

Alexandra To

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR · NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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🔗 Google Scholar Profile

Academic Appointment

Northeastern University

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Boston, MA

August 2020 - PRESENT

Jointly appointed in the Games group in the Art + Design department in the College of Arts, Media, & Design and the Khoury College of Computer Science

Education

Carnegie Mellon University

PHD IN HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION

Pittsburgh, PA

Aug. 2015 - Jul. 2020

- Human Computer Interaction Institute | School of Computer Science
- Thesis: *"Empowering Uncertainty Resolution for Marginalized Populations through Social Technology"*
- **Advisors:** Jessica Hammer and Geoff Kaufman

Stanford University

B.S. IN SYMBOLIC SYSTEMS, HCI CONCENTRATION, MINOR IN ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Stanford, CA

Sept. 2010 - Jun. 2015

M.S. IN SYMBOLIC SYSTEMS

- Symbolic Systems Program | School of Humanities and Sciences
- Honors Thesis: *"Foundry: Managing Teams of Experts Online"*
- Masters Thesis: *"Experts On Demand: Enabling Flash Organizations with Rapid Onboarding"*
- **Advisor:** Michael Bernstein

Honors & Awards

- 2020 **Award Recognizing Contribution to Diversity & Inclusion**, ACM CSCW
Best Paper Award, ACM CSCW
SIGCHI Development Fund Grant (\$15,000), *"Engaging in Race in HCI"*, ACM SIGCHI
Best Paper Award, ACM CHI 2020 (top 1%)
- 2018 **Graduate Student Small Project Funding Award (\$750)**, CMU GSA / Vice Provost's Office
- 2017 **Best Paper Award**, ACM CHI 2017 (top 1%)
University/Post-Secondary Student Honorable Mention, Carnegie Science Awards
- 2016 **Best Student Non-Digital Game, "Outbreak"**, Meaningful Play 2016
People's Choice Game, "Outbreak", Meaningful Play 2016
Graduate Student Assembly/Provost Conference Funds, Carnegie Mellon University
- 2014 **Best Paper Award**, ACM UIST 2014
B.S. Conferred with Honors, Stanford University

Peer-Reviewed Publications

*Indicates shared authorship position

21. Bennett, C. L., Gleason, C., Klaus Scheuerman, M., Bigham, J. P., Guo, A., **To, A.** *"It's Complicated": Negotiating Accessibility and (Mis)Representation in Image Descriptions of Race, Gender, and Disability.* [CONDITIONAL ACCEPT] In Proc. CHI 2021
20. **To, A.**, Carey, H., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. *Reducing Uncertainty and Offering Comfort: Designing Technology for Coping with Interpersonal Racism.* [CONDITIONAL ACCEPT] In Proc. CHI 2021
19. Carey, H., **To, A.**, Hammer, J., Kaufman, G. *Fictional, Interactive Narrative as a Foundation to Talk about Racism.* In Proc. DIS 2020 Work-in-Progress.

18. **To, A.**, Sweeney, W., Hammer, J., Kaufman, G. "They Just Don't Get It": Towards Social Technologies for Coping with Interpersonal Racism. In Proc. CSCW 2020. **Best Paper Award 🏆**, **Award Recognizing Contribution to D&I 🏆**
17. [**To, A.**, Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, I.F., Smith, A.]*, Toyama, K. *Critical Race Theory for HCI*. In Proc. CHI 2020. **Best Paper Award 🏆**
16. Holmes, J., **To, A.**, Zhang, F., Park, S.E., Ali, S., Bai, Z., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. (2019). *A Good Score: Leveraging Game Theming and Narrative to Impact Player Experience*. In Proc. CHI 2019 Late-Breaking Work.
15. **To, A.**, Holmes, J., Fath, E., Zhang, E., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. (2018). *Modeling and Designing for Key Elements of Curiosity: Risking Failure, Valuing Questions*. In Proc. ToDiGRA Special Issue, Selected Papers from DiGRA 2017, Vol 4.2
14. Fath, E., **To, A.**, Kaufman, G., Hammer, J., (2018). *Designing an Inclusive Playtesting Process Using Cognitive Load Theory*. In Proc. Meaningful Play 2018
13. Ali, S., **To, A.**, Bai, Z., Holmes, J., Fath, E., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. (2018). *Transition from Goal Driven Game Design to Game Driven Goal Delineation in Tandem Transformational Game Design*. In Proc. Meaningful Play 2018
12. Hammer, J., **To, A.**, Schrier, K., Bowman, S.L., Kaufman, G. (2018). *Learning and Role-Playing Games. Role-Playing Game Studies*
11. **To, A.**, McDonald, J., Holmes, J., Hammer, J., Kaufman, G. (2018). *Character Diversity in Digital and Non-Digital Games*. In Proc. ToDiGRA Diversity Special Issue, Vol 4.1
10. **To, A.**, Holmes, J., Fath, E., Zhang, E., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. (2017). *Modeling and Designing for Key Elements of Curiosity: Risking Failure, Valuing Questions*. In Proc. DiGRA 2017.
9. **To, A.**, Hammer, J., Kaufman, G. (2017). *Character Diversity in Digital and Non-Digital Games*. In Proc. DiGRA 2017 Gaming the Systems: Towards a More Inclusive DiGRA Workshop.
8. **To, A.**, Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. (2017). *Scaffolding Conversation through the Design and Implementation of Board Games*. In Proc. DiGRA 2017 Boardgame Studies Round Table Workshop.
7. Valentine, M., Retelny, D., **To, A.**, Rahmati, N., Doshi, T., Kim, M., Fonua, M., Bernstein, M. (2017). *Flash Organizations: Crowdsourcing Complex Work by Structuring Crowds as Organizations*. In Proc. CHI 2017. **Best Paper Award 🏆**
6. **To, A.**, Fath, E., Zhang, E., Ali, S., Kildunne, C., Fan, A., Hammer, J., Kaufman, G. (2016). *Tandem Transformational Game Design: A Game Design Process Case Study*. In Proc. Meaningful Play 2016.
5. **To, A.**, Fan, A., Kildunne, C., Zhang, E., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. (2016). *Treehouse Dreams: A Game-Based Method for Eliciting Interview Data from Children*. In Proc. CHI Play 2016.
4. **To, A.**, Ali, S., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. (2016). *Integrating Curiosity and Uncertainty in Game Design*. In Proc. DiGRA/FDG 2016.
3. Nebeling, M., **To, A.**, Guo, A., de Freitas, A., Teevan, J., Dow, S., Bigham, J. (2016). *WearWrite: Crowd-Assisted Writing from Smartwatches*. In Proc. CHI '16.

2. Retelny, D., Robaszkiewicz, S., **To, A.**, Lasecki, W., Patel, J., Doshi, T., Valentine, M., Bernstein, M. (2014). *Expert Crowdsourcing with Flash Teams*. In Proc. UIST '14. **Best Paper Award** 🏆
1. Retelny, D., Robaszkiewicz, S., **To, A.**, Bernstein, M. (2013). *Enabling Expert Crowdsourcing with Flash Teams*. In Proc. CrowdConf 2013.

Other Publications & Workshops

12. Hammer, J., **To, A.**, Principe Cruz, E. *Lab Counterculture*. In CHI 2020 alt.CHI.
11. Smith, A., Ahmed, A., Alvarado Garcia, A., Dosono, B., Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, I., Rankin, Y., **To, A.**, Toyama, K. *What's Race Got to Do With It? Engaging in Race in HCI*. In CHI 2020 Workshops [organized virtually].
10. **To, A.**, Hammer, J., Kaufman, G. *The Role of Trust in Technology in Coping with Experiences with Racism*. In Proc. CSCW 2019 Social Technologies for Digital Wellbeing Among Marginalized Communities Workshop.
9. **To, A.**, Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. *Mitigating Vicarious Trauma in Conducting Sensitive Research*. In Proc. CHI 2019 Sensitive Research, Practice, and Design in HCI Workshop.
8. **To, A.**, Hammer, J., Kaufman, G. *Promoting Digital Wellbeing by Empowering Users from Racial Minority Groups*. In Proc. CHI 2019 Designing for Digital Wellbeing Workshop.
7. **To, A.**, Ali, S., Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. *Integrating Curiosity and Uncertainty in Game Design*. (in press) Curiosity Research in HCI.
6. Deterding, S., Smith, D., Powley, E.J., Hammer, J., **To, A.**, Guckelsberger, C. 2018. *Curiosity in Games: An Interdisciplinary Workshop*. In Proc. FDG 2018 Workshops.
5. **To, A.**, Kaufman, G., Hammer, J. 2017. *Designing Affective Supports for Curiosity in Games*. In Proc. CHI 2017 Designing for Curiosity Workshop.
4. Nebeling, M., **To, A.**, Guo, A., de Freitas, A., Teevan, J., Dow, S., Bigham, J. 2016. *WearWrite: Crowd-Assisted Writing from Smartwatches*. In Proc. CHI 2016 Productivity Decomposed Workshop.
3. Nebeling, M., Guo, A., **To, A.**, Dow, S., Teevan, J., Bigham, J. 2015. *WearWrite: Orchestrating the Crowd to Complete Complex Tasks from Wearables*. In Proc. UIST 2015 Demos.
2. **To, A.**. 2015. *Experts On Demand: Enabling Flash Organizations with Rapid Onboarding*. Masters Thesis, Symbolic Systems Program. Readers: Michael Bernstein, Melissa Valentine
1. **To, A.**. 2014. *Foundry: Managing Teams of Experts Online*. Senior Honors Thesis, Symbolic Systems Program. Readers: Michael Bernstein, Daniela Retelny

Research Experience (Academic)

Critical Race Theory & HCI

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY HCII

- With: Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Oburu, Angela Smith, Kentaro Toyama
- Exploring and defining the intersection of Critical Race Theory and Human-Computer Interaction

Pittsburgh, PA

Jun. 2019 - PRESENT

Coping After Racist Experiences (CARE)

Pittsburgh, PA

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY HCII

Jan. 2018 - PRESENT

- With: Jessica Hammer, Geoff Kaufman
- Exploring the development of racial and ethnic identity, peoples experiences with racism in personal interactions, and how they respond to them and develop resilience through communication with others in their social networks.

Data-Driven Diversity (D3) Lab

Pittsburgh, PA

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY HCII

Sept. 2018 - July 2020

- With: Kody Manke, Linda Babcock, Geoff Kaufman
- Consulting with D3 lab on projects understanding how different groups experience student success, thriving, and a sense of belonging at Carnegie Mellon University.

Character Diversity in Games

Pittsburgh, PA

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY HCII

Feb. 2016 - Jan. 2018

- With: Jessica Hammer, Geoff Kaufman, Joselyn McDonald
- Exploring how digital and non-digital games express diversity (i.e., representations of marginalized groups to which player may or may not belong) through characters.

Sensing Curiosity in Play and Responding (SCIPR)

Pittsburgh, PA

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY HCII

Aug. 2015 - Dec. 2018

- With: Jessica Hammer, Geoff Kaufman, Elaine Fath, Safinah Ali, Jarrek Holmes, Zhen Bai
- Designing, and researching game-based interventions for marginalized science identity middle school students

WearWrite

Pittsburgh, PA

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY HCII

July. 2015 - Sept. 2015

- With: Steven Dow, Jeff Bigham, Michael Nebeling
- Exploring shepherding the crowd through a smart watch. Contributed development to front end interface, designed lab protocol, running the study, and writing paper publication.

Flash Organizations

Stanford, CA

STANFORD UNIVERSITY HCI GROUP

Jun. 2014 - Jun. 2015

- With: Michael Bernstein, Melissa Valentine, Daniela Retelny, Negar Rahmati, Tulsee Doshi
- Scaling up the team capabilities of the expert crowd using HCI and organizational behavior research. More work developing our online platform, Foundry, as well as developing and testing of theoretical framework.

Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project

Stanford, CA

STANFORD UNIVERSITY ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Sept. 2013 - Dec. 2013

- With: Gordon H. Chang
- Mining America's Historical archive newspapers for information searching specifically for anything that references Chinese railroad workers to compile and attempt to learn more about these individuals.

Flash Teams

Stanford, CA

STANFORD UNIVERSITY HCI GROUP

Jun. 2013 - Sept. 2013

- With: Michael Bernstein, Daniela Retelny, Sébastien Robaszkiewicz
- Creating lightweight modular team structures to guide teams of expert crowd workers. Developed an online platform, Foundry, for the authorship and run-time coordination of these teams.

MLK Jr. Digital History

Stanford, CA

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SYMBOLIC SYSTEMS PROGRAM

Jun. 2012 - Sept. 2012

- With: Todd Davies, Clay Carson
- Work jointly with the Symbolic Systems Program and the Martin Luther King Jr. Institute. Designing a collaborative history online platform to engage a wide audience with digital history as well as designing research studies.

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record, Game Concept Dev. and Prod. (GAME 3800)

ART + DESIGN AT NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

2021

Instructor of Record, Human-Computer Interaction (IS 4300)

KHOURY COLLEGE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AT NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

2020

TA, User-Centered Research & Evaluation (05-410/05-610)

HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION INSTITUTE AT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

2019

Instructors of Record: Amy Ogan and Raelin Musuraca

TA, Programming Usable Interfaces (05-430/05630)

HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION INSTITUTE AT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

2017

Instructor of Record: Jason Hong

TA, Navigating Race and Identity in America (85-357)

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

2017

Instructor of Record: Kody Manke

TA, Minds and Machines (SymSys 100)

SYMBOLIC SYSTEMS PROGRAM AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

2014

Instructors of Record: Dan Lassiter, Thomas Icard, Todd Davies

CA, Human-Computer Interaction Seminar (CS 547)

COMPUTER SCIENCE DEPARTMENT AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

2014

Instructor of Record: Michael Bernstein

Work Experience

UX Research Intern

FACEBOOK, INC.

May 2018 - Aug. 2018

Working on the Emerging Verticals team conducting qualitative research (e.g., diary studies, interviews) with small business owners and consumers.

Design Intern

SCHELL GAMES

May 2017 - Aug. 2017

Working on an interdisciplinary team with eleven game designers, artists, and developers working on transformational game design for a digital app. Gathered and synthesized research related to the project's transformational goals, contributed to design brainstorming and iteration, and wrote narrative content.

Residential Computer Consultant

RESIDENTIAL COMPUTING AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

2013-2015

Aided residents on campus with technology issues including common hardware and software failures and Internet connection. Managed residential computing cluster machines. Hosted technology-based events aimed at increasing comfort with technology and for social bonding in residence.

Head Student Advisor

BING OVERSEAS STUDY PROGRAM AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

2013-2015

Managed a team of 25 student advisors for 12 study abroad programs. Organized outreach events in all freshman dorms as well as engineering and athlete programs, coordinated student advisors, put together promotional materials. This role was created specifically for me after my first year as a student advisor.

Selected Invited Presentations

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DUB SEMINAR

01/2021

"Designing to Empower Marginalized Communities through Social Technology"

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY - KHOURY COLLEGE

12/2020

"Coded Bias Viewing & Panel Discussion"

STANFORD HCI SEMINAR

10/2020

"Designing to Empower Marginalized Communities through Social Technology"

CORNELL INFO SCI COLLOQUIUM

10/2020

"Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith

WELLESLEY CS220 HCI GUEST LECTURE "Designing to Empower Marginalized Communities through Social Technology" & "Critical Race Theory for HCI"	09/2020
UCHICAGO HCI SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	08/2020
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND HCIL "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	08/2020
SNAP HCI RESEARCH SPECIAL SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	08/2020
UC BERKELEY AFOG GROUP "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	08/2020
CHICAGOCHI "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	08/2020
ADOBE RESEARCH HCI/VIS SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	08/2020
THUMBTRACK DEI, DESIGN, RESEARCH SPECIAL SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	07/2020
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN MISC SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	07/2020
FACEBOOK "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	07/2020
STANFORD UNIVERSITY HCI GROUP LUNCH SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	07/2020
CARNEGIE MELLON HCII AND ROBOTICS INSTITUTE SPECIAL SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	07/2020
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DUB SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	07/2020
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY - KHOURY COLLEGE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE "Designing to Empower Marginalized Communities through Social Technology"	06/2020
MICROSOFT RESEARCH HCI SEMINAR "Critical Race Theory for HCI" - Co-Presented with Ihudiya Finda Ogbonnaya-Ogburu, Angela Smith	05/2020
INNOVATION WITH IMPACT, CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY "Fictional, Interactive Narrative as a Foundation to Talk about Racism"	04/2020
WOMEN IN DATA SCIENCE (WIDs) @ CMU Virtual Panel	03/2020
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY - COLLEGE OF ARTS, MEDIA & DESIGN "Designing to Empower Marginalized Communities through Social Technology"	02/2020
CMU HCII/PHILIPS HEALTH FUNDER MEETING "SleepyGames Research Presentation" - Co-Presented with Adela Kapuścińska	10/2019
MOSAIC ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON INTERSECTIONALITY, CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY "Incorporating Intersectionality in Your Research" - Co-Facilitated with Judeth Oden Choi	10/2019
INNOVATION WITH IMPACT, CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY " "They Just Don't Get It": Support Seeking for Racist Experiences"	04/2019
STANFORD UNIVERSITY HCI GROUP LUNCH SEMINAR "Supporting Curiosity-Driven Question-Asking with a Transformational Game"	07/2018

Service

Professional Service

Associate Chair	CSCW 2021
Program Committee	DiGRA 2018 “Users” Track, DiGRA 2019 “Making Sense of Play and Players” Track, DiGRA 2020 “Game History and Cultural Context” Track
LBW/WiP Assoc. Chair	CHI: 2021 CHI Play: 2019, 2020
Paper Reviewer	CHI: 2018, 2020, 2021 CSCW: 2020 CHI Play: 2020 DIS: 2020 IDC: 2019, 2020 Meaningful Play: 2018 DiGRA/FDG: 2016 Creativity & Cognition: 2017
LBW/WiP Reviewer	CHI: 2019, 2020 alt.CHI: 2020 CHI Play: 2017 MobileHCI: 2017 Creativity & Cognition: 2019
Student Game Reviewer	CHI: 2016, 2020
Student Volunteer	CHI Play 2016, DiGRA 2017

Northeastern University Institutional Service

2020-2021	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB) Committee, Game Science and Design (GSND) Program Committee, Joint CAMD + Khoury Faculty Hiring Committee
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Carnegie Mellon Institutional Service

2019-2020	HCII Faculty Hiring Committee
2016-2018	HCII PhD Open House Volunteer
2015-2020	OH!Lab 2015-2020 Lab Historian, eHeart Lab 2015-2020 Lab Historian

Community Service

Selection Committee	Carnegie Science Awards 2018, 2019, 2020
Logistics Committee	Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit 2019 (<i>Signs, Logistics, Accessibility Co-Chair</i>), Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit 2020 (<i>Evaluations Chair</i>)
Alumni Volunteer Interviewer	Stanford University Undergraduate Admissions 2019, 2020

Skills & Methods

Research Methods Interviewing, Grounded Theory, Controlled Lab Experiments, Think Aloud Study Protocols, Studies with Children, Ethnomethodology, Surveys, Research Through Design, Co-Design

User-Centered Design Paper Prototyping, Rapid Iterative Prototyping, UI Wireframing, Heuristic Evaluation, Storyboards, Cognitive Task Analysis, Transformational Game Design, Competitive Analysis, Contextual Inquiry

Game Design Transformational, Educational, Tabletop, Interactive Narrative Games (e.g., Inform, Twine), Playtesting, Participatory Design with Children

Selected Media

- 06/20 **UMSI News**, U-M research reveals racism challenges in human-computer interaction
- 01/2019 **CMU News**, Alumnus, Students Join Pittsburgh Community at Racial Justice Summit
- 07/2017 **New York Times**, The Pop-Up Employer: Build a Team, Do the Job, Say Goodbye
- 11/2016 **HCII News & Events**, HCII & ETC Student Game Brings Home Best Student Game and People's Choice Award
- 08/2014 **Stanford News**, Stanford's Symbolic Systems program bridges the gap b/t humanity and technology
- 08/2014 **Stanford News**, Stanford team looks to take crowdsourcing to a whole new level

Updated: January 25, 2021