

**SurPriSe**  
**(Surveillance, Privacy & Security)**

**A Faculty Learning Community**  
**At**  
**Oakland University**

*Fostering interdisciplinary approaches to understanding  
surveillance, security and privacy through curricular development  
and research*

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Twenty three faculty (representing twelve different departments) from the College of Arts and Sciences and the schools of Business Administration, Computer Science and Engineering, Health Sciences and the Kresge Library have formed a faculty learning community to foster interdisciplinary approaches to understanding surveillance, security and privacy through curricular development and research (see attached list). Our community is called **SurPriSe**, an acronym derived from the words surveillance, privacy and security. Our goal is to develop and use a truly interdisciplinary perspective to examine these three important and interrelated topics which does not assume a positive or negative position per se, but promotes open dialogue and debate.

While all three terms are contentious in current academic and public discourse, we take them to generally relate to the following. Surveillance is a characteristic of modern society where people are sorted into categories for various reasons (e.g. entitlements, allocation of services, for market advantage, and for safety) and with significant impact. This sorting occurs through the use of personal information that is systematically and routinely collected by government and corporate organizations. Privacy concerns the control of information about oneself and protection from intrusion into one's personal existence. There have been a number of harms identified that have to do with the collection, storage, analysis, sharing, and decision making which utilizes personal information. Security is commonly thought of as the protection of assets and is concerned with different risks. Risk is concerned with the magnitude of loss, the likelihood of loss, and exposure to loss. For society, once it has been decided which assets to protect, security is concerned with managing the risk to those assets often through the use of actuarial models and algorithms. As currently practiced, making particular assets and individuals more secure generally results in lessening the security to others.

All three, surveillance, privacy, and security have undergone major changes in the last three decades. Significant factors have included technological developments (e.g. the Internet, development of large shared databases, increasingly sophisticated software for data mining), the globalization of the economy and the enhanced importance of borders to control population migration, the spread of disease, and other social problems, and alteration to the legal and social landscape subsequent to 9/11 via the war on terrorism. Understanding these three topics and the relationships among them inherently requires that they be examined in concert with an interdisciplinary perspective.

The issues confronting modern society that have given rise to increased forms of surveillance, and the corresponding concerns regarding privacy and the need for more security will not go away—they will only become more complex. A principled position being explored by SurPriSe is the degree to which a society can *conduct surveillance with integrity, establish privacy as an individual and a societal value and achieve security with dignity for all individuals and groups*. By this we mean: that surveillance can occur without harmful discrimination and unwarranted abuses of power and trust by individuals and organizations; that privacy values can be preserved in the face of other contending values; and that security solutions work to protect particular assets and individuals without making others less secure. We seek funding opportunities to support research or curricular development in any of these areas or topics.

## **Oakland University SurPriSe Learning Community Members**

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