



Statement on Declining Online Imaging and Recording for remote meetings, classes, and social gatherings

Written and distributed by Cam Hunters, a research-creation project by Julia Chan and STÉFY

Usage

The following Statement on Declining Online Imaging and Recording was written by artist-scholars Julia Chan and Stéfy McKnight (STÉFY) for hosts of digital meetings (such as teachers, instructors, employers, colleagues, et cetera). Its development was inspired by psychotherapist Francesca Rossi's concept of "affirmative camera consent" that addresses the needs of victim/survivors of digital abuse, particularly in the context of the increasing use of online videoconferencing platforms during the COVID-19 global pandemic.¹ As there are many reasons why someone may not want to be imaged or recorded while online, we believe the ability to decline being on camera or recorded during online videoconferencing should be available to everyone. We urge institutions, colleagues, family, friends, and organizations to include this statement in their course outlines and meeting/workshop invitations, including any employer-, labour-, social-, educational-, health-, and activist-related online gatherings. Including this statement is a small step towards equity, solidarity, and care.

Declining Online Imaging and Recording

There are many reasons why someone may not want to appear on camera online or be recorded during an online session or meeting. On-camera gatherings on videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams, Big Blue Button, Google Hangouts, or Google Meet may be triggering or retraumatizing for participants who are victim/survivors of digital abuse. Participants may be uncomfortable having their personal and private space, home, or office (or lack thereof) broadcast to others or those in positions of authority (such as employers, teachers, professors, et cetera). Participants may not wish to reveal family members, partners, friends, or any others who may be sharing their space at that time. Members of oppressed, marginalized, and/or highly surveilled groups may be reluctant to appear in digital spaces where security and privacy levels are unclear. Whatever the reason, everyone should have the ability to decide whether they wish to appear online or be recorded, without penalty.

Further, everyone should be asked for permission before others "screenshot," document, record, or photograph them, or circulate images and recordings of them. To agree to participating in an online video chat or meeting does not automatically imply consent to other forms of imaging. Everyone should have the opportunity to refuse or decline online imaging and recording.

Declining Online Imaging and Recording Statement:

(Please feel free to amend this statement in order to fit your meeting or gathering and forward it to others who may wish to use it.)

For meetings:

The following gathering will be held through digital means (including videoconferencing and webcam usage). You are not required to turn your camera on. This gathering will not be recorded by the host. **OR:** This gathering will be recorded by the host. If you do not wish to be recorded during

¹ <https://www.cagoldberglaw.com/a-guide-to-coping-with-quarantine-as-a-survivor-of-digital-violence/>

this gathering, please let [*name of host*] know at [*email address*]. [*Name of host*] will contact you to discuss alternative arrangements.

For teachers and course instructors:

This course may include classes or sessions that use videoconferencing platforms. You are not required to turn your camera on. Classes or sessions will not be recorded by the instructor. **OR:** These classes or sessions may be recorded by the instructor. If you do not wish to be recorded during these classes or sessions, please let [*instructor's name*] know at [*email address*]. [*Instructor's name*] will contact you to discuss alternate arrangements.

This statement was created by/adapted from the research-creation project Cam Hunters (artist-scholars Julia Chan and Stéfy McKnight [STÉFY]). For more information about imaging and consent, please email camhunters@protonmail.com or visit www.camhunters.org.

Respecting Others' Decision to Decline Online Imaging and Recording

By using the statement above, you are demonstrating that you agree that people should have the ability to decline online imaging and/or recording. Please respect participants' privacy and personal boundaries; if a participant decides to decline imaging and/or recording, do not question why they have done so. It is your responsibility to be in solidarity with them and support their decision.

Here are some more suggestions and ideas for respecting others' decisions to decline online imaging and recording:

- Include the Declining Online Imaging and Recording statement, or a similar statement in your own words, in your course outline or meeting invitation
- Recognize that your attendees may feel pressured to appear on camera—or feel reluctant to refuse, particularly if you are in a position of power
- Let participants know that they are welcome to keep their cameras off, or turn them off at any time during the session
- Obtain the permission of all participants before taking photographs, screenshots, or recording. Ask for this permission well before the session to allow participants the ability to opt out privately, rather than on-the-spot and/or in front of a group
- Discourage other participants from taking photographs, screenshots, or recording unless they obtain permission from all other participants
- If you must record a session, make sure all participants are informed well ahead of time, and allow for those who choose not to participate the ability to access the recording afterward
- Consider offering participants the option to call in to a meeting via phone
- Do not mandate any assignments or work-related projects that involve filming and videotaping from home or other remote spaces
- Consider that, for some participants, home may not be a safe space

If you have questions regarding this statement or the larger issue of imaging and consent, please contact us at camhunters@protonmail.com or visit www.camhunters.org for more information.

Cam Hunters is a collaborative art/media performance and research-creation project between artist-scholars Julia Chan and Stéfy McKnight (STÉFY). Cam Hunters seeks to reveal and interrogate the increasing presence of surveillance, in all its forms, in our lives. We do this through a range of projects, such as performances, creating satirical videos, recording a podcast, and offering critical tools.