

Technology & Justice: Mediating Communities

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Sorelle Friedler (sfriedle@) Computer Science

Laura McGrane (lmcgrane@) English

Contemporary society and its practices have always been enmeshed in technology. The particular challenges that we face today, however, are compounded by the digital facets of the tools and systems that are used to organize and mediate our everyday lives. This seminar will interrogate the role of technology across its various domains, including policing and surveillance, media and politics, labor and occupational structures, climate justice and community health. In particular, we will explore the effects of technology on communities, both how they are organized and the ways they are discriminated against.

As we think through both existing and emerging technologies, we are especially aware of the importance of bringing different disciplinary perspectives to bear on their effects. Working with faculty from across the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, we will pose four key questions: 1) How are various technologies constructed and designed and how do we articulate both a narrative of *need* in communities and a recognition of the accompanying harms? 2) How do we know if and when problems with technologies exist? That is to say, what does it mean to identify an injustice or coercive capacity and what values do technologies both reinforce and undermine? 3) How do different systems of value and ethics, understood in particular cultural contexts, help us to identify and understand our communal obligations and missteps? 4) What can we do on an active and advocacy level to push back against technological injustices? What do legal, artistic, political, technological, activist, and other community-based movements look like?

In the current global environment, approaches to these topics come from a variety of disciplines and perspectives across the divisions. Below we describe a few illustrative themes and readings meant to offer a sense of the breadth and interconnection of related questions. Our hope is that specific participants in the faculty seminar will bring ideas and methodologies to expand our paradigms.

Policing, incarceration, and abolition

Predictive tools are increasingly being used to determine who retains their freedom pre-trial, suggested sentence lengths, and parole options. Criminal risk assessments, both actuarial and machine learning based tools, provide judges with scores indicating whether defendants are "risky" to the community and ankle monitors and other tools track released parolees. Such technological interventions impact not just the incarcerated and paroled populations but also their local communities. What does communal harm from technologies mean in these settings, how are these harms differentially distributed based on race and class, what are the impacts on community health and well-being, and what community consultation processes are used (or

not) in the development of these technologies?

Possible Readings:

- Ruha Benjamin, *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life*
- Sarah Brayne, *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing*
- Benjamin Wiggins, *Calculating Race: Racial Discrimination in Risk Assessment*
- Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*
- Megan Stevenson and Sandra Mayson, *Pretrial Detention and the Value of Liberty, Virginia Public Law and Legal Theory Research Paper No. 2021-14*

Surveillance, emotion, labor and the human

Facial recognition, gait detection, and affective computing tools claim to be able to identify and protect individuals, classify race and gender, and detect human emotion. In addition, advances in robotics offer the specter of machines in place of humans across work and domestic spaces. How do these tools misrepresent across demographics, minimize the humanity of human beings, and instantiate visual and sensory regimes of surveillance that impact individuals, laborers, and their communities, often disparately and without their consent?

Possible Readings:

- Alondra Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome*
- Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru, *Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification, Proceedings of the Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*
- Kate Darling, *The New Breed: What Our History with Animals Reveals about Our Future with Robots*
- Luke Stark and Jesse Hoey, *The Ethics of Emotion in Artificial Intelligence Systems, Proceedings of the Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*
- Os Keyes, *The misgendering machines: Trans/HCI implications of automatic gender recognition, Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*
- Frank Pasquale, *New Laws of Robotics: Defending Human Expertise in the Age of AI*

Disinformation, community, and the planet

Social media companies and other AI systems are vast systems of power that reshape our world. Though media has long had a profound effect both on how publics are constituted and the constituents who shape social structures, recent digital disinformation campaigns have heightened its effects. Social media platforms make recommendations that increasingly radicalize us, whether helping to build anti-vaccination communities, replicating and amplifying memes and messaging, or disrupting health and community connections. These changes

simultaneously reshape the environment through infrastructure, emissions, and climate disinformation. How do such globe-spanning community disruptions both alter forms of community building and offer the possible imagining of new avenues of communication?

Possible Readings:

- Kate Crawford, *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*
- Whitney Phillips and Ryan M. Milner, *You Are Here: A Field Guide for Navigating Polarized Speech, Conspiracy Theories, and Our Polluted Media Landscape*
- Ethan Zuckerman, *Mistrust: Why Losing Faith in Institutions Provides the Tools to Transform Them*
- Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts, *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*
- John Cheyney-Lippold, *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves*

The seminar format will follow the current HCAH model, including organizing a possible exhibit, and we also look forward to bringing visitors both in person and virtually. We imagine that Haverford faculty and postdoctoral candidates could come from any number of departments, including but not limited to Health Studies, Environmental Studies, History, Political Science, Visual Studies, Anthropology, Philosophy, Computer Science, PJHR, Religion, African and Africana Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, (and from elsewhere) Media Studies and Information and Systems Studies.