

WEEKLY READINGS

Course Introduction

Monday January 27: *Is progress always good?*

- Hans Jonas, "Experimenting on Human Subjects"
 - Excerpt: "Society and the cause of progress"

Unit 1: Developing Frameworks

Thursday January 30: *Can rules help us be good?*

- Read: Sven Nyholm, "The ethics of crashes with self-driving cars"
 - [there is a part 2 to this article which is optional; it is in our texts folder]
- Watch: *The Good Place*, Season 2, Episode 5 [the whole episode is great, but you only need the first little bit to get the trolley problem content] (Netflix)
 - If you cannot access Netflix, not to worry! I will show the relevant bits in class.
- [Optional: Jack Denton, "[Is the trolley problem derailing the ethics of self-driving cars?](#)"]
- **Guiding Questions:** While reading and watching, think about the role that *rules* are playing in the design of self-driving cars. Do you think it is possible to come up with a complete set of rules that will make autonomous vehicles safe? What do you think Michael's point is in the gory version of the "trolley-problem" to which he subjects Chidi? Nyholm discusses several ethical theories that might be brought to bear on the question of autonomous vehicles - which do you think works best? Which would be disastrous?

Monday February 3: *Is social media compatible with the good life?*

- Shannon Vallor, "Flourishing on Facebook"
- **Guiding Questions:** Think a bit about the role social media plays in your life--does it make your life better? Does it make *you* better? If you do not use social media, why not? Is your choice related to the questions Vallor raises or something different? Do you think that friendship is essential for the good life? What do you make of Vallor's explanation of the value of virtue ethics on bottom page 186/top 187? Do you think reciprocity, as Vallor defines (pages 188-189) is the "glue" of all friendship? Is meaningful reciprocity possible on social media? How about empathy (page 191)? Can you think of examples of meaningful empathy online? Does social media facilitate self-knowledge (page 194)? Does social media

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really allow us to *share our lives* (page 196)? If you take current social media to not help us develop these virtues, can you imagine a kind of social media that would?

Thursday February 6: *How does AI help (or hurt) us?*

■ **AI and Ethics Lab 1 with CS 232: Alexa Project & Discussion in Module 210S**

- Watch: *Her* [<https://sites.google.com/a/wellesley.edu/lts-videos/>]
- Read: Megan Specia, "[Siri and Alexa reinforce gender bias](#)" (NYT)
- Read: Sigal Samual, "[Alexa, are you making me sexist?](#)" (VOX).
- **Guiding Questions:** "Don't fall in love with your cellphone" -- good advice? Is *Her* a cautionary tale? If so, what is it cautioning us against? If not, why not? Is there anything morally wrong with trading painful loneliness for companionship, even if that companionship might mean giving up privacy and, maybe authenticity? Does Samantha betray Theodore? Have you ever worried about the manner in which you or someone else has interacted with a voice assistant? Do you think that the fact that voice assistants typically have women's voices contributes to the view that women belong or are more appropriately placed in roles of service? And, relatedly, being polite and accommodating no matter how they are treated? Should voice assistants be programmed with feminist values?

Monday February 10: *Can some kinds of tech influence our ability to be good?*

- Monique Wonderly, "A Humean Approach to Assessing the Moral Significance of Ultra-Violent Video Games"
- **Content Guide:** Pages 1, 2, and 3 describe games that depict sexual assault and violence. Page 4 describes cases of criminal behavior that some think is due to playing the kinds of games described in pages 1-3.
- **Guiding Questions:** "[Some people insist that] playing video games is a benign and largely amoral activity" (page 1): are these people right? Why or why not? Is it possible to put your morality "on hold" while gaming? (Think about how your answer might change if the game is happening through virtual reality....) What do you think of the claim that video games can be considered "persuasive technology" (page 4)? Do you think a case could be made for utilitarian or Kantian models to apply to thinking about the moral status of violent games (page 5)? How does Hume define morality (page 5)? Do you think that moral realism is true (page 6)? What do you make of the role of Humean "sympathy" in morality (page 7)? Does it strike you as true that we tend to empathize more with people like ourselves, and less with people who are different from us (page 7)? Do you think that there is a relevant difference between viewing violence on TV or in movies and playing violent video games (page 8)? How much authority should the courts have to decide what kinds of video games should be available to users (pages 8-9)? Should children have special and/or greater protections against accessing such games? Why or why not?

Thursday February 13: *How do harmony and personhood intersect with tech?*

- Pak-Hang Wong, "Dao, Harmony and Personhood: Towards a Confucian Ethics of Technology"
- **Guiding Questions:** How does Wong describe the metaphysical nature of *Dao* (pages 69-70), its epistemological nature (page 70), its ethico-political nature (pages 70-71)? How does Wong describe the role of harmony (pages 72-73)? Why is the Confucian notion of personhood *thick* (page 74)? Why is the Confucian person *developmental* (page 75); why is it virtue-based (page 76)? Why are social roles important in Confucianism (page 78)? Does "learning to be human" seem like an important consideration

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for developing tech (page 81)? What about "mutual enrichment" (page 81)? What about "role based ethics" (pages 82-83)? How do you think the Confucian model outlined by Wong is different from what Vallor discussed? From Wonderly?

Tuesday February 18: *What does it look like to think intersectionally about tech?*

- Safiya Noble, "A Future for Intersectional Black Feminist Technology Studies"
- **Guiding Questions:** What is Noble's goal of theorizing a liberatory, intersectional internet (pages 1-2)? Noble notes research that indicates that the default identity of internet users is a white male; does this accord with your experience (page 2)? Noble draws connections between economic and social precarity of Black women and new media and information studies; what do you think (page 3)? What do you make of the critique of the neoliberal efforts to empower Black women; especially the notion of privileging the individual over the collective (which may remind us of Wong's discussion) (page 3)? What do you make of Noble's neocolonial argument on page 4? Is coltan the new rubber? Ought we consider the nature of Silicon Valley, and the types of people who get to work and live there when we consume tech products (page 5)? What about the ecological impact (page 5)? Is there such a thing as value-free tech (page 6)?

Unit 2: Privacy

Thursday February 20: *What's surveillance got to do with capitalism?*

- **AI and Ethics Lab 2 with CS 232: Alexa Project & Discussion in Module 210S**
- Shoshana Zuboff, "You are now remotely controlled" (NYT)
- Shoshana Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, Chapter 9 excerpt.
 - [Optional: Shoshana Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, pages 3-17; 63-97]
 - [Optional: Read/Listen: Richard Serra (American artist), *Television Delivers People* (1973)]
- **Guiding Questions:** What is surveillance capitalism (NYT page 1, para.2, 3)? Do you think it is wrong for Zuckerberg to refuse to remove doctored videos from Facebook (page 2, para.1)? Why or why not? "Privacy is not private" (page 2, para.4 and following) -- what does Zuboff mean? What does she mean by "epistemic inequality" (page 3, para.3 and following)? Are the statistics about where computer scientists end up working surprising (page 5, para.1)? What is meant by the shift from monitoring to actuation (page 5, para.5)? Is privacy a luxury good (page 6, para.6)? Does surveillance capitalism drive innovation (page 8, para.6)? Does it bring real value to people (page 9, para.1)? Consider the examples given in Chapter 9 of *Surveillance Capitalism*; are these companies doing something morally wrong? If so, where is the wrong located? What is the violation? And, if we don't like this system, how can we fix it??

Special Event with CS 232 and CAMS 301 (Professor Codruta Morari) at 6:30pm in the Collins Cinema: screening of 1974 surveillance movie *The Conversation*, followed by discussion led by Professors Morari, Mustafaraj, and Walsh.

Monday February 24: *Is privacy a good? Is it a right?*

- Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Right to Privacy"
- Kashmir Hill, "The Secretive Company that Might End Privacy as We Know It" (NYT)
- Privacy Chicken! A game created by the NYT....how far can you get?
 - [Optional: Listen: Podcast on Clearview and Privacy. h/t Keer]

- [Optional: Drew Harwell, "Ring and Nest and Voyeurism"]
- [Optional: Zack Campbell and Chris Jones, "The EU Police Push for Pan-European Facial Recognition Network"]

■ **Guiding Questions:** What do you make of Thomson's argument about the rights one has with respect to the picture on page 299 ("To own a picture is to have a cluster of rights in respect of it")? What about the claim that even if we are not able to do enough to protect the picture, it is still wrong for someone to destroy it (page 300)? Does it seem correct to think of the right to privacy as a kind of right to property -- "The right to not be looked at and the right to not be listened to are analogous to the rights we have over our property" (page 303)? "We have a right that certain steps shall not be taken to find out facts, and we have a right that certain uses shall not be made of facts" (page 307) - what is Thomson's argument for this claim? Thomson claims that the right to privacy is everywhere overlapped by other rights. In other words, when finding out why a violation of the right to privacy has occurred, we can locate the violation of some other right (page 310). Does this seem right? How might we apply Thomson's discussion to the kind of privacy we might feel is being violated online? How does Thomson's discussion, especially the parts about the right to not be looked at, intersect with the discussion of Clearview in the NYT article? From this article, we get the quote: "I have come to the conclusion that because information constantly increases, there's never going to be privacy" -- reactions?? Think about the balance between security (law enforcement) and privacy with respect to facial recognition...how do we balance the good here? Consider the final line from the article: "Asked about the implications of bringing such a power into the world, Mr, Ton-That seemed taken aback. 'I have to think about that,' he said, 'Our belief is that this is the best use of the technology.'" Thoughts?


Special Event: Tuesday February 25

- Hosted by President Johnson, President Spinelli (Babson), and President Miller (Olin), Professor Zuboff will deliver a public lecture at Alumnae Hall at 7:00pm (yay!)
- **Please reserve your free ticket here**: <https://www.wellesley.edu/events/node/172001>

Thursday February 27: *We rate Uber and Lyft drivers, restaurants, professors... Why not one another?*

- Read: Yongxi Chen and Anne Sy Cheung, "The Transparent Self under Big Data Profiling: Privacy and Chinese Legislation on the Social Credit System" (pages 363-373 are optional; please read the other pages)
- Watch: *Nosedive* (Season 3, Episode 1 of the Netflix show *Black Mirror*)
- **Guiding Questions:** What is the stated motivation for China's State Council's Planning Outline for the Construction of the Social Credit System (SCS) (page 358)? Does it seem reasonable? What do you make of the "partnerships" element of the plan (page 360)? Do you think it should be mandatory to participate in this kind of system (page 362)? Do you think that your Personal Credit Information (PCI) is **yours** in the way that Thomson describes your picture in her examples?
- What different kinds of tech do you notice in Lacie's world? How different are they from what we have now, if at all? Does this seem like the future towards which we are inevitably heading? Does Lacie have choice in her world? Do we?

Monday March 2: *Is there such a thing as benevolent surveillance?*

-  Drew Harwell, "Colleges are turning students' phones into surveillance machines"

- Deanna Paul, "Colleges want freshman to use mental health apps"

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- Ifeoma Ajunwa, Kate Crawford, and Jason Schultz, "Limitless Worker Surveillance," pages 103-113.
- **Guiding Questions:** [Harwell] App-enabled attendance points: good idea or bad? Why? Look at paragraph 2 of page 2 - what is argument? Look at paragraph 2 of page 4 - what is the argument? What about paragraph 4 of page 4? Why is it important for the bluetooth beacons to be hidden (page 7)? What is the argument in paragraph 3 on page 7? Is this just nudging (page 9)? What about the benevolence argument at the bottom of page 9 and following? Should parents be able to know whether their child is attending class (page 13)? [Paul] Can you think about how a utilitarian, a deontologist, a virtue ethicist, a confucian ethicist, a Humean sentimentalist, and a Black feminist intersectional ethicist might explain the cost/benefit of TAO and YOU apps? [Ajunwa et al] Have you experienced surveillance in the workplace? Do you think your employer has a right to know what you do outside of work? For example, if you work someone with a strict ethics code of conduct, is it fair for your employer to surveille you outside of work to ensure that you keep up your ethical commitment? Check out the article in footnote 11 for a WILD story about workplace violations of privacy. "We cannot depend on each individual state's legislature to accomplish piecemeal the work of protecting workers" (page 106) -- thoughts? Is the protection of workers' privacy a civil rights issue? What was up with Henry Ford (page 107)? Does the percentage of American companies that monitor their employees' internet use surprise you (page 109)? Do you think that worker surveillance results in lower morale (page 111)? Does an employer have a right to know what their employees are doing on and off the job?

Unit 3: Bias

Thursday March 5: *Can data be feminist?*

- **AI and Ethics Lab 3 with CS 232: Discussion in Pendleton Atrium**
- Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein, *Data Feminism*, Introduction and Chapter 1 **This is a lot of reading, so please make sure you carve out the time for it. It is well worth the investment. Also, a good deal of the pages are images and endnotes :)**
 - [Optional: Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein, *Data Feminism*, Chapter 2]
 - [Optional: Watch: Mimi Onuoha, "What is missing is still there," talk given at Wellesley College in April 2019]
 - [Optional: Read: Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges"]
- **Special Guest Speaker:** Professor Catherine D'Ignazio (yay!)
- **Guiding Questions:** "How can we use data to remake the world" (page 5)? How do D'Ignazio and Klein define intersectionality (pages 7-8)? What about "privilege hazard" (page 8; 28-29)? What is the definition of "data feminism" (page 8)? "Whose information needs to become data before it can be considered as fact and acted upon" (page 10)? What is the connection between data and power (page 12-14)? How should we define "data science" (page 14)? What do you make of the place of emotion and embodiment here (page 18)? What does "examining power" entail; how do we define "power" (page 24)? Please take a moment to get clear on the definitions of "structural domain," "hegemonic domain," "disciplinary domain," and "interpersonal domain" (page 25). What do you make of the Amazon job application screening tool example (page 28)? The facial recognition example (page 29-30)? What does the balance of good/harm look like in the DiF case regarding Zimbabwe (page 31-32)? "Who benefits from data science and who is overlooked" (page 34)? "Whose goals are prioritized in data science (and whose are not)"

and who is overlooked" (page 37). Whose goals are prioritized in data science (and whose are not, PHIL 222 520)? The Target and pregnancy example we discussed in class is discussed on page 40-41. Think about what Noble would say with respect to the example at the bottom of page 42.

Monday March 9: *Are Google search results neutral?*

- Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*, Chapters 1 and 2 (I've given you the Intro too; it's optional. The file also includes all notes and references, which is why it's so big)
- **Guiding Questions:** Who is the internet for? Recall the discussion of Noble's piece on Black feminist intersectionality; we noted that she states that the internet is built with its user in mind: white, cis, heterosexual man. What do you think of the case Noble makes throughout these two chapters as it relates to that point? What is the cultural power of algorithms (chapter 1)? Who do you think is responsible for search results (chapter 2)? Do you agree that "what we find [when we search online] is meaningful" (page 105)?

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