems, utilising basic theories to understand surveillance practices in depth, and will explore how and why surveillance has developed as a powerful way of structuring societies, racializing people, mobilizing political agendas, and supporting neoliberal economy, as well as examining how you can respond to surveillance technologies individually and collectively.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to offer a critical introduction to surveillance, in which you will learn basic social theories of surveillance, such as the Panopticon or social sorting, and understand the infrastructure, organization, and consequences of mass surveillance practices in the contemporary world, including identification (ID) card, surveillance camera, smart city, and the COVID-19 contact tracing apps. You will learn to see the big picture of surveillance activities beyond your electronic screen and to make historically-grounded assessments of technologies and data. By the end of the course, you will be able to identify who benefits from a surveillance system, and who does not, despite surveillance being normally advertised for *all*. Accordingly, this course will increase your abilities to grasp social impacts of emerging new technologies, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), in relation to legal and social values of privacy, liberty, equality, democracy, and human rights.

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[1] This outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. A detailed course outline will be made available in the first day of class. Only that outline is to be considered official.

Course Pre-requisites:

SOCI 100A&B Introduction to Sociology, SOCI 202 Constructing Social Problems and SOCI 206 Crime and Deviance are *recommended* prior to taking this course, but all students from other disciplines, such as engineering, computing or medicine, are welcome.

Topics May Include:

The US National Security Agency's 'Collect It All' systems revealed by Edward Snowden and other whistle blowers, smartphone surveillance that emerged in response to COVID-19 all over the world (contact tracing apps, geolocational tracking, quarantine enforcement selfies, and health colour code system), biometrics (fingerprinting, facial recognition, and DNA databases), predictive policing, racial profiling, surveillance/industrial complex, surveillance capitalism, smart city, surveillance software for work and education.

Required Resources May Include:

Monahan, Torin and David Murakami Wood (eds.) 2018. *Surveillance Studies A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This book is not a textbook but a collection of excerpts from essential resources of surveillance studies, and we will read many excerpts in this book if not most. Please buy a hard copy (there is no e-version). Alternatively, you can find a hard copy on reserve at the UVic library and take photocopies of relevant sections. All other required readings will be made available via Brightspace.