

My relationship to technology has shifted over the semester in regards to re-affirming my political ideology in terms of highlighting how inherent bias has affected data and the technology to power connection. For example, crime statistics- as discussed in the second to last class held; the use of false incriminating data sets that are altered in a white nativist supremacy framework, only perpetuate over-policing in the neighborhoods of marginalized populations such as BIPOC communities. The powerful tool of Data can unfortunately be put to use in a harmful connotation in the hands of those who are corrupt. Through the activities that were provided to us via prof. Zach, we learned the art of decipheration. The professor presented us with critical thinking methodology that allowed us to delve deeper into what data actually means. From prior experience, I figured that “numbers are numbers”, now- i have completely re-shaped my thinking when it comes to analyzing different data through a new framework. Post-course, I consider what relevance does this data have in regards to an ‘agenda’ or motive that it may be trying to convey. In the past, I slightly have had an inclination to the understanding of this concept through the means of “cherry picking”- but to completely grasp what randomness adds to a data set, was a whole different field. One example that details this issue greatly would be the break down of the “Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade” data set. Here you have recorded (and some not so recorded) data regarding the 20,000 trans atlantic slave voyages from the time period of the 16th to 19th centuries. Setting aside the horrific commodification and dehumanization of a people, you have a data set that is littered with incorrect loggings, many outliers, and the most prominent- the intentional exclusion of certain data. You may ask why? Well, a guilty conscience is the culprit. Which brings me to my next problem, the indirect

acknowledgement of knowful wrongdoing. When scouring the data set, you notice that for many instances (17,828 rows or 86% of the set) to be exact, has no recorded entries for who they captured at all. It does not require much speculation to reason that the captors knew just how negative it would appear optically that they were enslaving absurd amounts of people, especially women and children- therefore it was most likely suggested to not log an entry for that category. This is just one example but there are many cases of the utilization of data just being plain harmful and I think the professor really had that resonate with us and to have us always analyze with a grain of salt in mind. Ultimately, it is a tool- not all information deals in absolute fact. It is up to the interpreter to gauge whether or not what they are looking at, corroborates the narrative in an ethical and mindful manner. I would like to extend a big thank you to the professor for opening a wider lens that I can view the world through now having taken this course, from the use of the technical aspect of learning python to the texts that deal in the understanding of the humanities- i highly recommend Data Science to others.