

Politics and AI

Basic Information

Lecturer: Mgr. Tomáš Čech MSc
Winter Semester
5 ECTS
1/1
Capacity: 25

Abstract

This course covers the key topics that allow us to think about artificial intelligence (AI) in a political context. The aim is to offer students perspectives on AI that are related to the political milieu of our societies. After finishing this class students should understand better how to approach AI as a political issue. They should acquire analytical and critical thinking about the world of AI that might help them to generally think about AI and its context. Furthermore, students are encouraged to participate in classes and learn how to structure their ideas. Lastly, they will try out a foresight method (**week 12 and weekly assignments**) that might help them to think about the future (of any topic) more structurally.

Course Grading

Attendance: Obligatory (maximum of 2 absences)

Participation in class: 20%

Assignments: 20%

Final Paper: 60% (4 000 - 5 000 words)

Optional: Presentation of one of the weekly readings in class deducts 50% from the length of the final paper (i.e. 2000-2500 words). Maximum two people per presentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in this course. Each student is allowed to miss the class twice. More unexcused absences will prevent the student from completing the course or they need to provide sufficient reasons for missing the classes.

Participation

Active participation in classes is encouraged. This part of the final grade is not about taking the air time, but rather actively contributing and engaging with the class. The aim is to create

a safe environment where everyone's ideas and opinions are heard and everyone is comfortable to participate.

Assignments

Each course participant has to submit a weekly assignment (**starting week 2**) that will be used for the final class foresight workshop. Each assignment has to reflect weekly readings and contain two different reflections on them. The first, so-called Horizon 1, is a reflection of a situation that we are experiencing today. The second one, so-called Horizon 3, is an imagination of how such a situation might develop in the future (e.g. by 2050), the focus should be on common good. We will use these ideas in the last class as materials to come up with Horizon 2 that focuses on what ought to happen in-between Horizon 1 and Horizon 3 and what are the trade-offs to get there. The length of these assignments is up to each participant, the objective of these is to attempt to conceptualize where we are at the moment and where we want to get to. It is important to note that there are no wrong answers as we are trying to think about possible futures.

Final Paper

The final paper should be written on topics related to political philosophy of AI, but it does not have to be constrained by the topics that will be discussed in course. Every course participant has to prepare an idea for their final paper by **week 7**, with some literature that they are planning to use. This particular class will be dedicated to a discussion of these ideas and getting feedback from the lecturer and fellow classmates.

Grading Scale

The Faculty of Social Sciences uses the following A-F grading scale

- A = 91-100 % – excellent
- B = 81-90 % – very good
- C = 71-80 % – good
- D = 61-70 % – satisfactory
- E = 51-60 % – minimal pass
- F = 0-50 % – fail

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to the course and why should we think about AI in a political context?

Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence* - **Chapter:** Introduction (p. 1-21). Yale University Press.

Week 2: The TESCREAL bundle

Geburu, T., & Torres, Émile P. (2024). *The TESCREAL bundle: Eugenics and the promise of utopia through artificial general intelligence*. *First Monday*, 29(4).

Week 3: Dehumanization in the age of AI

Bender, E. M. (2024). *Resisting Dehumanization in the Age of "AI"*. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 33(2), 114-120.

Week 4: The AI Mirror

Vallor, S. (2024). *The AI Mirror: How to Reclaim Our Humanity in an Age of Machine Thinking - Chapters: Introduction (p. 1-15) & The AI Mirror (p. 15-37)*. Oxford University Press.

Week 5: Artificial Whiteness

Katz, Y. (2020). *Artificial Whiteness: Politics and Ideology in Artificial Intelligence - Chapter: Artificial Whiteness (p. 153-183)*. Columbia University Press.

Week 6: AI and freedom

Coeckelbergh, M. (2022). *The Political Philosophy of AI. Chapter: Freedom: Manipulation by AI and Robot Slavery (p. 10-37)*. Polity Press.

Week 7: Discussion of paper proposals

No reading

Week 8: AI and democracy

Coeckelbergh, M. (2022). *The Political Philosophy of AI. Chapter: Democracy: Echo Chambers and Machine Totalitarianism (p. 62-93)*. Polity Press.

Week 9: AI and data

Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence - Chapter: Data (p. 89-122)*. Yale University Press.

Week 10: AI and capitalism

Verdegem, P. (2024) *Dismantling AI capitalism: the commons as an alternative to the power concentration of Big Tech. AI & Soc 39, 727–737.*

Week 11: AI and climate

Brevini, B. (2021) *Is AI Good for the Planet? Chapter: Why AI Worsens the Climate Crisis (p. 63-90)* Polity.

Week 12: Workshop - Three horizons foresight method

No reading

