COURSE SYLLABUS

IST343.M001 Data in Society, Fall 2025

Instructor: Jasmina Tacheva
Large Lecture: Tuesdays 11 AM – 12:20 PM, Watson Theater
Recitations: Thursdays, various times & locations

Office Hours: Thursdays 9:30-10:50 AM
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Course Description:

You will critically examine how individuals, groups, and societies create and are created by digital data and algorithms. You will analyze the social, political, legal, and environmental impacts of data and data-driven technologies across varying contexts including social media and (generative) AI.

Additional Course Description:

We create, produce, analyze, and make decisions on a wealth of data using tools and techniques that we have created. Our contemporary information environment is fully mediatized, which means that most of what we know as well as how we work, participate in civic and political life, shop, find entertainment, fall in love, maintain our friend and family ties, and learn are done through digital media. The consequence of this is a deep wealth of behavioral data – likes, clicks, shares, comments, views – that marketers, tech giants, businesses, the entertainment industry, the medical industry, politicians, and governments now actively use to segment, target for persuasive messaging, and predict future behavior of the public. This course introduces students to the variety of techniques of data gathering and segmentation, and the social, economic, political, and cultural implications of the increasingly data-driven society we live in. This course aims to help students think critically and practice ethics around data and algorithms in everyday life.

Prerequisite / Co-requisite:

None

Audience:

Undergraduate Students

Credits:

3

Learning Objectives:

IST 343 is closely aligned with the university's shared competency of Ethics and Integrity (EI). The table below illustrates how the course learning outcomes connect with the EI learning outcomes, program objectives, and class assignments:

IST343 Course Learning Objectives	EI Learning Outcomes	IST 343 Assignments
Analyze how algorithms (re)shape social relations and institutional practices between groups of people along intersectional dimensions of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, and class using theories and concepts from critical humanist perspectives.	Critically analyze ethical cases, issues, or dilemmas and their broader societal and/or institutional impact	Final exam; Recitation notebooks; Reading prompts
Identify the flaws in data and models that lead to unintended consequences that negatively affect individuals, groups, and cultures.	Critically analyze ethical cases, issues, or dilemmas and their broader societal and/or institutional impact	Final exam; Critical writing essays; Reading prompts
Describe how historical practices, datasets, and cultures have led to current data science techniques and algorithm models.	Examine one's own code of ethics and how their values, histories, and communities inform actions.	Critical writing essays; Final exam
Explain how data is collected, aggregated, and used to develop and revise algorithms.	Evaluate ethical frameworks that promote integrity in action.	Critical writing essays; Recitation notebooks; Reading prompts

This course satisfies Syracuse University IDEAS course requirements.

Texts / Supplies – Required:

All the books are available for free. See the links below.

- Wong, Wendy. (2023). *We, the Data*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Available Available for free by following this link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UiYw3hq_ALnbh3BkY6WqUKgJ8niEwBUJ/view?usp=drive_link
- D'Ignazio, Catherine, & Klein, Lauren F. (2020). *Data Feminism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Available for free at: https://bit.ly/datafeminism-book
- D'Ignazio, Catherine. (2024). *Counting Feminicide*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Available for free at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YjUaH7QYxf1ob6cLeqCYm-

data- and algorithm-driven world so that you can make informed, intentional choices as an information and data professional. Attendance is expected and will be taken for both the large lecture and the recitation meetings, and students who fail to attend will be noted. Students who are not attending class typically perform poorly on the assessments and will miss participating in graded in-class activities.

Grading:

Assessments and Weights:
Assessments will focus on measuring your critical engagement with concepts and arguments from the required readings, your ability to apply the ideas to data science examples, and your ability to critically evaluate data science in practice. Assessments will be comprised of the following, which measure all 4 learning outcomes for this course:

- Critical writing essays – 3 (15% each - 45% of overall grade)
- Reading quizzes on readings for large lecture (10% - lowest 2 dropped)
- Reading prompts on readings for the week (15% - lowest 2 dropped)
- Recitation activities (10% of overall grade)
- Final exam (20% of overall grade)

We do not "bump up" final grades for students on the cusp between grades. To accommodate unforeseen circumstances that may result in an occasional absence, you may miss two large lecture classes and two recitation sessions and still earn full credit for the class engagement component of your overall grade.

Assignment Descriptions:

- **Reading Quizzes for Large Lecture.** To support your reading and to give you feedback on your understanding of the readings, a short quiz will be administered during the large lecture. The lowest 2 grades will be dropped. Because you are still learning about the ideas from the readings, the weight for this is low in your final grade. If you are not in class, you cannot take or make up quizzes, except via approved absences.
- **Reading Prompts for Recitations.** To help support your reading, give you feedback on your understanding, and to facilitate contributions to rich class discussion, there will be short writing prompts at the start of recitation class on the assigned reading and lecture for the week. The lowest 2 grades will be dropped. If you are not in class, you cannot take or make up quizzes, except via approved absences.
- **Critical Writing Essays.** For each book-related module of the course, you will be expected to critically analyze a data-science-related phenomenon. You will apply a concept or idea from the reading to something out in the world. You will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge and mastery of ideas from the readings.
- **Final Exam.** To help you analytically interpret and engage with the current and future philosophical implications of digital data on society and synthesize the ideas across the readings, **you will complete a comprehensive in-person final exam.**
- **Recitation Activities.** Your recitation activity score is determined by your participation