# Weapons of Math Destruction by Cathy O’Neil

Reading Discussion Questions for Chapters 4 and 5

**DUE ON 10/19/21**

Discussion will take place in class on 10/20/21, and I will return this sheet to you before discussion begins.

Written answers to these questions are worth up to 2 points, participation in discussion is worth up to 1 point, to a maximum of 2 points possible.

1. On page 70, O’Neil writes, “Anywhere you find the combination of great need and ignorance, you’ll likely see predatory ads.” Where have you experienced this type of advertising? Were you able to identify that it was predatory?

The most significant will be online shopping. When you are looking up something in the Amazon, for example, the system recorded by browsing activity and started to send you an enormous amount of advertisement about the product you look at. I am able to identify these as they are what I just looked at few days ago.

1. Page 77 mentions an intentionally misleading ad. What role does misinformation play in WMDs? How do you protect against it?

Misleading ads can lead to serious consequences, and some of them, if political, can lead to a sentiment of dislike towards a group of people. As a country’s defense department once posted an anti-Muslimism post on the social media, it leads to the dislike of the Muslim group in that country. You can be protected against it by doing more research on if the ad is valid or not.

1. What do you think (if anything) should be done about for-profit colleges?

For profiting colleges should be taxed more as they are overpricing the knowledge which are supposed to be free to everyone. College’s goal supposed to be using the money they get from the students in teaching them and building infrastructures that benefits them, instead of making money out of the students.

1. On page 86, the founder of PredPol says “the model is blind to race and ethnicity.” Describe how he is both wrong and right in that statement.
2. Describe in your own words the feedback loop that happens in the justice system. (Described in chapter 5)
3. One of the reasons that WMDs exist is because concepts like fairness (pg. 94 & 95) and trust (pg. 103) are difficult to encode in mathematical models. How would you go about solving that issue?
4. What was your favorite passage or idea from these chapters? (write it along with pg. #)
5. What questions do you have?

If the misleading ads are so prevalent among the society nowadays, why there are so many people believe to trust the information that is believed to be “insane” in many people’s eyes?