

History 295: From the KGB to the Elf on the Shelf
Surveillance in Modern History

Spring 2021: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, 3:00-5:00 CDT

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Office hours: Monday and
Friday from 11-12;

- I hope we can all agree on the following guideline for online learning: if one of our pets appears on screen, we're all encouraged to (unobtrusively) ask the animal's name, but if a friend or family member does something embarrassing in the background, we'll all agree to pretend it never happened and to proceed as usual with class.
- Finally, I will make an effort to create an asynchronous alternative to our synchronous class sessions if technology issues, the pandemic, or other challenges of the current moment lead to problems for you. Just be in touch.

Learning Goals

This course has three broad objectives: to help students understand the modern history of surveillance (in many of its different forms), to enable them to critically read both primary documents and secondary sources, and to help them improve their analytical writing skills. But it also has several more specific goals:

Historical Analysis Goals

By the end of the semester, students who have completed this course will be able to:

- explain the meaning of three different concepts (surveillance state, surveillance society, and surveillance capitalism) while discussing the relationship between these phenomena and the factors driving the development of each phenomenon;
- explain how and why the concept of surveillance has changed over time. To what extent is political surveillance in 18th-century France the same as political surveillance in 21st-century China?
- explain the role of technology, state formation, empire-building, war, and economic change in the development of surveillance around the world.

Critical Reading Goals

By the end of the course, students will have refined their ability to:

- interpret a primary source (historical document) by analyzing its structure, audience, goals, and biases;
- identify and critique the argument of a secondary text (a book or article by a present-day historian), while situating that text within a larger historical debate or literature.

Analytical Writing Goals

Office Hours

I strongly encourage students to come talk to me during my office hours, so we can discuss course readings, assignments, the study of history, or related issues. I meet with students in my Webex personal room—the same link we use for class. I will lock this room during office hours (to meet with students one at a time), so you may need to wait a few minutes to be admitted.

These are drop-in hours; you are welcome to come by without an appointment (and, in fact, I will leave these hours free for drop-ins.) You are also welcome to email me to arrange a different time to meet. I will most likely cancel my regular office hours a couple weeks each semester (say, during registration week) and instead offer meetings by appointment only. I can always find time to meet with you!

Students are welcome to meet with me to discuss any questions they might have about this course, the study of history, or other academic issues at Grinnell. If you're having trouble with a written assignment, I particularly encourage you to come: If you get stuck writing a thesis statement or can't figure out what you want to say in a paper, it's often better to meet with someone about it than to try to just push yourself to get something done. I'm also happy to discuss course readings in more detail, to answer questions, to talk about the history major, or to discuss any academic questions that might concern you.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on the following requirements. Note that you must hand in every assignment listed below in order to pass the class, and that if your grades improve steadily over the course of the semester, I will take that into consideration in deciding your final grade.

- A 2-page paper providing a definition of surveillance (10% of your final grade)
- A 3-page paper (20% of your final grade)
- A 6-to-8-page analysis of documents from the Mass-Observation movement in the United Kingdom (25% of your final grade)
- A take-home exam (with essay questions) (20% of your final grade)
- Class participation (25% of your grade)

Extension policy

Each student in the class can have one (and, in most cases, only one) 48-hour extension on a writing assignment over the course of the semester. (The one exception is that the deadline for the take-home final is a campus-wide deadline and can't be changed.) To claim this extension, send me a brief email asking for extra time before the assignment's deadline. I will grant this extension automatically, so there is no need for you to explain why you need more time. Keep in mind, however, that once you've been given an extension on an assignment, I will not give you an extension on another except in the case of a documented emergency. Note, too, that you can have one extension of up to 48 hours; you cannot break your extension into two 24-hour extensions, for example. In the absence of an extension, late assignments will be penalized one

third of a letter grade per day.

Important notes

My goal is to create as inclusive a classroom as possible and to meet the needs of all of my students. I therefore encourage students with documented disabilities, including invisible or non-apparent disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, who is located on the 3rd floor of Goodnow Hall (x3089).

I will also, of course, excuse absences related to religious observance and will be flexible with

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Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent, pp. 3-67, 172-177
[Pioneerweb]

Assignment: **2-page essay is due at 10:00 PM CDT**

Monday, April 12: Empire and Surveillance in the US

Reading: Alfred McCoy, *Policing America's Empire*, pp. 293-346 [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, April 13: Social Security and Surveillance

Reading: Sarah Igo, *The Known Citizen*, pp. 55-99 [Pioneerweb]

Thursday, April 15: World War I and Surveillance in Russia and Beyond

Reading: Peter Holquist, "'Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work': Bolshevism and Surveillance in its Pan-European Context" [Pioneerweb]
Catherine Katz, "Shadows of the First World War: Surveillance, Censorship, and the Right to Privacy" [Pioneerweb]

Friday, April 16: Stalinist Surveillance

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 164-194 [Pioneerweb]
Jan T. Gross, "A Note on the Nature of Soviet Totalitarianism" [Pioneerweb]

Monday, April 19: Surveillance and Crime in Germany

Reading: Saxe Elder, "Murder, Denunciation, and Criminal Policing in Weimar Berlin" [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, April 20: Surveillance and Dictatorship in Twentieth-Century Germany

Reading: Robert Gellately, "Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany: Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic" [Pioneerweb]

Unit Three: Mass-Observation

Thursday, April 22: Mass-Observation: An Introduction

Reading: *Mass-Observation* by Charles Madge and Tom Harrison
"Mass-Observation: A Nation-Wide Intelligence Service"

Friday, April 23: Scholars on Mass-Observation

Readings: J. Michael Hogan, "The Road Not Taken in Opinion Research: Mass-Observation in Great Britain, 1937-1940" [Pioneerweb]

Peter Gurney, “‘Intersex’ and ‘Dirty Girls’: Mass-

Reading: Kristie Macrakis,