Undergraduate Research Opportunity

PROJ E CT

Law, Algorithms and Probability

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Philosophy

The focus of this project is to help develop a podcast series on the main controversies about the use of probabilistic, quantitative and algorithmic methods in the law. The plan is to create a few short podcast episodes, each on a different question, such as: How do you weigh evidence with probability? How probable is a reasonable doubt? Is DNA evidence infallible? Does cross-examination help to find out the truth? Are trials nothing other than gambles with people’s lives? Can machine learning algorithms follow legal precedent? Will machine judges be more accurate than humans? Etc. Each episode should begin with a story or court case and then raises the relevant philosophical questions, while also containing excerpts of interviews with select experts. Each podcast should summarize -- in a balanced, accessible and compelling manner -- the state of the literature. The target audience are undergraduate students and the general public.

STUDENT

Research assistant’s duties:
With the goal of developing the podcast, the research assistant will focus on a question of their choice and perform the following tasks relevant to addressing the question:

- (T1) research and summarize pertinent court cases
- (T2) research and summarize the pertinent scholarly literature in philosophy, law, psychology, forensic science, computer science and related fields
- (T3) prepare questions for experts
- (T4) conduct interviews with experts
- (T5) draft a script for the podcast

Required skills or qualifications:
Desired qualifications include good research skills, an interest in combining philosophical questions with real world stories, attention to detail, an inclination for both rigorous and creative thinking. Familiarity with the literature on law, algorithms and probability is a plus (see, e.g., the entry on "Legal Probabilism" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Skills student will acquire:
Students will develop strategies for summarizing effectively large bodies of literature. They will learn how distill complex ideas into compelling narratives that can be accessible to a broader audience. They will also improve their writing skills, both analytical writing and creative writing.