

Critical Data Studies Module 1 – A Brief Introduction to Critical Data Studies  
Suggested Self or Peer-graded assignments, readings and discussion questions.

Video 1 Introduction to the Course and Module

- Discussion Questions (video):
  1. What type of change is possible? How might we intervene?
  2. Can we imagine more just technologies and data practices?
- Critical Reflection Assignment: Write a 250-300 word short answer response. What is your interest in Critical Data Studies (CDS)? What questions do you want to explore?

Video 2 Why data?

- Discussion Questions (video):
  1. How are data made? Why are data not the same as 'natural' resources?
  2. Why might even the most banal forms of data have politics?
- Readings (cited/optional):
  1. Rosenberg, Daniel. (2013). "Data Before the Fact," in *"Raw Data" is an oxymoron*. L. Gitelman, ed. MIT Press.
  2. Gitelman, Lisa and Virginia Jackson. (2013). "Introduction," in *"Raw Data" is an oxymoron*. L. Gitelman, ed. MIT Press.

Video 3 Why study data?

- Discussion Questions (assigned reading):
  1. What narrative do Dalton, Taylor and Thatcher (2016) tell about the history of critical data studies as a field?
  2. Do any of the problems with big data resonate with your own experience?
- Readings (assigned):
  1. Read Craig Dalton, Linnet Taylor, Jim Thatcher. (2016). "Critical Data Studies: a dialogue on data and space," in *Big Data & Society*. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2053951716648346>

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## Video 4 Data Agency

- Discussion Questions (assigned reading):
  1. How are 'data bodies' defined in this project?
  2. How might data bodies be said to diminish an individual's agency and self-determination?
- Readings (assigned):
  1. Petty, Tawana, Mariella Saba, Tamika Lewis, Seeta Peña Gangadharan, Virginia Eubanks. (2018). Our Data Bodies: Reclaiming Our Data (interim report). Our Data Bodies Project. June 15, 2018. Available at: [https://www.odbproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ODB.InterimReport.FINAL\\_7.16.2018.pdf](https://www.odbproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ODB.InterimReport.FINAL_7.16.2018.pdf)
- Readings (cited/optional):
  1. Barad, Karen. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.
  2. Bennet, Jane. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press.
  3. Bucher, Taina. (2018). *If...then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*. Oxford University Press.
  4. Latour, Bruno. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford University Press.

## Video 5 Data and Sponsored Search

- Discussion Questions (assigned reading):
  1. How are racial and gender bias embedded in sponsored search?
  2. What kind of results would you expect from a non-commercial search engine?
  3. Can you think of other examples that demonstrate this point?
- Readings (assigned):
  1. Noble, Safiya. (2013). "Google search: Hyper-visibility as a means of rendering Black women and girls invisible," in *InVisible Culture* 19. Available at: <http://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/google-search-hyper-visibility-as-a-means-of-rendering-black-women-and-girls-invisible/>
- Readings (cited/optional):
  1. Noble, Safiya. (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression: How Algorithms Reinforce Racism*. New York University Press.

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## Video 6 Algorithms

- Discussion Questions (video):
  1. In this 1958 filmstrip, who was imagined as the designer of "information systems"?
  2. Who (and whose values) are prioritized in the design of algorithm-based systems?
  3. How does this relate to the social impact of these technologies?
- Critical Reflection Assignment (assigned reading): Review each policy, then write a brief 250-500 word response.
  1. How are algorithms defined and framed in each document?
  2. What are the goals of the policies?
  3. How have (or will) the regulations be implemented?
- Readings (assigned):

Algorithmic Accountability Policies have been adopted or introduced in:

  1. New York City ([LL490](#)) in 2018, available at:
  2. Washington State ([SB-5527](#) and [HB-1655](#)) in 2019 and ([Substitute HB-1655](#)) in 2020.
- Readings (cited/optional):
  1. Ruha Benjamin. (2019). *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Polity.
  2. Brent Mittelstadt, et al. (2016). "The Ethics of Algorithms: Mapping the Debate," in *Big Data & Society* (Dec-Jul).
  3. Tarleton Gillespie. (2016). "# trendingistrending: when algorithms become culture," in *Algorithmic Cultures*. Routledge.
  4. Julia Angwin et al. (2016) "Machine bias." *ProPublica*, May 23, 2016.
  5. Jeff Larson et al. (2016). "How we analyzed the COMPAS Recidivism Algorithm" *ProPublica*, May 23, 2016.
- Further Viewing  
See links to the following videos at the CSoI Data and Information Ethics Learning Hub page: <https://www.soihub.org/resources/data-and-information-ethics.html>
  1. Algorithms of Oppression by Safiya U. Noble
  2. Automating Inequality by Virginia Eubanks
  3. Race after Technology by Ruha Benjamin

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