

Thursday, December 7, 2017 | Tisch Library, Room 304

Holding Algorithms Accountable

Cathy O'Neil

Reception: 2:30 PM
Talk: 3:00 - 4:00 PM



In this talk, mathematician, data scientist, and author Cathy O'Neil will outline the kinds of problems we face with powerful, opaque, and unfair algorithms being deployed against workers, consumers, and citizens. She will talk about the technical approaches we could take to addressing the problems, with existing examples of algorithmic auditing as well as existing holes in the literature. She will also discuss what kind of inquiry could or should take place in academia versus industry or Washington D.C.

Cathy O'Neil earned a Ph.D. in math from Harvard, was a postdoc at the MIT math department, and a professor at Barnard College where she published a number of research papers in arithmetic algebraic geometry. She then switched over to the private sector, working as a quant for the hedge fund D.E. Shaw in the middle of the credit crisis, and then for RiskMetrics, a risk software company that assesses risk for the holdings of hedge funds and banks. She left finance in 2011 and started working as a data scientist in the New York start-up scene, building models that predicted people's purchases and clicks. She wrote *Doing Data Science* in 2013 and launched the Lede Program in Data Journalism at Columbia in 2014. She is a regular contributor to Bloomberg View and wrote the book *Weapons of Math Destruction: how big data increases inequality and threatens democracy*. She recently founded ORCAA, an algorithmic auditing company.



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