

Laura Kurek

Ph.D. Candidate | School of Information | University of Michigan

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My research examines how state actors, particularly Russia, attempt to manipulate online information environments. I employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, and have worked with data from social media platforms (X/Twitter, Rumble, Telegram) as well as peer-production knowledge sites (Wikipedia). Prior to my Ph.D., I was a data science specialist researching disinformation and inauthentic online activity for the U.S. Department of State.

Education

Ph.D., University of Michigan

School of Information
GPA: 4.0, Research areas: Social Computing, Computational Social Science
Advisors: Dr. Ceren Budak and Dr. Eric Gilbert

Expected May 2027
Ann Arbor, MI

B.S., Georgetown University

Walsh School of Foreign Service
Major: Science, Technology & International Affairs
GPA: 3.86, Magna Cum Laude. Concentration: Security
Certificate: Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European Studies

May 2016
Washington, DC

Semester Abroad, Moscow International University

American Councils Advanced Russian Language and Area Studies Program (RLASP)

Fall 2014
Moscow, Russia

Publications

2025 **Laura Kurek**, Ceren Budak, and Eric Gilbert. 2025. Wikipedia in Wartime: Experiences of Wikipedians Maintaining Articles About the Russia-Ukraine War. Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 9, 2, Article CSCW209 (April 2025), 27 pages. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3711107>

2025 **Laura Kurek**, Kevin Zheng, Eric Gilbert, and Ceren Budak. 2025. Outsourcing an Information Operation: A Complete Dataset of Tenet Media's Podcasts on Rumble. arXiv preprint [arXiv:2503.19802](https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.19802)

2025 **Laura Kurek**, Joshua Ashkinaze, Ceren Budak, and Eric Gilbert. 2025. Follow Nudges without Budes: A Field Experiment on Misinformation Followers Didn't Change Follow Networks. arXiv preprint [arXiv:2512.13643](https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.13643)

2025 Joshua Ashkinaze, Ruijia Guan, **Laura Kurek**, Eytan Adar, Ceren Budak, Eric Gilbert. 2025. Seeing Like an AI: How LLMs Apply (and Misapply) Wikipedia Neutrality Norms. Accepted to the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM 2026). [arXiv:2407.04183](https://arxiv.org/abs/2407.04183)

Other writings:

2024 **Laura Kurek**, Tim Harper, Aliya Bhatia, & Nathalie Marechal. 2024. Rules of the Road: Political Advertising on Social Media in the 2024 U.S. Election. Center for Democracy & Technology. <https://cdt.org/insights/report-rules-of-the-road-political-advertising-on-social-media-in-the-2024-u-s-election/>

Industry Experience

Center for Democracy and Technology

May 2024-Aug. 2024
Washington, DC

Technology Policy Intern | Elections & Democracy

- Co-led the production of a 40-page report on social media platforms' political advertising policies
- Conducted interviews with 7 social media companies and 5 generative AI companies
- Presented report findings to civil society groups, legislators, and industry representatives

Accenture Federal Services

Sept. 2017-July 2022
Washington, DC

Data Science Associate Manager

- Managed research production, interfacing between client and internal data science teams. Defined research objectives and developed analytical methods to assess online disinformation.
- Collaborated on joint reports with allied governments. Presented findings to technical and non-technical client audiences. Published over 30 reports.

Dec. 2021-July 2022

Data Science Specialist

- Co-led a 9-person research team: negotiated report priorities, trained 3 new members, resolved data access issues. Published over 50 reports.
- Developed network- and account-level methods to identify and describe information campaigns.
- Led a 4-part series into a state-aligned network, assessing campaign scope and tactics.

Dec. 2020-Nov.2021

Technology Delivery Senior Analyst

- Authored social media and network analysis reports. Identified three COVID-19 disinformation campaigns. Developed a hashtag network script, advanced network visualizations, and a Django web app for topic modeling.
- Led a change management software implementation for 10 teams within a federal IT department.

Dec. 2018-Nov.2020

Technology Delivery Analyst

- Facilitated two simultaneous agency-wide software implementations using Agile development
- Managed relationships with over 40 stakeholders to standardize over 200 software requirements.
- Led 7 software training sessions for over 150 users and supported 300-person user testing.

Sept. 2017-Nov.2018

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program

June 2016-June 2017
Perm, Russia

Fulbright English Teaching Assistant

- Led eight English-language classes weekly of 8-15 students at Perm National Research Polytechnic University, Linguistics Department.
- Taught intermediate Russian language classes to first-year international students.
- Organized a bi-monthly English conversation club. Provide faculty support translating academic papers and administrative documents from Russian to English.

Conference Presentations and Invited Talks

- 2025 *Wikipedia in Wartime: Experiences of Wikipedians Maintaining Articles about the Russia-Ukraine War.*
- CSCW, Oct. 22. Conference proceedings paper presentation
 - Wikimedia Ukraine, Sept. 23 & Nov. 15. Invited online talks with consecutive interpretation in Ukrainian.
- 2025 *Who's Left to Build an Encyclopedia: Impacts on the Russian-Language Edition of Wikipedia After the Launch of a Government-Sanctioned Clone.* PolNet-PaCSS. Aug. 13.
- 2025 *Follow Nudges: Targeting Inaccurate Health Information Networks via a Large-Scale Online Field Experiment* IC2S2. July 22.
- 2025 *Tenet Media: Foreign state funded content creation*
UM Political Communication Working Group. Nov. 22.
- 2024 *Wikipedia in Wartime: Experiences of Wikipedians Maintaining Articles about the Russia-Ukraine War.*
Wiki Workshop 2024. June 20.
- 2023 *(Not) here to build an encyclopedia: How do Wikipedians maintain articles related to the Russo-Ukrainian war?*
UM Computational Social Science Working Group. Dec. 8.

Awards

- 2025 University of Michigan School of Information Travel Grant (\$2500)
University of Michigan Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant, Pre-candidacy (\$1,500)
- 2024 University of Michigan Rackham Doctoral Intern Fellowship, Summer 2024 (\$12,990)
University of Michigan Rackham Conference Travel Grant (\$900)
- 2023 University of Michigan School of Information Travel Grant (\$500)

Professional Development and Service

- 2025 Presenter, CSCW; Organizer, CSCW workshop - *Beyond Information: Online Culture and Information Disorder*
Presenter, PolNet-PaCSS
Presenter, IC2S2
Reviewer, ICWSM; Wiki Workshop; WebSci Workshop - *Global Election and Information Security*
- 2024 Presenter, Wiki Workshop
Reviewer, CSCW; ICWSM workshop - *International Workshop on Cyber Social Threats (CySoc)*

Participant, *ICWSM workshop - Digital State Sponsored Disinformation and Propaganda Information*; *CRA/CCC workshop - Future of Research on Social Technologies*

2023 Participant, *ACL*; *CSCW*
Reviewer, *ICWSM*

Teaching Experience

Courses

Winter 2026 *AI in Practice*, University of Michigan (SI 376)
Graduate Student Instructor for undergraduate-level AI course

Fall 2025 *Networks*, University of Michigan (SI 608)
Graduate Student Instructor for graduate-level network science course

Guest Lectures

Fall 2025 *Network Community Detection*
SI 608 Networks. October 9.

Winter 2025 *Misinformation and Disinformation Online*
SI 315 Interpersonal & Psychological Implications of Social Media. April 1.

Yoga Instructor

Vinyasa & Ashtanga styles, RYT 200

2024-2025 *Power Flow & Slow Flow*, UM Recreation, Ann Arbor MI
Short Form Ashtanga, Tiny Buddha Yoga, Ann Arbor MI
Hot Flow & Sunrise Flow, Reunion Hot Yoga, Washington DC

Skills

I bring a wide range of methods to my research: network analysis, natural language processing, experiments, interviews, surveys, as well as data scraping and SLURM-based cluster computing capabilities. I have a solid background working with LLMs for a variety of purposes: transcribing video data using the Whisper C++ model; conducting LLM auditing and benchmarking experiments using LiteLLM and Ollama; and fine-tuning classifiers to identify persuasion techniques in news articles. I am proficient in Python, and I am familiar with the pandas, NumPy, TensorFlow, and Transformers libraries as well as Hugging Face's repository of pre-trained models. I am accustomed to learning new methods to tackle the research question at hand.

Human Languages: Advanced Russian language proficiency [reference: CEFR C1 Level, Alta Level 10 Advanced Plus]

Computer Languages: Proficient in Python, including the libraries pandas, Tensorflow, PyTorch, and Transformers

Data Science Skills: Data cleaning, network analysis, topic modeling, social media analysis, Jupyter notebook

Other: Experiment design, semi-structured interviews, surveys