

## INF 385T: Datafication and its Consequences

UNIQUE NUMBER 28675

Fall 2023

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**CLASS MEETS:** Thursday, 12:30-3:30

**Instructor:** Elliott Hauser, PhD

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Pronouns: he/him/his      Office hours: Self-scheduled via <https://bit.ly/hauserofficehours>

### Course Description

#### UNIVERSITY CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

Processes, techniques, and technologies that generate inscriptions (ready-to-take data), especially from or about people(s) or culture(s). Contexts, consequences, and history of datafication practices. Purposive intervention with datafication processes, practices, and artifacts.

#### PREREQUISITES FOR THE COURSE

Graduate standing, or consent of the instructor.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

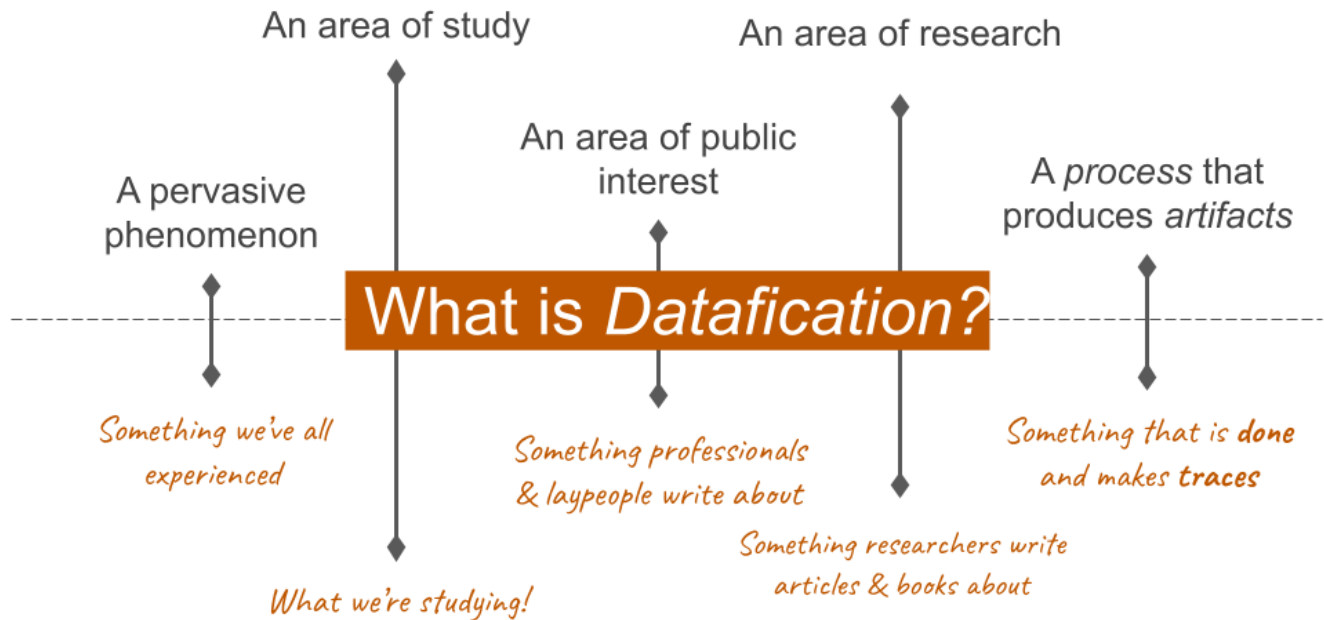
Students should leave the course able to:

1. Describe datafication artifacts and the datafication processes that produced them.
2. Evaluate specific datafication processes and datafication artifacts.
3. Analyze the consequences of a datafication process and/or artifact upon the meaning, identity, and agency of specific people, places, or things.
4. Design and undertake a purposive intervention in a datafication process or artifact.

#### WHAT IS DATAFICATION?

In this class, Datafication is a term for **any process of generating inscriptions from or about people, artifacts, properties, identities, concepts, and other sources of personal and cultural meaning, identity, or agency**. Datafication processes include naming, identification, counting, cataloging, measuring, scoring, equating, and certifying. Layered datafication, where outputs from one process become inputs to another, produces complex chains of inscription with far-reaching consequences for human life. Although the term datafication is used by some communities to exclusively indicate digital data, the phenomenon of

datafication investigated here is at least as old as human language. We will investigate both digital and analog datafication processes and artifacts.



#### DETAILED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course approaches the phenomenon of datafication as entangled agencies of inscription, meaning, and identity. We will survey the history, practices, and technologies surrounding a variety of specific datafication processes performed by human and nonhuman actors in contexts like governance, visual and textual media, technoscience, and industry. We will seek evidence of datafication's material, discursive, and ethical consequences as we uncover its effects upon cultural conceptions of originality, control, and proof.

Students will investigate datafication processes experientially by performing datafication and examining data and datafication artifacts. Course readings will be drawn from fields including critical data studies, algorithm studies, and software studies; information history, information infrastructure studies, and classification theory; philosophy of information, language, and science; and social studies of science, art, and technology. Students will undertake an original, substantial, and scholarly investigation of a specific datafication process, devise an intervention within it, and explain how their intervention alters datafication's consequences.

*Note: Students will be taught to use tools of datafication at a level sufficient for success in the course's planned assignments; no prior technical experience is required. Students will be encouraged to draw upon prior experience with specific datafication techniques such as cataloging, schema development, survey administration, user profiling, machine classification, etc. in their independent projects, where applicable.*

## Outline of Course Schedule

The following table gives an outline of the planned course themes, topics, major concepts, and datafication examples covered in the course.

Theme	Weekly Topic	Concepts & Contexts
Inscription & Meaning	Welcome!	Datafication
	Processes and Artifacts	Timekeeping
	Inscription and Meaning	Publications
Meaning & Identity	Datafication, Inscription, & Meaning	Maps
	Meaning Making Arti-facts	Questionnaires
	Arti-facts of Identity	Categories in Health & Medicine
Identity & Agency	Datafication, Meaning, & Identity	Student-selected examples
	Arti-facts of Identity	COMPAS Scores
	Human and Nonhuman Agencies	Revisit prior examples
Agency & Inscription	Intervening in Datafication	Consequences
	Datafication, Identity, & Agency	Student-selected examples
	Project Choice	Student-selected final
Synthesis	Project Work	Student-selected final
	Datafication and Its Consequences	Student-selected final

The themes are intentionally circular: we will look at datafication’s impacts upon inscription and meaning, meaning and identity, identity and agency, and agency and inscription. This circular design will culminate in an independent student-led synthesis of the techniques and concepts covered in the course via the final project (described below).

The details will change as needed; the **course schedule** on Canvas will be students’ primary reference for due dates, readings, and lecture notes. Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also update Canvas with them. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced. I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible.

## Course Requirements and Grading

### REQUIRED MATERIALS

Any assigned readings that are not freely available will be provided through Canvas and/or the University libraries. Students will not have to purchase or rent readings (though they may if they so choose).

All software, hardware, and physical artifacts will be provided by the instructor or can be obtained at no cost by the student. Students will not have to purchase or rent these (though they may if they so choose).

For some assignments, students will need to locate outside sources, artifacts, and/or processes relevant to the topic. This will be feasible without spending money (though they may do so if they so choose).

#### REQUIRED DEVICES

Students will need a device with a keyboard to facilitate text-based input for in-class and homework activities. Laptops are highly recommended. Technologies used in class *may be supported* by tablets with mobile operating systems such as iOS and Android. An external keyboard is required for devices that do not have one.

#### CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Attendance, full participation, respectful behavior, and professionalism are expected of all students. Expectations are the bare minimum required to enable the course to function. They do not constitute points to be earned on the final grade, but failure to meet expectations can lower the final grade.

**Class attendance** T.B.D.

**Class participation** T.B.D.

**Behavior expectations** T.B.D.

**Professional Standards** T.B.D.

#### ASSESSMENT WEIGHTS

The following table presents the major types of assessments in the class. The student's grade on all assessments of a given category will be averaged to determine the category grade. The number of assignments marked with an asterisk is approximate and may be adjusted in the student's favor (for instance, 'dropping' the N lowest) as required during the semester.

Assignment Type	Number (* Approx.)	Category Weight	Grade Basis
Reading Reflections	10*	20%	Completion
Activity Worksheets	10*	20%	Completion
Conceptual Syntheses	2	20%	Rubric
Final Project	1	20%	Rubric
Participation, Preparation, & Professionalism	–	20%	Expectation

**Reading reflections** are short written engagements with the assigned readings (and, towards the end of class, student-provided readings). They will seed class discussion and will serve as useful resources for subsequent projects.

**Activity worksheets** are documents produced using instructor-provided templates that help students describe, evaluate, or intervene (as appropriate) a specific datafication process or artifact. The process or artifact used in the activity will typically be provided by the instructor at first and by the student during subsequent uses of the form.

**Conceptual Syntheses** are composite documents that utilize the course readings, activity worksheets, and new writing to apply the course concepts to a specific datafication example. The example will be drawn from those covered in the course or, with permission, selected by the student.

The **Final Project** the design and execution of an intervention in a datafication example chosen by the student. Students will apply the core techniques and concepts covered in the class to support this effort. Students may draw from all prior work completed in the class, as applicable, and will identify new related readings and complete new worksheets as needed. The result should be suitable for inclusion in a professional portfolio and/or further development into a research publication, depending on the student's goals.

#### LATE WORK AND MAKING UP MISSED WORK

Students should request an extension as soon as it becomes apparent that a deadline will not be met. Reasonable requests for extensions will be granted; unexcused late work will not be accepted.

Students who encounter challenges unrelated to the course such as health problems, family emergencies, or weather-related disruptions to their studies will be fully accommodated. **Students do not need to disclose to me the nature of their challenges to obtain this help.** To obtain an individual accommodation, contact Student Emergency Services (below), who will inform me that you require an accommodation. I will then work with you to ensure you can participate fully in the class.

#### ABSENCES

T.B.D.

#### EQUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

T.B.D.

#### EXTRA CREDIT

T.B.D.

#### +/- GRADNG POLICY

T.B.D.

#### GRADE BREAKS

Grade	Cutoff
A	94%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	84%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	74%
C-	70%
D+	67%
D	64%
D-	60%

F	<60%
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## How Will You Learn?

### STATEMENT OF LEARNING SUCCESS

Your success in this class is important to me. We all learn differently, and everyone struggles sometimes. You are not, ever, the only one having difficulty! If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT and I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

### TEACHING MODALITY INFORMATION

The course is officially **hybrid**. In this class, that means we will meet in person whenever feasible, synchronously via Zoom if not, and asynchronously (via e.g. recorded lecture) if necessary.

### COMMUNICATION

The course Canvas site can be found at [utexas.instructure.com](http://utexas.instructure.com). Please use Canvas messages to contact me about the course, CCing the TA or AA as applicable. This will help you get the fastest response.

You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses.

### ASKING FOR HELP

In addition to in-class opportunities to ask questions, students are encouraged to self-schedule office hours with me for individual attention or feedback.

### COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed, and that students comfortably express themselves during discussions. Differences will be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit to all students. Please come to me at any time with any concerns.

### DISABILITY & ACCESS (D&A)

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability & Access (D&A). Please refer to the D&A website for more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

## Course Policies and Disclosures

The following are statements of general university policy and disclosures as applied to this course.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY EXPECTATIONS

Students who violate University rules on academic misconduct are subject to the student conduct process and potential disciplinary action. A student found responsible for academic misconduct may be assigned both a status sanction and a grade impact for the course. The grade impact could range from a zero on the assignment in question up to a failing grade in the course. A status sanction can range from probation, deferred suspension and/or dismissal from the University. To learn more about the academic integrity standards, tips for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

### GETTING HELP WITH TECHNOLOGY

Students needing help with technology not specifically taught as part of this course (for example, personal computers, Canvas, or word processing software) should contact the [ITS Service Desk](#) or the [Information Commons](#).

### CONTENT WARNING

Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. I have not deliberately included content that I expect students to find offensive and/or traumatizing. However, due to the nature and consequences of datafication, some readings and content included or selected by other students for this course may include such topics. I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity, especially around potentially sensitive topics or discussions.

### BASIC NEEDS SECURITY

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to visit UT Outpost for support. UT Outpost, is a free on-campus food pantry and career closet for all currently enrolled UT students. Furthermore, if you are comfortable notifying me, please do so, as I may have additional resources I can share.

### RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

By [UT Austin policy](#), you must notify me of your pending absence as far in advance as possible of the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### NAMES AND PRONOUNS

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "chosen name" with the registrar's office, which you can do so [here](#). I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the pronouns you have asked to be used

for you (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit [this site](#). Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender identity & expression, and nationalities. More resources available on the Gender and Sexuality Center's website, [www.utgsc.org](http://www.utgsc.org).

#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what now is called North America. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo/Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

## University Resources for Students

#### DISABILITY & ACCESS (D&A)

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability & Access (D&A). Please refer to the D&A website for more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

#### COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH CENTER (CMHC)

We all benefit from support during times of struggle. Know you are not alone. If you are experiencing signs of stress, anxiety, depression, academic concerns, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, or any other concern impacting your well-being – you are strongly encouraged to connect with CMHC. The Counseling and Mental Health Center is located on campus and provides a wide variety of mental health services to UT students including crisis services, counseling services with immediate support and well-being resources. Additionally, CARE Counselors are located within each of the academic schools and colleges. These counselors are familiar with the concerns that are unique to their unit's students. For more information on CMHC, visit [cmhc.utexas.edu](http://cmhc.utexas.edu) or call 512-471-3515.

#### UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES (UHS)

Your physical health and well-being are a priority. University Health Services is the on-campus medical facility providing high quality medical care and patient education to UT students. Services offered include general medicine, specialty clinics including the gynecology clinic, sports medicine, nutrition services, allergy, immunization and travel health and physical therapy, an urgent care, a 24/7 nurse advice line, and a lab and radiology services. For additional information, visit [healthyhorns.utexas.edu](http://healthyhorns.utexas.edu) or call 512-471-4955.



### SANGER LEARNING CENTER

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

### STUDENT EMERGENCY SERVICES (SES)

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to crisis or an emergency situation, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/> or by calling 512-471-5017.

## Important Safety Information

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or professors, contact BCCAL (the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line) at <https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line> or by [calling 512-232-5050](tel:512-232-5050). Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, however the university may be required to release some information to appropriate parties.

### CLASSROOM SAFETY AND COVID-19

- For any illness, students should stay home if they are sick or contagious, not only to stop the spread, but also to prioritize their personal well-being.
- UHS provides [symptomatic COVID-19 testing](#) for students. Schedule your appointment by calling 512-471-4955 or online within the [MyUHS patient portal](#). Learn more about [symptomatic COVID-19 testing here](#).
- Disposable masks are available for students at the William C. Powers, Jr. Student Activity Center and Texas Union hospitality desks.
- The [exposure action chart](#) offers guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 or if you test positive. If you experience symptoms, stay home and isolate and follow the instructions for symptomatic in the chart.
- Stay up to date on [COVID-19 vaccinations](#) by getting all available boosters when eligible. Vaccines are available through University Health Services.
- Additionally, UHS maintains up to date resources on COVID-19, which can be found here:
- [COVID-19 Information and Resources](#)

## CARRYING OF HANDGUNS ON CAMPUS

Texas' Open Carry law expressly prohibits a licensed to carry (LTC) holder from carrying a handgun openly on the campus of an institution of higher education such as UT Austin. Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to [review the university policy regarding campus carry](#).
- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.
- Per my right, I prohibit carrying of handguns in my personal office. Note that this information will also be conveyed to all students verbally during the first week of class. This written notice is intended to reinforce the verbal notification, and is not a “legally effective” means of notification in its own right.

## TITLE IX DISCLOSURE

[If this disclosure is included in the syllabus, the [Title IX office has specified the following wording](#).]

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 (formerly known as [Senate Bill 212](#)) requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the [Title IX Office](#) regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, written forms, applications, one-on-one conversations, class assignments, class discussions, or third-party reports) must report it to the [Title IX Coordinator](#). Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, please remember that I will be required to report this information.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Education Code, Section 51.252, they are [mandatory reporters](#) under federal Title IX regulations and are required to report [a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct](#), including the types of misconduct covered under Texas Education Code, Section 51.252. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex – including pregnancy and parental status – in educational programs and activities. The Title IX Office has [developed supportive ways](#) and compiled [campus resources](#) to support all impacted by a Title IX matter.

If you would like to speak with a Case Manager for Support and Resources, who can provide support, resources or academic accommodations, in the Title IX Office, please email [supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu). A Case Manager can also provide support, resources and accommodations for pregnant, nursing, and parenting students.

For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419.

#### CAMPUS SAFETY

The following are recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the [Office of Campus Safety](#), 512-471-5767,

- Students should sign up for Campus Emergency Text Alerts at the page linked above.
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus must evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- For more information, please visit the [Office of Emergency Management](#).