Course Syllabus

CSD-JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Computer Science

Logistics

Course time: Thursdays 11:50-1:10pm ET (remote - see Canvas for the Zoom link). Office hours are by appointment - just email the instructor(s) you'd like to meet with.

Instructors:

Bailey Flanigan (she/her)	bflaniga@andrew	(student instructor)
Ananya Joshi (she/her)	aajoshi@andrew	(student instructor)
Zico Kolter (he/him)	zkolter@andrew	(faculty instructor)

The primary resource for this course is the course website at https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~15996/, where you can find helpful links, homework assignments, and other information about the course.

Course Description

This is a required course for first year CSD PhD students, occurring annually in the first six weeks of Spring semester. The goal of this course is to prepare PhD students to engage in the CS community, even as our community evolves to put more emphasis on Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI). This evolution, articulated by the quote below, is reflected in the increasing expectations of students to engage meaningfully with JEDI concepts on department committees, in student groups, and on job applications.

> *"There is a movement occurring…widely within our computing community, toward making tangible progress through intentional actions and interventions for advancing and valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion."* [ACM 2021].

A hallmark of this course is that it was created by PhD students, and it remains PhD-student-run. Designed specifically with the needs of PhD students in mind, this course is short, flexible, literature-based, framed through the lens of academic computer science, and geared toward helping students build community. It *requires* three hours per week in and out of class, but provides many opportunities for deeper exploration with instructor support.

Intro to *Core Questions* and *Lenses* (details on course website)

This course is structured around the *Jigsaw Method*, an evidence-based approach to cooperative learning (details on the "Pedagogy" page of the course website). As part of this approach, each week of the course is structured around a **core question** - a concrete, but conceptually vast, question. We approach this question from many different angles, called **lenses**. Each week's core questions and lenses are provided in the course schedule below. As part of this approach, students are assigned to different lenses each week. During in-class discussion, they first share their knowledge on their lens with other students who had the same lens (*lens groups*), and then regroup to share what they learned across lenses (*synthesis groups*). Group assignments are found on the website.

Homework Assignments

Each week, students will complete two short assignments: the **pre-class activity** (due the day before class), and the **post-class reflection** (due the day after class). Both assignments require written responses of about 150 words, submitted via Canvas. *This word limit is a guideline, not a hard requirement. Both assignments serve foremost as a space for students to engage with the material <u>on your own terms</u>. Students are not expected to develop or engage with specific opinions in these assignments.*

Pre-class activity. The purpose of the pre-class activity is for you to study existing , reputable sources on the current week's topic to collect information, evidence, ideas, arguments, and perspectives to share with your peers in class discussion.

Examples of encouraged responses for the pre-class activity:
- Quote, paraphrase, or take notes on sources (can be those we provide or sources you choose)
- Write down ideas, arguments, opinions, or evidence. These can be your own, or taken from sources.
- Write down questions you have pertaining to your lens / resources you explored
- Connect resources to experiences or themes in your own life
- Explore your own agreement or disagreement with something you read
- Express your discomfort with discussing or writing about a particular topic

Post-class reflection. The purpose of this activity is for you to solidify new ideas that you encountered in class, and it is also an opportunity to communicate to the instructors any concerns, questions, or requests for support.

Examples of encouraged responses for the post-class reflection:
- Write about discussion topics that you found interesting or learned something from
- Reflect on discussion dynamics that occurred in your group
- Ask for support or additional resources from instructors
- Connect class to experiences or themes your own life
- Discuss any thoughts or opinions you have about any aspect of this week's class (e.g., the lecture)
- Write down questions you still have
- Engage with the class topics further (e.g., via the options listed in the Post-Class Reflection)

Additional Enrichment Opportunities

Course Project. The course project is optional, but it is a great opportunity to learn more about a topic that interests you – and have an impact – with access to the support of course staff. For details, possible projects, and how to sign up to do a course project, see the [Project Overview](#).

15-996 Library. Want to dig deeper? Check out the [15-996 Library](#), where you can check out some great books (spanning genres of fiction, nonfiction, and memoirs) related to the topics we are discussing in class. If you'd like a book recommendation, feel free to ask instructors!

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction, identity, and inclusive discussion.		
(no core question)	(no lenses)	**1/31: pre-class surveys due** **2/3: class meets** **2/4: post-class reflection due**
Week 2: Foundations of Inequality		
Core question: How can inequality be perpetuated by a policy or criterion that intends to be neutral to people's identities?	**Lens 1:** Implicit Bias **Lens 2:** Intersectionality and the complexity of identity **Lens 3:** Privilege + oppression via policies **Lens 4:** Privilege + oppression via cultures and norms	**2/9: pre-class activity due** **2/10: class meets** *speaker: Dr. LD Ortis* **2/11: post-class reflection due**
Week 3: Diverse experience in CS, higher-ed, and US society		
Core question: How can we decrease stereotype threat and increase identity safety in academic/research settings?	**Lens 1:** Understanding and addressing stereotype threat **Lens 2:** Structural strategies for increasing identity safety **Lens 3:** Interpersonal strategies for increasing identity safety	**2/16: pre-class activity due** **2/17: class meets** **2/18: post-class reflection due**
Week 4: Intent versus Impact		
Core question: How should we account for the difference between the intent and impact of our (and others') words and actions?	**Lens 1:** Microaggressions, verbal slights, and their impacts **Lens 2:** Disarming microaggressions and using language for inclusion **Lens 3:** Engaging bravely in challenging conversations	**2/23: pre-class activity due** 2/24: class meets **2/25: post-class reflection due**
Week 5: Well-being in the PhD Program		
Core question: What are some strategies for maintaining our mental and emotional well-being during the Ph.D. program?	**Lens 1:** Mental health **Lens 2:** Rights, boundaries, + self-advocacy **Lens 3:** Self-compassion as a tool	**3/2: pre-class activity due** **3/3: class meets** **3/3: post-class reflection due**
Week 6: Allyship and promoting positive change		
Core question: How can we contribute to creating a more just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive CS environment?	(no lenses)	**3/16: pre-class activity due** **3/17: class meets** **3/17: course evaluation due**

Grading Policy

This course is graded pass/fail. <u>The bottom line is, if you put in a good-faith effort, you will pass.</u> The grading policy is designed to, within reasonable constraints, allow students to get out what they put in.

To pass this course, students need to do three things:

1. Attend all sessions. <u>If you have to miss more than 50% of class period,</u> please let the instructors know ahead of time if you can (just ask us - we are flexible and want to support you!). <u>If you miss class by mistake</u>, contact us as soon as possible afterwards. You will make up class by completing a [make-up assignment](#) to cover the in-class material, due 11:59 the day before the subsequent class. Missing more than one week without telling instructors ahead of time, or still having missing make-up assignments overdue by the last day of class, are grounds for failing the course.

2. Actively participate in class. We expect students to put in a good-faith effort to participate in this class each week. We recognize that the topics we cover can be difficult, and that a "good faith effort" may look different for different people, or even for the same person during different activities or on different days.

Examples of what we consider <u>participating</u>:
- Turning your camera on (it can be uncomfortable to engage when others have their cameras off)
- Coming to class prepared
- Asking questions
- Sharing information you learned or bringing up sources
- Sharing your thoughts aloud or in the chat
- Actively listening to others
- Supporting or checking in with other members of your group
- Helping keep your group's discussion on-task and inclusive
- Recording ideas for your group (scribe)
- Writing down your ideas and having someone else share them
- Amplifying other's ideas that were typed in the chat

Examples of <u>not participating</u>:
- Turning your camera off (except for short moments or under extenuating circumstances)
- Texting or doing other work during class
- being disruptive or off-task, "trolling", sleeping
- Not coming prepared to class.

If you feel you are generally unable to safely participate in-class discussions, please contact the instructors.

3. Complete out-of-class work adequately and on-time. This is important (1) out of consideration for the instructors' time, who will be grading these assignments, and (2) out of respect for other students' time, as the out-of-class work prepares students to contribute in class. <u>If you need a deadline extension,</u> please let us know ahead of time. <u>If you accidentally miss a deadline,</u> send us an email afterwards letting us know what

happened, and finish the assignment as soon as possible. Failing to complete an assignment before the subsequent class, or missing 2 or more deadlines without notifying instructors ahead of time, is grounds for failing the course.

Homework responses are graded on the following rubric. To pass the course, students must receive at least 1 point on every assignment. Unlimited tries are permitted up until 1 week after the original deadline.

2	*Outstanding response.* This is reserved for especially stellar responses. Receiving this score does not gain you any extra credit in the course - it's just for honor :)
1	*Adequate response.* The standard score. Response engaged thoughtfully and in sufficient detail with the question, and followed the discussion guidelines in the Discussion Guide.
0	*Unsatisfactory response.* The reason for the response being unsatisfactory will be communicated in the TA's feedback. A response may receive this score because it is too short, lacks detail, is superficial or vague, does not address the question, or violates discussion guidelines.

Academic Integrity

Cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade. If you wish to use text written or spoken by someone else, quote them if possible, and always cite your sources. When completing asynchronous work for which you are instructed not to use outside sources, please follow these instructions. This is not only important for your own integrity, but also to uphold the integrity of the data we collect on the efficacy of the course.

Health and Well-Being

Student well-being is a priority, and we want to work with you to accommodate your needs to the extent that we can. We hope that you find this work well-motivated and intellectually stimulating, and that you enjoy engaging with the important and useful topics explored.

Being a graduate student can be difficult, and your mental health is important. We strongly encourage you to seek support throughout your PhD via Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) (call 412-268-2922 and/or visit http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/). If you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, either in general or about a specific problem, you can talk with your advisor, an ombudsperson, a friend or faculty member you trust, or ask the course instructors or course consultants about further resources.

Accessibility and Inclusivity of Course Materials

It is our highest priority to ensure that students can bring their authentic selves to this class, and that students receive equitable access to education. Given that some of the content discussed in this course may be emotionally and intellectually challenging, several measures have been taken to ensure that the experience of taking this course is as inclusive to everyone as possible.

Accessibility of materials. *If there is something we can provide to allow you to more easily engage with a resource, please let us know and we will try to secure an alternate version.* Please also let us know if you will be using a screen reader or other accessibility-related device, so we can ensure that the resources assigned are compatible with your device. We try to provide sources in various formats and offer students significant choice in the resources they learn from, because we recognize that students may learn best in different environments and from different materials.

Disability accommodations. \We encourage you to discuss any accommodations that would help you with the course instructors as early as possible. We will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, we encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Content warnings and handling of sensitive material. Especially intense content and sensitive topics will be flagged in the course materials. In addition, discussions are regulated by community guidelines described in the Discussion Guide, which also describes many ways in which students can rely on instructors for support in discussions. For additional support, we encourage students to utilize Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) (call 412-268-2922 and/or visit http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/).

Options for giving feedback. We welcome and encourage students to provide feedback and suggestions about the course. We will take care to address your concerns with humility and sensitivity. We approach the practice of developing and teaching this course with the understanding that we can always improve**,** and we acknowledge that people may experience the material in ways we have not anticipated.

Channels through which students can give feedback:

1. Email or make an appointment with the course instructors. You can convey your concerns directly to them or, if you prefer, they can refer you to someone else to talk to.

2. Contact Darla Coleman, the SCS Executive Director for DEI (dcoleman@andrew.cmu.edu), who is a staff member and an appointed accepter of feedback for this course.

3. Utilize the anonymous feedback portal (linked at the top + on the website)

FYI: This course is the subject of IRB-approved research

(Official paragraph from IRB): For this class, we are conducting research on teaching and learning. This research will involve some student work. You will not be asked to do anything above and beyond the normal learning activities and assignments that are part of this course. You are free not to participate in this research, and your participation will have no influence on your grade for this course or your academic career at CMU. If you do not wish to participate, please send an email to Chad Hershock (hershock@andrew.cmu.edu). Participants will not receive any compensation. The data collected as part of this research will include student grades. All analyses of data from participants' coursework will be conducted after the course is over and final grades are submitted. The Eberly Center may provide support on this research project regarding data analysis and interpretation. The Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation is located on the CMU-Pittsburgh Campus and its mission is to support the professional development of all CMU instructors regarding teaching and learning. To minimize the risk of breach of confidentiality, the Eberly Center will never have access to data from this course containing your personal identifiers. All data will be analyzed in de-identified form and presented in the aggregate, without any personal identifiers. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, or to report concerns to this study, please contact Chad Hershock (hershock@andrew.cmu.edu).