

Vassar College

Data Science and Society

Data Science and Society Colloquium Series Talk

Michael Burnam-Fink

Vassar College - Class of 2010

What is Scientific about Data Science

Friday, November 4, 2022

4:00pm

Rockefeller Hall 312

Tea at 3:30pm (Rocky 305 - Math Lounge)



Data is the new oil of the 21st century, and data science is the field that refines raw data into useful insights. Much like petroleum, data is a means to many ends, a valuable commodity, and a substance with potentially harmful side effects. Just because a field calls itself a science, and uses computer and statistical techniques, doesn't necessarily make it scientific. In this talk we'll explore the characteristics of science that make it a reliable source of knowledge and compare the philosophical and social aspects of science to data science workflows and algorithms to see what, if anything, is scientific about data science.

Michael Burnam-Fink is a data scientist and software developer with First Republic Bank. He majored in Science, Technology, and Society (Vassar '10), and earned a PhD in the Human and Social Dimensions of Science and Technology at Arizona State University. His data science projects include evaluating the intellectual integration of interdisciplinary research groups, finding hidden gems in book reviews, and predicting wildfire spread.