TIANQI KOU

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RESEARCH FOCUS

I study how implicit and explicit communication norms—or their absence—shape the validity of ML research argumentation and broader discourse about AI tools' capabilities. My ultimate aim is to improve ML research rigor and social accountability of ML research & technologies by: drawing on philosophical and qualitative methods, (1) dissecting how harms (e.g. AI hype) emerge from communication; (2) developing responsible communication norms to mitigate these harms; (3) enforcing such norms through academic, policy, or legal reforms.

EDUCATION

2021- M.S., Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University
Information Science (Advisor: Dana Calacci)
Committee: Daniel Susser, Cindy Lin, Andrea Miller

2017-19 M.S., Dean's Fellowship, Fordham University
Computer Science (Advisor: Yijun Zhao)

2013-17 B.S., with high honors, Harbin Institute of Technology, Monash University
Economics

APPOINTMENTS & AFFILIATIONS

Center for Socially Responsible Artificial Intelligence, Penn State University
2022- Student Affiliate

Critical Technocultures Lab, Georgia Institute of Technology
2023- Visiting Scholar

Apteo
2019-21 Machine Learning Engineer
(Industry Employment)

LOGIC(S)
2024- Liberal Tech Scholar
Fact Checker

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

2025 Sloan Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow Finalist
2024 Liberatory Tech Scholar Fellowship, LOGIC(S)
2024 Graduate Student Award for Excellence in Teaching Support, Penn State IST
2024 FAccT Student Travel Award
2023 Dean's Travel Award, Penn State IST
2022 Microsoft PhD Research Fellowship Nomination, Penn State IST
2019 Graduate Academic Achievement Award, Fordham University
2017-19 Dean's Fellowship, Fordham University
2016-17 Chinese Scholarship Council First Class Scholarship
2013-17 National People's Scholarship

SELECTED WORKS IN PROGRESS

1. "A Path to New Forms of Machine Learning Accountability: Identifying Gaps and Challenges in Designing for the Implementation of Social Claim Replicability."
   Tianqi Kou and Dana Calacci

2. "What is the Hype? A Relational Conception: Demonstration Using Four Machine Learning Based Policing Tools."
   Tianqi Kou, Dana Calacci, Nasser Eledroos, and David Gray Widder

PUBLICATIONS

Note: In computer and information science, papers published in major conference proceedings are double-anonymously peer reviewed and recognized as equivalent research contributions to journal articles.

Articles and proceedings

1. Dead Zone of Accountability: Why Social Claims in Machine Learning Research Should Be Articulated and Defended.
   Proceedings of the AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society (AIES), 2025, forthcoming. [Preprint] or [TL;DR]
   Tianqi Kou, Dana Calacci, and Cindy Lin
2. From Model Performance to Claim: How a Change of Focus in Machine Learning Replicability Can Help Bridge the Responsibility Gap.
   Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (FAccT), 2024, Pages 1002 - 1013. [Article]
   Tianqi Kou

Preprints

3. A Quantitative Machine Learning Approach to Master Students Admission for Professional Institutions.
   [Preprint available upon request]

TALKS / PANELS / WORKSHOPS/ SYMPOSIUMS

1. What is the Hype: A Relational Conception of Hype in AI-based Tools in Policing Context.
   Workshop Presentation. Hype Studies Conference; Barcelona, Spain. Sept. 2025.
   Tianqi Kou, Dana Calacci, Nasser Eledroos
2. Claim Replicability and the Responsibility Gap.
   Invited Talk, Digital Life Initiative, Cornell Tech, NYC. Oct. 2024.
   Tianqi Kou
3. A Feminist Conception of Replicability for Machine Learning Research
   Poster. Institute for Computational and Data Sciences Symposium. Oct. 2024.
   Tianqi Kou
4. The Function of Replication Studies in Machine Learning Research.
   Workshop Presentation. Philosophy of Science Meets Machine Learning; Tübingen, Germany. Sept. 2025.
   Tianqi Kou
5. The Underestimation and Overestimation of Reproducibility in Machine Learning Research Claims.
   Poster. Institute for Computational and Data Sciences Symposium (2023)
   Tianqi Kou

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

2025	Hype Studies Conference, Barcelona, Spain.
	Author
	Privacy Law Scholars Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
2024	ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency.
	Author
	Northeast HCI, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA.
2023	Association for Library and Information Science Education, Pittsburgh, PA.
2022	Workshop on the Reproducibility Crisis in ML-based Science, Princeton University.

TEACHING

Penn State University

AY23-24	IST 402: Emerging Issues and Technologies / Teaching Assistant
AY23-24	DS 200: Intro to Data Science / Teaching Assistant
AY22-24	IST 230: Language, Logic, and Discrete Mathematics (three times) / Teaching Assistant
AY21-22	DS 310: Machine Learning / Teaching Assistant

Fordham University

AY17-18	CIS S5800: Machine Learning (two times) / Teaching Assistant

AY18-19 SDGB 7844: Statistical Methods and Computation II / Teaching Assistant

Harbin Institute of Technology, eHealth Research Institute

AY14-15 Intro to Python and R for Digital Health / Instructor Assistant

SERVICE

2025 Student Track Mentor / AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society

2025 Reviewer / AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society

Program Committee / ACM Conference on Fairness Accountability and Transparency

Reviewer / Big Data & Society

2024 Reviewer / ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems

2024 Queer Graduate Student in STEM, Penn State College of Engineering.