Syllabus: Spectacle and Surveillance, Winter 2015

Instructors: W. J. T. Mitchell: wjtm@uchicago.edu; Office: Wieboldt 203; hours, Tuesdays 2-3:30.

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Course Assistant: Nova Smith: nova@uchicago.edu; Office hours: TBA

Class Meetings: Mondays, 2:30-5:20 plus evening hours for film screenings. Except for the first class meeting on January 5, all sessions will be videoconferenced with a parallel seminar at Columbia University in New York

Course Requirements: Each week, two students will present response statements (5-10 minutes) to the readings, providing a critical introduction and discussion questions. Each week two students will be invited to make a 15 minute presentation of their research project. A final research paper of 15-25 pages will be due

0. January 5:


I. January 12: NSA Surveillance and the Snowden Affair

Readings:


Siva Vaidhyanathan, The Googlization of Everything (And Why We Should Worry) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) (Chapter 1)

Film Pod:

Laura Poitras’ Citizen Four (2014). Possible outing to Wilmette for screening.
Optional Litigation Portfolio


Optional Additional Readings:

Articles at the UK Guardian: [http://www.theguardian.com/world/the-nsa-files](http://www.theguardian.com/world/the-nsa-files)


II. January 26: Michel Foucault & Panoptic Surveillance

Readings:


Film Pod: TBD

Further Readings

Michel Foucault. 1978. “About the Concept of the ‘Dangerous Individual’ in Nineteenth-century Legal Psychiatry,” pages 176-200 in *Power* (Volume III) [also in *Dits et écrits III*, #220].

III. **February 9:**

The Art of Counter-Surveillance

Rebecca Zorach, to visit the seminar on February 9 to talk about Trevor Paglen and the art of counter-surveillance—i.e., the way artists have found ways to “look back” at the technologies and systems of surveillance. Readings: TBA

IV. **February 16:** Gilles Deleuze & Societies of Control

Readings:


Film Pod:


V. **February 23:** W.J.T. Mitchell & The Spectacle Today

Readings:

W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (excerpts)

W.J.T. Mitchell, “Showing Seeing,” in *What Do Pictures Want*

Guy Debord & the Spectacle

**Readings:**

Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*  
Film Pod: *La société du spectacle* (1973, Guy Debord)

**Optional Additional Readings:**

Louis Aragon, *A Treatise on Style* (?)

Baudrillard on the simulacra


**VI. March 2: B.E. Harcourt & the Expository Society**

**Readings:**

B.E. Harcourt, *The Expository Society*  
Film Pod: TBD

**VII. March 9: Conclusions & Final Reports**

Final Papers Due: March 16th

**Potential Films to Screen: Volunteers to curate these films will be welcome.**

*We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks* (2013) A documentary that details the creation of Julian Assange’s controversial website, which facilitated the largest security breach in U.S. history.

*The Fifth Estate* (2013, Bill Condon) Julian Assange and Wikileaks. A dramatic thriller based on real events that reveals the quest to expose the deceptions
and corruptions of power that turned an Internet upstart into the 21st century's most fiercely debated organization.

*Ivan the Terrible* (1945, Sergei Eisenstein). Banned by Stalin for its expose of total surveillance.

*Red Squad* (1972 An Independent documentary investigating the surveillance activities of the New York City Police Department and the FBI.


*Surveillance City* (in production, Joel Sucher and Steven Fischler)

*The 1,000 Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (1960, Fritz Lang)

*The Conversation* (1974, Francis Ford Coppola) A paranoid, secretive surveillance expert has a crisis of conscience when he suspects that a couple he is spying on will be murdered.

*The End of Violence.* (Wim Wenders, 1997)


Other possible films: *Blowout* (1981, Brian de Palma); *Cache* (2005, Michael Hanneke); *Total Recall* (2012); *Rear Window* (1954, Hitchcock); *Sleep Dealer* (2008, Alex Rivera); *Source Code* (2011, Duncan Jones); *The Bourne Legacy*; *The Bourne Trilogy*. 