

# Ling 575: Societal Impacts of Language Technology

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September 27, 2023

# Safety first

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## Building Evacuation information


- Evacuate the building using the nearest exit (or alternate if nearest exit is blocked).
- Do not use elevators.
- Take personal belongings (keys, purses, wallets, etc.).
- Secure any hazardous materials or equipment before leaving.
- Follow directions given by evacuation wardens.
- Go to Evacuation Assembly Point (EAP) designated in your building's evacuation plan and on building emergency evacuation signs. ==> DENNY YARD
- Assist people with disabilities.
- <https://www.washington.edu/uwem/plans-and-procedures/uw-emergency-procedures/>

## COVID-19

- Please stay home if you are unwell, and attend online if you are able
- You are welcome to attend online at any point, for any reason
- <https://www.washington.edu/coronavirus/>

# Plan for today

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- Course goals
- Ground rules
- Course requirements
- Student intros
- Options: topics
- If time: Stochastic Parrots 

Today will be way  
more lecture than  
typical for this class

# Course goals: Explore what/how/who

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- **What** can go wrong, with language technology?
  - What has gone wrong?
  - How can we analyze systems to predict what might go wrong?
  - What areas of expertise are required?
  - Who should be consulted and how?

# Course goals: Explore what/how/who

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- **How** can we fix/prevent/mitigate?
  - What best practices exist for documentation of process & product?
  - What can we achieve via research on social impacts, either as main focus or as “ethical considerations” sections?
    - When should such research happen? (cf. IRB, pre-registered reports)
  - What is the role of ethical review at conferences?
  - What is the role of policy/regulation?
  - How do we keep the public appropriately informed?

# Course goals: Explore what/how/who

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- **Whose** job is this?
  - What are our responsibilities as technology developers?
    - At a company
    - In the public sector
  - What are our responsibilities as members of the public?
  - Who should be involved in crafting policy and how?

# Ground rules

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- Stay engaged
- Experience discomfort
- Speak your truth
- Expect and accept non-closure
- Maintain confidentiality
- Listen with the intent to learn
- Suspend judgment

Source: *The Denver Foundation*  
Agreements for Courageous Conversations  
and Active Learning

[http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org/  
agreements-courageous-conversations-  
and-active-learning](http://www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org/agreements-courageous-conversations-and-active-learning)

# Course requirements

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- KWLA paper
- Exercise 1 (10) - write an ethical considerations section
- Exercise 2 (10) - scicomm
- Participation in discussions (incl. Canvas) (15)
  - Come prepared to discuss readings — won't be the same as everyone else!
- Peer feedback on term project (5)
- Term project (45)



# Term project

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- 6-8 page paper, with the sections described
- Based on:
  - Demographically informed error analysis of some system
  - Value sensitive design-based analysis of existing NLP task
  - Some other project that you propose

# KWLA - K & W due Friday!

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- What you already know (~1 page)
- What you want to learn (~1 page)
- What you learned (~3 pages)
- How you'll apply it in your research/studies (~2 pages)

# Student intros

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- Name + anything you'd like us to know about how you like to be addressed/referred to (pronouns, nickname, etc)
- What do you hope to get out of this class?

# Topics — options

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- Next week: Foundational readings
- Value sensitive design
- Taxonomies of algorithmic harm
- Documentation and transparency
- Privacy
- Bias/discrimination
- Crowdsourcing & labor conditions
- Language variation & emergent bias
- Community control of language data
- Policy regulation & guidelines
- Synthetic media & pollution of the information ecosystem
- ... (see web page)

# Reading questions for next week

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- What do we want to get out of the “foundations” readings?
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