International Studies 294 & Computer Science 194
Macalester College, Fall 2025
evolving syllabus; v2, Nov 2, 2025: expect further revisions

Thinking Internationally About (and with) AI and ChatGPT

Instructor: David Chioni Moore, International Studies & English
Preceptor: Ellie Spangler ’26
Class: MWF 1:10-2:10 pm, Carnegie 304
Office hours: varied options via Google calendar, and by appointment, Carnegie 410
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Overview:
The sudden recent rise of artificial intelligence (AI), most prominently but not only ChatGPT (released 1008 days before the first day of this class), is having deep political, economic, and cultural effects. It may also reshape the relations of humans to knowledge and to the world. In this experimental course, we will think about (and with) AI in a global frame. After asking “what is AI?”, we will explore AI topics including but not limited to environmental and labor costs, costs and benefits to users (especially college students), emerging AI in Mac alumni work lives, geopolitics and warfare, paradise and extinction predictions, and AI in cinematic and literary representations. Rather than keep AI at a distance during the course, we’ll work with it: carefully, skeptically, critically, together. But in some weeks, we’ll avoid screens completely.

Notes:
Timely class attendance is integral to the course and its grade. Inform me in advance of conflict with any religious holidays and/or any relevant disabilities; we’ll arrange acceptable alternatives and/or accommodations, and your grades will be unaffected. In class, we’ll take a mixed approach to screens, varying day by day. For well documented cognitive reasons, we’ll engage most of our readings on paper, with no screens in the classroom. But often we’ll have laptops out to engage AI directly. But in general, phones off, out of sight, off the body, and out of mind. I have posted a general trigger warning to our shared Google Drive: please read it.

AI statement:
For my other courses, I’ve got an AI statement, outlining policies for assignments and so forth. But this class is essentially one giant AI-statement-in-progress. We’ll establish ground rules for each assignment as we go.

Assignments and grade components:

ungraded preliminary paper, due Sept 4	required
critical reflective essay, due Oct 2nd	10%
class-crafted assignment, due Oct 28th	10%
one-hour in-class exam, Nov 7th	10%
two-hour in-person final exam: self-AI-self, Dec 15th	15%
active and insightful class participation	25%
final project, self-crafted, due Dec 16th or earlier	30%
total	**100%**

Course Books:
This course is essay-heavy. Thus there's only one assigned book: James Boyle's *The Line: AI and the Future of Personhood*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2024. Secure it in print (not in e-format) from the campus bookstore. But if you have a strong educational need for the book in e-format, let me know and we'll make that work.

Week by Week Course Layout:

Week 1 - introduction: Wed and Fri Sept 3 and 5
Wednesday: introductory day

Readings for Friday:
Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 176, no. 1, July 1945, pp. 101-108. (Note the specificity of July 1945 and the U.S.)

McCarthy, John, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude Shannon. "A Proposal for the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence." Submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation, 31 Aug. 1955.

For fun, screen this brief South Park clip on ChatGPT, and read this story from The Onion.

Week 2 - definitions: MWF Sept 8, 10, 12
Readings. Read in this order: first two for Monday, second two for Wednesday:
Qiu, Jack Linchuan. "The Global Internet." *Media and Society*, edited by David Hesmondhalgh and James Curran, 6th ed., Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, pp. 3-20.

Five chatbot responses to an extended prompt "Please summarize A.I. for me in 500 words" by ChatGPT by OpenAI, Claude by Anthropic, Lama by Meta, DeepSeek by Hangzhou, and Gemini by Google-DeepMind. Responses gathered August 27, 2025.

van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. "The Platform Society as a Contested Concept." Chapter 1 of *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 1-27.

Bender, Emily M., Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Margaret Mitchell (using the pseudonym "Shmargaret Shmitchell"). "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? 🦜" *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*, Association for Computing Machinery, 2021, pp. 610-623. [Note that there is an emoji of a parrot at the end of the paper title.]

Week 3 - environment: MWF Sept 15, 17, 19. Read in this order: 2 Mon, 2 Wed, 2 Fri
Crawford, Kate. "Earth." *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021, Chapter 1, pp. 23-52.

OECD (2022), "Measuring the environmental impacts of artificial intelligence compute and applications: The AI footprint", OECD Digital Economy Papers, No. 341. Paris: OECD Publishing, https://doi.org/10.1787/7babf571-en. → *Skim digital copy only.*

Klinger, Julie M. 2023. Social and Environmental Impacts of Rare Earth Mining, Processing, and Proliferation: Scoping and Preliminary Assessment. In: Kalantzakos, S. (eds) *Critical Minerals, the Climate Crisis and the Tech Imperium*. Archimedes [book series], vol 65. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. pp. 149-165. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25577-9_8

Johnson, Alix. "Data Centers as Infrastructural In-Betweens: Expanding Connections and Enduring Marginalities in Iceland." *American Ethnologist*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2019, pp. 75-88.

Valdivia, Ana. (2024). "The supply chain capitalism of AI: a call to (re)think algorithmic harms and resistance through environmental lens." *Information, Communication & Society*, pp. 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2420021.

Stern, Nicholas, Mattia Romani, Roberta Pierfederici *et al.* "Green and intelligent: the role of AI in the climate transition." *npj Climate Action* 4, 56 (2025): pp. 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44168-025-00252-3

Week 4 - labor: MWF Sept 22, 24, 26
Crawford, Kate. "Labor." *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*, Yale University Press, 2021, Chapter 2, pp. 53-87.

Two chapters from Muldoon, James, Mark Graham, and Callum Cant. *Feeding the Machine: The Hidden Human Labor Powering AI*. New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024. Chapter 1, "The Annotator," pp. 21-42, and Chapter 5, "The Operator," pp. 113-138.

Sun, Nikki. "Workplace AI in China: The Changing Profile of Work and Labour." Chatham House, July 18, 2024. https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/07/workplace-ai-china. 42pp.

→ on Friday Sept 26th, we'll discuss the class-set assignment and final projects

Week 5 - cultural week 1 of 3: MWF Sept 29, Oct 1 & 3
→ Optional film screening - bring your friends! - Sunday evening Sept 28th, details TBD

Terminator 2: Judgment Day. Directed by James Cameron, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, and Edward Furlong, TriStar Pictures, 1991.

Briefly review this Wikipedia list of AI-themed films, and this similar IMDB list.

→ Thursday Oct 2nd, 8:00 pm, first reflective paper due by emailed PDF

Friday reading:

Molesworth, Mike, Georgiana Grigore, Chris Miles & Vassilis Charitsis. (2025). Metaphors of symbiosis: What science fiction movies reveal about human-AI imaginaries. *Management Learning*, *0*(0), pp. 1-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076251339614

Week 6 - costs and benefits to users, focus on college: MWF Oct 6, 8, 10

Monday: setting the stage:

O'Connell, Derek. "How Are Students Really Using AI?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 14 July 2025, www.chronicle.com/article/how-are-students-really-using-ai.

Latham, Scott. "Are You Ready for the AI University?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 25 April 2025, www.chronicle.com/article/are-you-ready-for-the-ai-university.

Walsh, James D. "Everyone Is Cheating Their Way Through College." *New York Magazine*, 7 May 2025, nymag.com/intelligencer/article/openai-chatgpt-ai-cheating-education-college-students-school.html

Wednesday: getting more specific:

Barba, Lorena A. "Experience Embracing genAI in an Engineering Computations Course: What Went Wrong and What Next." *IEEE Computer*, vol. 58, no. 8, 2025, doi:10.1109/MC.2025.3572654. Also at *Figshare*, 3 May 2025.

Burnett, D. Graham. "Will the Humanities Survive Artificial Intelligence?" *The New Yorker*, 26 Apr. 2025, www.newyorker.com/culture/the-weekend-essay/will-the-humanities-survive-artificial-intelligence

Zhai, Chunpeng, Santoso Wibowo, and Lily D. Li.. "The Effects of Over-Reliance on AI Dialogue Systems on Students' Cognitive Abilities: A Systematic Review." *Smart Learning Environments*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2024, pp. 1-18.

Friday: extending the debates:

Sarofian-Butin, Dan. "In the Age of AI, Is Education Just an Illusion?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 28 Mar. 2025, www.chronicle.com/article/in-the-age-of-ai-is-education-just-an-illusion.

Chayka, Kyle. "A.I. Is Homogenizing Our Thoughts." *The New Yorker*, 25 June 2025, www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/ai-is-homogenizing-our-thoughts.

Shirky, Clay. "Students Hate Them. Universities Need Them. The Only Real Solution to the A.I. Cheating Crisis." New York Times, 26 August 2025, www.nytimes.com/2025/08/26/opinion/culture/ai-chatgpt-college-cheating-medieval.html

Week 7 - cultural week 2 of 3: Mon and Wed Oct 13, 15
Čapek, Karel. *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)*. Translated by Peter Majer, Methuen Drama, 1999. (Play originally published in Czech in 1921.) Note: the word "robot" entered English in 1922 through this play, as the Czech word *robota* means compulsory labor.

Optional to skim: Bryson, Joanna J. "Robots should be slaves." *Close Engagements with Artificial Companions: Key Social, Psychological, Ethical and Design Issues*, edited by Yorick Wilks, John Benjamins Publishing, 2010, pp. 63-74.

→ Friday Oct 17th is Fall Break

Week 8 - Warfare and Geopolitics: MWF Oct 20, 22, 24

Monday 10/20: Weapons and Warfare - two essays:

Scoles, Sarah. "The Technology for Autonomous Weapons Exists. What Now?" *Undark*, 1 Jan. 2025, undark.org/2024/11/26/unleashed-autonomous-weapons/.

Watts, Tom F. A., and Ingvild Bode. "Machine guardians: The Terminator, AI narratives and US regulatory discourse on lethal autonomous weapons systems." *Cooperation and Conflict* 59.1 2024, pp. 107-128. doi:10.1177/00108367231198155.

Wednesday 10/22: National Competition, International Institutions: two videos, two essays

Aschenbrenner 2024 - AI Nationalization is Inevitable. Leopold Aschenbrenner interview with Dwarkesh Patel, June 5, 2024, 12 minutes, www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0Pa5oudUp4

Aschenbrenner 2024 - How the US-China AI Race Will Play Out. Leopold Aschenbrenner interview with Dwarkesh Patel, June 6, 2024, 7 minutes, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghluOfM-Xik

Ho, Lewis, Joslyn Barnhart, et al. "International Institutions for Advanced AI." Published to the preprint repository *arXiv*, 11 July 2023, arxiv.org/abs/2307.04699

Schmid, Stefka, Daniel Lambach, Carlo Diehl, and Christian Reuter. 2025. "Arms Race or Innovation Race? Geopolitical AI Development." *Geopolitics* 30 (4): 1907–36. doi:10.1080/14650045.2025.2456019.

Friday 10/24:

Continue discussion, course planning, and planning for the following week's alumni panels

Week 8 - AI in the Macalester alumni workplace: MWF Oct 27, 29, 31

Monday: alumni Zoom panel with Spotify software engineer Julia Romare '19 (Stockholm, Sweden), investigative journalist Phineas Rueckert '16 (Paris, France), AI legal research

innovator Jonathan Barrentine ’07 (Burnaby, British Columbia), and Johns Hopkins University institutional analyst Natalie Kronebusch ’19.

Wednesday: alumni Zoom panel with filmmaker Haeryun Kang ’11 (Seoul, South Korea, at 3:10 a.m.!), TikTok corporate strategist Fatiya Kedir ’21 (New York, USA), International Red Cross digital verification analyst Mitchell Paquette ’16 (Geneva, Switzerland), and sustainable timber strategist Austin Clowes ’16 (San Francisco, California).

On Friday, Oct 31st, we’ll Zoom in with OpenAI senior technical recruiter Ru Meng (Dan) Wang ’17 (Seattle, USA).

Week 10 - paradise vs. extinction or doom: Mon & Wed Nov 3 & 5
→ Friday Nov 7th will be a one-hour in-class exam

Monday:
Monday first half: debrief our prior-week alumni panels.
Monday second half: start discussion of paradise vs. doom narratives.
Wednesday full discussion of paradise vs. doom narratives, listed below:

Read for both Monday and Wednesday two central statements and a heterodox reply:
Altman, Sam. “Moore's Law for Everything.” March 21, 2021. https://moores.samaltman.com/.

Heaven, Will Douglas. “Geoffrey Hinton tells us why he's now scared of the tech he helped build.” *MIT Technology Review*, 2 May 2023, www.technologyreview.com/2023/05/02/1072528/geoffrey-hinton-google-why-scared-ai/.

Huemer, Michael. “I, For One, Welcome Our Robot Overlords.” *AI & Society*, July 2025, doi:10.1007/s00146-025-02505-5.

(For those interested, the foundationally influential AI doom-scenario book is Nick Bostrom’s *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*. Oxford University Press, 2014. A similar but much more recent, more currently informed, and highly cited document is the young researcher Leopold Aschenbrenner’s 165-page 2024 online essay “Situational Awareness.” Having warned the world about the dangers of AI in 2024, Aschenbrenner opened a hedge fund to invest in AI in 2025.)

→ Friday Nov 7th will be a one-hour in-class exam

Week 11 - AI, posthumanism, and transhumanism: MWF Nov 10, 12, 14
Please purchase this book from the campus bookstore - our only full book of the semester:

Boyle, James. *The Line: AI and the Future of Personhood*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2024. Introduction pp. 1-32, Chapter 2 “Artificial Intelligence” pp. 59-130, and Conclusion pp. 235-275. Total assigned reading 144 pages.

Week 12 - cultural week 3 of 3: MW Nov 17 & 19; Friday’s class topic is tbd

→ Optional film screening - bring your friends! - Sunday evening Nov 16th, details TBD

<u>One of two female AI-bot films: one classic and one very recent:</u>
Ex Machina. Directed by Alex Garland, starring Domhnall Gleeson, Alicia Vikander, and Oscar Isaac. A24 Studio, 2014.

Companion. Directed by Drew Hancock, starring Sophie Thatcher and Dennis Quaid. New Line Cinema, 2025.

→ Friday Nov 21st's class topic will be determined collectively by the class in advance.

Week 13 - open: Monday Nov 24 only
An open TBD day (our second) to be determined collectively by the class in advance.

Macalester is closed Wed and Fri Nov 26 & 28 for Thanksgiving

Week 14 - final project preliminary presentations: MWF Dec 1, 3, 5

Presentation of final projects-in-progress

Week 15 - concluding 2 day week: Mon and Wed Dec 8 & 10

Monday and Wednesday: course conclusion

Concluding sequence:
Mac classes end Wednesday, Dec 10th, 2025. Finals period is Sat-Wed Dec 13-17.

In-person final exam is Monday, December 15th, 1:30-3:30 pm: do not leave town before this exam.

Final projects are due Tuesday, December 16th, by 2:00 pm. For your sake, I strongly encourage earlier submission!