

Draft 1/25/22: please do not distribute

Course Syllabus

CSD-JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Computer Science (15-996)

Course Logistics

Course time: Thursdays 11:50-1:10pm ET. Class is remote. See Canvas for the Zoom link.

Office hours: by appointment (email student instructors).

Instructors:

Bailey Flanigan (she/her ¹)	bflaniga@andrew	(student instructor)
Ananya Joshi (she/her)	aajoshi@andrew	(student instructor)
Zico Kolter (he/him)	zkolter@andrew	(faculty instructor)

Main Course Resources:

[Course website](#): location of homework links, abridged version of the syllabus (besides course policies) and high-level course description

[Discussion Guide](#): This is the main resource for supporting inclusive in-class discussions. It contains the class community guidelines, a list of inclusive discussion strategies, instructions for synthesis group activities, and options for resolving issues.

[Class Glossary](#) (link coming soon): Definitions and explanations of terminology students may encounter throughout this course.

[Canvas](#): Homework is submitted and graded here, and you can also find the Zoom link here.

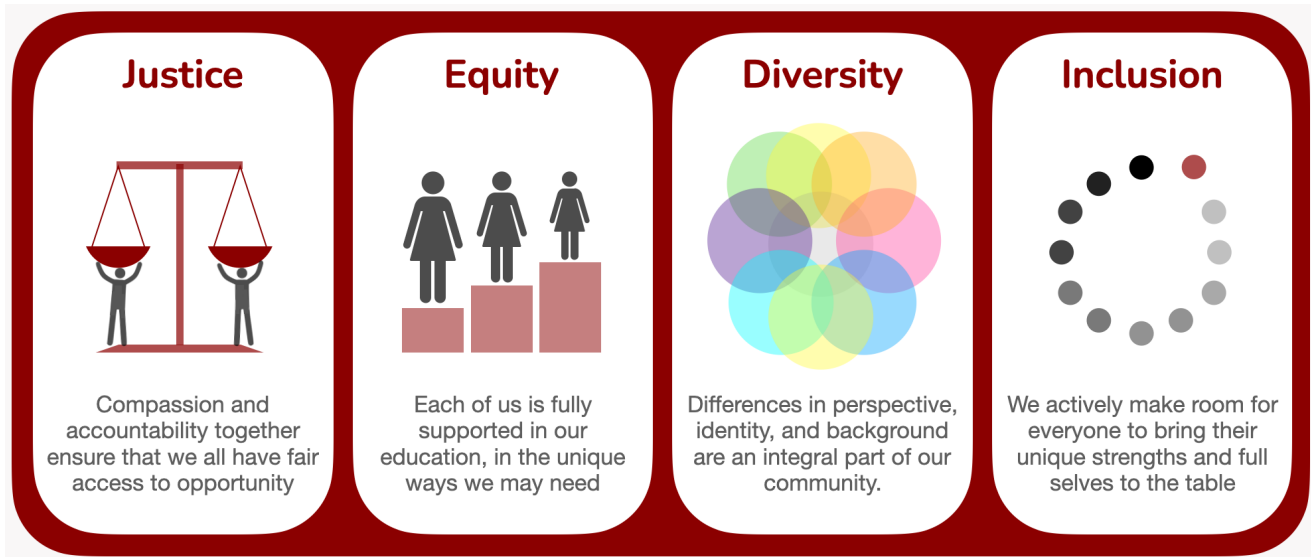
[Class Google Drive](#): Contains most course materials, plus folders containing collaborative resources for each synthesis group. We treat these documents as living documents, and we welcome students to use the comment feature to make suggestions and ask questions in the margins of any document.

[Anonymous Feedback Portal](#): Anonymously leave feedback and suggestions about the course here.

¹ For an explanation of why we include our pronouns (and a primer on pronouns in general), see mypronouns.org.

What is JEDI?

JEDI stands for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion—four important components of a truly inclusive community. These terms have many definitions, but we define them below in ways that highlight their role in this course.



Course Description

This is a required course for first year CSD PhD students, occurring annually in the first six weeks of Spring semester. The goal of this course is to prepare PhD students to engage in the CS community, even as our community evolves to put more emphasis on Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI). This evolution, articulated by the quote below, is reflected in the increasing expectations of students to engage meaningfully with JEDI concepts on department committees, in student groups, and on job applications.

"There is a movement occurring...widely within our computing community, toward making tangible progress through intentional actions and interventions for advancing and valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion." [\[ACM 2021\]](#).

A hallmark of this course is that it was created by PhD students, and it remains PhD-student-run. Designed specifically with the needs of PhD students in mind, this course is short, flexible, literature-based, framed through the lens of academic computer science, and geared toward helping students build community. It *requires* three hours per week in and out of class, but provides many opportunities for deeper exploration with instructor support.

Course Structure (Abridged)

This course is structured around the [Jigsaw Method](#), an evidence-based approach to cooperative learning. Before reading this section, it may be helpful to read the longer *Course Structure* section on the Pedagogy website page, which describes the components below in more detail within the Jigsaw framework. This will also be explained in week 1 of class.

Core questions and lenses. Each week is structured around a *core question* - a concrete, but conceptually vast, question. We then approach this question from many different angles, or *lenses*. Each week's core questions and lenses are provided in the course schedule on the next page.

Lens groups and synthesis groups. In this class, students are grouped in two different ways: into *lens groups*, and into *synthesis groups*. Synthesis groups are the same each week; lens groups are by default the same each week, but students are permitted to trade on a week-to-week basis. See the [Assigned Groups and Lenses](#) (link coming soon) for group assignments.

In-class resources. Each week of class generally has the same schedule (with small deviations in weeks 1 and 6), consisting of a guest-lecture followed by two rounds of discussion. The first round of discussion occurs in lens groups and the second in synthesis groups. For each week, we provide detailed [In-Class Schedules](#) (link coming soon)** to help students to follow along in class and provide all resources students will need to participate.

Out-of-class work. In a typical week, students must complete two out-of-class assignments: *pre-class activities* (due the day before class), and *post-class reflections* (due the day after class). Pre-class activities help students prepare to contribute to in-class discussion, and post-class reflections give students a chance to reflect on lingering thoughts and questions about the material of the week. All deadlines in this course are at 11:59pm. See next page for deadline dates.

Additional Enrichment Opportunities

Course Library

Using a budget provided by SCS, we have been able to purchase approximately 30 books to lend out to students. These books come highly recommended by your peers and other readers, and are written by authors at the forefront of the JEDI conversation. For more details, a list of available books, and instructions for how to check them out, see the [Class Library](#).

Course Project

The course project is optional, i.e., doing a project will not affect your grade. However, this is a great opportunity to learn more about a topic that interests you – and have an impact – with access to the support of course staff. **For details, possible projects, and how to sign up to do a course project, see the [Project Overview](#).**

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Introduction, identity, and inclusive discussion.		
(no core question)	(no lenses)	1/31: pre-class surveys due 2/3: class meets 2/4: post-class reflection due
Week 2: Foundations of Inequality		
Core question: How can inequality be perpetuated by a policy or criterion that intends to be neutral to people's identities?	Lens 1: Implicit Bias Lens 2: Intersectionality and the complexity of identity Lens 3: Privilege and oppression via <i>policies</i> Lens 4: Privilege and oppression via <i>cultures and norms</i>	2/9: pre-class activity due 2/10: class meets <i>speaker: Dr. LD Ortis</i> 2/11: post-class reflection due
Week 3: Foundations of Identity Safety		
Core question: How can we decrease stereotype threat and increase identity safety in academic/research settings?	Lens 1: Understanding and addressing stereotype threat Lens 2: Structural strategies for increasing identity safety Lens 3: Interpersonal strategies for increasing identity safety	2/16: pre-class activity due 2/17: class meets <i>speaker: Erica Cruz</i> 2/18: post-class reflection due
Week 4: Intent versus Impact		
Core question: How should we account for the difference between the intent and impact of our (and others') words and actions?	Lens 1: Microaggressions + verbal slights Lens 2: Responding effectively Lens 3: Charged language in the academic context	2/23: pre-class activity due 2/24: class meets <i>speaker: Prof. Geoff Kaufman</i> 2/25: post-class reflection due
Week 5: Well-being in the PhD Program		
Core question: What are some strategies for maintaining our mental and emotional well-being during the Ph.D. program?	Lens 1: Mental health Lens 2: Rights, boundaries, + self-advocacy Lens 3: Self-compassion	3/2: pre-class activity due 3/3: class meets <i>speakers: Angie Lusk, Darla Coleman, + Viviana Ferrer-Medina</i> 3/3: post-class reflection due
Week 6: Allyship and promoting positive change		
Core question: How can we contribute to creating a more just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive CS environment?	(no lenses)	3/16: pre-class activity due 3/17: class meets <i>speaker: Dr. Judeth Choi + panel.</i> 3/17: course evaluation due

Course Policies

Accessibility and Inclusivity of Course Materials

It is our highest priority to ensure that students can bring their authentic selves to this class, and that students receive equitable access to education. Given that some of the content discussed in this course may be emotionally and intellectually challenging, several measures have been taken to ensure that the experience of taking this course is as inclusive to everyone as possible.

Accessibility of materials.

We recognize that students may learn best in different environments and from different materials. We try to provide sources in various formats and offer students significant choice in the resources they learn from. **However, if there is something we can provide to allow you to more easily engage with a resource, please let us know and we will try to secure an alternate version.** In addition, please let us know if you will be using a screen reader or other accessibility-related device, so we can ensure that the resources assigned are compatible with your device.

Disability accommodations.

We encourage you to discuss any accommodations that would help you with the course instructors as early as possible. We will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, we encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Content warnings and handling of sensitive material.

Especially intense content and sensitive topics will be flagged in the course materials. In addition, discussions are regulated by community guidelines described in the Discussion Guide, which also describes many ways in which students can rely on instructors for support in discussions. For additional support, we encourage students to utilize Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) (call 412-268-2922 and/or visit <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>).

Options for giving feedback.

We approach the practice of developing and teaching this course with the understanding that we can always improve, and we acknowledge that people may experience the material in ways we have not anticipated. **We welcome and encourage students to provide feedback and suggestions about the course. We will take care to address your concerns with humility and sensitivity.**

Channels through which students can give feedback:

1. Email or make an appointment with the course instructors. You can convey your concerns directly to them or, if you prefer, they can refer you to someone else to talk to.
2. Contact Darla Coleman, the SCS Executive Director for DEI (dcoleman@andrew.cmu.edu), who is a staff member and an appointed acceptor of feedback for this course.
3. Utilize the anonymous feedback portal (linked at the top + on the website)

Grading Policy

This course is graded **pass/fail** on the basis of **effort and attendance**. The grading policy is designed to, within reasonable constraints, allow students to get out what they put in. **To pass this course, students need to do three things:**

1. Attend all sessions.

Attendance is required.

If you need to miss a week of class, please let the instructors know ahead of time (just ask us - we are flexible and want to support you!). If you miss a class by mistake, contact us as soon as possible afterwards per the procedure in the “make-up assignment” document linked below. Missing more than one week without telling the instructors ahead of time is grounds for failing the course.

If you miss a week of class, you must make it up by completing a [make-up assignment](#) to cover the in-class material, due 11:59 the day before the subsequent class. Still having missing make-up assignments overdue by the last day of class is grounds for failing the course.

2. Actively participate in class.

We expect students to put in a good-faith effort to participate in this class each week. We recognize that the topics we cover can be difficult, and that a “good faith effort” may look different for different people, or even for the same person during different activities or on different days.

Here are some examples of what we consider participating:

sharing your thoughts, actively listening, supporting other members of your group, helping keeping your group’s discussion on-task and inclusive, asking questions, recording ideas for your group, writing down your ideas and having someone share them, typing ideas into the chat (if remote), amplifying others’ ideas that were typed in the chat (if remote).

Here are some examples of not participating:

Texting or working on other things during class, actively being disruptive and off-task, sleeping, not coming prepared to class.

If you feel you are generally unable to safely participate in-class discussions, please contact the instructors.

3. Complete out-of-class work adequately and on-time.

We expect students to submit assignments on time. This is important (1) out of consideration for the instructors’ time, who will be grading these assignments, and (2) out of respect for other students’ time, as the out-of-class work prepares students to contribute in class.

If you need a deadline extension, please let us know ahead of time. **If you accidentally miss a deadline**, send us an email afterwards letting us know what happened, and finish the assignment as soon as possible. Failing to complete an assignment before the subsequent class, or missing 2 or more deadlines without notifying instructors ahead of time, is grounds for failing the course.

Homework responses are graded on the following rubric. To pass the course, students must receive at least 1 point on every assignment. Unlimited tries are permitted up until 1 week after the original deadline.

2	Outstanding response. This is reserved for especially stellar responses. Receiving this score does not gain you any extra credit in the course - it's just for honor :)
1	Adequate response. The standard score. Response engaged thoughtfully and in sufficient detail with the question, and followed the discussion guidelines in the Discussion Guide.
0	Unsatisfactory response. The reason for the response being unsatisfactory will be communicated in the TA's feedback. A response may receive this score because it is too short, lacks detail, is superficial or vague, does not address the question, or violates discussion guidelines.

Academic Integrity

Cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade. If you wish to use text written or spoken by someone else, quote them if possible, and always cite your sources. When completing asynchronous work for which you are instructed not to use outside sources, **please follow these instructions**. This is not only important for your own integrity; this is also to uphold the integrity of the data we collect on the efficacy of the course.

Health and Well-Being

Student well-being is a priority, and **we want to work with you to accommodate your needs to the extent that we can**. We hope that you find this work well-motivated and intellectually stimulating, and that you enjoy engaging with the important and useful topics explored.

Being a graduate student can be difficult, and your mental health is important. We strongly encourage you to seek support throughout your PhD via Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) (call 412-268-2922 and/or visit <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>). If you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, either in general or about a specific problem, you can talk with your advisor, an ombudsperson, a friend or faculty member you trust, or ask the course instructors or course consultants about further resources.

FYI: This course is the subject of IRB-approved research

For this class, I am conducting research on teaching and learning. This research will involve some student work. You will not be asked to do anything above and beyond the normal learning activities and assignments that are part of this course. You are free not to participate in this research, and your participation will have no influence on your grade for this course or your academic career at CMU. If you do not wish to participate, please send an email to Chad Hershock (hershock@andrew.cmu.edu). Participants will not receive any compensation. The data collected as part of this research will include student grades. All analyses of data from participants' coursework will be conducted after the course is over and final grades are submitted. The Eberly Center may provide support on this research project regarding data analysis and interpretation. The Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation is located on the CMU-Pittsburgh Campus and its mission is to support the professional development of all CMU instructors regarding teaching and learning. To minimize the risk of breach of confidentiality, the Eberly Center will never have access to data from this course containing your personal identifiers. All data will be analyzed in de-identified form and presented in the aggregate, without any personal identifiers. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, or to report concerns to this study, please contact Chad Hershock (hershock@andrew.cmu.edu).