Syllabus Fall 2025
CompSci 240/GSF 242: Race, Gender, Class, and Computing

Course Details

Location:	French Science 4233
Hours:	Mon/Wed 305-420pm
Website:	https://courses.cs.duke.edu/fall25/compsci240
Course Materials:	https://go.canvas.duke.edu/

Instructor Details

Instructor:	Dr. Nicki Washington
Email:	nicki@cs.duke.edu
Office Hours:	Dr. W: Tues 11am-1pm ET (Zoom)
	ALL OFFICE HOURS WILL BE POSTED ON ED FOR DR W AND TA's.

Course Description

This course examines how identity impacts and is impacted by computing. Through an introduction to identity as a social construct, we will explore the societal factors that have influenced present-day technology development and use, historical contexts, and the resulting impact on various communities.

Prerequisites

None.

Areas of Knowledge and Modes of Inquiry Fulfillment

This course fulfills the Social Science (SS) Area of Knowledge and Cross-Cultural Inquiry (CCI); Science, Technology, and Society (STS); and Writing Modes of Inquiry requirements (W).

Required Text

Required-The MLA Style Manual (https://bit.ly/2NqpyG8) will be used for all formal paper submissions (Book Reflection Draft #1, #2, and Final Draft).

This course leverages news articles, podcast episodes, Ted Talks, interviews, documentaries, and books that are available via either the web or the Duke Library at no charge.

Additional Resources

- This course will use Canvas. All course material and submissions will be via Canvas.
- This course will use various articles, podcast episodes, videos, and other publicly accessible information via the Internet.
- ***This term we will be using Ed for class discussion (linked through Canvas).*** The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates, the TAs, and the instructor.
- ***Only email the instructor team for confidential matters.*** It is extremely easy for emails to get buried in inboxes. In addition, your peers may have the same question as you. All general questions should be posted via Ed. Other questions re: something specific to you should be sent via private message in Ed (of which the instructor team will see and respond).

- o **_When to post public Ed message:_** Assignment clarification, issues accessing pre-lecture material (e.g., broken link), etc.

- o **_When to post private Ed message:_** Question regarding assignment grade (after returned), request to use accommodations for an assignment, concern/reporting of problematic exchange or incident on Ed discussions.

- o **_When to email Dr. Washington_**: Health-related issue, other personal matters impacting class attendance/assignments, harassment, offensive exchange, etc.

Course Objectives/Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
1. Understand identity and the various ways in which it is represented.
2. Understand historical trends that impact organizational cultures and technology development.
3. Examine the impact of different technologies on different identities.
4. Identify strategies for creating more equitable and inclusive technical environments and software.

Course Requirements
- **Attendance**: Attendance is required, and active participation is essential in this course. If you miss class, you are responsible for staying up to date and reviewing notes from classmates. Absences due to illness, emergency, or university-related obligations are excused when you notify me in advance (or within 24 hours). Excessive absences—excused or unexcused— may impact your participation grade. Should you miss class due to illness, please submit a STINF form.
- **Participation**-Because the nature of the course centers class discussions, students are *expected* to attend class and actively participate in class discussions. Note: This grade includes not only attendance, but also active participation in class lectures. Those not participating will not receive full credit.
- **Position Paper**
- **Invisible Knapsack**
- **Accessibility Assignment**
- **Weekly Reflections**-Students are expected to provide weekly writing assignments based on class discussions and reading material, which also serve as informal writing preps.
- **Book Readings**-Students are expected to select and read two books from a pre-approved list.
- **Book Reflection**-Students are expected to submit one reflection paper on one book they read from a pre-approved list. A draft submission is required for each.
- **Peer Review**-Students will complete one peer review of a book reflection draft.
- **Group Lecture Facilitation-** All students will be assigned to a small group, which will be responsible for leading a 30-minute class discussion on a specific topic.
- **Discussion Questions**: You will be required to submit one discussion question for each class lecture. These will be randomly selected for inclusion in class discussions.
- **News You Can Use**: You will be required to submit one relevant article in the current calendar year that is related to each lecture topic.

*This course was intentionally and appropriately curated to teach concepts that are often not taught in computing courses. It is extremely important that this course is prioritized as a space for learningAs such, it requires participation that is respectful of everyone. Failure to abide by this (including verbal and written language that is found to be abusive, offensive, threatening, and/or hateful) will result in reporting to the proper university officials. Repeated incidents will result in appropriate university

grievance harassment procedures and additional actions, as necessary. For more information, refer to the [Duke Community Standard: A Guide for Students.](#)*

Grading Policy

Attendance	5%
Participation:	10%
Position Paper:	5%
Book Selections	5%
Accessibility Activity	5%
Invisible Knapsack	5%
Weekly Reflections:	12.5%
Book #1 Reflection Draft	5%
Book #1 Reflection-Final	5%
Peer Review (Book #1)	5%
Book #2 Reflection	10%
Group Lecture	12.5%
News You Can Use	7.5%
Discussion Questions	7.5%

Total-100%

Regrade Requests

Students may request a regrade of any assignment via private message in Ed up to 7 days AFTER the grades have been released. **Note**: *Requests for regrades do not guarantee additional points will be awarded.*

Late Work

All assignments are due via Canvas at 1159pm EST on the specified due date.

Student Code of Conduct

Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Members of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and non-academic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity.

Duke University has high expectations for students' scholarship and conduct. In accepting admission, students indicate their willingness to subscribe to and be governed by the rules and regulations of the university, which flow from the [Duke Community Standard](#) (DCS). Regardless of course delivery format, it is the responsibility of all students to understand and follow all Duke policies, including but not limited to the academic integrity policy (e.g., completing one's own work, following proper citation of sources, adhering to guidance around group work projects, and more). Ignoring these requirements is a violation of the DCS.

Students can direct any questions or concerns regarding academic integrity to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards at conduct@duke.edu and can access the DCS guide at https://dukecommunitystandard.students.duke.edu/.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
Unless indicated by the assignment instructions, ***students are prohibited from using generative AI tools of any kind to create assignment submissions***. All text submitted should be your own writing. Students found to use generative AI tools in ways that are prohibited are in violation of the Duke Community Standard, will receive a 0 on the assignment, and will be reported the Office of Student Conduct.

Students Requiring Accommodations
Duke University is prepared to make reasonable academic adjustments and accommodations to allow students with disabilities full participation in the same programs and activities available to students without disabilities. The Student Disability Access Office assists students with disabilities who are enrolled in Trinity College and the Pratt School of Engineering. To receive consideration for reasonable accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as, but not limited to, hearing, seeing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, walking, caring for oneself, and learning. Substantially limiting refers to an impairment that prevents an individual from performing a major life activity or significantly restricts the condition, manner, or duration under which an individual can perform a major life activity. Students requesting accommodations under the provisions of Section 504 or the ADA (e.g., academic, housing, etc.) must consult Leigh Fickling, Director, Student Disability Access Office, 919-668-1267 or 919-668-1329 TTY, to explore possible coverage. Students with medical conditions not covered under the provisions of ADA must consult Duke Student Health Services at 919-681-9355 for further information.

Office of Student Affairs
Students are also encouraged to raise concerns or questions related to harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, and related retaliation to the Office of Student Affairs at conduct@duke.edu.

Inclement Weather Policy
In the event of inclement weather or other connectivity-related events that prohibit class attendance, we will notify you how we will make up missed course content and work. Please check Ed and emails for any class-specific updates. This includes situations where class may be held remotely via Zoom. Asynchronous catch-up methods may apply.

Sick Absences
Student health, safety, and well-being are the university's top priorities. Please do not come to class if you are sick to keep the university community as safe and healthy as possible. Please inform me of your absence and plan to complete any missed work.

Students who encounter short- and long-term medical issues or instances of personal distress or emergency can seek academic support if needed. You can find details regarding university sick leave policies here:
- Trinity College: Health Issues, Short- and Long-Term
- Pratt School: Missing Class, Illness, Short- and Long-Term

Religious Accommodations
Students are permitted by university policy to be absent from class to observe a religious holiday. Accordingly, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences and the Pratt School of Engineering have established procedures to be followed by students for notifying their instructors of an absence necessitated by the observance of a religious holiday. Please submit requests for religious accommodations at the beginning

of the semester so that we can work to make suitable arrangements well ahead of time. You can find the policy and relevant notification form here: https://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/religious-holidays

Pronoun Usage
Pronouns are meaningful tools to communicate identities and experiences, and using pronouns supports a campus environment where all community members can thrive. You can update your gender pronouns in DukeHub. You can learn more at the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity's website.

Syllabus Change Policy
This syllabus is a guide, and every attempt is made to provide an accurate overview of the course. However, circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester and may depend, in part, on the progress, needs, and experiences of the students.