

ENGLISH 262

Culture Under Surveillance

Spring 2015 – 104 Biobehavioral Health Building, 10:10-11:00am MWF
<http://noendofneon.net/surveillance>

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Office Hours: MW 9:00-10:00am,
W 11:15am-12:15pm,
and by appointment



On some level, surveillance and narrative seem to have an awful lot in common: both are technologies reaching across time and space to allow some parties to see into the inner lives of others, to witness and record private moments, to look from the outside in and make the private public. In this course, we will take these similarities seriously, asking how fiction, film, television, and games can and do operate in an era of widespread surveillance. How do textual and visual media confront—or replicate—the dynamics of power and spectatorship we associate with surveillance? What kinds of fictions have been written and produced about surveillance, as surveillance has become more and more central to the interactions between governments, companies, and individuals? How can we attend to surveillance itself as not only a technological or political phenomenon but a psychological and cultural phenomenon? How can we write and narrate under, around, about, within, or against surveillance? In short: what is it like to read, write, film, play, and live in the shadow of a surveillance society?

Available at the PSU Bookstore in the HUB:

- *Philip K. Dick – *A Scanner Darkly* (ISBN: [0547572174](#))
- *Matt Kindt – *Super Spy* (ISBN: [1891830961](#))
- *Margaret Atwood – *The Handmaid's Tale* (ISBN: [038549081X](#))
- *Susanna Keysen – *Girl, Interrupted* (ISBN: [0679746048](#))
- *Octavia Butler – *Lilith's Brood* (ISBN: [0446676101](#))
- *William Gibson – *Pattern Recognition* (ISBN: [0425198685](#))
- *Gary Shteyngart – *Super Sad True Love Story* (ISBN: [0812977866](#))

Available elsewhere:

- *Cory Doctorow – *Little Brother* (available for free [on Doctorow's site](#), or for actual money [on Amazon](#))
- **Papers, Please* (available [on Steam](#))
- **The Wire* season 1 (available on HBOGo, Amazon Prime, or [on DVD](#))

Grading:

citizenship/participation:	15%	ANGEL posts:	15%	Twitter:	15%
project 1:	15%	project 2:	15%	project 3:	25%

Attendance: Regular attendance is **required**. Please come to every class, and please come on time. Your grade will be lowered if your attendance is poor, down to and including "F." Specifically, you are permitted **three (3!)** absences; after that, your grade begins to drop. Excused absences for illness or emergency are appropriate, but beyond that, let me repeat PSU policy: a student whose absences are excessive "may run the risk of receiving a lower grade or a failing grade," whether or not some of those absences are "excused." In other words: *don't miss class*. Pretty please.

Participation: I want to hear from you, in any and all forms you're comfortable with. This is why citizenship and participation (in-class, Twitter, and ANGEL) total nearly half of your course grade. What we're reading is not dry, stodgy, solitary Literature™. It should elicit responses from you—emotional, ethical, intellectual. I hope you'll feel comfortable weighing in during class discussions, and even if you're not normally inclined to talk in class, I'd encourage you to step outside your comfort zone here. We won't bite. (*Note: please don't bite.*) Those who still don't feel comfortable speaking up very often should focus extra energy on participating on ANGEL and Twitter, above and beyond the required postings.

ANGEL Forum: Each week, you'll post a brief (or lengthy, if you like!) response on ANGEL to the week's reading. These should be more than mere value judgments ("I liked this book!" or "why did you assign this, you horrible bastard?!"); they should articulate something interesting or noteworthy about the reading. You may have observations or provocations about one or more of the readings in terms of style, theme, character, plot, and so on. Some moment in a text may have stood out to you for one reason or another. Or you might relate a given reading to other readings we've covered, to discussions we've had in class, to broader conversations taking place outside our classroom, or to related real-world issues. Your response need only be a (rich) paragraph or so long (ideally more than "See Spot run. See Spot surveil. Surveil, Spot, surveil!"), but if you have more to say, by all means, let fly. These brief writings not only tell me that you're keeping up with the reading and thinking about the course material outside of class, they will also give me a better sense of the topics that interest and provoke you, so that our in-class discussions can be happier and more productive.

*(Note: if you want to make me really happy—and since I'm giving you grades, you probably should—start responding to and following up on each other's posts. This should be a **conversation**, ideally!)*

Twitter: You will be responsible for a minimum of **five** tweets a week that engage in some way with the course readings or with aspects of the class conversation. You need to start a Twitter account (if you have one, ensure that it is *public*, not locked) and send me an email identifying what your Twitter name is. Append our course hashtag (**#ENGL262**) to each tweet so your classmates and I can see it. Respond to others by using the @ symbol (e.g., @noendofneon). Ideally, a remark will come to you as you read for each class session, so keep your phone or computer handy if possible. You're also not only welcome but encouraged to tweet during class; most days, I'll have the feed displayed up on the screen. In general, it may be best to think of your tweets as *reactions* rather than *responses*; they don't need to be quite as composed or considered as the ANGEL forum posts. I suggest that two of your weekly tweets respond to other users' tweets on our hashtag. I will be posting questions and comments as well, off and on. (More on than off, in all likelihood.)

Academic Freedom: In English classrooms, academic freedom most frequently comes up in two contexts: charges of "offensiveness" on the one hand, "brainwashing" or "indoctrination" on the other. While you have the right to be free of gratuitous insult, you do not have the right not to be offended. I mean something very specific by this: at a university, you do not have the right to be protected from words, ideas, values, or beliefs—whether conservative or liberal, religious or secular, putatively obscene, or any other category—that you find distasteful. A key part of any education is the careful scrutiny of received ideas. By the same token, you should feel free to disagree, either verbally or in your written assignments, with any idea expressed in class, whether by me or by any student. Your grade will not be determined by how closely your thought agrees with mine or how aptly you mimic my own views in your papers and forum posts; rather, it will be the product of the quality of both your thinking and your expression of that thinking. Every semester, I happily give "A" grades to students with whom I strongly disagree, because they write and speak with such clarity and grace.

Penn State Sexual Harassment Policy AD-41: Penn State is committed to an open, sensitive, understanding, and responsive campus environment, and as such, sexual harassment of faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated. Penn State's sexual harassment policy is available in greater detail [online](#).

Penn State Accommodations Policy: It is Penn State's [policy](#) not to discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in its educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services at University Park (located in 116 Boucke Building) at 863-1807, preferably as early as possible, and please let me know as well.

Date	Reading/Viewing Due
1.12 (M)	
1.14(W)	Philip K. Dick – <i>A Scanner Darkly</i> ch. 1-5
1.16 (F)	<i>A Scanner Darkly</i> ch. 6-9
1.19 (M)	* * * NO CLASS - Dr. Martin Luther King Day * * *
1.21	<i>A Scanner Darkly</i> ch. 10-end
1.23	<i>Cabin in the Woods</i> (dir. Drew Goddard)
1.26 (M)	Matt Kindt – <i>Super Spy</i> p. 1-181 (through “Sharlink ‘The Shark’”)
1.28	<i>Super Spy</i> p. 182-end (“Nerves” - end); Edgar Allan Poe - “The Man of the Crowd”
1.30	<i>The Conversation</i> (dir. Francis Ford Coppola)
2.2 (M)	<i>Selma</i> (dir. Ava DuVernay)
2.4	Claudia Rankine – <i>Citizen</i> excerpts (PDF); play Nothing to Hide
2.6	Italo Calvino - “A King Listens” (PDF); <i>Black Mirror</i> episode “White Bear”
2.9 (M)	<i>The Wire</i> episodes 1-2
2.11	<i>The Wire</i> episodes 3-4
2.13	<i>The Wire</i> episodes 5-6
2.16 (M)	<i>The Wire</i> episodes 7-9
2.18	<i>The Wire</i> episodes 10-11
2.20	<i>The Wire</i> episodes 12-13; * * PROJECT 1 DUE BY 11:59pm * *
2.23 (M)	Margaret Atwood – <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> ch. 1-13
2.25	<i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> ch. 14-29
2.27	<i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> ch. 30-39; play Papers, Please
3.2 (M)	<i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> ch. 40-end
3.4	Susanna Keyesen – <i>Girl, Interrupted</i> p. 1-91 (through “Keepers”); Kate Losse - “The Male Gazed”
3.6	<i>Girl, Interrupted</i> p. 92-end (“Nineteen Sixty-Eight” - end); The Secret Cinema (dir. Paul Bartel)
3.9-3.15	* * * SPRING BREAK * * *
3.16 (M)	Octavia Butler – <i>Dawn</i> sections 1 and 2 (“Womb” and “Family”)
3.18	<i>Dawn</i> section 3 (“Nursery”)
3.20	<i>Dawn</i> section 4 (“The Training Floor”)
3.23 (M)	<i>Code 46</i> (dir. Michael Winterbottom)
3.25	Philip K. Dick - “The Minority Report” (PDF)
3.27	play Unmanned ; drone readings (TBA)
3.30 (M)	<i>Martha Marcy May Marlene</i> (dir. Sean Durkin)
4.1	William Gibson – <i>Pattern Recognition</i> ch. 1-8
4.3	<i>Pattern Recognition</i> ch. 9-16; * * PROJECT 2 DUE BY 11:59pm * *
4.6 (M)	<i>Pattern Recognition</i> ch. 17-27
4.8	<i>Pattern Recognition</i> ch. 28-35
4.10	<i>Pattern Recognition</i> ch. 36-end
4.13 (M)	Gary Shteyngart – <i>Super Sad True Love Story</i> p. 1-96 (through “RateMe Plus”)
4.15	<i>Super Sad True Love Story</i> p. 97-177 (“Fire Up That Eggplant” - “The Quiet American”)
4.17	<i>Super Sad True Love Story</i> p. 178-248 (“The Sinners’ Crusade” - “The Rupture”)
4.20 (M)	<i>Super Sad True Love Story</i> p. 249-end (“Security Situation in Progress” - end); Ken Liu - “The Perfect Match”
4.22	John Crowley - “Snow” ; <i>Black Mirror</i> episode “The Entire History of You”
4.24	Cory Doctorow – Little Brother ch. 1-6
4.27 (M)	<i>Little Brother</i> ch. 7-12
4.29	<i>Little Brother</i> ch. 13-18
5.1	<i>Little Brother</i> ch. 19-end (including afterwords and bibliography)

The **third and final project** will be due on Thursday, May 7th by 11:59pm.