HU|BP
Berlin Perspectives

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

East Germany's Secret Police and Contemporary Surveillance Culture

Winter Semester 2023/24: 16 October 2023 – 17 February 2024

CATEGORY
History and Politics

COURSE STRUCTURE
2 contact hours à 45 min per week (winter semester: 16 weeks)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE
Time
Friday, 10 - 12 c.t. (10:15 am – 11:45 am)
Place
Hausvogteiplatz 5-7, Room 0323-26

COURSE LANGUAGE
This course is taught in English, including readings in English. For understanding the texts and the discussions in class a language level B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required.

Language requirements (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
English B2

TARGET GROUP
International exchange students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic. Berlin Perspectives courses are designed for undergraduate students. Master students may participate if their home university agrees. Regular degree-seeking students can select the course within the elective part of their study program (überfachlicher Wahlpflichtbereich üWP).

Text Verdana 10,5
Students of all subjects with a strong interest in the various aspects of Culture, History, Literature, Film and Visual Arts, as well as Surveillance Studies.

CREDITS = 5 ECTS

The Berlin Perspectives courses are offered by the Career Center as part of the elective program üWP. Registration takes place via Agnes.
All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to live in a surveillance society? How does the digital age challenge questions regarding privacy, individuality and freedom? When does surveillance as care tip over into surveillance as control? And how does the Stasi system of vigilance prefigure contemporary surveillance culture? This course will on the one hand examine the impact of surveillance on society by looking at the multifaceted ways technologies, societies and the arts interact; and on the other hand, reflect on surveillance in a totalitarian context while comparing observation techniques in the GDR with contemporary surveillance methods. We will also explore how surveillance is represented in contemporary literature, film and popular culture. The course will map out important themes with regards to surveillance and its repercussions (e.g., visibility, identity, privacy and control). The course provides an overview of the interdisciplinary field of surveillance and covers the latest research in the following major areas: 1. Relationship between surveillance, power and social control; 2. Histories of Surveillance: GDR and the Stasi (especially in the context of Berlin) 2. The concept of privacy; 3. Surveillance in the arts and popular culture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The objective of this Bachelor-level course is to equip students with an in-depth understanding of the Stasi and the phenomenon of surveillance and enable them to read, understand and critically reflect on the most recent theoretical research in surveillance studies.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- understand the origins of surveillance in contemporary society
- be familiar with the observation methods of the Stasi
- critically assess the changing social processes in surveillance culture
- employ surveillance theories
- examine the effects of surveillance on individuals and cultural production through analyzing novels and

READINGS

Students will be provided with reading material.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 5 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 75% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- hand in the following **assignments**:
    - regular mini-presentations and group activities
    - weekly reading assignments
    - final paper (25.000 characters, including spaces.)

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Betiel Wasihun is a Lecturer at Arden University Berlin and a Senior Researcher working on various projects on surveillance and its cultural and literary manifestations, e.g., collaboration with the University of Birmingham on the interdisciplinary project "Knowing the Secret Police: Secrecy and Knowledge in East-German society". She is also a Research Associate at the Institute for Philosophy, History of Literature, Science and Technology at the TU Berlin which she joined in 2017 as a IPODI-Marie Curie Fellow. Before relocating to Berlin, she was a Fellow of Lincoln College (2010-15) and a member of the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages (2010-17).

COURSE SCHEDULE
2 hours à 45 min per week (16 weeks)
Christmas Break from 25 December 2023 and 5 January 2024

General note: there will be weekly reading assignments, group presentations and a final paper (25.000 characters, including spaces)

Week 1: Introduction to "Surveillance Studies" and course outline

Required reading:
- Lyon, David. "The Watched World Today", pp. 11-24.
- Lyon, David. "Surveillance Studies. An Overview", *Surveillance Studies. A Reader*, edited by Torin Monahan and David Murakami Wood, OUP 2018, pp. 18-22.

Group activity: There are cultural differences in the way people deal with surveillance. Discuss with reference to your own experience.

Week 2: Histories of Surveillance I: Understanding the GDR.

Excursion: "Alltag in der DDR" Museum in der Kulturbrauerei,Knaackstraße 97, 10435 Berlin. Guiding questions will be provided prior to the museum trip.

Assignment: "Museum Report" (group presentation)

Week 3: Histories of Surveillance II: Cold War-Era – Film Analysis: *The Lives of Others*

Viewing in class (parts for the film) and discussion *Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others)* Dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006

Assignment: Preparations for Panel Discussion

Week 4: Histories of Surveillance III: Getting more Insight

Panel Discussion with Contemporary GDR witness Peter Keup.

Week 5: Histories of Surveillance IV: Berlin Wall and Stasi Methods and Archive

Required reading:

- Funder, Anna. "Stasiland. Stories from behind the Berlin Wall", *Surveillance Studies. A Reader*, pp. 83-88.

Excursion: Stasi Museum, Ruschestraße 103 "Haus 7", 10365 Berlin & exhibition tour "Einblick ins Geheime" ("Access to Secrecy), Stasi Records Archive, Normannenstraße 21a, 10365 Berlin. Guiding questions will be provided prior to the museum trip.

Assignment: "Museum Reports" (group presentations)

Week 6: Guest Lecture (tba)

Week 7: Surveillance Theories I: Panopticon and Societies of Discipline (Bentham, Foucault)

Required Reading:

- Bentham, Jeremy. "*Panopticon Or: The Inspection House"*
- Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism" (from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*)

Assignment: Reading presentation on important aspects of Foucault's "Panopticism" theory.

Week 8: Surveillance Theories II: Societies of Control (Deleuze)

Required Reading:

- Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control"

Assignment: Reading presentation on Deleuze (group presentation)

Week 9: Surveillance Theories III: Corporate Surveillance and Surveillance Capitalism (Zuboff)

Required Reading:

- Zuboff, Shoshana. "Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization" (2015)

- Dave Eggers's novel *The Circle* (2013; selected excerpts)
- Taddicken, Monika. "Privacy, Surveillance, and Self-Disclosure in the Social Web. Exploring the Users's Perspective via Focus Groups"

Assignment: How does Zuboff's concept of Suveillance Capitalism apply to *The Circle*? Discuss (group presentation)

Week 10: Surveillance Theories IV: Liquid Surveillance (Lyon and Bauman)

Required reading:

- Bauman, Zygmunt, and David Lyon. *Liquid Surveillance. A Conversation*. Polity, 2013 (selected excerpts)

Assignment: Reading presentation on "Liquid Surveillance" (group presentation)

Week 11: Surveillance Theories V: Surveillant Assemblage (Haggerty and Ericson)

Required Reading:

- Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard v. Ericson: "The Surveillant Assemblage (*Surveillance Studies. A Reader,* pp. 47-51)

Assignment: Think of examples of what Haggerty and Ericson call "Surveillant Assemblage" and depict them accordingly (group presentation)

Week 12: Surveillance Theories V: "The Viewer Society"

Viewing in class (parts): *The Truman Show*, Dir. Peter Weir, 1998, film

Required Reading:

- Thomas Mathiesen. "The Viewer Society. Michel Foucault's 'Panopticon'

revisited"

Assignment: Discuss Mathiesen's concept of the "Viewer Society" and its representation in *The Truman Show* group presentation)

Week 13: Circulation of Knowledge in the GDR

Viewing in class: "The Open Secret" (Documentary; Jacob Cartwright & Nick Jordan, 2022, 30 min.)

Week 14: Dystopian Novels: Understanding the genre

Required Reading:

- George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* pp. 3-31
- Mike Nellis: "Since Nineteen Eight-Four: Representations of Surveillance in Literary Fiction" (*Surveillance Studies. A Reader, pp. 394-398)*

Assignment: Discuss the role of Big Brother in Orwell's *1984* (group presentation)

Week 15: Stasi Infiltration of the Prenzlauer Berg Underground Literary Scene I

- Berlin writer Sascha Anderson: former collaborator of the East German Stasi

Week 16: Stasi Infiltration of the Prenzlauer Berg Underground Literary Scene II & Wrap-Up

- Berlin writer Wolfgang Hilbig's novel *Ich* – Observation, Experience and Imagination

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS
- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

in case of online sessions
- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions: be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers).

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical) especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct.

Attendance policy: Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

in case of online sessions

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions: be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions in this international classroom.

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies. **Plagiarism** in even a small assignment will result in failing the entire course. See **ZSP-HU** (Fächerübergreifende Satzung zur Regelung von Zulassung, Studium und Prüfung der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), **§ 111** (Täuschung).

Attendance policy: Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 15 June 2023