CSCI-461: Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Development
Units: 4
Fall 2021 – Mon/Wed 10:00am-11:50am

Location: TBD

Instructor: Bistra Dilkina
Office: SAL 304
Office Hours: 1 fixed-time office hour plus by appointment. Tuesday 3-4pm.
Contact Info: dilkina@usc.edu

Teaching Assistant: TBD
Office: TBD
Office Hours: 2 fixed-time office hours with TA
Contact Info: TBD
Course Catalogue Description
Hands-on AI for Sustainable Development: learn about data mining, ML, optimization, and fairness in the context of applications with environmental and societal benefit; team projects with real-world relevance.

Course Description
The course will focus on understanding how AI can be leveraged for social good and for making progress towards sustainable development. It will introduce AI concepts spanning data mining, machine learning (classification, regression, ensembles, deep learning, feature importance), decision making and optimization, and fairness in machine learning and algorithmic decision making in the context of informing applications in environmental sustainability (biodiversity, climate, water, forests), disasters and climate change, poverty, homelessness, and health. It will expose students to both core AI knowledge as well as cutting edge research on the topic of using AI for social good applications. This course will introduce material through textbook reading, lectures and academic research papers reading. In-class Python tutorials and individual Python assignments using real datasets will give students hands-on practice of the concepts and algorithms covered. In teams, students you will experience end-to-end the process of completing an applied AI project in the context of a societal or environmental domain. The class will provide many opportunities for interactions with other students, the instructor and TA.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to:
1. Describe and apply AI methods covered in the course, including the basic concepts and the key algorithms
2. Describe pressing societal and environmental challenges, where AI has been successfully deployed to tackle them
3. Model societal challenges as mathematical problems that AI techniques can be applied to and recognize which AI techniques fit the problems
4. Prototype ML applications in Jupyter Notebook, including the full pipeline of a data-driven project

Prerequisite(s):
1. CSCI-270
2. CSCI-360 or CSCI-467 or by instructor approval. D-clearance form: https://forms.gle/5UEsnEEN4owiV3jK6

Recommended Preparation: Python programming skills are strongly encouraged (classes that use Python depending on instructor: CSCI 353, CSCI 360, CSCI 445, EE 250, EE 364, also ITP 115 as introduction to Python). All coding assignments will be based on Python so students should either already have Python skills or be prepared to learn on their own in parallel with the course. Examples will be provided in the form of Python tutorials and
scaffolding for assignments.

Course Notes
The class is letter grade. Readings and slides will be posted to Blackboard. We will use Slack for Q&A and open discussions among students as well as Instructor and TA.

The class will provide many opportunities for interactions with other students, the instructor and TA. Please stop by my office during posted office hours. It can be to discuss course content, brainstorm ideas, ask a question about USC or careers, or just to stop by and say hello. If you cannot attend my posted office hours, please email me to arrange another time that is convenient for both of us.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
At this time, the growing area of AI applications in sustainable development and social good has not yet been formalized in a textbook. Therefore, most of the readings will be based on research papers and articles that will be provided to the class as PDF based handouts via Blackboard.

The following books provide useful background information about the techniques studied in class. However, they do not discuss the application to specific social good settings.
(PRML) Pattern Recognition and Machine Learning, Christopher Bishop, Springer; 2006


Description and Assessment of Assignments

Paper reviews
The course will explore the course topics through a series of assigned readings in the form of research papers (and book chapters). Students will be assigned 1 research paper to read for a given week and submit a 1-2 page review for the assigned reading paper as homework. There will be 6 (+ 1 optional) such paper reviews assigned through the semester. Reviews will be assessed based on answering the following 5 questions (based on clarity and correctness):

1. What is the main problem/task addressed by the paper?
2. Why was AI needed and what AI approach was employed?
3. What does the paper's literature review suggest has been done previously, and how does the paper expand this previous work?
4. What data was used and were stakeholders / partner organizations engaged?
5. Discussion: what generalization to other settings/problems or what extension of the paper could be done?

*Coding Assignments*
Students will implement techniques studied in class by completing Python notebook assignments. The assignments will be graded based on completion and correctness.

*Class Presentation*
Students will present individually or in small groups (depending on class size) an AI for Social Good research paper to the class. The paper will be selected from a list of papers selected by the instructor, or outside of the selected list with instructor permission. The presentations will be graded on clarity, completeness, and presentation style.

*Peer presentation learning*
Peer learning during student presentations will be assessed with a short questionnaire on each student presentation in terms of relevance to technical and social good course themes.

*Semester Project*
Students will work in small groups to carry out a class project. The focus of the class project will be to develop an innovative application of AI to address a social good problem. Students will leverage tools, concepts, and techniques presented in the class. The project involves identifying a problem related to social good, data sources available to inform the problem, and AI-based approaches to it. The project will involve: data cleaning and fusion, data exploration/preprocessing/visualization, implementing at least 2 competing AI approaches, presenting results in terms of a table of multiple (at least 3) evaluation metrics and possible visualizations of outputs, and a discussion. Project topics will be suggested by the instructor, and also students will have the freedom to propose their own. The grade for the project will be based on the successful completion of the agreed upon project objectives. The deliverables include a project proposal (1-2 pages single space), preliminary paper draft (4-8 pages single space), final presentation (10-20 minutes) and a final report (10-15 pages single space). Examples of past projects (proposals, paper drafts, presentation and report) will be shared with the class (with permission from past students). They will be graded based on clarity, and completeness. The project is total 55% of final grade broken into deliverables throughout the semester as listed in Grading Breakdown.

*Grading Breakdown*
The grades for the students will be based on completion of the paper review assignments, presentation of a research paper, programming assignments, and a semester project. The breakdown for each of these categories is listed below. A more detailed explanation of the grading for each category is also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tool (assignments)</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Reviews</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Python assignment (4x4%)</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Peer Class Presentation Quizzes</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary Paper Draft</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Final Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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**Assignment Submission Policy**
Assignments will be submitted via Blackboard.

**Grading Timeline**
Grades will be provided within 2 weeks of submission of the respective assignment.

**Additional Policies**
This is a discussion-based course, hence consistent attendance is expected. Missed classes with a valid excuse are allowed. Class participation will be scored based on engagements in course discussions. Class participation will be evaluated based on Q&A and engaging in discussions in class or on the class chat. At least 6 meaningful class interactions are needed to get full participation score. Meaningful interaction could be asking or answering questions during lecture, commenting on a paper being presented by the instructor or other students, or presenting updates on project progress, among others.
## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics/Daily Activities</th>
<th>Deliverables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction + Jupyter Notebooks Tutorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Clustering + Clustering Tutorial / Clustering for Climate</td>
<td>Paper review 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Regression (Cross-Validation, Features Selection) / Applications</td>
<td>Python assignment 1: clustering</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Regression / Applications</td>
<td>Paper review 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Python assignment 2: regression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Classification (Trees, Ensembles, Feature Importance) / Applications</td>
<td>Project Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Deep Learning &amp; Remote Sensing / Applications</td>
<td>Paper Review 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Student Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Paper Presentations + Reading (Quiz)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Student Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Paper Presentations + Reading (Quiz)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Optional paper review)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Student Presentations; Submodular Optimization / Applications</td>
<td>Paper Presentations + Reading (Quiz)</td>
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<td>Paper review 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Integer Programming Optimization / Applications</td>
<td>Python assignment 3: optimization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Integer Programming Optimization / Applications</td>
<td>Project preliminary paper draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Multi-objective Optimization + Genetic Algorithms / Applications</td>
<td>Paper review 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>AI &amp; Fairness</td>
<td>Paper review 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>AI &amp; Fairness</td>
<td>Python assignment 4: fairness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Project Presentations</td>
<td>Project Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>Project Report</td>
<td>Due on University-scheduled date of the final exam</td>
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### Papers covered in the class:

**Week 1:** Introduction for Sustainable Development + AI for Social Good Principles

Week 2: Data Mining / Environment

Week 3+4: Regression / Energy + Climate Change
• PRML Chapter 3, ISLR Ch. 3, 5 & 6
• A Large-Scale Study on Predicting and Contextualizing Building Energy Usage. J. Zico Kolter, Joseph Ferreira. AAAI 2011
• A Machine Learning Approach to Modeling Human Migration. Caleb Robinson and Bistra Dilkina. ACM SIGCAS Conference on Computing and Sustainable Societies 2018

Week 5: Classification / Illegal Wildlife Poaching
• PRML Chapter 4 & 14, ISLR Ch. 4 & 8
• "Adversary models account for imperfect crime data: Forecasting and planning against real-world poachers." Gholami, Shahrzad, et al. AAMAS 2018.

Week 6: Deep Learning / Land Cover + Poverty
• PRML Chapter 5, DL Ch. 6 & 7

Week 9: Submodular Optimization / Environmental Sensing + Public Health
• Using Social Networks to Aid Homeless Shelters: Dynamic Influence Maximization under Uncertainty. Amulya Yadav et al. AAMAS 2016

Week 10+11: Mathematical Programming / Biodiversity Conservation
• MP Chapters 1 & 9

Week 12: Multi-objective, Genetic Algorithms

Week 13+14: AI and Fairness
• A large-scale analysis of racial disparities in police stops across the United States. Pierson et al., https://arxiv.org/abs/1706.05678
• Julia Angwin, Jeff Larson, Surya Mattu, Lauren Kirchner, “Machine Bias”. https://www.propublica.org/article/how-we-analyzed-the-compas-recidivism-algorithm

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu*
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.
**USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710**
campussupport.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

**Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101**
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call**
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

**USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call**
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)**
ombuds.usc.edu
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.