

PHILOSOPHY (PHIL)

PHIL 557 Data Ethics (1)

Data about us is collected continuously, and in many ways makes our lives as we know them possible—enabling your doctors to treat you efficiently, letting Amazon show you what you need to buy before you even know it exists, helping Spotify introduce you to the next music you'll love. But is there a dark side to all this data-driven convenience? In this one credit hour course, students will engage with the ethical challenges posed by data collection, analysis and use, through class discussion, case study analysis and course readings. We begin by considering various ethical frameworks, including utilitarianism and deontology. We then engage with the history of data collection, looking at the abuse of humans, particularly from marginalized groups, in the Nazi experiments, the Tuskegee syphilis experiments and the history of eugenics in the US. Turning to contemporary methods of collecting and using data, we consider key areas of ethical concern including: issues of autonomy and consent, privacy and surveillance, artificial intelligence and machine learning, disinformation and bias, and algorithmic discrimination. Students demonstrate mastery of the material in online discussion, brief writing assignments, and analysis of a self-chosen contemporary case study.