

# Georgia Institute of Technology

## Course Syllabus: CS6603 AI, Ethics, and Society

### Fall 2025

Delivery: 100% Web-Based on Canvas

Dates course will run: August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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## General Course Information

### Description

Abuse of big data means your worst fears can come true. Are they being monitored by your employer? Check. Government intrusions into your daily life? Check. Being turned down by college admissions because you are predicted not to donate in 10-20 years? Check. Sounds a bit like the visions in the Minority Report. Alas, machine learning algorithms are already being deployed by industry, government, and even schools to make decisions that impact us in direct ways. These programs are typically promoted as fair and free of human biases, but humans who make mistakes are programming, calibrating, and evaluating their performance. Thus resides the problem. How do we design algorithms that effectively deal with large amounts of data to train them while ensuring their outcomes aren't misused? In this course, not only will we examine various AI/ML techniques that can be used to counterbalance the potential abuse and misuse of learning from big data, but we will focus on the effects of these technologies on individuals, organizations, and society, paying close attention to what our responsibilities are as computing professionals.

### Pre-Requisites

- You will develop working knowledge of Python throughout this course, but basic programming proficiency is required.
- You have a basic understanding of how to use Jupyter notebooks.
- You will need a social media account or access to a friend's/relatives' data to complete the first assignment.

### Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

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There are several outcomes for the course, based on four primary modules:

### *Module 1 - Data, Individuals, and Society*

Objective: After completing this module, students will be able to understand the power and impact that analytics and AI/ML have on individuals and society, especially concerning issues such as fairness and bias, ethics, legality, data collection, and public use.

### *Module 2 – The BS of Big Data*

Objective: After completing this module, students will be able to understand the underlying components of big data, apply basic statistical techniques to data scenarios, and understand the issues faced when learning from big data, ranging from data biases, overfitting, causation vs. correlation, etc.

### *Module 3 – Fairness in AI/ML*

Objective: After completing this module, students can understand and apply basic AI/ML techniques to data scenarios, focusing on identifying fairness and bias issues in designing decision-making systems. We will work systematically towards understanding technical approaches to current AI/ML applications, such as facial recognition, natural language processing, and predictive algorithms, all while being mindful of its social and legal context.

### *Module 4 – Bias Mitigation and Future Opportunities*

Objective: After completing this module, students can utilize tools and methods to quantify bias and examine ways to use algorithmic fairness to mitigate it, considering ethical and legal issues. Students will apply their knowledge of analytics and AI/ML to transform a current biased dataset into a more objective solution.

In this class, you will be challenged to broaden your understanding of state-of-the-art AI/ML algorithms and solutions, considering their potential impacts on society. You will have ample opportunity to analyze various situations critically and viewpoints provided in papers, books, on the web, and from your observations. You will be able to practice your learned knowledge by writing coherent and healthy-structured critiques of situations and papers, leading and participating in class discussions, and designing your algorithmic solutions. The issue of data misuse and abuse is not easily solvable; concrete right or wrong answers are not easily determined until solutions are typically deployed into society. Given this, you are entitled to your opinions on any topics presented throughout the course, whatever they happen to be. You will not be penalized for your viewpoints; however, you must be able to support your viewpoints and resulting solutions effectively. This means showing that you have given your approach to a problem some thought, can discuss its various trade-offs and implications and can support other viewpoints, even though your personal views may differ.

## **Course Materials**

### **Course Text**

## **Georgia Tech: Course Syllabus: [CS6603 AI, Ethics, and Society](#)**

*Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* by Cathy O'Neil (2016)

### **Additional Materials/Resources**

Additional assigned readings will be included with each assignment.

### **Classroom Management Tools (Located on Canvas)**

- Video Lectures
- Projects
- Graded Discussions
- Reading Materials
- Ed Discussion
- Grades
- Exams

## **Course Requirements, Assignments & Grading**

### **Assignment Distribution and Grading Scale**

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Homework Projects	40%
Written Critiques	10%
Mid-Term Exam	10%
Final Project	15%
Final Exam	10%
Class Discussion/Exercises/Quizzes ( <i>Case Studies, Exercises and Quizzes</i> )	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Grading Scale**

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A      90-100%

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B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

### **Assignments Quality**

This is a graduate level course. You are expected to turn in graduate level work. This means properly formatted reports, adequate responses in assignments and discussions (no one-liners) and actual substance to your work. We reserve the right to deduct points for work we do not feel is graduate level.

### **Assignment Logistics**

*Homework Projects:* All reports for Homework Projects must be submitted in JDF formatting with a PDF file type. Unless specified differently in the instructions, the report must be a singular file that contains all relevant information to the assignment (code, charts/graphs, table). All other submissions will not be accepted (.ZIP, multiple .PNG submissions for graphs). Tables must be copied into the report. Screenshots of the tables are not accepted. Graphs shall be self-generated using Python, Excel, or other software tools. Hand-drawn graphs, tables, and charts are not allowed.

Per JDF formatting, the file name for reports is GTUserName\_{Assignment}, (ex. gBurdell3\_Assignment\_3.pdf). Deductions will be made if your file name is not submitted correctly.

*Case Studies:* Require at least two responses to your peers.

*Exercises:* Do not require responses to your peers.

### **Assignments Due Dates (Time zone)**

Assignment due dates are Sundays at 11:59 PM [Anywhere on Earth time](#). We will only accept assignments that are submitted on time. We recommend [changing your time zone in Canvas](#) to show the due date in your local time.

### **Late and Make-up Work Policy**

Homework Projects and Written Critique assignments will be accepted with a deduction of 10% per 24-hour period starting after the due date submission time. Assignments over 3 days late (i.e., three 24-hour periods) will not be accepted. No time extensions are provided for the Exams, Final Project, and Class discussions/Exercises. There will be no make-up work provided for missed assignments.

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Please verify the information in your assignment before submission. We will NOT make exceptions for submitting the wrong assignment or insufficient or inadequate information.

In the event of emergencies (illness, family emergencies), please get in touch with the Dean. The Dean of Students is equipped to verify emergencies and pass confirmation on to all your classes. For consistency, we ask all students to do this in an emergency.

### **Reuse of Work Policy**

There is the option to reuse work from a previous semester. However, it is crucial to follow these steps every time an assignment is resubmitted from a prior semester:

- Post a private Ed post to inform the teaching staff which assignment is being resubmitted.
- Include a note in the Canvas comments section, mentioning that you are resubmitting an assignment from a prior semester. **Include a reference to the Ed post.**

Failure to adhere to these steps could result in a 0 for that assignment.

### **Regrade Policy**

If you feel your score is incorrect based on the feedback provided, you may request a rescore during the regrade time period, which is 7 full days from the date the grades are released. If the grades are released Monday, you will have till next Monday's End-Of-Day.

**To request a regrade**, you must:

1. **Open a private Ed Discussion post in the appropriate regrade category**
2. Copy all instructors and TAs
3. Provide your justification in the following format per question:
  - The step or question on assignment to be considered for regrade
  - Why do you consider there is an error in the score?

Requests that do not follow the above will not be considered (ex. questions in Canvas, regrade requests without adequate justifications)

Only one (1) regrade per assignment is allowed. Make sure your regrade request provides adequate details and encompasses all your questions. Additional requests for the same assignment will not be considered. Once a regrade has been completed by the TA, the grade is final.

### **Additional General Information on the Re-grading process:**

- Requesting a re-grade may result in a lower grade than what you were initially given by the TAs.
- It is essential to maintain a professional and formal tone in all communications. Requests that do not adhere to these standards of professionalism may not be considered.
- Once the instructors have reviewed your assignment and issued an updated grade, we will not entertain any further discussion on the grade we have given for that assignment.
- A re-grade is not the same as a request for accommodation due to hardship. If you have a legitimate hardship, please follow the **Late and Make up Work Policy** above. We will

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happily work with you to allow for additional time, etc., so that you can be successful in this course while working through your life challenges.

**No regrades will be accepted for the midterm and final exam. For the midterm, only your score will be released (questions & answers are not released). For the final exam, regrades are not accepted due to time constraints.**

### **AI Use Policy**

If your work is found to violate this policy, you **will be turned in for Academic Misconduct to the Office of Student Integrity.**

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence—Copilot, ChatGPT, etc.—can be great resources for improving your learning in the course, but it is important to ensure that their benefits are targeted at your learning rather than solely at your deliverables. Toward that end, the same academic integrity policy above applies to AI assistance: you are welcome to consult with AI agents just as you would consult with classmates, discuss ideas with friends, and seek feedback from colleagues. However, just as you would not hand your device to someone else to directly fix or improve your classwork, so also you may not copy anything directly from an AI agent into your document, nor let an AI agent directly generate content for your submission. This rule means you should disable any AI assistance more advanced than a grammar checker inside your word processors and IDEs.

Although you are prohibited from having these tools directly integrated into your workspace or from copying content from these assistants directly into your work, you are nonetheless permitted to use them more generally. The important consideration is to ensure that you are using the AI agent as a learning assistant rather than as a homework assistant, so long as your submission solely reflects your own understanding of the content, you are encouraged to let AI assistants aid in developing your understanding.

### **Office Hours**

This course does not have office hours. Students are encouraged to ask questions via **Ed** discussion forums. The teaching team will respond to the **Ed** posts in an efficient manner.

### **Feedback**

Every semester, we make changes and tweaks to the course formula. As a result, we try new things every semester, and some of these things may need to be revised. We ask for your patience and support as we figure things out, and in return, we promise that we, too, will be fair and understanding, especially with anything that might impact your grade or performance in the class. Second, we want to consistently get feedback on improving and expanding the course for future iterations. You can take advantage of the feedback box on **Ed** especially if you want to gather input from others in the class), give us feedback on the surveys, or contact us directly via private **Ed** messages.

## **Technology Requirements and Skills**

### **Computer Hardware and Software**

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- High-speed Internet connection
- Laptop or desktop computer with a minimum of a 2 GHz Processor and 2 GB of RAM
- Windows for PCs OR Mac iOS for Apple computers.
- Complete Microsoft Office Suite or comparable and the ability to use Adobe PDF software (install, download, open, and convert)
- Mozilla Firefox, Chrome, and Safari browsers (*Note: Honorlock requires students to use Chrome*)

### **Canvas**

This class will use Canvas to deliver course materials to online students. All course materials and assessments will take place on this platform.

### **Proctoring Information**

The midterm exam will be proctored as a closed book, closed notes, closed video, and no access to any external media except the exam itself. You are all allowed an 8-½"x11" blank paper and a simple non-scientific calculator as a backup. A proctored exam is similar to the one you would take in the classroom. These exams are delivered via a tool called Honorlock. Honorlock is an online proctoring service that allows you to take your exam from the comfort of your home. You DO NOT need to create an account, download software, or schedule an appointment in advance. Honorlock is available 24/7; a computer, a working webcam, and a stable Internet connection are needed. You will need Google Chrome and download the Honorlock Chrome Extension to start. You can download the extension at [www.honorlock.com/extension/install](http://www.honorlock.com/extension/install).

When you are ready to take the exam, you would log into CANVAS, go to the course, and click on the exam link. Clicking Launch Proctoring will begin the Honorlock authentication process, where you will take a picture of yourself, show your ID, the plain scratch paper (if used), and complete a room scan. Honorlock will be recording your exam session via the webcam and your screen. Honorlock also has an integrity algorithm that can detect search-engine use, so please do not attempt to search for answers, even if it's on a secondary device. If you encounter any issues, you may contact them by live chat, phone (844-243-2500), or email ([support@honorlock.com](mailto:support@honorlock.com)).

## **Course Policies, Expectations & Guidelines**

### **Communication Policy**

You are responsible for knowing the following information:

1. Anything posted to this syllabus
2. Anything emailed directly to you by the teaching team (including announcements Or Posts via **Ed**) 24 hours after receiving such an email.

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Because **Ed** announcements are emailed to you, you should check your Georgia Tech email once every 24 hours to remain updated on new information during the semester. Georgia Tech generally recommends that students check their Georgia Tech email once every 24 hours.

We generally prefer to handle communication via **Ed** to help with collaboration among the teaching team, but we understand **Ed** is not ideal for having information “pushed” to you. We may contact you via a private **Ed** post instead of an email. Still, if we do so, we will send email notifications immediately, bypassing your settings, to ensure you’re alerted. This type of communication will also spring under #2 above.

Note that this means you won’t be responsible for knowing information communicated in several other methods we’ll be using. You aren’t responsible for knowing anything posted to **Ed** that isn’t linked to an official announcement. You don’t need to worry about missing critical information so long as you keep up with your email and understand the documents on this website. This also applies reverse: we do not monitor our Canvas message boxes and may not respond to direct emails. If you need to get in touch with the course staff, please post privately to **Ed** (either to all Instructors or to an instructor individually) or tag the instructor in the relevant post.

### **Online Student Conduct and (N)etiquette**

Communicating appropriately in the online classroom can be challenging. To minimize this challenge, it is important to remember several points of “internet etiquette.”

That will smooth communication for both students and instructors:

- *Read first, Write later.* Read the ENTIRE set of posts/comments on a discussion board before posting your reply to prevent repeating commentary or asking questions that have already been answered.
- *Avoid language that may come across as intense or offensive.* Language can be easily misinterpreted in written and electronic communication. Review email and discussion board posts BEFORE submitting. Humor and sarcasm may be easily misinterpreted by your reader(s). Try to be as matter-of-fact and professional as possible.
- *Follow the language rules of the Internet.* Do not write using all capital letters because it will appear shouting. Also, emoticons can be helpful when used to convey nonverbal feelings. ☺
- *Consider the privacy of others.* Ask permission before giving out a classmate's email address or other information.
- *Keep attachments small.* If it is necessary to send pictures, change the size to an acceptable 250kb or less (one free, web-based tool to try is [picesize.com](http://picesize.com)).
- *No inappropriate material.* Do not forward virus warnings, chain letters, jokes, etc., to classmates or instructors. The sharing of pornographic material is forbidden.

*NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to remove posts that are not collegial and do not meet the Online Student Conduct and Etiquette guidelines.*

### **University Use of Electronic Email**

A university-assigned student e-mail account is the official university means of communication with all students at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Students are responsible for all information sent



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via their university-assigned e-mail account. Students who forward information to their university e-mail account are responsible for all information sent to any other e-mail account, including attachments. To stay current with university information, students must check their official university e-mail accounts and other electronic communications frequently and consistently. Recognizing that some communications may be time-critical, the university recommends that electronic communications be checked minimally twice a week.

### **Plagiarism & 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. All students enrolled at Georgia Tech and all its campuses are to perform their academic work according to standards set by faculty members, departments, schools, and colleges of the university; cheating and plagiarism constitute fraudulent misrepresentation for which no credit can be given and for which appropriate sanctions are warranted and will be applied. 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 an exam, exercise, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, investigate the incident, and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Any attempt to bypass our automated content-checking system will result in a 0 for the assignment.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with learning needs that require unique accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/> as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your unique needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail Dr. Mandala as soon as possible to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### **Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

At Georgia Tech, it is essential to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgment, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectations the teaching staff and you. Ultimately, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, we encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

### **Subject to Change Statement**

The syllabus and course schedule may be subject to change. Changes will be communicated via the **Ed** announcement tool. Students must check **Ed for instructor posts**, email messages, and course announcements to stay current in their online courses.

## Course Schedule

Week/Dates	Topics	Deliverables
1 August 18	<b>Lesson 1 Data Individuals, and Society Introduction</b> <b>Lesson 2 Overview</b>	<b>Syllabus Quiz</b>
2 August 25	<b>Lesson 3 Ethics vs. Law</b> <b>Lesson 4 Data Collection</b>	<b>Case Study: Emails Exposed</b> <b>Case Study: Loan Denied</b>
3 September 1	<b>Lesson 5 Fairness and Bias</b>	<b>Assignment: FB</b>
4 September 8	<b>Lesson 6 BS of Big Data &amp; Stats 101 Overview</b> <b>Lesson 7 Python and Stats 101</b>	<b>Case Study: Facebook Manipulation</b> <b>Assignment: Stats 101</b>
5 September 15	<b>Lesson 8 Descriptive Statistics</b> <b>Lesson 9 Inferential Statistics: Sampling Bias</b>	<b>Exercise: Anscombe's Quartet</b> <b>Exercise: Smoking Sampling Bias Design</b>
6 September 22	<b>Lesson 10 Inferential Statistics: Causation vs. Correlation</b> <b>Lesson 11 Inferential Statistics: Confidence</b>	<b>Written Critique: Ethical Autonomous Vehicles</b>
7 September 29	<b>Lesson 12 AI/ML Techniques: Word Embeddings</b> <b>Lesson 13 Bias in Word Embeddings</b>	<b>Mid-Term Exam (Ethics and Stats)</b> <b>Case Study: Word Embeddings</b> <b>Exercise: Bias in Word Embeddings</b>
8 October 6	<b>Lesson 14 AI/ML Techniques: Facial Recognition</b> <b>Lesson 15 Bias in Facial Recognition</b>	<b>Case Study: Facial Recognition</b> <b>Assignment: AI/ML Part I</b>
9 October 13	<b>Lesson 16 AI/ML Techniques: Predictive Algorithms</b> <b>Lesson 17 Crime-based Predictive Algorithms</b>	<b>Assignment: AI/ML Part II</b>
10 October 20	<b>Lesson 18 Bias in Predictive Algorithms</b>	<b>Exercise: Predictive Algorithms</b> <b>Case Study: Predictive Algorithms</b>
11 October 27	<b>Lesson 19 Fairness and Bias</b>	<b>Assignment: Fairness and Bias</b>
12 November 3	<b>Lesson 20 Fairness and Bias Assessment Tools</b>	<b>Exercise: AI Fairness 360</b> <b>Exercise: What-If Tool</b>
13 November 10	<b>Lesson 21 AI/ML Techniques for Bias Mitigation</b>	<b>Written Critique: What-If Tool</b>

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Week/Dates	Topics	Deliverables
14 November 17	<b>Lesson 22 AI, Society, and Ethics Wrap-up</b>	<b>Final Project</b>
15 November 24		<b>Final Exam</b>
December 1		<b>End-of-Course Survey, <a href="#">CIOS Survey</a></b>