



Sociology 3387f (570)
Surveillance, Security and Society
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: B. Muller
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

An examination of how surveillance has become ubiquitous and taken for granted in contemporary society. Beyond general themes of surveillance studies, such as control, visibility, classification, authentication, etc., this course focuses on the role of surveillance in social sorting and (in)security in society.

Antirequisite(s): [Political Science 3387F/G](#).

Prerequisite(s): Enrolment in 3rd or 4th year in either Political Science, Politics and International Relations, Sociology, or Criminology.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: SOCIOLOG

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

King's University College
Sociology/Politics 3387F S570

Surveillance, Security, and Society

SOC/POL3387F S570 (in person seminar)

Benjamin J. Muller, PhD
www.biometricstate.com
 Office Hours: [by appointment](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We live in a surveillance society. If you work, travel, use social media, work with AI, pay for goods and services with Apple Pay or Google wallet, and participate in many other parts of everyday life, then your personal information is being persistently monitored, assessed, and sorted. This sorting evaluates us and curates our opportunities, opening some doors for us, while closing others, largely without our knowledge. This course critically examines these often-invisible ways we are monitored and socially sorted. We engage in the impact of surveillance on our society, particularly on the most marginalized members of society, and explore how we can enhance transparency and challenge the perils and pitfalls of the surveillance society.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the primary developments and issues in the field of surveillance studies that have developed over the past 20 years.
2. Critically analyze the specific political and social sorting implications of surveillance and identification technologies that differentiate, discipline, and enforce conformity based on gender, race and class.
3. Understand the multitude of methodological and epistemological tools that are used to generate and construct knowledge about surveillance and society and the impacts of those truth claims.
4. Systematically apply key concepts, ideas, and theoretical paradigms within the social sciences to the study of historical and contemporary surveillance and identification technologies and their societal impacts.
5. Develop, enhance, hone, and apply critical thinking skills.
6. Develop, enhance, hone, and apply critical writing skills.
7. Develop, enhance, hone, and apply professional communication skills.

GRADING:

A+ >90%	Giddy up! This is excellent! Well Done.
A >80%	Extremely good. You're working hard and the work is paying off.
B 70-79%	Very Good work at this level of university; Mostly exceeds expectations.
C 60-69%	Satisfactory work; Average; You did what you had to do, but likely neither you nor I are not overly excited with it.
D 50-59%	Subpar. This is a big reason why I have office hours, so let's chat to facilitate improvement.
F <49%	Oops. It's obvious that there is a problem unless this was the result of a careless error in judgement. Let's work together to get you on track for success in your future assignments and assessments. Alternatively, Go on, Git!

Assignments [All assignments should be submitted through Brightspace]

Class Participation & Brief 10%
Jigsaws exercises 15% [3 x 5%]
Thinker Note/Podcast 20% [8 October 2026]
In-class facilitation/Reading Guide 10%
Book Review 20% [26 November 2026]
Oral Final Exam 25% [SCHEDULED DURING THE FINAL EXAM PERIOD]

- <https://www.wiley.com/en-ie/Technocolonialism%3A+When+Technology+for+Good+is+Harmful-p-9781509559046>
- <https://karendhao.com/>
- <https://www.dukeupress.edu/killer-apps>
- <https://jamesbridle.com/books/new-dark-age>
- <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300264630/atlas-of-ai/>
- <https://www.dukeupress.edu/dark-matters>

Students will be provided with weekly readings on Brightspace. For the book review assignment, **students are required to read one of the widely available texts linked above.**

PARTICIPATION & BRIEF [10% OF FINAL GRADE]

Your participation grade is derived from several contributions. Participation is mandatory, and success in participation or in the course is not possible without full engagement with the material. Everyone has one “freebie”, where your attendance/engagement in seminar or jigsaw will be overlooked. However, more than one absence – and in our environment, absence can also mean lack of engagement and not solely physical absence – will have negative results. You are encouraged to speak with your instructor about concerns at any time during the semester so we can create plans for your success and avoid problems, when and if we can. Life happens, I get it, but let’s try and figure things out so you can thrive.

Marks will be awarded for raising questions and concerns pertinent to the assigned required readings, expressing cogent arguments, and general participation in the discussion that demonstrates some comprehension and critical engagement in the required material covered for that specific session. Talking to fill time and space will not result in positive marks. Before coming to class, students should read, view, and/or listen to the appropriate material listed in the syllabus, and consider the following before attending the seminar: what is the primary argument? What is particularly compelling and/ or relevant about the material? What kind of epistemological and ontological assumptions are made by the author(s)? Attempt to critically evaluate the internal and external logic of the argument(s) presented; reflect on the broader implications for the themes in our course; and raise at least two interesting and provocative discussion questions. NB: Not less than Noon on the day of our classes, you are required to upload a **Brief** to Brightspace, which should raise a minimum of two discussion questions and provide one paragraph of personal reflections about the material. You will begin each class by sharing these briefs with one or two classmates to get the discussion going. These are not intended to be polished pieces; they are gut reactions to the material for our class. Briefs are not required when we have scheduled Jigsaws exercises.

READING GUIDE & CLASS FACILITATION [10% OF FINAL GRADE]

Individually or in pairs, you are required to discuss, interrogate, and engage readings and facilitate discussion for one class. Sign up will take place on the first day of class, and the schedule will subsequently be posted on

Brightspace. Do not summarize the readings; instead, critically engage the arguments presented and provide provocative and engaging questions and material to facilitate class discussion and offer your own insight. To help you and your peers prepare, you are required to upload **EITHER** a one-page study guide for the class not less than 24 hours prior to class, or a brief video or podcast study guide for your fellow students. This guide, whether in writing or audio/video, should be enticing and engaging, exciting students about the class ahead, and raise key points and questions that you intend to address.

JIGSAWS [15% OF FINAL GRADE] (1 Oct; 22 Oct; 19 Nov)

This exercise is aimed at encouraging you to develop knowledge about a specific area, issue or debate surrounding the main themes discussed in class and to effectively and persuasively share this knowledge with your peers. Each jigsaw has three different topics. Students will be assigned ONE JIGSAW topic and must come prepared to present this topic in 5 minutes to your group members; the other members of your group will be assigned the other two topics, and they will each present their topics in turn. Each jigsaw exercise will be marked out of 5 through the completion of a self-evaluation document that must be submitted one-week after the Jigsaw exercise, and collectively Jigsaws are worth 15% of your final grade. Further details will be provided in class and on Brightspace. PLEASE NOTE: In lieu of one of our Jigsaws and replacing or in-person class, we will have an asynchronous session, on Oct 2, for which there will be an alternative assignment worth 5% posted on Brightspace. All Jigsaw evaluations are subject to a grace period and will not be assessed until after the last class of the semester, meaning the last class is the absolute deadline without penalty for jigsaw submissions.

THINKER NOTE OR PODCAST [20% of FINAL GRADE] 8 October 2026

There are several historical thinkers who the course will cover. You are required to choose one of them (possible another not included in the list provided, in consultation with the Professor) and write a brief 1000 word “introductory note” on this individual OR produce a podcast that does not exceed 10 minutes and should be submitted along with your script. This is a brief piece, whether written or as a podcast, and as such, should be animated, engaging, and BRIEF. You cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of this thinker, so you should focus on one or two of the individual’s main contributions. What would someone interested in surveillance want to know about this thinker and their contribution to the field? Remember, that your target audience should be someone not in our course, potentially not in University or College, who is interested in the issues we discuss. More details will be provided in our second class. **The assignment is 8 October 2026.**

BOOK REVIEW [20% of FINAL GRADE] 26 November 2026

A guideline entitled, Critical Book Review Handout along with a rubric will be provided in class and discussed. This information will also be posted online. The Book Review is a mandatory portion of the course and will be based on one of the texts listed above (also to be provided in the book review handout after the Autumn reading break). This assignment should not exceed 2500 words and adhere to accepted academic citation styles. Further details and information will be included in the handout, and various style guides for MLA and Chicago Style are available online through the library portal.

Although this essay is based primarily on a single text, students are expected to raise course material in so far as it is relevant to the arguments and discussions presented. Students are also strongly encouraged to consult The New York Review of Books and The London Review of Books for samples of well written, engaging book review essays, of the sort expected for this assignment.

This assignment should not exceed 2500 words, is worth 20% of the final grade and is Due on 26 November 2026, but students will not receive penalty but will also receive less fulsome feedback if the assignment is submitted by 30 November 2026.

ORAL FINAL EXAM [25% of FINAL GRADE – SCHEDULED DURING THE FINAL EXAM PERIOD]

A list of questions on Brightspace on our last day of class. You will be assigned a 10-minute time slot during our assigned examination session, during which time I will conduct an oral examination that will be comprised of three questions from the list provided on 3 December. Further details will be provided in class and on Brightspace.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES & LATE POLICY

There is no need to submit paper copies of any assignment, other than the final exam. All other assignments should be submitted in electronic form via Brightspace. Plagiarism detection software will be used. Please include your name, the course number, your section number. A title page is not necessary. Word limits include references. APA or Harvard style referencing is necessary. If you have questions or concerns about citations, please ask, and/or avail yourself of the excellent support at [The Write Place](#). Unless otherwise noted in the syllabus, late assignments will require official accommodations or an application of the academic considerations policy. There is plenty of flexibility in both types of assessment and submission deadlines; if this is insufficient, please speak with me. AI is among many subjects of study in this course. Therefore, it should go without saying that using AI to study AI and surveillance and society is unacceptable. To this end, for all assignments in this course, I reserve the right to use Turnitin and/or AI detection tools to ensure that the authenticity of assignments.

FINAL EXAM NOTES

A student may be debarred from the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. * On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. (This statement is included in the policy pages.)

* Due warning means that the instructor has advised the student in writing/email of the nature of the unsatisfactory performance (i.e. absent too frequently from class), and the consequence of continued unsatisfactory performance (i.e. if another class is missed, the instructor will advise the department and request the student be debarred from writing the final exam).

FINAL NOTES

In this course, we will cover challenging and sometimes emotional material. This will demand your attention, commitment, patience, passion, and attentiveness. Along with a reasonable amount of reading and writing, I hope everyone learns to listen better, realizing how much more there is to know on any given topic, and move towards more clearly articulating your ideas. I can direct you to a series of policies and standards, and contacts for support, etc., which I will obviously make available on Brightspace. However, I want to emphasize a few important points here that I want you to keep in mind throughout the semester.

As someone whose research areas include technology, surveillance and security, I'm intimately aware of Artificial Intelligence: both its capabilities and its limitations. We will discuss this further in class, but the most essential question you need to ask yourself is: Why are you here and what you wish to gain from your experience at university? I will be with you for the entire semester, and I'm passionate about the material we cover in this course and committed to your engagement and success. I also realize it's not 1992, 1967, or 1885, so I'm conscious of the fact that technology is not something we can or ought to avoid or shut ourselves off from.

I hope that together, we can learn to manage and harness technology and be infected with a passion for the material we cover in the course – at least some of it or some aspects of it. Part of your job is to discover your specific passion. My purpose here is also to facilitate your success; Please try and remember this. If at any time material, assignments, etc. seem overwhelming, if you're having trouble, you're unclear about what we're doing, where we're headed, what the readings or assignments are about, please reach out and speak with me. Challenges, problems, the temptation of ChatGPT, and a range of difficulties from in the classroom and beyond are a part of life and a part of an undergraduate education. My hope is that together we can navigate these challenges and have a rewarding and inspiring time together.

PLEASE NOTE: All policies & handouts associated with this class are located on the course Brightspace page

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the “Special Examination” (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a multiple exam situation (i.e., you are scheduled to write more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Social Worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality_Reports_-_TurnItIn.html.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

7. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

8. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

9. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.