PHIL 3101: AI Ethics & Policy

Dr. Reeham R. Mohammed
Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter School of Public Policy
rrmohammed@gatech.edu

Course Time: T/R 12:30 – 2:40 PM
Course Duration: 5/18 – 8/6
Course Location: On Zoom

Course Description:

This course will explore the ethical and philosophical dimensions of artificial intelligence (AI). AI – and related fields of data science and machine learning (ML) – are transforming the world in which we live. They have the potential to bring tremendous benefits, but they also involve risks, including risks of privacy harms; human rights violations; social injustice and inequality; alienation, and – according to some – human extinction. In this course, we will examine conceptual tools and frameworks that deepen our understanding of the ethical and philosophical issues associated with AI; we will probe these tools and frameworks in the context of current cases and challenges (including discussions of bias, human-machine interaction, surveillance, machine consciousness, impacts on democracy, environmental degradation, and others), and we will explore policies and standards that help us to realize our shared goals and values.

Texts:

Arvind Narayanan & Sayash Kapoor, AI Snake Oil: What Artificial Intelligence Can Do, What It Can't, and How to Tell the Difference. Princeton University Press, 2024.

ISBN: 9780691249131

PDFs and other resources available on Canvas.

Learning Objectives:

• **Ethical Awareness:** This course should help to cultivate your ethical awareness – that is, your ability to identify ethical issues in specific contexts in which they are relevant, especially in AI/ML. If you examine an AI/ML application, and someone asks you, "what are some of the ethical issues associated with this application," you should be able to answer this question in a thoughtful and systematic manner.

• **Ethical Knowledge:** This course should help you to develop and deepen your knowledge of important ethical theories, frameworks, and concepts – including welfare, liberty, autonomy, equality, privacy, fairness, and others – and how these relate to ethical and responsible AI.

• **Ethical Reasoning:** This course should help you to identity, construct, and evaluate ethical arguments that are based on the theories, frameworks, and concepts mentioned above.

• **Communication:** This course should improve your ability to communicate, both orally and in writing, in a way that is clear, precise, and supported with reasons. You should improve your ability to do this even if the issues in question are controversial and subject to disagreement.

Course Format:

Even though the course is synchronous on Zoom, the format of this course will be discussion based. We will spend most class sessions in small or large group discussions; I will lecture only as needed. Attendance at all sessions is required.

Grading policy:

Reading Assignments 35%
Quizzes 25%
Final Project 40%

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scheme:

- A > 90% Excellent
- B 80-90% Above Average
- C 70-79% Average
- D 60-69% Below Average
- F < 59% Unacceptable

This should be obvious, but I will not accept work after the semester ends. When the semester has finished, if you are unhappy with your grade, please do not contact me asking to additional work that could change your grade. The answer will be no.

Class Participation:

It is expected that you participate regularly in class discussions and, more generally, contribute to a positive atmosphere for intellectual inquiry. This involves contributing to class discussions in both large and small groups, as well as being attentive (both to me and to your classmates), respectful, and considerate. Examples of behavior that detracts from a positive and respectful learning environment include: failure to listen to others, consistent interruption of others, disrespectful speech or incivility, failure to engage in class discussions (by, for example, doing your thermodynamics homework in class), tardiness, falling asleep in class, etc. While you will not receive a grade for participation, you will most develop a better understanding of the course material, and will likely perform better on quizzes, if you participate actively.

Important Note: Approach this course as you would an in-person class. Be prepared to join from a quiet, distraction-free environment that supports active listening and engagement. **Students are expected to keep their cameras on for the duration of class**, except during scheduled breaks.

Attendance:

Attendance at all class sessions is required. For each unexcused absence, two percentage points will be subtracted from your final grade. An absence is unexcused if it is not cleared with me **in advance** or documented. If you need to miss multiple class sessions, you should provide documentation through the Dean of Students for those absences.

Important Note: I will take attendance every class session. It is your own responsibility to keep track of your attendance and how it affects your grade. Make sure you are present when attendance is taken, as leaving class early or turning off your camera may result in a loss of attendance points for that session.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement:

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. The Student-Faculty Expectations articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Academic Integrity:

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on any assessed work will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.