

1984 vs. western  
democracy:  
surveillance  
assignment



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1984 vs. Western Democracy: SURVIELANCE The novel 1984, by George Orwell is an amazing novel, that is a must read, however this essay is comparing the surveillance in 1984 to surveillance in present day western democracies. In 1984 the amount of surveillance done by the government is unheard of, people are always under watch. Many people who read this book consider the amount of surveillance to be at such an extent that it is not believed that it could ever reach that level. However, the amount of surveillance in present day western democracies is at the same level if not a greater extent.

The reason people think 1984 has so much more surveillance is because of the fact that the characters in 1984 know they are being watched, it is obvious, everywhere you look there are telescreens watching the people. There is the same level of surveillance in western democracies except people do not realize they are being watched. The average person is caught on camera 100 times a day without even realizing it. The technology in place to do is so high tech that the every day person does not notice devices used to keep watch on them.

In 1984, the ways people were under surveillance was from telescreens, and listen devices, both of which the citizens were aware of. On the other hand surveillance of citizens in western democracies is much less obvious, yet it is still there. Tiny, powerful cameras are everywhere watching people pass by completely oblivious to their presence. Besides cameras, citizens are under watch in tons of different ways. Everything put on the internet can be traced back to the individual that put it up. High tech satellites can spy on any part of the globe at anytime without anyone knowing about it.

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Also the government can listen in to your phone calls at anytime they feel it necessary. New technology in surveillance is being discovered every day, the newest thing that looks to be most promising is iris scanning. This new technology allows to scan people iris' as if they were bar codes. Using this everyone in the world will be on a database of iris scans, which can be used for many different things. The iris scan can match anyone in an immense database almost instantly, with no ambiguity.

This is a great technology but its developers don't want people to think that this will stop crime completely, it just might help though. These iris scans are in the forefront of biometric data surveillance. In the future who knows to what extent this will be used and how efficient it will be. Most of this paper has been talking about how modern day surveillance is hard to detect, however this is one western democracy that has almost reached the 1984 level in terms of the citizens knowing that they are constantly under watch. In London, England cameras can be seen almost everywhere you look.

The average London citizen is captured on camera more than 300 times a day. Brittan contains 4 million surveillance cameras, equivalent to one fifth of all surveillance cameras on Earth. Brittan set up all these cameras as a reaction tot the terrorist attack they faced not to long ago. However many argue that the amount of privacy given up with these cameras is not rewarded with the same amount of security, which is why this is such a heated debate for many countries on whether or not to put in place the same amount of surveillance that Brittan has.

One side argues it will keep all citizens safe, and the others argue it takes away too much privacy. To sum it all up, contrary to popular belief, the amount of surveillance in western democracies today is greater and more sophisticated than that of the novel "1984." And, in the near future we might even see advancements in the field of biometric surveillance of citizens. Bibliography 1. "TAKING A CLOSER LOOK" Newsweek. Written 10/17/07. Accessed 12/10/07. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/53305>.