



## FRS 004 025: Data Feminism

Spring 2020 Course Syllabus

Time: TBD

Professor: Lindsay Poirier, [lnpoirier@ucdavis.edu](mailto:lnpoirier@ucdavis.edu); Emily Merchant, [ekmerchant@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ekmerchant@ucdavis.edu)

Office Hours: By appointment, via Zoom

### What is this course about?

This course explores the ubiquity of data in modern life and the way that objectivist language surrounding data obscures its role in reproducing gender inequality and other forms of social inequity. Students will be introduced to the basics of data generation and analysis and concepts from feminist theory such as intersectionality, standpoint epistemology, and situated knowledge. Students will create and visualize their own datasets to consider how complex phenomena get reduced to fit standard categories in the processes of counting and classifying the world. Students will also learn to think critically about objectivity, the gendering of data work, and the role of data in propagating oppression.

### Why is this course important?

The course is targeted towards students pursuing degrees in computational and non-computational fields. Students from computational disciplines will gain experience thinking about the real world consequences of data and data work, and students in non-computational disciplines will gain understanding of what data are and how they are generated and analyzed.

### What should you be able to do by the end of this course?

1. Develop skills in effectively communicating the ubiquity of data in all aspects of life and understand how data-driven processes reproduce social inequities
2. Critique data visualizations that obscure the conditions under which the data are produced and create data visualizations that foreground their arguments and the contexts of their production
3. Analyze data documentation to understand the perspectives embedded in the data and the definitions shaping its output
4. Evaluate the consequences of manual and programmatic human classification schemes
5. Cultivate ethics, responsibility, respect, and empathy through the interrogation of the hidden labor in automated data processes

#### COURSE TEXTS

D'Ignazio, Catherine, and Lauren F. Klein. 2020. *Data Feminism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. Draft version: <https://bookbook.pubpub.org/>

## How will you be graded?

CRITERIA	PERCENTAGE
Journal Entries	20%
Dataset and Documentation	30%
Data Visceralization	30%
Participation	20%

The grade of pass is awarded to undergraduate students for work in courses that otherwise would receive a grade of C- (70%) or better.

## What are the course assignments?

### *Weekly Journal Entries*

In your journal entries, in 100-200 words, you should reflect on the most important thing you learned each week and how it relates to something you see in the world.

### *Dataset and Documentation*

Compile a dataset about something on campus or otherwise related to your life (e.g. number of drinking fountains in each building, number of sunny days in each quarter). You will turn in the data (as a .csv file), complete documentation for the data, and a reflection on what you learned about data and documentation from completing this exercise.

### *Data Visceralization*

Find a creative way to represent your data that evokes meaning.

## What are the course policies?

### *Participation*

Thoughtful participation in class discussions is a key component of this class and requires that you come prepared to discuss the week's reading. If you are unable to attend discussion, a recording of the meeting will be made available online within 24 hours.

### *Late Assignments*

Late assignments will receive a 10% point deduction immediately. After this, an additional 10% will be deducted for each additional day late. Exceptions may be made at our discretion.

### *Academic Integrity*

As a UC Davis student, you are expected to know when and how to cite, quote, and paraphrase another individual's work correctly. If you do not, ask me or your TA for help. Please see the UC Davis Code of Conduct for more information: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf>. On the first day of class, you should verify you understand the Code of Conduct at <https://participate.ucdavis.edu/>

### *Plagiarism*

Plagiarism violates the UC Davis Code of Conduct. Students suspected of plagiarism will be referred to Student Judicial Affairs. Please see the plagiarism document attached to the syllabus for more information.

# Course Schedule

## WEEK 1: WHAT IS DATA? WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

4/1

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Introduction

## WEEK 2: DATA AND BODIES

4/8

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 1

## WEEK 3: STANDPOINTS

4/15

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 2
- Dataset proposal due

## WEEK 4: CLASSIFICATION, COUNTING, AND ITS DISCONTENTS

4/22

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 3

## WEEK 5: DATA EXPERTISE

4/29

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 4

## WEEK 6: CONTEXT

5/6

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 5

## WEEK 7: INVISIBLE LABOR

5/13

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 6
- Dataset and documentation due

## WEEK 8: POWER

5/20

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 7

## WEEK 9: DATA LITERACY

5/27

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Chapter 8

## WEEK 10: WRAP-UP

6/3

- Read before class: Data Feminism, Conclusion
- Data Visceralization Due