

YANMING WAN

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Profile

- **PhD student interested in Social Reinforcement Learning and Large Language Models.**
- Currently studying in **University of Wahington CSE**, advised by **Prof. Natasha Jaques**.

Education

University of Washington

Seattle, WA, USA

PhD Student, Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering, Advised by Natasha Jaques

Sept. 2023 – present

- GPA: 3.94/4.00 (Up till Winter Semester, 2025)

Tsinghua University

Beijing, China

Undergraduate Student, Yao Class, Institute for Interdisciplinary Information Sciences (IIIS)

Aug. 2019 – June 2023

- **GPA: 3.97/4.00, Rank: 2/30**
- Received **Recognition Prize of Yao Award** *Sept. 2022*
- Received **Jiang-Nanxiang Scholarship** (Unique in Yao Class) *Dec. 2021*
- Won the **Gold Medal** in 2018 Chinese Mathematical Olympiad, and admission guaranteed *Nov. 2018*

Research Experiences

Google DeepMind

Seattle, WA, USA

Student Researcher, Hosted by Jiaying Wu

Sept. 2024 – March 2025

- Current LLM training methods like RLHF prioritize helpfulness and safety but fall short in personalization. Traditional methods to personalization often rely on extensive user history, limiting their effectiveness for context-limited users.
- We propose to incorporate an intrinsic motivation to improve the conversational agents' model of the user as an additional reward alongside multi-turn RLHF. This auxiliary reward encourages the agent to actively elicit user traits by optimizing conversations to increase the accuracy of its user model, and consequently the policy agent can deliver more personalized interactions through obtaining more information about the user.

Social RL Group, University of Washington

Seattle, WA, USA

Research Assistant and Teacher Assistant, Advised by Natasha Jaques

Sept. 2023 – present

- Variational Preference Learning: To address the need for pluralistic alignment, we propose to infer a novel user-specific latent and learning reward models and policies conditioned on it without additional user-specific data.
- Follow Instructions with Social and Embodied Reasoning: To better natural language instruction in collaborative embodied tasks, we propose to make explicit inferences of human's goals and intentions as intermediate reasoning steps.

CoCoSci Lab, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Cambridge, MA, USA

Undergraduate Visiting Student, Advised by Josh B. Tenenbaum and Jiayuan Mao

Feb. 2022 – July 2022

- To collaborate with human partners successfully in complex environments, robots should be able to interpret and follow natural language instructions in contexts.
- Introduced HandMeThat, a benchmark for a holistic evaluation of instruction understanding and following in physical and social environments, which highlights the additional challenge of understanding instructions with ambiguities based on physical states and human actions and goals.

Publications

Yanming Wan*, Jiaying Wu*, Marwa Abdulhai, Lior Shani, Natasha Jaques. Enhancing Personalized Multi-Turn Dialogue with Curiosity Reward. In *submission*, 2025.

Yanming Wan, Yue Wu, Yiping Wang, Jiayuan Mao[†], Natasha Jaques[†]. Infer Human's Intentions Before Following Natural Language Instructions. In *AAAI*, 2025.

Sriyash Poddar*, **Yanming Wan***, Hamish Ivison, Abhishek Gupta[†], Natasha Jaques[†]. Personalizing Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback with Variational Preference Learning. In *NeurIPS*, 2024.

Yanming Wan*, Jiayuan Mao*, Joshua B. Tenenbaum. HandMeThat: Human-Robot Communication in Physical and Social Environments. In *NeurIPS Datasets and Benchmarks Track*, 2022.