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## Laurier conference to examine the perils of using technology to protect the public from threats

BRANTFORD – In an environment of fiscal constraint and growing fear of catastrophic events, security services are turning to information technologies to more efficiently identify, predict and manage “risks” in order to prioritize safety interventions. At the “Constructing, Predicting, and Experiencing Risk: Crime, Risk and Technology” conference in Brantford June 15-16, scholars from Wilfrid Laurier University, along with other Canadian and international scholars, will discuss issues associated with risk-identifying technologies, including “pre-crime” algorithms that claim to identify suspects of crimes not yet committed.

**Stacey Hannem** is one of the conference organizers and a criminology professor at Laurier. Hannem studies the intersection of stigma and risk – how Canadian prisons perceive the risk of families visiting incarcerated persons.

“Making ethical judgments about risk requires maintaining a delicate balance between human rights and security,” said Hannem. “In my research about the effects of prison on prisoners and their families, I have found that families walk a tightrope between visiting the prison and risking failing security scans, or not seeing their loved family member at all.”

Hannem says anti-drug technology that scans prison visitors often results in false-positives. “This technology for managing risk of drug trafficking can do serious collateral damage to family relationships that are key for improving outcomes for prisoners.”

Plenary conference speakers include **Kelly Hannah-Moffat**, director of the Centre for Criminology and socio-legal studies at the University of Toronto, and **Pat O’Malley**, research professor, Institute for Risk and Uncertainty at the University of Sydney.

Research talks will focus on a broad range of topics relevant to criminal justice, such as predictive policing, immigration security, social media and policing, geographical profiling, and electronic monitoring.

Academic partners and visitors from Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Sydney and University of New South Wales (Australia), Australian National University, University of Strathclyde, Université de Montréal, University of Toronto, University of Ottawa, University of Alberta, University of Waterloo, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, York University, Carleton University, and Brandon University will attend.

“We are honoured to host some of the most renowned scholars working at understanding the technological revolution in crime control and prediction,” said Hannem. “This event provides an opportunity for leading academics to discuss their findings and share them with criminal justice practitioners, police, and policy makers.”

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The event will take place at the Best Western Brant Park Inn and Conference Centre June 15-16.

The conference is funded by a Connection Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. In addition to Hannem, organizers include **Carrie Sanders** and **Tony Christensen** of Wilfrid Laurier University, Aaron Doyle of Carleton University and Christopher Schneider of Brandon University.

The event is free and limited spaces are open to the public. For details, visit <https://www.scribd.com/doc/314628913/Crime-Risk-Technology-Symposium>. Contact Stacey Hannem at [shannem@wlu.ca](mailto:shannem@wlu.ca) to register.

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