

Computer Science

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IMPORTANT DATES & REMINDERS

Monday, April 6, 2026 Last day for full term withdrawals to receive 100% refund

Monday, April 6, 2026 Registration for Summer Quarter begins

Friday, May 8, 2026 Last day to drop a FULL-TERM class for Spring in
CAESAR

Monday, May 11, 2026 Pre-Registration for Fall begins

Friday, May 15, 2026 Master's completion form due for TGS Spring master's
candidates

Monday, May 18, 2026 Registration for Fall begins

Monday, May 25, 2026 No classes - Memorial Day - University offices closed

Monday, June 8, 2026 Spring examinations begin

Friday, June 12, 2026 Spring examinations end

Friday, June 19, 2026 Juneteenth - University Closed

Monday, June 22, 2026 Spring Degree Conferral

Monday, June 22, 2026 Summer classes begin

We want to hear from you!
Please send any upcoming news and events to cs-news@northwestern.edu to be included in future bulletins, on our socials and/or website.

Missed a seminar? No worries!
View past seminars via the Northwestern CS Website
(northwestern login required).

[View Past Seminars »](#)

UPCOMING SEMINARS

April

01 - Robin Luo
02 - Tianhao Wang
06 - Faez Ahmed
08 - Austin Mordahl
13 - Arindam Banerjee
15 - Jakub Szefer
20 - Yuanyang Teng
22 - Lev Reyzin
27 - Tushar Chandra
29 - Bill Fefferman

May

04 - Moon Duchin
14 - Dr. Prabhakar Raghavan
20 - Julio Ottino



From Data to Design: Rethinking Engineering Design With Next-Gen AI

Faez Ahmed, MIT

Abstract

Generative AI is transforming how we create, customize, and accelerate digital

content. Yet applying these tools to engineering design introduces unique challenges, from maintaining precision under evolving requirements to working effectively in data-scarce environments and interpreting designer intent. In this talk, I will discuss these challenges and show how emerging engineering-focused foundation models are beginning to address them, reshaping workflows in areas such as vehicle design, CAD automation, and design optimization. I will highlight new opportunities enabled by generative AI that integrates multimodal data with engineering analysis and optimization, and present examples of AI-driven design co-pilots for engineering tasks. The talk will conclude with a perspective on how AI enables us to broaden design democratization, accelerate innovation cycles, and fundamentally reshape the role of engineers.

Biography

Faez Ahmed is an Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at MIT, where he leads the DeCoDE Lab. His research focuses on AI for engineering design, including deep generative models, multimodal representations, and human-AI collaboration. His work has been recognized with the NSF CAREER Award, ASME DAC and DTM Young Investigator Awards, the Google Research Scholar Award, and the Amazon Research Award. He serves as an Associate Editor for Computer-Aided Design and Design Science.

🕒 **Monday, April 6, 2026**
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM CT

📍 **Ford Motor Company Engineering Design Center, 1-350,**
2133 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208

[Seminar Details »](#)



Challenges of Modern Static Analysis: Configuration, Flakiness and Testing

Austin Mordahl, UIC

Abstract

"Static analysis tools are essential for catching bugs early in software development, yet decades of research have failed to overcome fundamental barriers to their adoption: complicated configuration, high false positive rates,

and failure to detect real bugs. Despite the proliferation of sophisticated tools for determining program properties and advances in underlying techniques, these challenges continue to hinder widespread adoption and effective use in practice. In this talk, we will explore solutions to three persistent problems that plague modern static analysis: configuration complexity, flakiness, and testing. First, we'll examine approaches to reducing the steep learning curves around tool configuration, making it easier for developers to deploy static analyzers in their projects. Second, we'll investigate techniques for addressing flakiness: when analysis tools produce different results on identical code, undermining developer trust in their results. Finally, we'll discuss methods for testing static analysis tools themselves: validating that tools correctly determine the program properties they claim to compute.

Throughout the talk, we'll also examine how large language models are reshaping approaches to each of these challenges and consider their potential to fundamentally transform static analysis workflows. Attendees will gain practical insights into emerging solutions to long-standing problems and new research directions in making static analysis tools more reliable and accessible."

Biography

Austin Mordahl has been an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois Chicago since November 2024. Prior to this, he was a Ph.D. student at the University of Texas at Dallas. Dr. Mordahl's research concerns automatic bug detection and static analysis, and he is especially interested in understanding and improving the performance of real-world static analysis tools. As a Ph.D. student, he was a recipient of the prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowship as well as the winner of the 2019 ACM Student Research Competition at ICSE.

🕒 **Wednesday, April 8, 2026**
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CT

📍 **Mudd Hall, 3514**
2233 Tech Drive, Evanston, IL 60208

[Seminar Details »](#)

CS Department Events

SAVE THE DATE: END OF YEAR DEPARTMENT AWARDS

Come celebrate with us at the annual end of year department awards on Wednesday May 27th. Details to come.

🕒 Wednesday, May 27, 2026
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM CT

📍 TBA

CSPAC, CSSI, AND GWIC RECRUITMENT

PhD students, we are looking for future student leaders to join our student organizations! This is a great opportunity to develop leadership, organization, and communication skills that are essential for any post-PhD career. More information and the (lightweight) nomination form can be found [here](#).

[Nomination Form »](#)

GRADUATE STUDENT APPRECIATION WEEK

Happy Graduate Student Appreciation Week

Kick things off on **Monday** with a special furry friend visiting the department. Stop by **Mudd 3312 from 12pm to 5pm** to say hello to **Atticus**.

Then, close out the week on **Friday** with a calming R&R event. Drop by **Mudd 3514 between 11am and 1pm** for free smoothies, spa items, cozy vibes, and time to unwind.

Be sure to [check out the Kudoboard](#) filled with messages of appreciation.

Plus, [enjoy more GSAW events](#) hosted by throughout the week.

🕒 Monday, April 6 - Friday, April 10, 2026

📍 Various Campus

SERGIO SERVANTEZ PHD FINAL DEFENSE ANNOUNCEMENT

Thesis Title

Large Language Models as Legal Reasoners

Abstract

The legal system is built upon complex bodies of written text that function as operative rules governing rights, obligations, and outcomes. Recent advances in natural language processing have created new opportunities to automate aspects of legal analysis using language models (LMs). However, these models remain fundamentally probabilistic systems optimized for statistical prediction rather than faithful rule application. As a result, they often generate fluent legal language while failing to perform the precise, multi-step reasoning required to correctly interpret and apply legal rules. This dissertation investigates how language models can be improved and rigorously evaluated as legal reasoners through the integration of symbolic representations and methods grounded in legal domain knowledge.

Focusing on a tractable subset of legal tasks termed computational legal reasoning, this work develops neurosymbolic approaches that structure legal interpretation, rule application, and evaluation. First, it introduces a system for transforming natural language contracts into machine-readable representations through the extraction of Obligation Logic Graphs (OLGs), enabling contractual obligations to be represented as structured logical relationships and translated into executable code. Second, it presents Chain of Logic, a prompting method designed to improve rule-based reasoning in language models by decomposing compositional rules into their constituent elements before recombining the results to reach a final conclusion. Third, it introduces OpenExempt, a dynamic framework and benchmark that generates natural language legal tasks and their solutions from expert-crafted encodings of statutes and case facts, enabling fine-grained diagnostic evaluation of model behavior across controlled variations in reasoning complexity and task structure. Together, these contributions advance the study of language models as legal reasoners by introducing methods that improve interpretability, reliability, and diagnostic evaluation.

Committee Members

Dr. Kristian Hammond, Chair, Computer Science

Dr. Sarah Lawsky, University of Illinois College of Law

Dr. Douglas Downey, Computer Science

Dr. Larry Birnbaum, Computer Science

🕒 **Thursday, April 23, 2026**
01:30 PM - 03:30 PM CT

📍 Mudd Hall, 3501,
2233 Tech Drive, Evanston, IL 60208

Other Events

MIND & MACHINE ALIGNMENT SUMMIT (JULY 2026)

The Ohio State University is hosting the **Mind & Machine Alignment Summit** on **July 19–21, 2026**. The summit will bring together researchers and builders working at the intersection of AI, social science, ethics, and policy to explore how AI systems can better align with human values and promote well-being.

We are currently **inviting proposals** for presentations, experiences, and project ideas, with submissions due by **April 8, 2026**.

🕒 July 19 - 21, 2026
All day

📍 The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

[Summit Details »](#)

CS News



Northwestern Network for Collaborative Intelligence Announces Strategic Leaders

Professors Sara Owsley Sood and Chris Wolverton are among the five impactful leaders from across the University who will helm NNCI's three strategic pillars—Research, Education and Infrastructure—and guide human-centered AI innovation

across Northwestern.

[***Read Full Article***](#)



Federal Judges Report Broad Adoption of AI Tools

In a new survey led by Professors Daniel Linna and V.S. Subrahmanian, more than half of responding judges report using at least one AI tool in their judicial work.

[***Read Full Article***](#)



Strong Northwestern CS Presence at ICLR 2026, ICRA 2026, and NeurIPS 2025

Faculty and students contribute to prestigious international conferences in AI and robotics research.

[***Read Full Article***](#)



Northwestern CS Announces Winter 2026 Outstanding Teaching Assistants and Peer Mentors

The quarterly department awards recognize exceptional service to the CS community.

[***Read Full Article***](#)



Northwestern Department of Computer Science
Mudd Hall, 2233 Tech Drive, Third Floor
Evanston, Illinois 60208

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