



# Shun Zhang

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**Research interests:** Reinforcement learning; large language models; automated theorem proving; automatic code generation; value alignment.

## Experience

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**Founding Member of Technical Staff**, *Asari AI* (San Francisco, CA) Jun. 2024 - Jan. 2025

- Building AI that plans, abstracts, verifies, and discovers new skills and knowledge.

**Research Scientist**, *MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab* Jun. 2022 - Jun. 2024

**Postdoctoral Researcher**, *MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab* Oct. 2021 - Jun. 2022

**Postdoctoral Researcher**, *IBM-NJIT* Aug. 2020 - Oct. 2021

- Conducted research and published papers on **reinforcement learning** and **large language models**, with a focus on competitive-level code generation, reinforcement learning from human feedback, and AI for scientific discovery.

**Graduate Research Assistant**, *University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor, MI) Sep. 2015 - Apr. 2020

- Conducted research and published papers on **preference elicitation** and **AI safety in reinforcement learning**.
- Designed active learning algorithms to improve a learning agent's performance and guarantee safety in domains with uncertain objectives.

**Software Development Engineer Intern**, *Amazon* (Seattle, WA) Jun. - Aug. 2014

- Created a WebRTC-related internal tool to resolve cross-departmental communication issues.

**Software Development Engineer Intern**, *Semantic Designs* (Austin, TX) Jun. - Aug. 2013

- Created a user interface for a programming language analysis tool for better visualization.

## Education

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**Ph.D. in Computer Science and Engineering**, *University of Michigan* Sep. 2015 - Apr. 2020

- Dissertation: Efficiently Finding Approximately-Optimal Queries for Improving Policies and Guaranteeing Safety
- Advisors: Satinder Singh, Edmund H. Durfee

**M.S. in Computer Science**, *University of Texas at Austin* Aug. 2015

- Master thesis: Parameterized Modular Inverse Reinforcement Learning
- Committee members: Dana Ballard, Peter Stone

**B.S. in Computer Science**, *University of Texas at Austin* May 2014

## Publications and Preprints

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- **Graph-Transformer-based Surrogate Model for Accelerated Converter Circuit Topology Design**  
Shaoze Fan, Haoshu Lu, **Shun Zhang**, Ningyuan Cao, Xin Zhang, and Jing Li  
*Design Automation Conference (DAC)*, 2024  
[paper](#)

- **Improving Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback with Efficient Reward Model Ensemble**  
**Shun Zhang**, Zhenfang Chen, Sunli Chen, Yikang Shen, Zhiqing Sun, and Chuang Gan  
*arXiv*, 2024  
[paper](#)
- **Adaptive Online Replanning with Diffusion Models**  
Siyuan Zhou, Yilun Du, **Shun Zhang**, Mengdi Xu, Yikang Shen, Wei Xiao, Dit-Yan Yeung, and Chuang Gan  
*Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS)*, 2023  
[paper](#)
- **Planning with Large Language Models for Code Generation**  
**Shun Zhang**, Zhenfang Chen, Yikang Shen, Mingyu Ding, Joshua B. Tenenbaum, and Chuang Gan  
*International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR)*, 2023  
[paper](#)
- **Hyper-Decision Transformer for Efficient Online Policy Adaptation**  
Mengdi Xu, Yuchen Lu, Yikang Shen, **Shun Zhang**, Ding Zhao, and Chuang Gan  
*International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR)*, 2023  
[paper](#)
- **Prompting Decision Transformer for Few-shot Policy Generalization**  
Mengdi Xu, Yikang Shen, **Shun Zhang**, Yuchen Lu, Ding Zhao, Joshua B. Tenenbaum, and Chuang Gan  
*International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML)*, 2022  
[paper](#)
- **Power Converter Circuit Design Automation using Parallel Monte Carlo Tree Search**  
Shaoze Fan, **Shun Zhang**, Jianbo Liu, Ningyuan Cao, Xiaoxiao Guo, Jing Li, and Xin Zhang  
*ACM Transactions on Design Automation of Electronic Systems (TODAES)*, 2022  
[paper](#)
- **From Specification to Topology: Automatic Power Converter Design via Reinforcement Learning**  
Shaoze Fan, Ningyuan Cao, **Shun Zhang**, Jing Li, Xiaoxiao Guo, and Xin Zhang  
*International Conference on Computer Aided Design (ICCAD)*, 2021  
[paper](#)
- **Efficiently Finding Approximately-Optimal Queries for Improving Policies and Guaranteeing Safety**  
**Shun Zhang**  
*Ph.D. Dissertation*, 2020  
[paper](#)
- **Querying to Find a Safe Policy Under Uncertain Safety Constraints in Markov Decision Processes**  
**Shun Zhang**, Edmund H. Durfee, and Satinder Singh  
*AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)*, 2020  
[paper](#)
- **Minimax-Regret Querying on Side Effects for Safe Optimality in Factored Markov Decision Processes**  
**Shun Zhang**, Edmund H. Durfee, and Satinder Singh  
*International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI)*, 2018  
[paper](#)
- **Modeling Sensory-Motor Decisions in Natural Behavior**  
Ruohan Zhang, **Shun Zhang**, Matthew H. Tong, Yuchen Cui, Constatin A. Rothkopf, Dana H. Ballard, and Mary M. Hayhoe  
*PLoS Computational Biology*, 2018  
[paper](#)

- **Approximately-Optimal Queries for Planning in Reward-Uncertain Markov Decision Processes**  
Shun Zhang, Edmund H. Durfee, and Satinder Singh  
*International Conference on Automated Planning and Scheduling (ICAPS)*, 2017  
[paper](#)
- **Determining Placements of Influencing Agents in a Flock**  
Katie Genter, Shun Zhang, and Peter Stone  
*Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS)*, 2015  
[paper](#)
- **Autonomous Intersection Management for Semi-Autonomous Vehicles**  
Tsz-Chiu Au, Shun Zhang, and Peter Stone  
*Handbook of Transportation*, 2015  
[paper](#)

## Academic Services

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### Conference Reviewer

IEEE ITSC 2014, AAAI 2019, AISTATS 2023-24, CVPR 2023, ICML 2023-24, NeurIPS 2023-24, ICLR 2024-25.

## Skills

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### Research

Reinforcement learning, convex optimization, deep learning, large language models, active learning, planning under uncertainty.

### Programming languages

Proficient in Python (NumPy, PyTorch). Experienced in Java, C++, C, Scheme, Matlab.

## Miscellaneous

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- Languages: Mandarin Chinese (native), English (professional proficiency).
- No sponsorship required to work in the United States.