

# TIANQI KOU

The Pennsylvania State University

College of IST

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Updated Oct 2025

## RESEARCH FOCUS

I study the **construction and mitigation of AI hype** within the communicative dimension of the machine learning ecosystem. Using philosophical and qualitative methods, I **analyze how hype emerges** as claims about contributions and capabilities circulate through interconnected communities—ML scientists, vendors, adopters, critical scholars, courts, civic groups, media, and regulators—and **develop norms of responsible communication** to counter it. Currently, I situate this inquiry in the context of carceral AI.

## RESEARCH KEY WORDS

Philosophy of Science and Technology, Science and Technology Studies, AI Hype, Communication Norm, Accountability, Tech Policy

## EDUCATION

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|---------|---|
| 2021–   | M.S., Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University<br>Information Science (Advisor: Dana Calacci)<br>Committee: Daniel Susser, Cindy Lin, Andrea Miller |
| 2017–19 | M.S., Dean’s Fellowship, Fordham University<br>Computer Science (Advisor: Yijun Zhao)   |
| 2013–17 | B.S., with high honors, Harbin Institute of Technology, Monash University<br>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

## AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

2025	Dean's Travel Award
2025	Sloan Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow Finalist
2024	Liberatory Tech Scholar Fellowship, LOGIC(S)
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 Excellence 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. "Implementing Social Claim Accountability in Machine Learning: Challenges and Opportunities"  
Tianqi Kou and Dana Calacci
2. "What is the Hype? A Relational Conception Hype in AI-based Tools in Policing Contexts."  
Tianqi Kou, Dana Calacci, Nasser Eledroos, Dasha Pruss, 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.  
[\[Paper\]](#) or [\[Proceeding Poster\]](#)  
**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. [\[Paper\]](#)  
**Tianqi Kou**

### *Preprints*

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

## 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, David Gray Widder, Dasha Pruss
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

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|------|--|
| 2025 | AAAI/ACM Conference on Artificial Intelligence Ethics and Society, Madrid, Spain.<br>Author<br>Hype Studies Conference, Barcelona, Spain.<br>Author<br>Privacy Law Scholars Conference, Los Angeles, CA. |
| 2024 | ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency.<br>Author<br>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*

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|---------|---|
| 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*

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|---------|--|
| 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.