

Protecting privacy is important



Elias Garcia

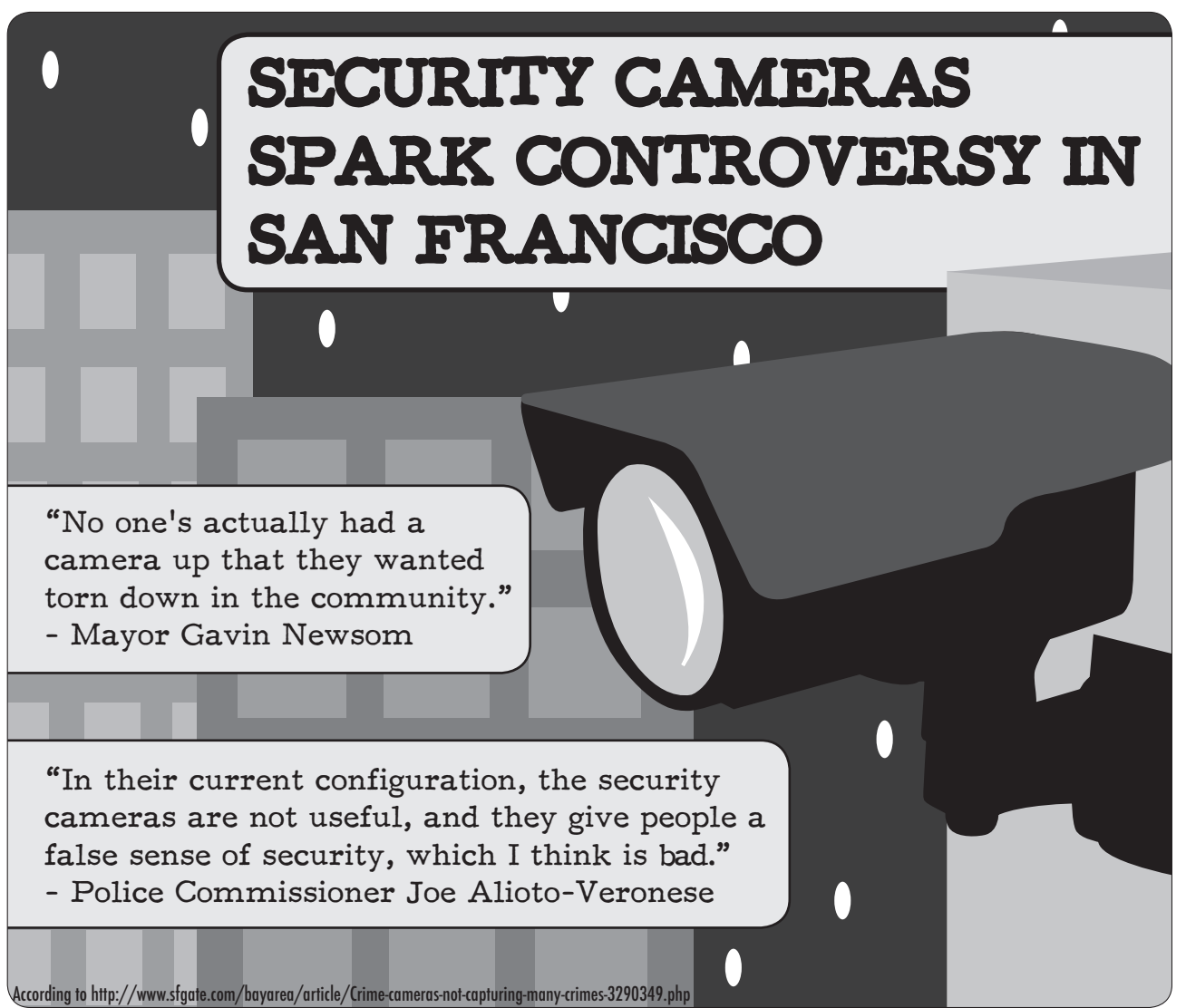
In the “Bourne Identity” trilogy, Jason Bourne is a rogue CIA agent deemed a threat to U.S. security. He is hunted down using the complex surveillance systems throughout Europe to virtually track his every moment.

Although such a reality once was limited to the realm of cinema, the opposite now is true. One country the films takes place in is the U.K., which is known for its closed circuit television — CCTV — surveillance system. According to a July 2013 article from The Telegraph, there is about one camera for every 11 people in the U.K., about 5.9 million cameras total. While the U.K. is definitely an outlier when it comes to direct camera surveillance, the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri has begun to worry that the local surveillance system might be growing in the St. Louis area. In addition to the already large network of under-regulated surveillance cameras, the St. Louis Police Department now is requesting funding for a Real-Time Surveillance System, a centralized hub that “monitors the entire city” to be used by the police department in real time.

An October 2014 ACLU of Missouri report outlines the recent list of concerns and abuses by regional St. Louis governments and police departments about this sprawling, and continuously growing, network of surveillance cameras. A major point of concern was that citizens might voluntarily connect their CCTV to the city network.

This creates a major concern for the legality and enforcement of laws. This current setup not only increases the capacity for the local government to monitor citizens, it is dubiously regulated. In fact, the ACLU states that at the time of the report, the government and private citizens had access to information across multiple platforms that should be beyond their jurisdiction or concern. A prime example was a store owner who could access cameras beyond his own because they were hooked up to the local ward’s network.

While the general lack of regulation is a concern, another is the current laws’ complete inability to account for modern technology. Things such as facial recognition software, drone surveillance,



Pan Tilt Zoom features and tracking capabilities, all of which help identify and track the whereabouts of specific individuals, are completely unaccounted for within the current legal framework. Such powerful technology allows for an expansion of surveillance that only recently has become possible, and it easily can be abused with little precedence and oversight. If the St. Louis Police Department’s request for the Real-Time Surveillance System is fulfilled, these technologies could be integrated within the monitoring center along with the city’s current existing systems, such as license plate scanners and private owners willing to add their CCTVs to the network. This gives the police a powerful and discreet way of spying on whoever they want within view of their monitoring system, regardless of their innocence.

The justification of this system is obvious, as the police claim it will deter crime. However, the October 2014 UCLA report cites a specific University of Missouri-St. Louis report on the 21st Ward, an area in St. Louis that already has cameras, showing how the benefits of CCTVs are marginally effective at preventing property crime, and little else. In fact, the study shows how the reduction first gained by installation typically rebounds within six months. Consequently, the study conducted by UMSL suggests alternative methods be explored first by St. Louis authorities before attempting an increase in the current system, such as better patrolling methods or hiring of private security.

Making matters more interesting is another

study done in the U.K. by Campbell Systemic Reviews during December 2008 that showed similar results — despite the pervasive nature of CCTVs throughout the U.K., they largely have deterred only a specific type of crime, namely vehicle theft/damage in parking lots. In other words, while CCTV systems might deter a low level of crime, they do not achieve the goals law enforcement has said they do. We are better off pursuing more traditional methods of reducing crime which don’t involve robbing people who happen to be using public places of so much privacy.

There’s a saying that goes “1984 was not supposed to be an instruction manual,” but as national and regional governments continue to expand their monitoring capabilities further, using more and more advanced technologies, we need to seriously reevaluate the reality behind that warning.

Privacy already is under attack from agencies like the NSA, and we should have a very low tolerance for privacy breaches. Law enforcement agencies such as local police do not need a surveillance system that potentially can track every movement we make, especially when its efficiency already has been put into doubt. Surveillance is not the cure-all it has been built up to be, and it’s time we realize that.

Elias Garcia is a sophomore economics and computer science major from Independence, Mo.

Most teachers will be understanding



Megan Archer
Opinions Editor

Usually when I get sick enough to miss class, I just assume I’m going to lose some points and there’s nothing I can do about it. For example, if I miss a quiz, I lie in bed and search Blackboard to calculate how well I’ll have to do on my next homework assignment to make up for my missed points.

However, when pneumonia knocked me off my feet for two solid weeks — including the midterm period — it was clear I couldn’t just accept my lost points this time unless I wanted my GPA to take a major hit. This was when I discovered an im-

portant lesson — if you communicate with your professors, most will be understanding of your circumstances.

When I realized I wasn’t able to stand, much less walk to class, I begrudgingly started to email my professors for extensions. I was pleasantly surprised by how accommodating they were. I received extensions for assignments and got to take tests at rescheduled times. I barely even needed the doctor’s note I asked for during one of my trips to the hospital.

However, don’t think of extensions as a free pass to ignore all of your homework and studying while you’re recovering. Lots of work can be done from your bed — reading textbooks, doing Internet research and submitting homework through email attachments. Although you shouldn’t overload yourself with work while sick — stress only will delay your recovery — keeping up with at least a bit of your homework is a good policy. It shows your professors that you’re trying your hardest to keep up in class. Besides, when you first re-

turn to class, you probably won’t be in full health. Making up past work and keeping up with current work while sick is no fun.

During my time here, I’ve only had to miss class because of illness, but I imagine professors would be equally sympathetic to other legitimate absences. Obviously you shouldn’t expect to get a make-up quiz when you spend the day in Columbia, Missouri, to catch a concert, but for events such as family emergencies or important interviews, professors probably will be willing to work with you.

You’ve probably noticed my language hasn’t been certain on this topic — just because all of my professors have been understanding doesn’t mean all of yours will be. There are professors who won’t be willing to compromise about deadlines. In these cases, make a back-up plan.

Keep your eyes on the registrar’s schedule change deadlines. If you still have time to drop a class, keep that option in mind as a way to save your GPA. Switching to credit/no credit is a great option for classes you don’t

need for graduation requirements, if you’re afraid a free elective will damage your GPA. Even in the worst-case scenario — you are very sick for a long period of time and your professors are not willing to extend any deadlines — you have the option to drop all of your classes all the way up until the last day of classes.

However, as long as you communicate early and often with your professors and do your best to stay on top of your work while sick, you probably should be able to avoid dropping any classes.

Don’t be too proud or scared to ask for an extension if you really need one — your professors are human, and they know viruses don’t care about your schedule, no matter how many points that test is worth.

Megan Archer is a senior computer science major from Morrison, Colo.

AROUND THE QUAD

How sick do you have to be to miss class?

I haven’t skipped ever yet. I had bronchitis and didn’t skip.

Annali Cler
freshman



That depends on my mood, and on the class.

Silas Wood
sophomore



I have to be practically dying.

Anna DeMoor
junior



If it’s a serious class, I have to be seriously incapacitated.

Nick Gravett
sophomore

