

SOCIAL DATA ANALYTICS, B.S.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park

Program Description

Social Data Analytics is an interdisciplinary major that prepares students to participate in both a research environment where “big data” is a major source of insight into social and political processes, and an economy increasingly organized around data analytics. Students completing the major will have the technical skills to handle, analyze, apply and present big data, and the disciplinary knowledge to draw valid inferences from such information to address real world problems. The program integrates coursework in the social sciences with courses in statistics, mathematics, information science and computer science to develop the unique skill set necessary to conceptualize data sources in relation to the social conditions from which they arise; to think critically about big data in relation to specific problems; and to derive and test hypotheses through application of data tools and techniques. Students will gain valuable practical experience working with data through a capstone experience and participation in faculty research.

This major is intended to produce graduates who are big picture thinkers with the knowledge to formulate good questions and leverage vast stores of unstructured data in answering them. Students will be prepared for careers in government, business, healthcare, and industry. The major also provides a strong foundation for advanced study in social science, law, business and public policy.

What is Social Data Analytics?

Social Data Analytics (SoDA) is an interdisciplinary major that teaches students to use the increasingly vast stores of information generated from social media, cell phones, “smart objects” and other technology that captures moment to moment changes in where people are, what they are doing and thinking, and with whom they are associating. This data (often called “social data” or “big data”) can help researchers and policy makers address a wide variety of political, economic and social problems. It can be used, for example, to improve government services; to identify patterns of armed conflict, human rights abuses, and disease before they escalate; to enhance the efficiency of businesses; and to create more resilient communities in the face of climate change. Students in this major learn data analysis techniques and how to apply them to develop reliable answers to questions about the social and political world.

You Might Like This Program If...

You want to develop data analytics skills to solve real-world problems in the political, social, and economic arenas. The Social Data Analytics major combines social science, computer science, statistics, and visual communication to prepare students to use “big data” – effectively and ethically – to improve how people live and work together.