

## **INFO 6940: Special Topics: Technology and Social Justice**

**Professors:** Prof. Nicki Dell

**Credits:** 3 hours

**Course website:** TBD

### **Catalog Description:**

This course examines the design, deployment, and adoption of computing technologies that aim to engage with issues of social justice. Through discussions of case studies from the US and across the world, we will study technology and social justice in specific domains such as agriculture, finance, health, education, data collection, privacy, and more, examining the design, deployment, and adoption of different computing technologies in these domains. We will also explore many of the big debates in the field through reading and discussing seminal papers, including how to define social justice and/or design justice, what it means for technologies to engage with social justice, how technology design can better serve marginalized communities, how to approach and measure success, how to consider failure, what constitutes 'good' work, how to broach the 'digital divide' and more.

### **Course Frequency:**

Offered Spring 2021

### **Prerequisites:**

Students are expected to have previously taken a course in programming, design, psychology, development sociology, or should have equivalent professional experience in one of these areas.

### **Corequisites:**

None.

### **Preparation Summary:**

See prerequisites.

### **Textbook(s) and/or Other Required Materials:**

Selected course readings available via the course website.

### **Class and Laboratory Schedule:**

**Lectures:** 3 hrs/wk

**Recitations:** None, but you are welcome to visit the professor's office hours.

**Labs:** None.

### **Assignments, Exams, and Projects:**

**Homework:** Semester long research project.

**Hands-on activities:** Students will complete (and turn in) "in-class" activities.

**Reading questions:** Students will complete reading responses on the assigned reading materials.

### **Grading**

Project: 50%

Hands-on activities and in-class participation: 20%

Reading Questions: 30%

**Typical Topics Covered:**

- What is social justice? What is design justice?
- How can technology design engage with issues of social justice?
- What are some examples of where technology design has achieved and not achieved social justice goals?
- What are marginalized communities?
- The Digital Divide
- What constitutes "good" research?
- Amplification Theory
- Challenges of doing research with marginalized communities
- Post-colonial computing
- Feminist HCI
- Biases that affect research
- Ethical issues working with marginalized communities
- The future of technology and social justice
- Quantitative and qualitative fieldwork methods
- Study design
- Specific domain case studies including:
  - Agriculture, finance, health, education, privacy, security, activism, accessibility, entertainment, literacy, social media, and more.

**Student Outcomes:**

- Critically discuss common methods in designing technology for social justice
- Demonstrate an understanding of the key debates framing this research area
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to design quality research studies on these topics
- Critically discuss positive and negative case studies in a range of popular domain areas

**Academic Integrity:**

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. The policy can be found on the university's website here: <https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/academic-integrity/>.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any

collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Your access in this course is important. Please give me [the TA, the Course Coordinator] your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that we have adequate time to arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and/or SDS at [sds\\_cu@cornell.edu](mailto:sds_cu@cornell.edu). If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS. You may also feel free to speak with Student Services at Cornell Tech who will connect you with the university SDS office.