



COMA 387: Communication, Race, & Surveillance

Class Information

Class Date/Time/Location: ...

Instructor: Dr. Marnie Ritchie (ritchiem@plu.edu)

Office Hours: ...

We are on the traditional lands of the Nisqually, Puyallup, Squaxin Island, and Steilacoom peoples. We acknowledge and respect the traditional caretakers of this land. We recognize the inadequacy of a land acknowledgment and pledge to take action beyond this linguistic act to decolonize our institution.

Jump to [click]...

ABOUT COMA 387

- Course Description
- Course Objectives
- Required Materials
- A Note on J-Term & Our Class Time

COURSE POLICIES

- Self Care
- Assignments
- Add/Drop
- Academic Integrity
- Laptops
- Accommodations
- Pronoun Use
- All Gender Bathrooms
- Caregivers
- Bodily Needs
- Title IX

CONTINUED...

- Support for Commuter Students
- Support for Transfer Students
- Support for Undocumented Students
- Classroom Inclusivity

ASSIGNMENTS

- Participation
- Readings & Reading Notes
- Screening Notes
- Group Presentations
- Critical Syntheses
- Extra Credit

GRADES

- Explanation of Assessment
- Grade Breakdown

COURSE SCHEDULE

ABOUT COMA 387

Course Description

This course considers how surveillance as a *communicative practice* reifies race and racism within US culture. The course offers theoretical lenses for critiquing surveillance culture including feminist surveillance studies, critical security studies, affect theory, critical ethnic studies, and black studies. The course examines, among other artifacts, CCTV, drones, wearables, facial recognition software, borders, airports, biometrics, and whistleblowers. Students in the course will map surveillance systems, reflect on self-surveillant practices, and create media products that obstruct surveillance, toward the course's overall goal of developing *critical surveillance literacy*.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the intersections of communication, race, and surveillance in US culture
2. Continue to develop written and oral communication skills
3. Learn and apply a number of theoretical lenses for critiquing surveillance culture
4. Create physical and digital works that obstruct surveillance systems
5. Develop critical surveillance literacy (a fluency with critical language about surveillance)

Required Materials*

- All readings will be printed and provided to you in class
- A pen and/or highlighter, for close reading and annotation
- A notebook or laptop, for taking notes

*If you cannot afford the above materials, email me or come speak with me.

A Note on J-Term & Our Class Time

J-Term is an entire semester jam-packed into one month! *Natasha Lyonne voice* What a concept!

J-Term makes for unique challenges and opportunities. Because we have long class periods (2 hours and 50 minutes each), we will segment these periods (usually in three 50-minute sessions with two ten-minute breaks in the middle or two 80-minute sessions with one ten-minute break in the middle). I will let you know at the start of class what kind of segmented period we will have that day.

This class is during lunch time, so you may eat during class.

We meet Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Each of our four weeks will follow this schedule:

- **Tuesday: Lecture Day** - setting up the learning goals, expectations, and concepts for the week; engaging in foundational reading(s) for the week
- **Wednesday: Group Work Day** - working in teams to analyze and apply concepts and communicate these concepts through oral presentations
- **Thursday: Critical Making Day** - creating counter-surveillance products
- **Friday: Film Day** - watching key films about communication, race, and surveillance, with meta-commentary on film as a surveillant technology

COURSE POLICIES

Self Care

Your personal well-being is essential and not just to your performance in college. Learning to manage stress is a process. Asking for help is a skill. If you need additional resources or feel that you might fall behind in work, I ask that you come speak with me earlier rather than later. I encourage you to contact the Center for Student Success, which can connect you to resources on campus like the Counseling Center, Health Center, Campus Ministry, and Center for Gender Equity. The main hub of the CSS is located on the first floor of the Mortvedt Library building. You can contact them by email (success@plu.edu) or phone (253-535-8870).

Assignments

All assignments are due on the date indicated in the course schedule below. The only written work outside of class are weekly syntheses, and students will submit them online into a [Google Drive folder](#). If you know you cannot meet a deadline, please email me ASAP.

Add/Drop

You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, and similar topics found at <https://www.plu.edu/registrar/curriculum-management/>.

Academic Integrity

All graded work must be the original work of the student claiming credit for it, with proper credit given to outside sources via citations. Students who use unoriginal work or permit another student to use their work will not receive for the course. Students who are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult with me. For more information, please see PLU's statement: www.plu.edu/academics/integ.html.

Laptops

I allow laptops in class, and I put considerable trust in students that you use them responsibly.

Accommodations

Students with medically recognized and documented disabilities and who are in need of special accommodation have an obligation to notify the University of their needs. Students in need of accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Support Services (x7206). If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with

me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Support Services website contains more information: <https://www.plu.edu/dss/>.

Pronoun Use

We will use one another's personally designated pronouns. Do not assume anyone's gender in the course. Some of our readings use "she and/or he" to the exclusion of a more inclusive "they." I encourage you in your reading to note these exclusions and normalize using gender neutral language in your writing and language. Some language to avoid microaggressions: people do not "identify" as a gender, but rather they are a gender; people do not have "preferred pronouns," but rather they have pronouns; do not truncate "trans" with "men" or "women" or "person" (i.e. "transwoman"), because this is something trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERF's) do to discredit trans personhood.

All Gender Bathrooms

There are numerous "all gender" bathrooms throughout the PLU campus available to students. There is one in Ingram Hall, located in the west hallway (down the hall on the left by the water fountain). More information on locations is available here:

<https://www.plu.edu/gender-equity/resources/trans-and-gender-nonconforming-resources/all-gender-rest-rooms/>. If you do not need to use these bathrooms for your safety and comfort, as some students do, please do not use them.

Caregivers

If you are a caregiver and find it difficult to find care for our class time, please let me know. You should never have to choose between caring for another and facing a punishment for missing class due to forces beyond your control. Sometimes care service falls through, and sometimes it is too expensive. You are welcome to bring the child or person for whom you care to class at any time, if this is something you would be comfortable with. If you will be late due to caretaker responsibilities, please just send me a quick email, if able. For more resources, see <https://www.plu.edu/commuter-transfer/students-who-are-parents/>.

Bodily Needs

Please feel free to exit class to use the restroom when you need to. Lactating parents may take breaks to feed their infant or express milk, either in the classroom or elsewhere. PLU has a designated lactation room: the downstairs Women's Restroom in the Mortvedt Library.

Title IX

I am a mandatory reporter under Title IX. This means that if you disclose sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or gender-based discrimination to me related to the Pacific Lutheran University community, I must report it to Campus Safety, Students Rights and Responsibilities, Human Resources, and/or a member of the University Dispute Resolution Committee.

If you would like to confidentially submit a disclosure, meaning one that does not activate Mandatory Reporting, you can do so via the following resources:

Advocacy Services in Center for Gender Equity (<https://www.plu.edu/genderequity/advocacy-services/> or 253-538-6304)

PLU Health Center (<http://www.plu.edu/health-center/> or 253-535-7337),

PLU Counseling Center (<https://www.plu.edu/counseling/> or 253-535-7206)

PLU University Pastor (<https://www.plu.edu/campus-ministry/staff/> or 253-535-7464)

Support for Commuter Students

If you are a commuter student, PLU offers you a number of resources specific to commuter student needs:

<https://www.plu.edu/commuter-transfer/commuter-resources/>.

Support for Transfer Students

If you are a transfer student, PLU offers you a number of resources specific to transfer student needs:

<https://www.plu.edu/commuter-transfer/transfer-student-resources/>.

Support for Undocumented Students

If you are undocumented, PLU offers you a number of resources through the Diversity Center:

<https://www.plu.edu/undocumented-students/>. You should never feel that you have to disclose your status to anyone, especially if this disclosure puts you at risk.

Addressing Food Insecurity

PLU offers the “PLU Pantry” inside Campus Ministry on the first floor of AUC. The PLU Pantry is there for anyone who experiences food insecurity, including students and their families. It accepts donations. You can find out more information on the website: <https://www.plu.edu/campus-ministry/plu-pantry/>.

Classroom Inclusivity

Pacific Lutheran University is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). It reproduces practices of whiteness, especially when these practices go unchallenged. We mark this so that we can name whiteness in our collective imaginary. We will strive to make this class an inclusive space, which means we will actively contest exclusionary practices. Here are a few best practices for ensuring our space is actively more just: avoid words with exclusionary histories; try to summarize what a peer is saying in class in your head before responding; do not minimize marginalized identities’ negative feelings and need to process; take responsibility for the impact of your ideological beliefs. If you are unsure what might constitute an exclusionary impact in class, ask open questions in class in the spirit of becoming-more-accountable and/or let’s chat in my office hours further.

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation

Attendance

Class attendance is required, and participation is essential. Your perspective is important to the critical discussions that we will have. I take attendance for J-Term courses, because missing one class in J-Term is like missing three regular-semester classes (!).

Absence Policy

Please do not come to class if you are sick. Please email me ahead of class. Go to the Health Center, if able. See the “Self Care” policy above. If you are consistently absent, I will email you to check in on you. If you are absent more than one day, I will send in a CARE form, so that someone from the Center for Student Success can also check in on you: <https://www.plu.edu/srr/student-care-network/>.

In-Class Discussion (100 points)

Here is a breakdown of the assessment:

90-100 – Creative insights and questions, risked speaking in class on a regular basis, consistent evidence of preparedness, generous openness to other perspectives, took notes, excellent insights and questions, took an active role in their own success

80-89 – Adequate thought and effort in class participation, mostly reliable evidence of preparedness, curiosity concerning other perspectives, took notes, was present and engaged

70-79 – Present in class but little participation and evidence of engagement, adequate preparedness, acknowledgment of differing opinions

60-69 – Absences from class that affected participation, visible unpreparedness and non-engagement, little acknowledgement of differing opinions, was disruptive

0-59 – Interfered with peers’ learning, disrespectful of class atmosphere, consistent and visible unpreparedness, consistently disruptive

Group Work Days (100 points)

For Group Work days, it is *strongly recommended* that you bring a laptop to class. Students will often need to undertake research during these days. Students may also use the Ingram Computer Lab in 115A, but there are limited spaces (15 seats).

Here is a breakdown of the assessment:

90-100 – Exhibited eagerness and teamwork, ensured an equitable distribution of labor, contributed influential ideas, tried to disrupt groupthink (going with the first idea), actively listened to others, present for all group work days

80-89 – Exhibited cooperation with others, contributed some ideas, listened to group members, present for all group work days

70-79 – Contributed some ideas, was present during the group meetings, one absence from a group work day

60-69 – Made little effort to contribute to the group’s success, was distracted during group meetings, multiple absences from group work days

0-59 – Consistently disrupted the group’s efforts

Critical Making Days (100 points)

Here is a breakdown of the assessment:

90-100 – Exemplary thought and effort, showed up to all critical making days, exhibited an experimental ethos, helped others through making, posted photos of made objects for all days

80-89 – Above average thought and effort, showed up to all critical making days, posted photos of made objects for all days

70-79 – Adequate thought and effort, one unexcused absence from a critical making day, did not post a photo of made objects

60-69 – Little thought and effort, multiple unexcused absences from critical making days, did not post any photos of made objects

0-59 – Interfered with the critical making process

Readings & Reading Notes

We will read closely. PDF’s of all the readings are available on Sakai.

On “Lecture Days,” students will write and turn in “Reading Notes” (25 points each; 100 points total). The reading notes consist of summarizing, in your words, the key takeaways from the reading(s), and posing critical questions inspired by/about the reading(s). We do this to hone the skill of close reading. Consult “Reading Notes Instructions” and “How to Read Closely” on Sakai.

Screening Notes

On “Film Days,” students will write and turn in “Screening Notes” (25 points each; 100 points total). The screening notes consist of analyzing the film as you are watching it and reflecting on how the film relates to communication, race, and surveillance. We do this to hone the skill of critical viewership and media consumption. Consult “Screening Notes Instructions” on Sakai.

Group Presentations

There will be three group presentations in class (50 points each; 150 points total). The presentations will be 10-15 minutes in length, each. Each day will hold a different theme, depending on the week. Each group member must speak. We do this to hone the skill of oral communication. Consult “Group Presentation Instructions” on Sakai.

Critical Syntheses

The *only written work done outside of class* involves writing in-depth, weekly critical syntheses (100 points each; 400 points total). A critical synthesis should be 4-6 pages in length (they can be longer), double-spaced, Times New Roman font, 1" margins. The critical analysis should analyze the content for the entire prior week, including all the readings and the film for that week. It should defend a thesis. You may include outside research in your synthesis, but that is not required. Write for a general reader, not your professor (in other words, do not reference class discussion as if a reader will automatically understand).

Consult "Critical Synthesis Instructions" and "Writing Tips" on Sakai for help, if stuck.

Extra Credit

Track any self-surveillant activity (surveillance you perform on yourself) over a set duration. Write a 1,000-word (minimum) report or create a substantial creative work (an Instagram account, a video, a Twitter bot, a Twitter thread you've constructed, a photo collage, etc.) about what you learned by being conscious of that activity. If choosing the writing option, the report should be Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1" margins in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. Due by Monday 02/03 by 11:59 pm emailed to your professor (ritchiem@plu.edu). 10 points.

GRADES

Explanation of Assessment

A work is exemplary. It goes above and beyond expectations for assignments.

B work exceeds expectations for assignments.

C work meets expectations.

D work meets most expectations but falls short on some.

E work does not meet expectations for assigned work

Please wait 24 hours before speaking with me about any graded assignments.

Any grade complaints must be submitted within seven days of receiving the grade in writing.

Grade Breakdown

Assignment	Point Value
Participation	300
Reading Notes	100
Screening Notes	100
Group Presentations	150
Critical Syntheses	400
TOTAL:	1,050

10 points of extra credit are available (see above)

CITATIONAL ETHICS

I thank Dr. Kate Hoyt for the format/template for a live syllabus and Dr. Guy McHendry for inspiration from his course about race and surveillance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note: the course schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion

WEEK 1: COMMUNICATION, RACE, & SURVEILLANCE			
Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments
T 01/07	Lecture Day & Introduction to the Course: Communication, Race, & Surveillance	<p>“Surveillance and Communication” Joshua Reeves</p> <p>“Race and Surveillance,” Simone Browne (Content Warning: Discussion of Transatlantic Slave Trade)</p>	Reading Notes Due in Class
W 01/08	<p>Group Work Day & Presentation 1: Decentering the Organizing Metaphor</p> <p>Bring a Laptop to Class If You Have One</p>	---	---
Th 01/09	<p>Critical Making Day: Cultivating Surveillance Skepticism</p> <p>Bring a Laptop to Class If You Have One</p>	---	Post a Photo of What you Made in Class on Sakai Forum “Critical Making 1” by End of Class (We will have class in time to upload/post these)
F 01/10	<p>Film Friday: The Feeling of Being Watched (Assia</p>	---	Screening Notes Due in Class

	Boundaoui; 2018; 1 hour, 23 minutes)		
WEEK 2: FEMINIST SURVEILLANCE STUDIES			
Date	Topic	Readings Due	In-Class Assignments
T 01/14	Lecture Day: Feminist Surveillance Studies	“Introduction,” Rachel E. Dubrofsky and Shoshana Magnet, from <i>Feminist Surveillance Studies</i> (Content Warning: Discussion of intimate partner violence on p. 6 and p. 8; mention of rape of Indigenous people on p. 7 and p. 16)	Critical Synthesis 1 (“Communication, Race, & Surveillance”) Due at Start of Class in Google Drive Folder Reading Notes Due in Class
W 01/15	Group Work Day & Presentation 2: Airport Security Solidarities	Excerpt from “Flying Under the Radar,” in <i>Going Stealth</i> , Toby Beauchamp	---
Th 01/16	Critical Making Day: Feminist Hacking/Making/ Craftivism/ Hashtagging	---	Post a Photo of What you Made in Class on Sakai Forum “Critical Making 2” by End of Class
F 01/17	Film Friday: <i>La Operación</i> (Ana María García; 1982; 40 minutes) (Content Warning: images of birth; images of fallopian tube operation in beginning and end	---	Screening Notes Due in Class

	of film; film is about forced sterilization)		
WEEK 3: RACE AFTER TECHNOLOGY			
Date	Topic	Readings Due	In-Class Assignments
T 01/21	Lecture Day: Race After Technology	<p>“Introduction,” to <i>Race After Technology</i>, Ruha Benjamin (Content Warning: Mention of threats of rape and lynching against Leslie Jones on p. 18)</p> <p>“Introduction” to <i>Race after the Internet</i>, Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White</p>	<p>Critical Synthesis 2 (“Feminist Surveillance Studies”) Due by the end of the day in Google Drive Folder</p> <p>Reading Notes Due in Class</p>
W 01/22	Group Work Day & Presentation 3: Unmasking the Algorithm	Excerpt from “Looking for Black Girls,” <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> , Safiya Umoja Noble	---
Th 01/23	Critical Making Day: A Politics of Refusal for Facial Recognition	“The Right to Hide?” Torin Monahan	Post a Photo of What you Made in Class on Sakai Forum “Critical Making 3” by End of Class
F 01/24	Film Friday: <i>Robot Stories</i> (Greg Pak; 2003; 1 hour, 23 minutes)	---	Screening Notes Due in Class

	(Content Warning: Depiction of sexual harassment in vignette three)		
WEEK 4: SOUSVEILLANCE			
Date	Topic	Readings Due	In-Class Assignments
T 01/28	Lecture Day: Sousveillance	“Sousveillance,” Steve Mann, Jason Nolan, and Barry Wellman (Content Warning: mention of beating of Rodney King on p. 333)	Reading Notes Due in Class See new due date below for Critical Synthesis 3
W 01/29	Group Work Day: Mapping Campus Surveillance	---	---
Th 01/30	Critical Making Day: Making a Digital Campus Surveillance Map	---	Critical Synthesis 3 (“Race After Technology”) Due by start of class (11:30 am) in Google Drive Folder We Will Post our Map on Sakai Forum “Campus Surveillance Map” by End of Class
F 01/31	Film Friday & Course Wrap-Up: Wounds of Waziristan (Madiha Tahir, 2013, 26 minutes) (Content Warning: Includes images of dead bodies and *highly* graphic photo of dead children; images of drone	---	Screening Notes Due in Class

	<p>strikes; suicidal ideation; the film is about drone wars in Pakistan)</p>		
M 02/03	<p>We do not meet on this day, but see final assignment due --></p>	---	<p>Critical Synthesis 4 (“Sousveillance”) Due by the end of the day (11:59 pm) in Google Drive Folder</p> <p>Extra Credit Due by end of day (11:59 pm) emailed to your professor (see description above about how to complete Self-Surveillance Extra Credit) (ritchiem@plu.edu)</p>