

# AMANDA CERCAS CURRY

amandacurry.github.io - amanda.cercas@gmail.com - www.linkedin.com/in/amanda-cercas-curry

My research interests are broad and range from the development of open-domain conversational systems to their social impact and how we can develop more ethical AI across disciplines. I believe a multi-disciplinary approach involving diverse teams and feminist design methods are key in solving today's ethical and technical challenges.

---

## EXPERIENCE

**PhD Student in Computer Science:** Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK), September 2016 -ongoing: My main areas of research are abuse detection and mitigation and ethical considerations in social dialogue systems. My project supervisors are Prof. Verena Rieser, and Prof. Ruth Aylett.

**HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY:** Ethical Intelligence (Edinburgh, UK), May 2019-August 2020: Think tank assessing and advising AI companies on ethical issues relating to data collection and algorithm usage.

**TEACHING ASSISTANT:** Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK), September 2016 – 2019 Assisted teaching in Software Development and Conversational Agents courses.

**RESEARCH ASSISTANT:** Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK), Summer 2014 and 2015: Developed an online game to evaluate how best to present uncertain information, such as weather reports, to the general public. Participated in Explorathon 2015, a public engagement event at the Edinburgh Zoo.

---

## LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Cohost of *Let's Chat Ethics*** (2020 - ongoing): Weekly podcast covering topics relating to Ethics and AI.

**Cohost of *Building Ethical Intelligence*** (2020): Educational series including online workshops, webinars and podcasts on topics such as Emotion AI and anger, Racial Bias in AI.

**Team Leader Amazon Alexa Prize 2018:** Coordinated liaison between Amazon's support and the student team. Implemented several neural abuse detection models using AllenNLP and RasaNLU. The models were trained on manually-annotated data from the 2017 Prize. Implemented a Lucene-based retrieval bot that uses certain subreddits containing interesting facts and thoughts as a source of information.

**Student Committee Member of SigGen** (2018-2020): Involved in the everyday functioning of the group.

**Cofounder and committee member of InterconnectHW:** (2015-2016) A network for female students in STEM subjects in Scotland.

---

## PRIZES AND AWARDS

**NESTA AI For Good Grantee 2020** £40,000

**Amazon Alexa Challenge Finalist 2018** \$50,000

**Amazon Alexa Challenge Finalist 2017** \$50,000

**James Watt PhD Scholarship 2016** Heriot-Watt University

**8<sup>th</sup> BCSWomen Lovelace Colloquium 2015:** First prize for final year undergraduate research.

**Dean's List and Outstanding Student Scholarship 2010** Hunter College

---

---

## EDUCATION

**European Summer School in Language, Logic and Information** (Bolzano, Italy) August 2016.

**Machine Learning in NLP Summer School** (Lisbon, Portugal), July 2016.

**BSc Hons COMPUTER SCIENCE:** Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK), June 2015

Achieved: 1<sup>st</sup> Class

Dissertation: Generating and Evaluating Context-Dependent Route Instructions in Virtual Environments.

Courses include: Artificial Intelligence, Data Mining and Machine learning, Biologically Inspired Computing, Data Visualisation and Analysis, Advanced Interaction Design, Intelligent Robotics.

**BA LIBERAL ARTS:** CUNY Hunter College (New York, USA), 2010-2011, GPA 4.0. Transferred to Heriot-Watt University.

**BILINGUAL INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA:** United Nations International School (New York, US), 2010

---

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Amanda Cercas Curry**, Judy Robertson and Verena Rieser, 2020. Conversational Assistants and Gender Stereotypes: Public Perceptions and Desiderata for Voice Personas. In proceedings: Workshop on Gender Bias in NLP at COLING. Barcelona, Spain.

**Amanda Cercas Curry** and Verena Rieser, 2019. A Crowd-based Evaluation of Abuse Response Strategies in Conversational Agents. In proceedings: SigDial 2019. Stockholm, Sweden.

**Amanda Cercas Curry**, Ioannis Papaioannou, Alessandro Suglia, Shubham Agarwal, Igor Shalyminov, Xinnuo Xu, Ondrej Dusek, Arash Eshghi, Ioannis Konstas, Verena Rieser and Oliver Lemon, 2018. Alana v2: Entertaining and Informative Open-Domain Social Dialogue using Ontologies and Entity Linking. In proceedings: Amazon Alexa Prize 2018. Las Vegas, NV, USA.

**Amanda Cercas Curry** and Verena Rieser, 2018. #Me Too, Alexa: How Conversational Agents Respond to Sexual Harassment. In proceedings: NAACL 2018 Second Workshop on Ethics in NLP. New Orleans, LA, USA.

Ioannis Papaioannou, **Amanda Cercas Curry**, Jose L. Part, Igor Shalyminov, Xinnuo Xu, Yanchao Yu, Ondrej Dusek, Verena Rieser and Oliver Lemon, 2017. An Ensemble Model with Ranking for Social Dialogue. In proceedings: NIPS 2017 Workshop on Conversational AI. Long Beach, CA, USA.

Jekaterina Novikova, Ondřej Dušek, **Amanda Cercas Curry** and Verena Rieser, 2017. Why we need new evaluation metrics for NLG. In proceedings: EMNLP 2017, Copenhagen, Denmark.

---

## SKILLS

### TECHNICAL:

Preferred languages: Python, Java

Known technologies: Allen NLP, Pandas, Scikit-learn, IBM SPSS, R

**LANGUAGES:** English and Spanish (bilingual), German and French (intermediate)

---