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Immediate Release

## Innovative free course empowers citizens to advocate for ethical AI

***The Center for responsible AI at NYU Tandon, in partnership with the Queens Public Library and P2PU, launched “We are AI,” a five-week course to give citizens a primer on AI and empower them to advocate for policies that prevent its abuses.***

BROOKLYN, New York, Wednesday, May 19, 2021 – Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems proliferate more and more decisions about how we live. Many of these sophisticated computer programs that “learn” from data in order to make decisions are invisible to the public, yet the results of the decisions they make, or help humans make, have a huge impact on modern life. AI controls whose updates we read on Facebook, which products we select on Amazon, and which movies we watch on Netflix. AI is also increasingly used to make critically important decisions in all areas of life, including hiring, education, public service, and even law enforcement.

“Because of its importance in our lives, we should understand how AI works so that we can control it together,” said [Julia Stoyanovich](#), professor of computer science and engineering at the [NYU Tandon School of Engineering](#), and director of NYU Tandon’s [Center for Responsible AI](#) (R/AI).

To make that possible, on May 19, 2021 R/AI launched [We Are AI](#), in partnership with the [Queens Public Library](#), part of the New York City Public Library system, and Peer-to-Peer University ([P2PU](#)).

Led by Stoyanovich and Eric Corbett, a Smart Cities postdoctoral research associate at Tandon’s Center for Urban Science and Progress ([NYU CUSP](#)), **We Are AI** is a five-week course run as a learning circle by the peer-to-peer learning platform [P2PU](#). The goal of the course is to introduce the general public to the basics of AI, discuss some of the social and ethical dimensions of its use in modern life, and

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empower individuals to engage with how AI is used and governed. **No math, programming skills, or existing understanding of AI are required!**

Embedded within the five modules ([What is AI](#), [Learning from Data](#), [Who Lives Who Dies Who Decides](#), [All About That Bias](#), and [We Are AI](#)) are a series of 10-minute videos exploring such topics as [defining AI](#), [learning from data](#), [ethics in AI](#), and [bias in AI](#). There is also an innovative, engaging [comic book series](#) designed to make this highly complex matter comprehensible to virtually anyone.

The course uses every day imagery and lay-friendly language to offer a primer on such topics as:

- Algorithms, and how machine learning systems make **predictions** about the world based on past experience encoded in the data
- Classifiers and how to design them
- Ethics in AI
- Racism and gender bias in decision making AI used in delivering online ads and hiring

The course is also a component of an evolving pedagogical [research focus](#) at R/AI to develop :

- The best channels for reaching the public
- The best media tools for effective engagement
- The most effective kinds of curricula to impress upon the public what AI does, why it matters and what's at stake

“Artificial intelligence is increasingly a silent mediator in high-stakes decisions,” said Stoyanovich. “But too few citizens are aware of its influence in their lives — in fact many are not even aware of the existence of these systems. We partnered with the Queens Public Library and P2PU to help citizens get informed, empowered and active in shaping the laws that can determine how these frameworks are used, but also to help us learn how to get even better at teaching these critical subjects.”

### ***About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering***

*The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute. A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences as part of a global university, with close connections to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. NYU Tandon is rooted in a vibrant tradition of entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity, and innovative solutions to humanity's most pressing global challenges. Research at Tandon focuses on vital intersections between communications/IT, cybersecurity, and data science/AI/robotics systems and tools and critical areas of society that they influence, including emerging media, health, sustainability, and urban living. We believe diversity is integral to excellence, and are creating a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable environment for all of our students, faculty and staff. For more information, visit [engineering.nyu.edu](http://engineering.nyu.edu).*

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