# INLS 774: Applied Data Ethics

# Instructor Information

Amelia N. Gibson

Email: [angibson@email.unc.edu](http://chrome-extension://bpmcpldpdmajfigpchkicefoigmkfalc/views/qowt.html)

Class meetings: Asynchronous

Office hours: Mondays 4:30-5:30 pm

You may also contact me via Teams Chat

## Course Description and Objectives

How should our values and beliefs be expressed in our information and data systems and services? What impact does our work have on people (at different scales)? What is our responsibility to understand and respond to those impacts? How is power expressed in various sociotechnical information systems and how do the values that we (intentionally or unintentionally) build these systems help or harm? What is our obligation to “goodness,” “fairness,” “justice,” or “ethics?” What are the limitations of these frameworks?

Students who take this course in applied ethics will practice engaging in thought and discussion on issues related to information and data in various individual, community, and societal contexts. Students will learn a series of formal frameworks for ethical reasoning and will examine issues relevant to information and data systems and services through collective consideration of recent cases.

## Course Materials

You are not required to purchase a textbook for this course. Course materials (including readings, videos, podcasts, and other media) are outlined in the weekly modules in Sakai and in the Weekly Schedule and Readings section of this document. If the reading is not posted, you are responsible for finding it using UNC Libraries or other means. Course readings may change based on changing current events.

# Course Policies

## Honor Code

The Honor Code, which prohibits giving or receiving unauthorized aid in the completion of assignments and exams is in effect in this class. Whenever you use the words or ideas of others, they should be properly marked as a quotation (and referenced) or the source of the ideas should be cited. APA citation format is required for assignments in this class. Please contact the instructor if you have any questions about the application of the Honor Code to your work in this class. You can learn more about the UNC Honor Code at <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/> and about the Instrument of Student Governance at <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf>. I also expect that students will give proper credit to other researchers through proper use of citation. APA citation style will be used for this course.

## ****Community Standards in On-Campus Classes and Mask Use****

While we are amid a global pandemic, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in on-campus classrooms and other spaces. This requirement is to protect our educational community — your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask in on campus spaces, your instructor may ask you to leave immediately, and submit a report to the [Office of Student Conduct](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UNCChapelHill&layout_id=23).  At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception.  For additional information, see [Carolina Together](https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/university-guidelines-for-facemasks/).

## Counseling and Psychological Services

The work that we will be engaging with this semester is difficult, and most of you will be unfamiliar with some or all of it. It is normal to feel confused or lost sometimes.  Additionally, we are living in challenging times, and we are all grappling with chronic stress and anxiety. It is common and natural to feel overwhelmed.

If you are interested in seeking resources from UNC CAPS you can visit their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more. (source: Student Safety and Wellness Proposal for EPC, Sep 2018). Additionally, SILS alumni Jess Epsten, and Emily Simmons created a Toolkit for LGBTQQIA+ Young Adults Seeking Mental Health Services in North Carolina accessible through the CEDI Lab website [here](https://cedi.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/LGBTQQIA_Mental_Health_Toolkit-1.pdf).

## Accessibility Resources and Service Office

Should you encounter barriers to your learning—whether it's something that I'm doing or not doing, or challenges in your personal circumstances—I am here to help. Please set up an appointment so that we can work together towards your success.

Additionally, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. See the ARS Website for contact information: [https://ars.unc.edu](https://ars.unc.edu/) or email ars@unc.edu.

If you need an accommodation but have not yet gone through the steps it takes to establish a formal relationship with University ARS, please let me know, and I will do my best to accommodate your needs.

Relevant policy documents as they relation to registration and accommodations determinations and the student registration form are available on the [ARS website under the About ARS tab](https://ars.unc.edu/about-ars/policies).

## Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University’s technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University’s mission. In the context of a class, it’s quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others’ intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the University website “Safe Computing at UNC” for information about the data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

## Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/. Please contact the University’s Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim–titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

## Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals’ abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University’s Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

## Diversity Statement

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate suggestions.

# Assignments

In lieu of attendance, students in this class will complete weekly discussions, activities, and/or case study responses. The success of this course relies on active participation from all class members. You should plan to set aside regular times throughout the week to participate in this class. Missing assignments (including participation assignments) will result in a failing grade. If you fall behind (because of illness or other issues) please contact me so that we can arrange alternatives or makeup assignments.

## Weekly Case Studies/Activities (35%)

At the beginning of each week, I will post a case study for you to examine, and a question for student to answer or activity to complete in assigned groups. Groups should use the weekly discussion board and private messages to communicate with each other and share resources as you draft your answer. For questions, each group should submit a single answer of 300-500 words each week by the following Sunday night at midnight in Teams assignments. I will post all submitted assignments to the class-wide Team (without names).

## Teams Discussions (35%)

Students will be asked to participate meaningfully in Teams discussions each week. Although the nature of the discussions will change each week, students are expected to complete initial posts by Wednesday at midnight, and at least 2 responses by Saturday at midnight. I will post an initial discussion question each week, but students may choose to initiate discussion questions in the weekly channel chat if you have one. Discussions should be related to the topic of the week. *Teams discussions are graded separately from notes taken, questions asked, or responses made within hypothes.is.*

Successful participation in discussions includes the following criteria:

1. Discourse in our class should be respectful, empathetic, and demonstrate compassion for your classmates.
2. Respect for All Persons. While I expect robust discussion, disrespect for colleagues and/or the instructor will not be tolerated. Additionally, class time will not be spent debating the right of any person to exist.
3. Complete all readings. Readings are meant to inform discussions/activities. When possible, ground your questions and comments in the readings and related materials.
4. Make discussion posts and responses substantive. “I agree” is insufficient. Add to the comment by offering additional points for consideration, or relevant questions. Respond to previous questions. Suggest additional resources or alternative perspectives. Make your posts meaningful.
5. Don’t be afraid to admit when you don’t understand. Add (specific) questions to the discussion if you have them (working through questions and ideas is an excellent way to start important discussions!).
6. Focus on the issue at hand - While discussions sometimes take necessary detours, keep the broader topic/question in mind as you decide on how to contribute. Focus on the substance of issues (and not your classmates) when you agree or disagree. I will not count off-topic posts in discussion points.
7. Disagree constructively. If someone else’s perspective is different from yours, try to understand it rather than dismiss it out of hand. Ask for examples, explanations, or clarifications. Offer counter-examples, or refer to readings, rather than dismiss/insult a colleague.
8. Remember that we all come to these issues with different levels of experience and are all working through different questions in different ways.

### Shared Notes (33%)

The class will collect a repository of shared notes in the related Teams documents and/or using hypothes.is (join our class hypothes.is group here: <https://hypothes.is/groups/o2v28Yr8/applieddataethics-sp22>). Students will be assigned to a reading group each week. Each student must contribute to shared notes on their assigned reading each week. When commenting in shared notes word documents, be sure to track changes and end your submissions with a parenthetical note: (Gibson).

## Grading

Graduate students in this course will receive a grade of P if you complete all assignments *and* have a minimum grade of 65 points. To pass the course, you **must complete all assignments**. If a particular assignment needs revision to be marked as complete, I will notify you of the revision due date. Because this semester is relatively compressed, I will not be able to offer much leeway with due dates, but please contact me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) if you have an extenuating circumstance. Undergraduate students will be graded according to the following scale:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter grade** | **Numeric range** | **Description of grade** |
| A | 95-100  | Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development.  |
| A- | 90-94  |    |
| B+ | 88-89  |    |
| B | 86-87  | Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.  |
| B- | 84-85  |    |
| C+ | 82-83  |    |
| C | 80-81  | A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.  |
| C- | 78-79  |    |
| D+ | 74-77  |    |
| D | 70-73  | A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment.  |
| F | Below 70  | For whatever reason, an unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the student's performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content or has not submitted all required materials.  |

# Weekly Schedule

### **Week 1 (01/10/22 - 01/16/22):** What are we doing here?

#### **READ and take notes:**

1. Iliadis, A., & Federica R. (2016). Critical Data Studies: An Introduction. Big Data & Society, 3(2): 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951716674238>
2. Brown University Science & Technology Studies. (n.d.). A framework for making ethical decisions.  <https://www.brown.edu/academics/science-and-technology-studies/framework-making-ethical-decisions>
3. Boyd, D., & Crawford, K. (2012). Critical questions for big data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon. Information, Communication & Society, 15(5), 662-679.

#### WATCH

[Timnit Gebru: How Can We Stop Artificial Intelligence From Marginalizing Communities? | TED Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/timnit_gebru_how_can_we_stop_artificial_intelligence_from_marginalizing_communities)

### Week 2 (01/17/22 - 01/23/22): How do we operationalize value & values?

READ and take notes:What elements are shared among these codes? What is missing from each (or all?)? What would you add/take away?

1. ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (<http://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/>)
2. ALA Code of Ethics <https://www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org.united/files/content/trustees/orgtools/policies/ALA-code-of-ethics.pdf>
3. Society of American Archivists Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics ([SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics | Society of American Archivists](https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics))
4. Feminist Data Manifestno: <https://www.manifestno.com/>
5. Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency in Machine Learning. (n.d.). Principles for accountable Algorithms. <https://www.fatml.org/resources/principles-for-accountable-algorithms>

### Week 3 (01/24/22 - 01/30/22): Is info/data neutral?

#### **READ and take notes:**

1. Hoffmann, A. L. (2018). Data violence and how bad engineering choices can damage society. Medium. [https://web.archive.org/web/20190421005839/https://medium.com/s/story/data-violence-and-how-bad-engineering-choices-can-damage-society-39e44150e1d4](https://web.archive.org/web/20190421005839/https%3A//medium.com/s/story/data-violence-and-how-bad-engineering-choices-can-damage-society-39e44150e1d4)
2. Noble, S. (2013). [Google search: hyper-visibility as a means of rendering black women and girls invisible](http://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/google-search-hyper-visibility-as-a-means-of-rendering-black-women-and-girls-invisible/) | invisible culture: an electronic journal for visual culture.  InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture, No. 19.
3. Tripodi, F. (2019). [Devin Nunes and the Power of Keyword Signaling | WIRED](https://www.wired.com/story/devin-nunes-and-the-dark-power-of-keyword-signaling/)

### Week 4 (01/31/22 - 02/06/22): **How do we embed our biases into systems?**

#### **READ and take notes:**

1. Tripodi, F. (2021). [Ms. Categorized: Gender, notability, and inequality on Wikipedia](https://journals-sagepub-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/doi/10.1177/14614448211023772). *New Media and Society*[Teams]
2. Nopper, T. (2019). Digital Character in “The Scored Society”: FICO, Social Networks, and Competing Measurements of Creditworthiness, In [Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life](https://apps-crossref-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/coaccess/coaccess.html?doi=10.1215%2F9781478004493), Ruha Benjamin (editor) [Teams]
3. Scannell, R. J. (2019). This Is Not Minority Report: Predictive Policing and Population Racism, In [Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life](https://apps-crossref-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/coaccess/coaccess.html?doi=10.1215%2F9781478004493), Ruha Benjamin (editor) [Teams]

#### Watch

1. Amrute, S. (2021). [Racist Tropes and Labor Discipline: How Tech Inherits and Reproduces Global Imaginaries of Race and Work - Microsoft Research](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/video/racist-tropes-and-labor-discipline-how-tech-inherits-and-reproduces-global-imaginaries-of-race-and-work/) (Video: 58 minutes)

### Week 5 (02/07/22 - 02/13/22): Power

#### **READ and take notes:**

1. Allen, A. (2016). Feminist Perspectives on Power, Section 1: Defining Power. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/>
2. Benjamin, R. (2016). Informed refusal: Toward a justice-based bioethics. Science, Technology, & Human Values, 41(6), 967-990.
3. Keyes, O. (2019). Counting the countless: Why data science is a profound threat for queer people. Retrieved from <https://reallifemag.com/counting-the-countless/>

### Week 6 (02/14/22 - 2/20/22): How do we balance between rights and accountability?

#### **READ and take notes:**

1. Tannenbaum, M. (2013). ‘But I Didn’t Mean It!’ Why It’s So Hard to Prioritize Impacts over Intents. Scientific American, 14. Retrieved from <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/psysociety/e2809cbut-i-didne28099t-mean-ite2809d-why-ite28099s-so-hard-to-prioritize-impacts-over-intents/>
2. **Brandes, R. (2022, January 4). Batman or Penguin? How Andrew Frame’s Citizen App Is Turning Every City Into Gotham. Los Angeles Magazine.** [How Andrew Frame's Citizen App Is Turning Every City Into Gotham (lamag.com)](https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/batman-or-penquin-how-andrew-frames-citizen-app-is-turning-every-city-into-gotham/)
3. D. Clark, M. (2020). DRAG THEM: A brief etymology of so-called “cancel culture.” Communication and the Public, 5(3–4), 88–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057047320961562>
4. Mateescu, A. (2021). Electronic Visit Verification: The Weight of Surveillance and the Fracturing of Care. [EVV\_REPORT\_11162021.pdf (datasociety.net)](https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EVV_REPORT_11162021.pdf) (Teams)

### Week 7 (02/21/22 - 02/28/22): **How do we understand what is “(un)true?”**

#### **READ and take notes:**

1. D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2020). The Numbers Don't Speak for Themselves. Data Feminism. <https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/czq9dfs5/release/1>
2. Lazer, D., Kennedy, R., King, G., & Vespignani, A. (2014). The parable of Google Flu: traps in big data analysis. Science, 343(6176), 1203-1205
3. Williams, R. (2020). [View of Falsified Incompetence and Other Lies the Positivists Told Me | Canadian Journal of Disability Studies (uwaterloo.ca)](https://cjds.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cjds/article/view/696/951)