HI2H9-15 Surveillance States: Biometrics from the Border to the Bathroom

23/24

Department
    History
Level
    Undergraduate Level 2
Module leader
    Roberta Bivins
Credit value
    15
Module duration
    10 weeks
Assessment
    100% coursework
Study location
    University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

You are being watched and measured. And you are not alone. For over a century, a global web of state, commercial, and individual surveillance has observed and measured an ever-widening variety of bodies, situations, and spaces. As our bodies have become legible to authorities and to ourselves, they have come to serve as identity documents, markers of kinship, and signs of entitlement or otherness. This module will explore the ways in which new ideas, knowledge and technologies have enabled states, societies and individuals to identify and assess their citizens, police their borders, and generate self-knowledge. From the invention of the 'average man' in the 19th century to the rise of home DNA testing kits and biometric passports, we will look at what it means to 'measure up' in modern society, and ask: how, when and where should our bodies be subjected to measurement, by whom, and for what purposes? Case studies will include fingerprinting, DNA profiling, and the all-too-familiar bathroom scale; others will be selected by students.

Module aims

This module will build on knowledge and approaches gained in Year One to:

- Explore the ways in which states, societies and individuals have defined and observed 'normality', 'health', 'disability', and 'abnormality' in modern history;
- Analyse how technologies of measurement and surveillance help to define both states and citizenship;
- Examine how policy and politics respond to innovations in biomedical and technological understandings of our bodies;
- Train students to use material and/or visual culture as well as textual sources from across science, technology and medicine; and
- Expose students to key themes in the histories of medicine, technology, and disability. It will also complement the Year Two Research Project.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1. Introduction: What is counted counts.
Week 2: Who counts? The Observant State
Week 3. Measurement and Surveillance in Empire
Week 4. Measurement and Surveillance at the Border
Week 5: Measuring and Making Ourselves
Week 6. READING WEEK
Week 7. Life in the 'Counting House': Weighing up
Week 8. Life in the 'Counting House': Student Selected Component on Home Testing
Week 9. Life in the 'Counting House': Student Selected Component on Domestic BiometricTechnologies and State/Commercial Appropriation
Week 10. Conclusion: 'Count me out' and the Politics of 'Informed Refusal'

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the history of key surveillance technologies and modalities
- Analyse and evaluate the impact of measurement on the generation of social and political norms;
- Identify, research and analyse physical objects and/or visual representations as primary source material to generate new ideas and interpretations
- Communicate the findings of independent research, adapting it to the needs of diverse audiences
- Analyse and evaluate the contributions made by historical and interdisciplinary scholarship to understandings of bodily surveillance as state-making;

Indicative reading list

Indicative Reading List, Surveillance States

Katja Franko Aas, " 'The Body Does Not Lie': Identity, Risk and Trust in Technoculture." Crime Media Culture 2(2) 2006: 143-158.

Katja Franko Aas, '"Crimmigrant" Bodies and Bona Fide Travelers: Surveillance, Citizenship and Global Governance', Theoretical Criminology 15 (3) 2011: 331-346.

Louise Amoore, "Biometric Borders: Governing Mobilities in the War on Terror." Political Geography 25:2006: 336-351.

Clare Anderson, Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality and Colonialism in South Asia (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

Ruha Benjamin, 'Informed Refusal: Towards a Justice-Based Bioethics', Science, Technology and Human Values 41 (6) 2016: 967-990.

Roberta Bivins, '"Suspect" screening: the limits of Britain's medicalised borders, 1962-1981." in Medicalising borders: Selection, containment and quarantine since 1800 edited by Sevasti Trubeta, Christian Promitzer and Paul Weindling, 227-255. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021.
Roberta Bivins, 'Weighing on us all? Quantification and cultural responses to obesity in NHS Britain', History of Science, Vol 58, Issue 2, (June 2020), doi.org/10.1177/0073275319842965.

Roberta Bivins and Hilary Marland, 'Weighting for Health: Management, Measurement and Self-Surveillance in the Modern Household', Social History of Medicine, Vol 29, 4 (Nov 2016).

Keith Breckenridge. Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Keith Breckenridge, "Verwoerd's Bureau of Proof: Total Information in the Making of Apartheid." History Workshop Journal, no. 59 (2005): 83–108. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472787.

Geoffrey C. Bunn, The Truth Machine: A Social History of the Lie Detector (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

Simon Cole, Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Rebecca Jean Emigh, Dylan Riley, and Patricia Ahmed, Antecedents of Censuses from Medieval to Nation States: How Societies and States Count (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Rebecca Jean Emigh, Dylan Riley, Patricia Ahmed, Changes in Censuses from Imperialist to Welfare States: How Societies and States Count (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Ronald E Hall, ed., The Melanin Millennium: Skin Color as 21st Century International Discourse (Dordecht: Springer 2013).

Francine Hirsch, Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014)

Adi Kuntsman, Selfie Citizenship, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Adi Kuntsman, 'Introduction: Whose Selfie Citizenship?' in Kuntsman A. (eds) Selfie Citizenship

(Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) https://0-doi-org.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/10.1007/978-3-319-45270-8_2.

Michael Lynch, Simon Cole, Ruth McNally, Truth Machine: The Contentious History of DNA Fingerprinting (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Jayne Raisborough, Fat Bodies, Health and the Media. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

J. W. Rettberg, 'Biometric Citizens: Adapting Our Selfies to Machine Vision'', in Kuntsman A. (eds) Selfie Citizenship (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) https://0-doi-org.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/10.1007/978-3-319-45270-8_10.

Scott, James C., John Tehranian, and Jeremy Mathias, 'The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States: The Case of the Permanent Family Surname', Comparative Studies in Society and History 44, no. 1 (2002): 4–44. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3879399.

Chandak Sengoopta, Imprint of the Raj: How Fingerprinting Was Born in Imperial India (London: Macmillan 2003)

David Skinner, 'Mobile Identities and Fixed Categories: Forensic DNA and the Politics of Racialised Data', In Identity Politics After DNA: Re/Creating Categories of Difference and Belonging, edited by Katharina Schramm, David Skinner and Richard Rottenburg, 53-78. (Oxford: Berghahn, 2012).

Matthew Smith, Hyperactive: The Controversial History of ADHD (London: Reaktion Books 2012).

Laura Stoler, ed., Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Richard Tutton, Christine Hauskeller and Steve Sturdy, 'Suspect Technologies: Forensic Testing of Asylum Seekers at the UK Border', Ethnic and Racial Studies 37 (5) 2014: 738-752.

Research element

Students will incorporate primary research with material or visual culture into their applied tasks and essays

Interdisciplinary

We will be using secondary readings from history, political science, legal studies criminology, and sociology.

International

We will be examine the impact of surveillance technologies in the British empire, the USA, and Latin America; and of bordering technologies in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Europe and the UK.

Subject specific skills

Primary source analysis.

Research involving secondary literature.
Presentation of work orally and in multimedia or essay form.

Transferable skills

Communication of original research and analysis to diverse audiences;

Critical analysis of media representations of controversial topics AND/OR critical analysis of the embedded assumptions of physical objects, e.g. oximeters, height/weight tables, etc.;

Improved awareness of the role of STEM in shaping cultural and embodied norms of selfhood and citizenship, and reciprocally the role of political and cultural factors in shaping STEM.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Tutorials	2 sessions of 15 minutes (0%)
Online learning (independent)	3 sessions of 30 minutes (1%)
Private study	130 hours (87%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Students will undertake independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. The general expectation will be the reading and preparation of three texts (of article or book chapter length) or of a mix of texts and primary sources, for each seminar; this should take approximately 3 hours. The assessments will also require independent research, reading around 6-10 texts, and then preparing and presenting outputs in the forms described. Students will also be expected to complete independent online research on how three separate accredited archives or museums curate objects or visual representations as preparation for their applied task.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
3000 word essay	50%	
policy briefing or academic essay		

Applied task: Curation (1000 words)   40%

All students will identify and 'curate' (via a multimedia assignment of c. 1000 words) an object which exposes or amplifies themes of the module. Required skills for this will be taught in the module

Seminar contribution   10%

This will be assessed through participation in module discussions. Students may request reasonable adjustments if needed (e.g., assessment via written or oral participation only if special/medical circumstances apply).

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback via on-line systems (i.e. Tabula) and optional but encouraged individual meetings (face-to-face tutorials).

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
  - Year 2 of V100 History
  - Year 2 of V100 History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
  - Year 2 of VM11 History and Politics
  - Year 2 of VM11 History and Politics
  - Year 2 of VM11 History and Politics
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)

This module is Option list B for:

- UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
  - Year 2 of V100 History
  - Year 2 of V100 History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)

This module is Option list C for:

- UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
  - Year 2 of V100 History
  - Year 2 of V100 History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology