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THE GOVLAB AT NYU TANDON LAUNCHES ONLINE DATA SCIENCE LECTURE SERIES FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

Introductory Course, “Solving Public Problems with Data,” Outlines How Practitioners Can Use Data in Their Everyday Work to Address Social Challenges

BROOKLYN, New York – Today, The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering launched “Solving Public Problems with Data,” an introductory online course for public servants on why and how to apply data science and data analytics in their work.

The self-paced massive open online course (MOOC) – developed by The GovLab with support from The Laura and John Arnold Foundation as part of a program focused on using data to promote criminal justice reform – uses real-world examples and case studies captured in 10 video lectures from leading data experts. Lectures are grouped into three tracks – data science, data analytics, and data policy – to help practitioners move toward a more evidence-based approach to solving public problems.

Course participants learn key principles and tactics from well-known government, industry, and academic data scientists representing a variety of organizations, including Bloomberg LP, Cornell Tech, ESRI, Johns Hopkins University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Pratt Institute, as well as New York University and The GovLab.

“Data, data science, and using evidence derived from data are going to play an increasingly important role in how governments and other institutions fulfill their missions and develop solutions to major -more-
public problems,” said course producer and The GovLab Academy Director Dinorah Cantú-Pedraza. “Giving practitioners the tools and tactics they need to understand data available to them, and how to leverage that data, is no longer a nice-to-have skill set but an imperative.”

Many public institutions are not well-equipped to use the data they create and acquire to improve decision-making. Similarly, public officials who lead these institutions have not typically been trained to know how to work with data to address the pressing public challenges that fall within their portfolios, from infrastructure and health care to criminal justice and social services. The new “Solving Public Problems with Data” course is designed to help participants understand the fundamental principles and techniques of data science so as to develop a data analytic mindset in the execution of their daily work.

“Although government collects a great deal of data, it often lacks the know-how to use that data effectively to spot trends and improve outcomes,” said The GovLab Director Professor Beth Simone Noveck. “The grant from the Arnold Foundation gave us the support to create this important resource to promote data-driven criminal justice reforms. And thanks to the foundation’s generosity, we’ve been able to create a MOOC that will benefit not only criminal justice officials, but public policy professionals more broadly, most of whom are struggling with how to use data for public decision-making.”

Video modules within the “Solving Public Problems” course range from 25 to 60 minutes – preceded by an introduction on “why data matters” from Dr. Ben Wellington of Pratt Institute – and cover the following topics:

1. Introduction to evidence-based decision-making (Dr. Quentin Palfrey, MIT)
2. Data analytical thinking and methods, Part I (Professor Julia Lane, NYU)
3. Machine learning (Dr. Gideon Mann, Bloomberg LP)
4. Discovering and collecting data (Professor Carter Hewgley, Johns Hopkins University)
5. Platforms and where to store data (Dr. Arnaud Sahuguet, Cornell Tech)
6. Data analytical thinking and methods, Part II (Dr. Daniel Goroff, The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation)
7. Barriers to building a data practice (Professor Beth Blauer, Johns Hopkins University)
8. Data collaboratives (Professor Stefaan G. Verhulst, The GovLab)
9. Strengthening a data analytic culture (Dr. Amen Ra Mashariki, ESRI)
10. Data governance and sharing (Professor Beth Simone Noveck, The GovLab)

To learn more about “Solving Public Problems with Data,” visit [http://sppd.thegovlab.org/](http://sppd.thegovlab.org/).

**About The Governance Lab**

*The Governance Lab’s mission is to improve people’s lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments —*
and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. We approach each challenge and opportunity in an interdisciplinary, collaborative way, irrespective of the problem, sector, geography, and level of government. For more information, visit thegovlab.org.

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 (widely known as Brooklyn Poly). A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences, rooted in a tradition of invention and entrepreneurship and dedicated to furthering technology in service to society. In addition to its main location in Brooklyn, NYU Tandon collaborates with other schools within NYU, the country’s largest private research university, and is closely connected to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. It operates Future Labs focused on start-up businesses in downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn and an award-winning online graduate program. For more information, visit engineering.nyu.edu.

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