

Ending Targeted Surveillance of the Black Community in Detroit

Wednesdays

Class + Lab 3:15 to 6:30 p.m.

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Course Description

Law enforcement across Michigan now uses high-tech surveillance technology to track, identify, and arrest Black activists and other individuals. But surveillance tools are increasingly being used by many outside the law enforcement community to watch Black America. Digital surveillance tools are heavily relied on by private businesses, governments, schools, and police despite evidence that the technology is flawed and disparately impacts people of color. Surveillance of the Black community is not new; however, technology used today and the way it is implemented poses an even greater danger to privacy rights and further contributes to mass incarceration of Black people.

Detroit is the backdrop for our problem-solving course this semester. With its vibrant Black history, Detroit still remains a predominantly Black city, but with a much different reality. The tale of “two Detroits” is a narrative often referenced as a characteristic of Detroit’s most recent resurgence. One Detroit is marked by an affluent and lively downtown, private investment, and a large, mostly young white demographic. The second Detroit is the story of Detroit’s neighborhoods. At one point, boasting the highest homeownership rates in the country, Detroit’s predominantly Black neighborhoods have been ravaged by years of dis-investment, unemployment, and a series of housing crises. With this tale comes feelings of distrust and apprehension, perfectly setting up surveillance as a mechanism to keep a handle on new and old Detroiters.

This course will primarily focus on the nature and breadth of surveillance used to monitor the Black community in Detroit. Unfortunately, because of this country’s roots and subsequent policies, skin color has become evidence of the propensity to commit crime, and police as well as other actors use this “evidence” against minorities. From housing and schools, to businesses and traffic, Black Detroit is being watched by government and private entities alike. How and to what end? What are the various ways Black Detroit is being surveilled and how is the community responding to it? You will be challenged to think about and have frank conversations about race and its interaction with surveillance. Your projects will explore traditional and nontraditional surveillance, how programs of surveillance are set up, the rationale behind them, engage with stakeholders at all levels, and develop creative solutions that balance competing interests.

Given the sprawling nature of the problems under consideration, we are not expecting to offer a proposed solution to the entire issue. A novel, creative, and detailed solution that addresses one angle on the problem is preferable to an attempt to cover the entire issue with re-hashed generalities. Ideally, each group will identify a key challenge or opportunity related to your topic, propose a concrete and original idea in response, and present it in a way that allows experts to engage in a deep and meaningful way. We do not expect you to solve the whole problem. Maybe you will identify a small but previously unnoticed piece of the puzzle. Maybe you will come up with a new technical or legal tool to address it. Emphasize innovation. We do not want, and will not accept, just another report summarizing what a dozen other reports have already said and describing the same set of superficial strategies that are applied to every policy issue. Make us think! Make us disagree! Move the ball forward with the key stakeholders you will meet during the course!

In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of this class, we urge you to think broadly about the dimensions of the problem you will tackle. Law, business strategy, technology, public policy, information science, ethics, and whatever other skills and competences are reflected in your groups all belong in the discussion.

Topic Areas

- **Businesses**
 - Businesses like gas stations and party stores are of high importance for many Detroiters, often essential to some's everyday life. Many of these kinds of businesses are "one stop shops" for Detroit residents. For example, Detroit has 16 neighborhoods that are listed as "food deserts." This means that many Detroit residents facing poverty and barriers to transportation depend on businesses like these for their meals. However, a recent study identified that a vast amount of violent crimes in the city happen within 500 feet of gas stations and party stores. This is the data that led to the implementation of Detroit's real-time video surveillance program, Project Green Light. Since its inception, Project Green Light has grown to over 500 businesses that now include restaurants, clothing stores, hardware stores, jewelry stores and community centers. As we've seen in recent headlines, Black people have been killed outside of businesses like these for selling loose cigarettes or CDs. This technology only stands to exacerbate state violence against Black people.
- **Housing**
 - Since Project Green Light's inception over four years ago, it has expanded tremendously. The program is mostly comprised of Detroit

businesses, but now includes residential facilities. The expansion of Project Green Light in the housing domain began with public housing facilities and has since grown to include general housing and even some luxury housing. The residents of these facilities are highly surveilled in a space where the expectation of privacy is paramount. Some data also show that “crime” has not lowered near these residential facilities, raising questions of the program’s efficacy and concerns over its continued expansion.

- Schools
 - Schools are traditionally safe places for children to learn, play and grow. Unfortunately, in the wake of increasing school shootings and a need to respond quickly, several schools in Detroit are obtaining biometric surveillance technology, like facial recognition systems, that threaten school climate and student safety. In 2018, Randolph Career Technical Education School, was the first public school to sign up for Detroit’s real-time video surveillance program through Project Green Light. This marked the first time that the surveillance monitoring program made it into the educational space. Without critical evaluation of the technology’s accuracy, security, and likely effects on the learning environment, and without adequate input from parents, teachers, and students, surveillance technology in schools can have devastating effects and fuel the school to prison pipeline.
- Traffic
 - Driving, walking, or generally being in public while Black is becoming more and more dangerous. Traffic cameras throughout the city of Detroit are the next phase of Project Green Light’s program and will literally overnight, expand the scope of the government’s watchful eye. Traffic cameras can allow Detroit Police to use them in real-time coupled with facial recognition if the police believe the technology could aid in a criminal investigation. In addition to other forms of traffic surveillance, the government’s ability to monitor the comings and goings of Black Detroiters and more targeted surveillance of key people of interest is becoming easier and easier. Because Project Green Light’s connection to private business, the FBI and immigration authorities, this expansion is especially worrisome. While many of the surveillance tools employed by Detroit are subject to city council approval, they still lack sufficient community input, buy-in, and feedback. Consequently, the potential for misuse and abuse are quite high.

Course Objectives

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate and understand the role of their discipline in addressing the topic of the course.
2. Define and understand the identified problem.
3. Describe methods to communicate across disciplines and with key stakeholders to discuss this problem.
4. Develop the skills to work collaboratively to create innovative professional perspectives and practices that assist with solving the problem.
5. Reflect on the systematic factors that perpetuate and make it difficult to solve the problem.

Participation and Attendance

Class participation is an essential part of this course, as we will spend time in class applying the concepts and research ideas you have gathered. We encourage all students to actively engage in class and with guest speakers as these will be key opportunities to gain unique insight into the problem and gather feedback. Class attendance and participation is mandatory. If you are unable to make a class, please email us in advance. Students are permitted to miss one class without providing a reason. However, any additional classes missed without an excuse may affect your grade. Office hours are by appointment, but we will be scheduling time to meet with groups during lab time.

This course requires significant group work. In any course in which group work is an integral component of the course, students may have concerns about workload distribution within the group. We are hopeful considering the real-world applications of our work, that “free riders” will not be an issue. However, peer assessment will be part of the mid-term and end of term evaluations.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize that one of us may become ill, need to take care of someone who is ill, or be emotionally affected because of the effect of this pandemic on their loved ones. And with our class being conducted online, we also anticipate that some of you will sometimes have technical difficulties with your equipment or internet connectivity. For all these reasons, this year more than ever it is important that you keep the lines of communication open with us about your circumstances, whatever they are, so that we can (a) help you as best we can, and (b) prepare accordingly so our class sessions can run smoothly. This course is meant to challenge and motivate you, not to stress you out or add too much to your plate during times of intense emotional strain. If you are facing difficult circumstances and need to opt out of participating in a class session, tell us. If you know that you will not be able to join us for an online class session, please tell us that, too.

Assignments

Capstone Experience. The centerpiece of the class will be a final project that showcases the work that you and your team have done to solve a problem in your topic area, together with a presentation. The Capstone is the culmination of everything you and your group have worked on throughout the semester, your research, interdisciplinary thinking, and interactions with stakeholders. We are not simply looking for a PowerPoint presentation on your topic, but rather, a curated experience of your solution to the problem of targeted surveillance in Detroit that gives key stakeholders tangible tools to move the needle forward when they are executing their real-life programs. You will use your group's Mural to organize your data, feedback, stakeholders, ideas, and possible solutions. We will review your Mural and assist each group along the way. However, you will be the leaders in deciding which stakeholders you want to interview and what additional research or data gathering needs to happen. And the final Capstone will be created, organized and executed by your groups. Examples of past Capstone experiences include a facilitated stakeholder conversation, development and presentation of policy recommendations to stakeholders, a townhall meeting with community members and stakeholders, a conversation connecting stakeholders from the four different project groups, among others.

Detailed Outline/Draft. On March 3, we will ask your group to turn in a detailed outline and/or draft of your Capstone project. This outline/draft does not need to be, and indeed almost certainly will not be close to a final product. But it should also not be a vague sketch. By this point in the semester, your group should have a clear direction and a strong sense of what the final presentation will look like. We will review your outline and offer feedback.

Skill Share. Each week between March 3 and March 24, student groups will be required to do skill share presentations on topics that will help you along your journey to completing your Capstone projects. The skill share groups will be comprised of the same members as your Capstone project group. These presentations are expected to be 30 minutes long and include some sort of interactive portion for the listeners. Groups will also be expected to have handouts that will be uploaded into Canvas as a class resource. The four skill share groups will do research and present on the following topics:

- Facilitation
- Interviewing
- Entering Communities
- Collaboration

Please note that the topics listed are very broad and the presentations should not exceed 30 minutes. You must hone in on the specific domains of the subject area that is most relevant to the work your group will be doing for the Capstone project. Use your

collective creativity. Also, both professors will be able to assist groups in the planning phase of your presentations.

Written Reflection. In addition, on March 31, each of you will complete a written reflection on your journey through the course including data gathering, working with your team, and the Capstone project. This is a personal reflection, and you can use it as a time to comment on your project group, personal and group challenges you overcame, and personal highlights.

Evaluations. At the mid-term mark and at the end of the semester, you will complete evaluations. Part of your grade will reflect completion of both evaluations.

Problem Solving Module Assignments. Please see detailed assignments from the Problem Solving Bootcamp in the Assignments tab on Canvas and below in the weekly class schedule.

Zoom Logistics & Expectations

The biggest potential drawback to remote learning is that it can inhibit student engagement and participation. This semester, we want to combat this by creating a welcoming and inclusive virtual learning community, which requires each of us to be actively engaged in each class. To do so, we ask that you adhere to the following guidelines during class:

- Display your full name on your screen
- Please turn on your video during class if you are comfortable doing so. (Pick a virtual background if you'd like, as long as it's not distracting.) Turning on your video helps build community and encourages engagement. It also helps us as your professors. If you choose to turn your video off during a specific class, or for a particular portion of a class, you do not need to explain why your video is off. But please let us know if you are uncomfortable turning on your video at all. Creating a safe and welcoming learning environment is one of our top priorities.
- Please do not stress if a pet or a kid wanders across your screen. One of ours will likely do so several times a class. We might just ask that you introduce them. We will do the same.
- During class, feel free to use the chat function to comment on the discussion, raise questions, etc. If you have a question, feel free to use the "raise hand" feature on Zoom, physically raise your hand, or simply interject when there is a pause.

- There may be times in which your technology fails you or other circumstances impair participation. We understand. Just do your best; and please let us know if there are ways we can make things easier for you.
- All of our class sessions will be recorded and posted on Canvas, so if you have to miss a class due to illness or technical difficulties, you will be able to watch later to see what you missed.

Building Community

We believe that building community is critical to the learning experience. As such, we will take time each class to get to know one another. We might begin class with a short check-in/icebreaker. During class, we will be doing a lot of small group work using breakout rooms. And please call us by our first names! At the beginning of the course, you will have the opportunity to share your preferred name and pronouns.

Discourse

We will discuss and debate various issues as they relate to surveillance in the Black community, racism, the role and actions of government, and the impact on individual lives. All of us come to this course with various experiences and values, as well as assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes. Disagreements are expected and in fact welcomed as long as we respect diverse opinions and refrain from attacking one another personally. Remain open to evidence presented, which may conflict with your own viewpoints and perspectives. We will encourage a community of “calling each other in” rather than calling anyone out for something they’ve said in class. We seek to develop a culture and climate where people can freely explore and exchange ideas.

Feedback

Especially with remote learning, we want to make sure this is the best learning experience possible for each of you and will work hard to improve each week. To help with that, here is the link to a [Google Form](#) where you can leave anonymous feedback. Although the form will not ask for your name or any other identifying information, to ensure that everyone completes the form, we will ask you to email us confirmation that you’ve completed it. In addition to this anonymous form, we will ask each student to complete an end of term evaluation of the course. Each of these tools will help us respond to the class’ needs and change what is not working. Please do not wait until the formal evaluations to give us feedback so we can fix it.

Class Structure

Each week, class will be a mix of short lectures on substantive topics, group discussions, expert interviews, and presentations. The last hour in most classes will be an opportunity for your small groups to meet or schedule a check-in with one or both professors. This schedule may vary based on the needs of outside speakers.

The second, third, and fourth weeks of the course will be an introduction to problem solving methodology and will be with students from all the PSIs. Professors Bridgette Carr and Ann Verhey-Henke will be leading the class.

This is very much a group-based and team-based class. Most group-based work will take place in four interdisciplinary teams that will be formed before the first day of class (which is necessary for the skills-based portion of the course). We recognize that some students may drop or add the course, and that may necessitate some group reassignments. Please be flexible in your expectations!

Joint class time will consist of substantive discussion, skill building presentations, and sometimes augmented by outside experts. Group work time will be used flexibly by each group to work toward the group's assigned topic and, in particular, to liaise with the two of us. Each group is expected to identify and interview experts on their assigned topic, and some of those interviews may be scheduled during group work time or outside of class time. Note, however, that groups are expected to do the bulk of their work outside of class.

Class Schedule and Required Reading/Viewing/Listening

Class 1: January 20 - Introduction

Class 2: January 27 - Problem Solving 101 with Bridgette and Ann

- Assignments:
 - We will be using an online tool called MURAL. In order to be ready to go for class, please complete the 1 Hour MURAL training in the Assignments tab.
 - Read the Interviewing for Insights PDF slides.
 - Please come up with 3-5 questions in each of the following categories to ask your faculty members to learn more about your problem statement. Please have these questions typed up and accessible for class so that you can transfer them to MURAL:
 - Descriptive (Broad, open, evokes storytelling)
 - Structural (Specific, in-depth, use to categorize)
 - Contrast (Clarity, understand relationships, understand how terms are used)

Class 3: February 3 - Problem Solving 101 with Bridgette and Ann

- Assignments:
 - During our class last week we asked your group to identify some questions to use when interviewing your faculty members. Each individual in your group should answer those same questions for themselves and post their answers in your Group Workspace. All of you bring expertise,

information, and assumptions about the problem you are trying to solve--
-- it is important for us to document those at the beginning of the process!

- Please watch the recording Ann made to walk you and your group through making an Ecosystem Map. After watching please complete the first version of your Ecosystem Map on MURAL.
- Complete the social identity wheel and watch and complete the exercises (including the wheel) in the [Community Engagement: Collaborating for Change MOOC](#)

Class 4: February 10 - Problem Solving 101 with Bridgette and Ann

- Assignments:
 - Working with your group please identify the How Might We statement you want to use for Ideation. Put your chosen statement through the faucet. We will use your How Might We statement as the foundation for our last class together

Class 5: February 17 - Surveillance in Detroit

- Guest Expert:
 - Tawana Petty, Data Justice Program at Detroit Community Technology Project
- Assigned reading:
 - Detroit Community Technology Project, [A Critical Summary of Detroit's Project Green Light and its Greater Context](#) (2019).
 - Detroit Community Technology Project, Project Green Light Interactive Map, available at <https://detroitcommunitytech.org/?q=datajustice>.

Class 6: February 24 - Critical Intersectionality and Domains of Power

- Guest Expert:
 - Officer Steven Shank, Sergeant, Detroit Police Department 11th precinct
- Assigned reading:
 - Briggs, Xavier de Souza, [Planning Together: How \(and How Not\) to Engage Stakeholders in Charting a Course](#) (2003).
 - National Institute of Standards and Technology, [Face Recognition Vendor Test \(FRVT\) Part 3: Demographic Effects](#) (2019).
 - Mock, Brentin, [Why Detroit Residents Pushed Back Against Tree-Planting](#), Bloomberg CityLab Online (2019).

Class 7: March 3 - Direct Impact of Using Surveillance Technology

- Guest Expert:
 - Phil Mayor, Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU of Michigan
- Assigned reading/viewing:

- Hill, Kashmir, Wrongfully Accused by an Algorithm, New York Times Online (2020).
- Watch video, Wrongfully Arrested Because of Flawed Facial Recognition Technology, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tfgi9A9PflU&feature=youtu.be>
- City of Detroit, Detroit Police Department Directive on Facial Recognition, Detroit Police Department Manual (2019).
- Group 1 Skill Share Presentation (Entering Communities)
- Capstone Project Outline Due

Class 8: March 10 - Legal Implications and Shortcomings of Surveillance Technology

- Guest Expert:
 - Christina Bertrand-Hines, First Assistant Prosecuting Attorney at Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office and former Assistant Prosecuting Attorney at Wayne County Prosecutor's Office
- Assigned reading:
 - New York Department of Education, Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014.
 - New York Department of Education, Smart Schools Bond Act, Q and A and visit http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/smart_schools/home.html.
 - City of Seattle, Ordinance Relating to Surveillance Technology Implementation (2020).
 - Illinois Biometrics Information Privacy Act of 2008.
- Group 2 Skill Share Presentation (Collaboration)
- Last day to complete mid-term anonymous evaluation in this [Google Form](#).
- MURAL Assignment: Bridgette and Ann will be reviewing two sections of your map on March 11. Please make sure you have completed the Ecosystem/Stakeholder Mapping and Interview Synthesis sections. You should undertake a new Ecosystem Map and not copy/paste the one you did in the bootcamp. We will be providing you with feedback on those sections the following week. We understand you may not have completed all of your interviews by March 11 however your map should reflect the interviews completed so far.

Class 9: March 17 - Mid-term Presentations and Debriefs

- Group mid-term presentations on Capstone Projects
- Peer feedback on Capstone presentations
- Group debriefs

Class 10: March 24

- Assigned reading:

- Excerpts from Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, Before the Bullet Hits the Body: Dismantling Predictive Policing in Los Angeles (2018).
- Group 3 Skill Share Presentation (Interviewing)

Class 11: March 31

- Group 4 Skill Share Presentation (Facilitation)
- Written Reflections Due
- Optional meeting with Professors for Groups 1 and 2
- MURAL assignment: Bridgette and Ann will review two additional sections of your map on April 1. Please make sure you have completed the Ideate and Prototype sections of your map. We know you may not have all your feedback collected by this point, please just highlight whatever feedback you do have. We will provide you with feedback on those sections the following week.

Class 12: April 7

- Group 1 and 2 Capstone Presentations Due
- Optional meeting with Professors for Groups 3 and 4

Class 13: April 14

- Groups 3 and 4 Capstone Presentations Due

April 22

- Bridgette and Ann will be reviewing your entire process map. We expect all sections to be completed. (the storyboarding section is not required, it is optional. Some students last semester found it helpful as they prepared for their capstones).

Disability Accommodations

The University of Michigan is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by students with disabilities may be made by contacting the University's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office by email at ssdoffice@umich.edu or by phone at 734-763-3000. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, SSD will contact Assistant Dean Lindsey Stetson at the Law School's Office of Student Life (lawstudentlife@umich.edu, 734-764-0516) with a recommendation, and she will work with you and SSD to finalize and facilitate your accommodations. For more information about this process, please feel welcome to contact Dean Stetson.

Mental Health Resources

The Law School has a designated counselor, Reena Sheth (rpssheth@umich.edu), who is available to students for outreach, consultation, and individual therapy. The University

has additional resources available to meet students' needs. For urgent and crisis resources after business hours, call 734-765-8312. You can learn more about available counseling services and find information about how to schedule an appointment with a counselor on the law school's mental health resources website.

Grading

You will be graded based on your Capstone Experience, the Problem Solving Module, skill share presentations, written assignments, participation in class, and class evaluations. One-third of your overall grade for the PSI course will be based on your performance in the Problem Solving Module, and two-thirds of your grade will be based on your performance in the substantive PSI course. **Please note that you should check with your graduate school regarding the rules should you want to take this course pass/fail.**

Problem Solving Module: 33%

Assignments:

1. Skill Share: 14%
2. Written reflection: 10%
3. Evaluations: 5%
4. Capstone: 33%

Class Participation: 5%