"Degrees of Freedom: On Robotics and Social Justice"

Dr. Tom Williams
Associate Professor of Computer Science
Colorado School of Mines

Despite recent efforts by the Trump administration to curtail scientific research into diversity and inclusion, social justice issues remain of critical importance to key areas of national interest, including robotics and artificial intelligence. In this talk, Tom Williams will explore critical questions surrounding robotics and social justice, especially the ways that roboticists wield power through the ways they design and deploy their robots. In doing so, Williams will highlight not only the ways roboticists tend to reinforce White and Patriarchal power structures when they make design and deployment decisions, but also how roboticists might instead subvert those power structures by applying theories and methods from a diverse range of fields, including history, sociology, literature, psychology, and philosophy. Ultimately, Williams will connect questions of robot design with larger Abolitionist movements by presenting a vision for an Abolitionist Robotics that calls not just for an end to unjust paradigms of robot design, but moreover for active work toward a more social just future of robotics.

Tom Williams is an Associate Professor of Computer Science at the Colorado School of Mines, where he directs the Mines Interactive Robotics Research Lab. Prior to joining Mines, Tom earned a joint PhD in Computer Science and Cognitive Science from Tufts University in 2017. Tom's research focuses on enabling and understanding natural language based human-robot interaction that is sensitive to environmental, cognitive, social, and moral context. His work is funded in part by Early Career grants from NSF, NASA, and the US Air Force. He is the author of the forthcoming book Degrees of Freedom whose central themes will be summarized in this talk.

FRIDAY
Feb 21
10-11AM

Rogers Hall 230
FREE
Refreshments Served

OSU Robotics
robotics.oregonstate.edu

Oregon State University