



The IPSI Lecture Series Presents:



Promoting Semiotic Democracy in Infrastructures of Actuarial Surveillance

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By “actuarial surveillance” I refer to a particular mode of knowledge production, in which individual members of a population are first given unique identifiers which link those individuals to sets of databases. The activities of individuals are monitored. Data is created which is somehow understood to represent those activities. That data is collated, manipulated, and analyzed to make sense of these representations of activities, and that sense is applied back to the population to alter those activities in the interests of powerful actors.

All of these processes occur within and through infrastructure – more or less stable configurations of law, economics, culture, and technology that both mediate and produce relations of power. Because infrastructure is multi-modal and “more or less stable,” it is always available for many kinds of intervention that might de-stabilize or re-entrench these power relations.

Actuarial surveillance is one of the most powerful structuring practices at work in today’s world. In this lecture I explore this framework and discuss the hopeful possibilities it brings for long and short-term interventions that might engage surveillance infrastructures in order to bring about more equitable distributions of the power to make sense of and change our worlds.

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2:00 PM – 3:15 PM

University College, RM 140

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David J. Phillips holds a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication.

His work brings together surveillance, queer theory, and infrastructure studies.

He is the author of many works exploring the relations among information, economics, ideology, policy, culture, identity, and technology.

Most recently, his work employs theatre performance as research method.