The collection of personalized and statistical data is a widely used technique of state power, a prerequisite of the digital economy, and a byproduct of everyday interactions on online platforms. In this course, we will develop a sociological perspective on what can collectively be called "surveillance cultures".

We will do so by complicating four common claims: (1) surveillance is a distinctly (post-)modern and digitally enabled form of social control; (2) the collection of personal and statistical data has become indiscriminate and ubiquitous; (3) being watched is now a widely accepted way of life that elicits little resistance; and (4) being visible is a form of imprisonment that undermines personal freedom. Each of these claims captures something important about surveillance in the contemporary world — but each can also simplify to the point of distortion. By complicating these four claims, we will link the study of surveillance to questions of state power, contemporary capitalism, racial and social inequality, and the constitution of the socially situated self.

We will pursue two aims simultaneously: First, we will seek to develop a deeper empirical understanding of surveillance regimes and their social significance. Second, we will make sense of this empirical reality by familiarizing ourselves with the language of social theory. The theoretical perspectives we encounter throughout the semester will sometimes be in tension with one another, and it will be our task to articulate our (dis)agreements through weekly discussions and to render the course readings useful to our own engagement with the world.

The syllabus foregrounds examples from the United States, but surveillance is neither a uniquely American nor an exclusively digital phenomenon. We will consider several historical and non-Western cases during our classroom discussions, and students are encouraged to develop final papers that push beyond the scope of the syllabus.

**Course readings**

All course readings will be provided in electronic form on bCourses or as links in this syllabus. You do not need to purchase any books.

**COVID-19 attendance policy**

We will follow campus rules regarding in-person meetings and indoor masking. Chancellor Christ has announced in-person instruction as "our default" for Fall 2021, and we will follow this rule. We may have to adjust how we interact on short notice if campus rules change.
Soc 190 is a discussion-style seminar, so I expect you to be present in person for our weekly meetings.

Please inform me in advance if you cannot attend class. You are allowed two absences, but I will deduct participation points if you miss more than two seminars.

However, I understand that some students may want to minimize physical interactions. Office hours will be over Zoom by default, although you are welcome to request an in-person meeting with me at any time during the semester.

**Seminar meetings and participation**

We will meet once a week for two hours. Please be prepared to discuss, compare, and critique the course readings. I will sometimes give brief lectures to orient our discussion and clarify difficult readings, but the focus will be on a free and frank exchange of ideas. I will facilitate those discussions and ensure that we cultivate a learning environment where everyone’s voice is heard.

If you find it difficult to speak in class, I encourage you to meet with me individually. I can help you to speak with greater confidence.

**Disabled Students Program**

If you have a documented need for special accommodations, please forward your DSP letter as soon as possible to work out the necessary arrangements. If you require DSP-related deadline extensions, you will still be expected to meet the extended deadline.

**E-Mail and Office Hours**

I can easily be reached by email. While I’ll do my best to reply quickly, sometimes my work will prevent me from getting to your emails as promptly as I’d like. Fear not: A response is coming!

You can also sign up for my weekly office hours at [wejoinin.com/eiermann](http://wejoinin.com/eiermann). You do not need a set of fully formed questions to attend office hours. If you find a reading particularly interesting, if you want guidance on an assignment, or if you are hesitant to speak in class and prefer a more individualized setting, I hope that you will come to see me.

**Assignments and grading**

This seminar is organized around weekly discussions and culminates in an independent research paper. The assignments are designed to facilitate those discussions and to aid your paper-writing.

The final paper can take two forms:

1. You may choose to write an empirical paper that takes a detailed look at one specific surveillance regime. This will require some empirical research about the origins, development, implementation, legitimation, or impact of such a regime or about the resistance it has sparked. You will use theoretical readings from the syllabus to interpret the data you gather.

2. You may also choose to write a conceptual paper that develops a sociological perspective on privacy and surveillance, using empirical examples only to illustrate your conceptual claims.
This paper will require less empirical research, but you will need to master multiple schools of thought in order to explain, critique, juxtapose, or synthesize them. Keep in mind that this is not simply a summary — you will have to develop a distinct argument that intervenes in existing debates about surveillance and privacy.

You will do substantial work on your final paper during the semester by completing three preparatory assignments. All course assignments are double-spaced and should be submitted on bCourses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>I expect you to attend our seminar meetings and to contribute actively to classroom discussions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 reading response memos</td>
<td>1-2 page memos that discuss the week’s readings. You can turn in these memos during any week, as long as they are all submitted prior to RRR week. Please upload your memos to bCourses on Wednesday evening. I will read them before we meet on Thursday and may ask you to discuss your memo during class.</td>
<td>Wednesdays, 8pm</td>
<td>5% per memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper prep 1</td>
<td>2 pages about a surveillance regime that you find interesting (if you are writing an empirical paper) or about a theoretical puzzle (if you are writing a conceptual paper).</td>
<td>October 28, before class</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper prep 2</td>
<td>2 pages about your key findings (if you are writing an empirical paper) or about your answer to a theoretical puzzle (if you are writing a conceptual paper).</td>
<td>November 18, before class</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper prep 3</td>
<td>2-3 page outline with a summary of your argument. This should provide a detailed overview of your paper’s structure, data, argument, and tentative conclusions.</td>
<td>December 2, before class</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>15-20 pages.</td>
<td>December 15, midnight</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic honesty**

You must submit original work, cite your sources, and in no way misrepresent your work or the work of your peers. If you are unsure what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please familiarize yourself with Berkeley's code of student conduct at [sa.berkeley.edu/student-code-of-conduct](http://sa.berkeley.edu/student-code-of-conduct). Remember that it is always better to hand in an incomplete assignment or to ask for an emergency extension than to submit dishonest or plagiarized work.

**Campus Resources**

*Student Leaning Center*: Located in the Cesar Chavez Student Center, the SLC offers academic support through tutoring, study groups, and workshops. Contact them at 510-642-7332.

*Counseling and Psychological Services*: Mental health resources are available through University Health Services. Contact the Tang Center at 510-642-9494 or after hours at 855-817-5667.
Weekly calendar and readings

August 26: Societies of discipline and control


September 2: The long history of surveillance regimes


September 9: A post-modern form of social control?


September 16: Surveillance as a way of life


**September 23: Surveillance as a technological achievement**


**September 30: Surveillance as a political project**


**October 7: Surveillance as an economic imperative**


**October 14: Unequal visibility**


**October 21: Visibility, precarity, opportunity**


October 28: Is privacy dead?


Paper prep assignment #1 due at 10am.

November 4: Resistance at the margins


November 11: NO CLASS because of Veterans’ Day.

November 18: Visibility as imprisonment?


**Paper prep assignment #2 due at 10am.**

*November 25: NO CLASS because of Thanksgiving.*

December 2: Visibility as freedom?


**Paper prep assignment #3 due at 10am.**

*FINAL PAPER due on December 15 at midnight.*