Cultures of Surveillance

MCS 370 /// Spring 2019
Tu/Th 2:30-3:45

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Course Description

The population of the United States is roughly 326,000,000 people. And depending on who’s counting, there are somewhere between 30,000,000 and 60,000,000 (or more) surveillance cameras recording them every day. Baltimore alone maintains a network of 603 closed-circuit television systems on city streets. Schools hire police to monitor students, employers install keystroke logging software to monitor employees, parents use security systems to monitor babysitters and children, while we are all encouraged to monitor public spaces and ‘say something’ if we happen to ‘see something’ that looks out of place. At the same time, we voluntarily, habitually, and eagerly share information about our locations, bodies, relationships, behaviors, beliefs, and purchases on social media. We rely on phones, smart watches, and activity trackers to record our pulses, how we sleep, how many steps we take, and what we’ve eaten. “Cultures of Surveillance” is an effort to make sense of all of this by thinking critically about how surveillance functions, what we expect or hope it will do, and whether escaping it is desirable or even possible.
Course Objectives
Because surveillance affects virtually everyone—albeit in very different ways—the course will emphasize the application of key theories and concepts to real-world problems, phenomena, and experiences. We will do this work through discussion, writing, reflection, and critical engagement with media. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be:

- Practiced at employing different approaches to the real-world analysis of surveillance, including writing for both academic and public audiences, and multimedia composition
- Accomplished at reading, thinking, writing, and speaking critically about the historical, political, cultural, social, and ethical dimensions of surveillance
- Capable of thoughtfully evaluating other scholars’ arguments about surveillance cultures
- Attuned to the ways that gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, and (dis)ability affect individual experiences of surveillance
- Self-reflexive about the practices by which they surveil themselves and others

Free Advice (Helpful for this Course / College in General / Possibly your Whole Life)

Required Texts
The following texts are required for purchase:


Other readings will be available on Blackboard, through the UMBC library’s collection of electronic journals, or elsewhere online. All readings listed on the syllabus are required unless otherwise indicated.

Course Policies, Guidelines, and Expectations
These policies are intended to help make MCS 370 a successful collaborative learning experience:

- All assignments are due in accordance with my instructions. All assignments are due to Blackboard unless otherwise indicated. I do not accept papers submitted via e-mail or left in my
mailbox. If you are unable to complete or deliver an assignment because of an emergency, contact
me as soon as possible to make arrangements for submitting your work.

- **Late work may not be accepted; if accepted, it will be penalized.** Some assignments cannot be
  submitted late, and accordingly will not be accepted after the deadline. Before choosing to miss a
deadline, contact me to determine whether you will be able to receive partial credit for late work.
Every day that an eligible assignment is late will result in a deduction of 10 percent of the total
points possible. In other words, a 100-point paper turned in one day late that would otherwise
have earned a 93 will receive an 83. Although work submitted late will be graded, this grade may
not be accompanied by written comments or suggestions. If a family or medical emergency arises,
and you make arrangements with me ahead of time, I may agree to accept a late assignment
without penalty. Additionally, if you need to adjust a deadline because of a religious observance,
please speak with me well in advance so that we can make a plan.

- **Please bring all assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them.** This is especially
crucial because course meetings will emphasize active engagement with the texts. This is an
upper-level course, and the readings are often lengthy or challenging (or both!) – PLAN AHEAD.

- **Students of all faiths are welcome in this course.** If a religious observance will keep you from
coming to class or meeting a deadline, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make
arrangements to keep you on track.

- **Use mature judgment when deciding whether or not an illness should prevent you from attending
class.** Put simply: if you are sick, stay home. Then, contact a classmate as soon as possible for
notes and updates. If you are well and able, come to class. Both options are expressions of the
responsibility we have to one another in this class.

- **‘Emergency’ means emergency.** If you need a deadline extension because of an emergency
situation, remember that emergencies are illnesses (of you or a family member, including partners
or children) or other unpredictable events of that magnitude. The category of “emergency” does
not include vacations; commitments for other courses, extracurricular activities, or sports; social
engagements; or voluntary shifts at work.

- **This course uses Blackboard.** Be sure that you have access to this tool, and that you are familiar
with how to use it. All written assignments will be submitted on Blackboard, and some of your
readings and course materials will be available here as well. I will also use this forum to post
important announcements outside of class; if class is cancelled, check Blackboard for updates. If
class is cancelled, I will post updates on our Blackboard site.

- **Make an effort to meet with or contact me outside of class.** Try to anticipate problems before they
arise and approach them proactively. But also remember that meetings are not just for
catastrophes! Contact me any time to let me know how you are doing with the readings, to discuss
ideas and paper topics, or to give feedback on the course. Outside of in-person meetings, e-mail is
the best way to reach me.

- **Please turn off cell phones at the beginning of class unless you are a parent, caretaker, or
possessed of another legitimate need to be accessible.** If there is a situation that requires you to
have your phone on during class, please let me know. Otherwise, ‘off’ means totally off.
• Use available media wisely and respectfully. Unless an in-class assignment requires its use, you are strongly encouraged to ignore your laptops (and tablets and smart phones) during our meetings. Even if you use your laptop primarily to take notes, you’ll retain more information if you write by hand. And productive dialogue in the classroom simply cannot occur when students are preoccupied with things like their social media profiles, chats, and texts. If you decide to use your laptop in class, do so wisely. If laptop use becomes disruptive, I have the option to prohibit it altogether. In short: class meetings are an opportunity for you to have the increasingly rare experience of undivided attention. Take advantage of it.

Wondering why this is a good idea? Here are a few quick reads:


• The course will include in-class engagement with specific, relevant cultural artifacts. In the event that these contain sensitive material, we will make every effort as a group to address it carefully and thoughtfully. However, you are welcome to excuse yourself if you think you might find such content disturbing.

• MCS 370 is a collaborative learning experience. This goal can only be realized with your participation. Please treat your classmates respectfully at all times. All students are encouraged to engage with one another’s ideas in the service of collaborative knowledge production.

Email Policy

Think of emailing your professors as an opportunity to practice your professional communication skills. Many questions can be answered by consulting the course syllabus or assignment sheets; checking these places first will lead you to the desired information faster than e-mailing your professors. Before you send an email, use the following checklist to be sure it is both complete and professional:

- Meaningful subject line [not just “Question” or “Help!”]
- Appropriate salutation like ‘Dear Prof. _____’ or ‘Dear Dr. _____’ [not “Hey!”]
- Clear description of your reason for writing
- Complete, grammatically correct sentences
- If applicable: an explanation of what you have already done to resolve the problem
- An expression of thanks
- A signature that includes your full name and other information about you as appropriate.

Plan to wait at least 24 working hours for a response, and more at busy times of the semester or for complicated questions.

Evaluation

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

90-100% = A
80-89% = B
70-79% = C
60-69% = D
59% and under = F

NOTE: Students earn grades based on the quality of their work during the semester; post-semester requests for grade changes will be refused.

Academic Integrity

Integrity is the foundation of any scholarly community. By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in our collaborative learning experience. This means that everyone’s academic work and behavior will be held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty.

Verifiable instances of academic misconduct in MCS 499 will be penalized accordingly. The minimum penalties for violations of academic integrity in this course are as follows:

The first offense will result in a ‘0’ on the assignment and a deduction of 10% from the student’s overall grade for the course. The offense will also be recorded in UMBC’s Academic Misconduct Database.

The second offense will result in failure of the course, and will be recorded in the Academic Misconduct Database.

If the nature of the infraction warrants it, I reserve the right to impose a stronger penalty. Upon review, UMBC’s Academic Conduct Committee may also recommend additional disciplinary action, including notation on the student’s transcript, suspension, or expulsion.

Academic misconduct is a choice, and therefore it is preventable. Remember:

- ALWAYS cite your sources (I can help with this)
- ALWAYS ask questions if you are unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty
- ALWAYS see me if you are having difficulty with an assignment

UMBC’s Statement of Values on the issue of student academic integrity can be found at http://www.umbc.edu/saf/policies/StudentAcademicIntegrityValues.htm. A detailed discussion of the policies and procedures that UMBC employs to put these values into practice is available at http://www.umbc.edu/provost/integrity/ACC_final.pdf.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are welcome in this class. If you need to have an accommodation made for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to meet your needs. For more information on your rights as a student with a disability and the resources available to you, contact Student Disability Services at (410)455-2459.
Writing Resources

The written work you submit for this course should be of the quality that professors rightfully expect from undergraduates in an upper-level course, and thus should be precise, logical, well-organized, mechanically sound, and appropriate in topic and tone. There are many writing resources available to you as a UMBC student. Some of them include:

ME: I will provide detailed instructions for all assignments, and work to ensure that all students have the skills necessary to complete them successfully. I also encourage you to utilize my office hours if you have questions related to specific aspects of the writing process.

THE WRITING CENTER: All writers can benefit from conversations with skilled readers, and students are encouraged to utilize UMBC’s Writing Center. The Writing Center is located on the Lower Level of the Library, and sees clients on a walk-in basis. For more information, call (410)455-3126 or visit http://www.umbc.edu/lrc/writing_center.htm.

THE INTERNET: Believe it or not! For loads of general information about writing research papers, try Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/01/. The OWL also offers style guides for the major citation formats: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/.

And if you are unsure about the difference between primary and secondary sources, this site can help: http://libguides.wells.edu/content.php?pid=533656&sid=4848405. It also includes links to large collections of primary sources online.

Sexual Assault Resources and Reporting

Any student who has experienced sexual harassment or assault, relationship violence, and/or stalking is encouraged to seek support and resources.

Faculty and staff at UMBC are responsible employees, which means that while I am here to listen to and support you, I am required to report disclosures of sexual assault, domestic violence, relationship violence, stalking, and/or gender-based harassment to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. I am also required to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect. This does not mean that you are required to file a police report. You will be able to receive support and resources even if you do not want any further action taken (please note that in certain situations, depending on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to take action).

If you need to speak with someone in confidence about an incident, UMBC has the following Confidential Resources available to support you:

- The Counseling Center: (410)455-2472
- University Health Services: (410)455-2542
- After-hours counseling and care available by calling campus police at (410)455-5555.
- Any licensed campus clergy and medical staff
- Other on-campus supports and resources:
  - The Women’s Center: (410)455-2714 [quasi-confidential]
  - Title IX Coordinator: (410)455-1606

Additional resources can be found at http://humanrelations.umbc.edu/sexual-misconduct/gender-equitytitle-ix/.
**Mental Health Resources**

UMBC provides cost-free and confidential mental health services through the Counseling Center to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being.

The UMBC Counseling Center is in the Student Development & Success Center (between Chesapeake and Susquehanna Halls). Phone: (410)455-2472. Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm.

Remember, getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do—for yourself and for those who care about you. For more resources get the Just in Case mental health resources Mobile and Web App. This app can be accessed at [http://counseling.umbc.edu/justincase](http://counseling.umbc.edu/justincase).

**Course Requirements**

Your grade for the course will be based on the following elements.

**Contribution to Intellectual Community (20%)**

The success of the course depends directly on each student’s contributions. All students must come to every class prepared, having read all assigned texts and ready to engage substantively and productively in our work together, including large- and small-group discussions; film screenings; research and paper workshops; and other activities and assignments.

I neither anticipate nor require that you will have mastered the readings before speaking in class about them. A thoughtful question can contribute just as much to discussion as a definitive comment does. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, please let me know. The participation requirement is not meant to intimidate you; rather, it helps ensure that all students have maximum opportunity to explore ideas fundamental to the course.

Regular attendance (including timely arrival and attending the full class session) is essential to your success in this course! If you miss class, you are responsible for obtaining notes and updates from a classmate; the first course meeting will include an e-mail exchange to help with this. If there is an emergency that will keep you from attending class, please notify me as soon as possible. All students are permitted three *unexcused* absences during the semester; additional absences will negatively impact this component of your grade.

Remember that simply being present is not enough to earn full credit for participation. Even if I do not directly acknowledge behaviors like arriving late, leaving early, sleeping, playing on your phone, or doing work for other courses, be aware that I will note them. The mental absences that occur when students are disengaged or distracted compromise our shared intellectual project as much or more than physical absences, and will be reflected accordingly in your participation grade.

Additionally, if a need for reading quizzes becomes apparent over the course of the semester, scores on those assessments will be factored into this element of the overall grade.

**Reflection on 1984 (10%)**

This 3-4 page paper is a chance for you to reflect on the significance of George Orwell’s classic dystopian novel by evaluating its contemporary relevance. Structured around a series of questions that I will provide, this assignment emphasizes the work of connecting specific details of the text to the culture you inhabit. This paper will be due (to Blackboard) by 9:00 a.m. on Friday, February 15.

**Response Papers (3 @ 15% each = 45%)**

For three of the four units after Foundations, every student will write a response paper about the reading assigned for a date of their choosing. These papers will be 3-4 pages each, and will focus on evaluation of the author’s argument and evidence. Each student will conclude their paper with a series of discussion questions for the class to take up in our conversation about that reading. You will commit to your
Response Paper due dates early in the semester, and papers must be submitted to Blackboard by the start of class on the day for which the reading is assigned.

**Surveillance Map (15%)**
For the unit on which you do not write a response paper, you will complete a different type of reflection in which you log, and then represent, your encounters with the phenomena we consider in each unit. This assignment will not take the form of a traditional paper, and is your opportunity to experiment with medium, based on your strengths and interests: a short video, a map, a journal, or some other format of your choosing. Surveillance maps will be due by the beginning of class on the last day of the unit you pick, and students will have the opportunity to briefly share their work with the class if they choose.

**Writing for a Public Audience (10%)**
This final assignment is an opportunity for you to reflect on key ideas from our work this semester. This assignment asks you to cultivate a different kind of writerly voice as you attempt to inform and persuade a public audience about an issue related to surveillance. The final product, which will be 2-3 pages in length (choose your words carefully!) might take the form of a letter to the editor, an op-ed, a blog post, or something else intended for a broader readership than that of this class.

***You will receive detailed instructions about all assignments, including grading criteria, well in advance of their due dates.***

**Course Schedule**
All readings are due on the day for which they are assigned. It is very likely that we will follow this schedule throughout the semester, but it is subject to change at my discretion, in accordance with the evolving needs of the class.

(Tu) January 29, 2019 – Introduction(s)

1: Foundations
**Guiding questions:** What forms does surveillance take in our everyday lives? In what ways was *1984* prescient? In what ways was *1984* shortsighted? What are the historical origins of contemporary surveillance practices and technologies? How does discipline operate today? Who is a docile body?

(Th) January 31
- *SuperVision*: Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

(Tu) February 5

(Th) February 7

(Tu) February 12
(Th) February 14
• 1984: Book Three.

(F) February 15
• 1984 Reflection Paper due to Blackboard by 9:00 a.m.

(Tu) February 19

(Th) February 21

(Tu) February 26

2: States
Guiding questions: Why do governments tend to be optimistic about biometric technologies? How do they succeed? What counts as success? How do biometrics fail? Who benefits from biometrics? What is the role of religion in shaping surveillance practices? What are the connections between governmental and lateral public surveillance? What are the metrics by which we ought to evaluate Edward Snowden’s actions? To what extent is transparency an antidote to state power?

IF APPLICABLE: Response Papers for this unit are due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m. on the date you chose.

(Th) February 28

(Tu) March 5

(Th) March 7
(Tu) March 12

(Th) March 14

(Tu) March 19 – NO CLASS! SPRING BREAK!

(Th) March 21 – STILL NO CLASS! STILL SPRING BREAK!

(Tu) March 26
- **IF APPLICABLE:** Surveillance Maps for Unit 2 due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m.

3: Citizens

**Guiding questions:** How do states control mobility of citizens and others? What types of agency are available to citizens as they negotiate surveillance states? How is surveillance racialized? In what ways are citizens invited to participate in their own surveillance? What technologies enable citizens to engage in surveillance of state authorities?

**IF APPLICABLE:** Response Papers for this unit are due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m. on the date you chose.

(Th) March 28

(Tu) April 2

(Th) April 4 – NO CLASS! PROF. ADELMAN AT A CONFERENCE.

(Tu) April 9
(Th) April 11

(Tu) April 16
- IF APPLICABLE: Surveillance Maps for Unit 3 due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m.

4: Technologies
Guiding Questions: What have been the effects of reality television and social media on our surveillance practices? How do these types of media shape our identities and subjectivities? How do we become acculturated to surveillance? What are the ethics of surveillance capitalism? What are its pleasures?

IF APPLICABLE: Response Papers for this unit are due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m. on the date you chose.

(Th) April 18

(Tu) April 23

(Th) April 25

(Tu) April 30
- IF APPLICABLE: Surveillance Maps for Unit 4 due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m.

5: Bodies
Guiding questions: Who sees the body as data? What types of information do our bodies yield? What types of information are we inclined to share, or protect? What kinds of information exceed our control? What forms of surveillance are specific to female bodies? What forms of surveillance regulate sexuality
and expression of gender identity? How do these intersect with surveillance practices related to race, class, and ability? How might we resist surveillance?

IF APPLICABLE: Response Papers for this unit are due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m. on the date you chose.

(Th) May 2

(Tu) May 7
*Content warning: Discussion of intimate partner violence (with photos)

(Th) May 9
• IF APPLICABLE: Surveillance Maps for Unit 5 due to Blackboard by 2:30 p.m.

(Tu) May 14 – Wrap-up and Review

(W) May 15
• Writing for Public Audience due to Blackboard by 12:00 p.m.