

ASSIGNMENT # 4 SURVEILLANCE & EVERYDAY LIFE

DUE FEB 8, 2008

This assignment requires that you write TWO (2) short essays.

Essay 1—Mandatory

Read David Lyon's article, *Everyday Surveillance: Personal Data and Social Classifications* (available in the assignments section of the course website) and write an academic critique.

3-page maximum, double-spaced, 12-pt. font. Please include a title and bibliography.

Evaluation

Summary- 5 marks

1. Provide a clear summary of the purpose, main themes, leading ideas, proposals and/or conclusions presented by the author (3 marks)
2. Include discussion of its contribution to your understanding power and everyday life (2 marks)

Critical analysis- 7 marks

3. Go beyond summary to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the author's assumptions and arguments (4 marks)
4. Present counter-arguments or alternative perspectives and evaluate them in relation to the stated strengths and weaknesses (2 marks)
5. Suggest additional questions for research (1 mark)

Organisation- 3 marks

6. Coherently and consistently present a thesis statement, critical analysis, conclusions, citations and bibliography (2 marks)
7. Use title and headings to focus and engage the reader (1 mark)

Total- 15 marks

Essay 2—Please choose one (1) of the following two (2) options.

3-page maximum, double-spaced, 12-pt. font. Please include a title.

Option 1

User-generated content and social networking sites like YouTube and Facebook have been described as comprising an *attention economy* where social status and power come from one's ability to be *Internet famous* (# of friends, views, etc.) These kinds of online communication have also been described as involving a kind of *lateral* or *participatory surveillance* where, instead of being monitored by the State (top-down, involuntary), people monitor each other (sideways, voluntary) and watch themselves being watched.

This essay requires you to describe and evaluate your own actions. Drawing on your experiences posting content online or using social networking sites, as well as the concepts above, critically discuss how you manage your online identity and interactions, and how surveillance (both watching and being watched) plays a part in these everyday activities and interactions with others.

Things to consider: Which service do you use and how often do you use it? Which parts of your identity are public, and which are private? What are your criteria for accepting friend requests? Do you act differently online than you do offline? Who do you watch and who watches you? What role does corporate or commercial surveillance play? How do online status and power translate offline? What is the potential for political action? Is monitoring, and being monitored by, peers better or worse than being monitored by government, police -- and why?

Evaluation

1. Include definitions and apply key concepts (3 marks)
2. Provide specific and clear examples from personal experience (2 marks)
3. Discuss how you manage your online identity and interactions (2 marks)
4. Evaluate the surveillance implications of your activities and interactions, and explain how this contributes to your understanding of power and everyday life (5 marks)
5. Present a coherent and consistent narrative with a clear introduction, body and conclusion (2 marks)
6. Use title and headings to focus and engage the reader (1 mark)

Total- 15 marks

Option 2

It has been argued that we currently live in a *surveillance society* where individuals leave a multitude of *data* or *digital traces* (administrative, video, biometric, genetic, etc.) that contributes to pervasive processes of *social sorting*. While much surveillance is conducted in the name of *security* and *convenience*, codes and *classifications* associated with all these data are designed and used to influence and manage people by permitting and denying access to particular places, events and activities. Increasingly, these networked sorting systems attempt to predict and pre-empt particular relations and behaviours in order to control (i.e. limit) people's future, or potential, activities as well.

This essay requires you to describe and assess your own experiences. Drawing on things that you do and things that have happened to you, as well as the concepts above, critically discuss the kinds of data traces you leave behind every day, how they can be used to categorise and control you -- and how you can resist.

Things to consider: What sort of data are generated and collected when you travel? When you use your debit or credit card? When you see a doctor? When you are registered as a university student? How are these data sorted and ranked? Who has access to them and who does not? How are they used to provide security and convenience? How are they used to keep you out of certain places or activities, or limit your potential as a person and a citizen, now and in the future? What can you do to resist these kinds of digital and social sorting?

Evaluation

1. Include definitions and apply key concepts (3 marks)
2. Provide specific and clear examples from personal experience (2 marks)
3. Discuss the kinds of digital traces that emerge from your activities (2 marks)
4. Evaluate how these traces can be used to sort you into categories or identities that allow and deny you access to certain places and activities, and explain how this contributes to your understanding of power and everyday life (5 marks)
5. Present a coherent and consistent narrative with a clear introduction, body and conclusion (2 marks)
6. Use title and headings to focus and engage the reader (1 mark)

Total- 15 marks

Assignment Total – 30 marks – 15%

Drafts can be emailed to Anne for feedback no later than 7AM Feb 4, 2008.