

# Experiential Ethics 2024

Week 5: Social Construction,  
Technology and Justice



# Administrative Issues

- **Op-Ed:** A finished essay is better than a perfect essay.
- **Independent Project:** It's time to start thinking about ideas for your final project.
  - Opportunity to be creative, explore topics and formats that interest you.
  - Two options: meet with me in the next few days (post-meeting send a short email with your topic/question + format); send a short memo with topic/question + format.
- **Midterm Evaluation**

# Social Construction

- What is social construction?
  - Reality-Concrete vs. Ideas/Social Processes/Mental Images-Abstract
- Explain the two kinds of social construction
- Activity N 1: Show and tell. Present an example of a social construction (be it an idea, an object, etc.) and justify why it is a social construction.
  - 1 minutes to think.
  - Each student has 3 minutes to present their example.
- First reactions: it is an useful concept? If so, when it is helpful?

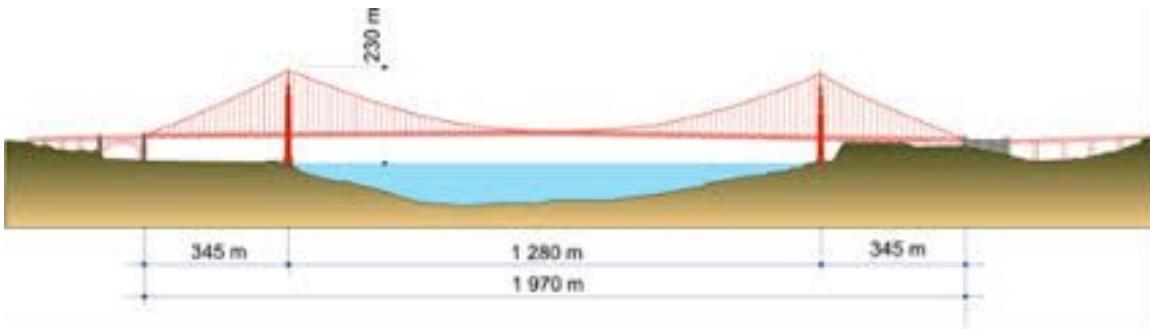
# Park Benches



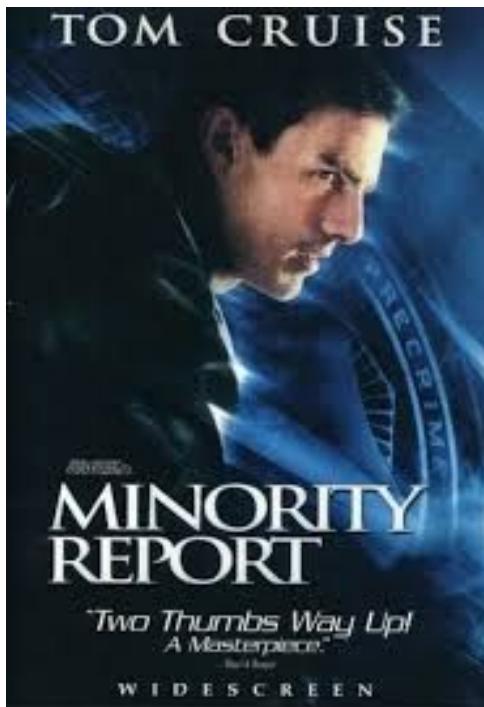
- In your own words, what does discrimination mean?
  - Is it something negative? Neutral? Positive?
  - When do people say that they were discriminated?
- 
- What is Discriminatory Design?
  - Example of Park Benches
  - First reactions about the video.



# Science, Technology and Design



# Neurosciences and Artificial Intelligence



## Machine Learning Can Predict Shooting Victimization Well Enough to Help Prevent

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This paper shows that shootings are predictable enough to be preventable. Using arrest and victimization records for almost 644,000 people from the Chicago Police Department, we train a machine learning model to predict the risk of being shot in the next 18 months. Out-of-sample accuracy is strikingly high: of the 500 people with the highest predicted risk, almost 13 percent are shot within 18 months, a rate 128 times higher than the average Chicagoan. A central concern is that algorithms may "bake in" bias found in police data, overestimating risk for people likelier to interact with police conditional on their behavior. We show that Black male victims more often have enough police contact to generate predictions. But those predictions are not, on average, inflated; the demographic composition of predicted and actual shooting victims is almost identical. There are legal, ethical, and practical barriers to using these predictions to target law enforcement. But using them to target social services could have enormous preventive benefits: predictive accuracy among the top 500 people justifies spending up to \$134,400 per person for an intervention that could cut the probability of being shot by half.

# We Can Do Better

- How are the ideas of socially constructed objects and discriminatory design connected?
- Every artifact is designed with some purpose. Does that mean everything is discriminatory in its design?
- Does labeling something as “discriminatory design” imply that it is a bad/unfair thing, or can discriminatory design be ethically acceptable?
- Can something be discriminatory if it’s designed specifically to advantage a disadvantaged group?
- Can a design be discriminatory even if the designer has no ill intentions?