QUESTION SET BASED ON CATHY O'NEIL'S TED TALK

'THE ERA OF BLIND FAITH IN BIG DATA MUST END'

The question-set below is based on what O'Neil says her TED talk. Think about what you might say in response to these questions and, if you wish, discuss your responses with a fellow student, colleague, or friend, making sure to explain anything from the talk that they might need to understand as your discussion proceeds.

O'Neil tells us that to build an algorithm we only need two things: (i) an historical data set and (ii) a definition of success.

Q1: What kind of historical data sets might be used to build algorithms used to make decisions in your educational context and what might they be counting as success?

Q2: Who has defined what counts as 'success' for the algorithms used in your educational context and are those who have defined success located *within* your educational context (e.g. in your school or university) or are they corporate actors external to it?

Q3: Come up with *one* example of artificial intelligence making decisions in your educational context. How does it make its decisions and to whom are its decisions accountable?

O'Neil claims that when we build algorithms, 'we embed our values' into them and that in the future 'we have to inject ethics into the process of building algorithms and that it has to start with data scientists'.

Q4a: How feasible do you think this process is going to be to implement when we remember that people, and corporations that own algorithms, often have different, incompatible, and even conflicting ethical values?

Q4b: How plausible is it that the process 'has to start with data scientists'?