

# Big Brother States in Fact and Fiction: Thoughts on China and Other Places

A public conversation with



**Spy Novelist/Reporter Adam Brookes**  
and  
**China Historian Jeffrey Wasserstrom**



Wednesday, October 17, 4:00 PM, International Student Center

Brookes and Wasserstrom will focus on issues of surveillance and control in China and also other parts of the world, where some commentators claim that elements of the dark future George Orwell conjured up in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be found. How can concepts like that of the “Big Brother State” help or hinder efforts to make sense of the current era, when new technologies of communication have become so powerful in both efforts to challenge and to assert authoritarian control? Are there other dystopian visions that are equally or more useful for thinking about authoritarian states and authoritarian trends in democratic societies? Do new technologies of surveillance make old genres, such as the Cold War era spy novel, obsolete or open new possibilities for their reinvention? A chance to ask questions will follow.

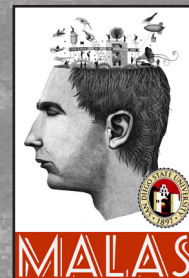


**Adam Brookes** studied Chinese at the University of London, then worked as a foreign correspondent for the BBC (based in Indonesia, China and the United States), before switching gears to write a trio of acclaimed novels of international intrigue: *Night Heron*, *Spy Games*, and *The Spy's Daughter*. NPR selected his first book as its “must-read

thriller of the year”; the *Washington Post* called it ‘outstanding’; *The Sun* draws comparisons to “espionage heavyweights including John le Carré.”



**Jeffrey Wasserstrom** is Chancellor’s Professor of History at UC Irvine, where he also serves as the Historical Writing Mentor for the Literary Journalism Program. He is the author or co-author of five books, including most recently the third edition of *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2018). He edited the *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China* (Oxford, 2016), writes for newspapers, magazines, and online publications, such as the *Los Angeles Review of Books* and its associated “China Channel,” and has been interviewed by both NPR and the BBC.



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