

Call for Papers:

## ***SURVEILLANCE | SOCIETY | CULTURE***

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT GÖTTINGEN, FEBRUARY 26-28, 2016

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

Have we grown accustomed to living under constant observation in what sociologist David Lyon has called a “surveillance society”? What only a few decades ago would have been considered a totalitarian nightmare seems to have become reality: surveillance practices and technologies have infiltrated all aspects of our lives, forcing us to reconsider established notions of privacy, subjectivity, and the status of the individual within society.

The United States is central to contemporary concerns about surveillance. American companies are at the forefront of developing surveillance technologies; internet corporations such as Google or Facebook have brought the accumulation and commercialization of “big data” to an unprecedented level of efficiency; and in the wake of 9/11 and the ongoing “war against terror,” governmental agencies such as the NSA are gathering and monitoring communication on a global scale. Therefore American Studies offers a fruitful place to begin discussing the impact of surveillance on society and culture.

Nevertheless, the discussion will have to extend beyond disciplinary boundaries just as the impact and etiology of surveillance extend beyond the borders of the nation state. This broad view of the multiplicity of viewpoints is an acknowledgment that the ubiquity of surveillance makes it difficult to assess. Surveillance takes many forms; works in innumerable areas of private, public and professional life; performs multiple functions; serves countless masters; utilizes a variety of strategies, techniques and technologies. One way to render this polymorphous and elusive socio-cultural phenomenon tangible is to study its representations in literature, film, and art. This conference therefore aims to study the cultures and society of surveillance. The goal is to bring together *literary*, *cultural* and *surveillance studies* to provide a transdisciplinary framework and generate new approaches to fundamental questions: How has surveillance changed historically and how have these changes been discussed both in the American and in the transnational context? How have these changes been represented in literary and visual culture? What is the ideological significance of surveillance-related genres like the detective or spy novel? Is there an “ethics” of surveillance and how are ethical questions negotiated in literature and culture? How is “meaning” produced textually and semiotically in a surveillance situation? How can cultural artifacts like novels or films operate as actors in the multiple networks of surveillance? How can the processes of subject formation that constitute the observers as well as the observed be described? How do the arts reflect the challenges to the individual posed by technological development? How does the omnipresence of various gazes affect cultural narratives of the “self”?

Possible topics could include but are certainly not limited to:

- Surveillance and/in/of literature and film
- Visual culture(s) and/of surveillance
- Surveillance (and) art
- Performance and surveillance
- The media of surveillance
- Surveillance and network culture

- “Big Brother” in the digital age
- Ideologies of surveillance
- Surveillance and critical posthumanism
- Neoliberalism and Surveillance
- Techniques of auto-surveillance (lifelogging, “wearables”, “The Quantified Self Movement” etc.)
- Forms of resistance (“sousveillance”, “counterveillance” etc.)
- Surveillance and questions of race, class and gender
- Post-Foucauldian theories of surveillance (e. g. Thomas Mathisen's “synopticon”, Zygmunt Bauman's “post-panopticon” or Siva Vaidhyanathan's “cryptopticon”)

We invite scholars of American Studies and related fields such as Cultural Studies, Film & Media Studies, Comparative Literature or Philosophy to submit a short abstract (approx. 300 words) and a short bio-bibliographic note to [florian.zappe@phil.uni-goettingen.de](mailto:florian.zappe@phil.uni-goettingen.de) and [andrew.gross@phil.uni-goettingen.de](mailto:andrew.gross@phil.uni-goettingen.de) by **September 21, 2015**.

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Conference Organizers: Florian Zappe and Andrew S. Gross (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen).