

The Wolfe Institute

*The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities
presents two lectures by David Lyon*

Frederic Ewen Series in Civil Liberties and Academic Freedom



David Lyon directs the Surveillance Studies Centre, is a professor of sociology, holds a Queen's Research Chair and is cross-appointed as a professor in the Faculty of Law at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Surveillance studies has been Lyon's major research area for the past 20 years. He brings a sociological perspective to bear on the issues raised by personal data processing in a database-dependent world. His surveillance interests include border and airport controls, social media, organizational routines, video camera surveillance and, especially, citizen registration and identification systems. His concerns include the social sorting capacities of contemporary surveillance along with an exploration of their ethics and politics. In 2008 Lyon was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. In 2005 Lyon was awarded a Queen's Research Chair and in 2007 received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Sociological Association Communication and Information Technology Section. In 2012 he received an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Canadian Sociological Association. As director of the Surveillance Studies Centre, Lyon works with a multidisciplinary and international team on several related initiatives from primary research to theoretical development as well as associated media, policy and advocacy activities. Lyon is North American editor of *Surveillance & Society* and on the international editorial boards of seven other journals. His books have been translated into sixteen languages.

Distributed Dystopia: Surveillance and Visibility in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*

**Wednesday, March 12, 2014
6:30 to 8 p.m.**

Surveillance after Snowden: Decoding the "Snooping Scandal"

**Thursday, March 13, 2014
11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.**

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Distributed Dystopia: Surveillance and Visibility in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*

Wednesday, March 12, 2014

6:30 to 8 p.m.

Gold Room, 6th floor

Brooklyn College Student Center

Campus Road and East 27th Street

In this novel about technology-and-society, a world dominated by social media is depicted as a place where privacy is deconstructed and (almost) disappears. Total transparency is the aim of the glass-encased headquarters of the Silicon Valley Circle Corporation. The experiences of Mae Holland, its newest employee, lead us through the book. Her growing enthusiasm for being perpetually present, constantly on display and her rationalizing of each surveillance practice as necessary and beneficial is slowed only by passing qualms and suppressed unease. This talk examines the novel in three main ways: the rise of social surveillance and its merging with state, corporate and workplace surveillance; the ambiguities and contradictions of visibility in everyday life; and the coded construction of the novel itself as a vehicle for dystopian critique. The talk is framed by surveillance studies and techno-cultural sociology in the context of debates over utopian and dystopian literature and their role in social analysis, ethics and political challenge in a post-Snowden world.

Surveillance after Snowden: Decoding the “Snooping Scandal”

Thursday, March 13, 2014

11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Woody Tanger Auditorium

Brooklyn College Library

Revelations from the National Security Agency (NSA) whistleblower Edward Snowden are making waves around the world. Mass surveillance programs track personal data from internet companies targeting everyone from ordinary citizens to heads-of-state. Many are outraged; few saw the writing on the (Facebook) wall. After commenting on (1), what exactly has been revealed, and (2) some implications, we ask how to respond, in ethical and critical ways? (3) This has been developing for decades: The rise of “risk society” and of data-driven organizations; digital dreams dominate; public-and-private blur into one. (4) Why do we tolerate it? The familiarity factor in everyday surveillance, the fear factor after 9/11 and the fun factor of social media produce compliance, not critique. (5) What’s really at stake? Not just privacy and autonomy but accountability, freedom, dignity – in short, human flourishing.
