BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Biopolitics and Digital Surveillance in the United States during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Student's name:	Vukan Bozovic
Referee's name:	Václav Rut

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	**50**	30
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	**15**	10
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	**15**	5
Total		*80*	45
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	**10**	8
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	**5**	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	**5**	5
Total		*20*	16
TOTAL		*100*	61

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: *15*

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

The submitted thesis presents an interesting and highly relevant topic, but is unfortunately lacking in its execution. My biggest problem is the lack of an actual analysis that would be supported by a methodology nested within Foucault's theoretical framework. The Foucauldian approach is well suited to the study of digital surveillance, but it needs to include research with an object of appropriate scope. For this reason, the thesis looks more like an extensive literature review of the digital surveillance measures used in the U.S. during the pandemic. The author admits that the thesis "relied heavily on secondary data" (p. 44). Perhaps a literature review would be appropriate for a bachelor's thesis, but this would need to be clearly stated in the outline and methodology. The discussion of the various digital surveillance measures is interesting, but lacks almost any analytical insight

the author. This is underlined by the very frequent use of phrases such as "is believed to", "is known to", "is alleged to", etc. The language and style in general is also a problem of the text, as it sometimes hinders the understanding of the argument.

The theoretical part is rather lacking. The characterization of key Foucauldian concepts is somewhat confusing (partly because of the language used and the high density of similar and nuanced concepts) and also seems to rely heavily on secondary literature. The only cited work by Michel Foucault himself is *The Birth of Biopolitics*, which, despite its name, is not the best place to learn about biopolitics (as it mainly covers the emergence of neoliberal governmentality). Of interest would be the previous years of lectures at the College de France, published as *Society Must Be Defended* and *Security, Territory, Population,* and the first volume of *History of Sexuality*. A lesser problem is the exclusion of other major theorists who might complement the analysis of this topic (such as the work of Byung-Chul Han, Giorgio Agamben, or Deleuze's Society of Control).

Despite my criticism, I believe that the thesis is not that far from being a very decent work. What would be required is the use of Foucault-adjacent methods (i.e. compatible with his post-structuralist insights), such as Critical Discourse Analysis, and their application to a more concrete and less ambitious object of study. This could be, for example, "discourse analysis of public face-mask mandates in the Czech media" or "genealogy of social distancing", etc.

Proposed grade: D

Suggested questions for the defence are:

Are there any methods that were under consideration for the analytical portion of the study?

Why was the U.S. chosen as a case? Would not a smaller country (or a single state of the U.S.) provide more analytical insight?

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

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Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	**A**	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	**B**	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	**C**	= good
61 – 70	**D**	= satisfactory
51 – 60	**E**	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	**F**	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.