

M&M AI and Society

AI and Society Summer Reading Group | Machines and Meanings, ICGC, UMN

The AI and Society reading circle is envisaged as an entry-point into building a collective that is committed to asking uncomfortable and unpopular questions about AI from the vantage point of the University. AI's disruption and path-dependent transitions have by now become a shared reality. The interdisciplinary reading circle is planned as a fortnightly reading group to bring together a committed set of graduate students, researchers, and practitioners at UMN and beyond, to deliberate deeply on the adoption of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) in the university, and in the wider economy and society. The reading group is envisaged as the first step in creating a *core group* as part of the [Machines & Meanings collaborative](#) oriented to thinking about social justice in the age of AI, through an interdisciplinary lens, bridging the gap between STEM and humanities. The institutional space of [Interdisciplinary Center for the study of Global Change](#) (ICGC) at UMN offers a unique vantage-point to build a multidisciplinary collective oriented to investigate AI *in* society, while crossing boundaries between research and practice, hermeneutics and design, and pedagogy and praxis. Through the discussion space, we eventually hope to develop an interdisciplinary collaborative that will work together to develop collaborative tracks of mutual interest associated with exploring Artificial Intelligence in Society as it shapes everyday culture, work-practices and academic research, while being empirically attentive and critically reflexive to issues of global change. Through the course of the summer readings, we will create an online space to share notes, annotated bibliographies, and compile a set of interests and thematics to investigate further. By the end of the reading circle, we hope to have a core group and interdisciplinary bibliographic archive ready to guide future activities and explore collaborations at the Machine & Meanings forum.

The reading circle will meet fortnightly in Fall 2026 in hybrid mode. Please enter your mails in this [interest form](#). We will cover three core themes of AI in the University (session 1), Philosophy, Politics and Governance of AI (session 2 and 3), and AI Culture and Society (sessions 4 and 5). Only the required readings will be discussed in the reading circle, and the suggested readings are meant to drive engagement and ospike further interest in the theme of the session. Two introductory background readings and sources of reference are Margaret Boden's *Artificial Intelligence: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2018) or *AI: It's Nature and Future* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

Session 1: AI, authorship and writing

Bajohr, Hannes. 2024. "[Writing at a Distance: Notes on Authorship and Artificial Intelligence](#)." German Studies Review 47 (2): 315–337. <https://doi.org/10.1353/gsr.2024.a927862>.

Seaver, Nick. 2026. "On recognizing the handiwork of AI." *American Ethnologist* 53: 142–147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.70062>

Trnka, Susanna. 2026. "What is an author?" *American Ethnologist* 53: 148–154. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.70082>

Suggested Readings: 1. Narayanan & Kapoor (2025), "[A.I. as Normal Technology](#)." Listen to the podcast on [Bullshit in AI](#) as a prelude to Narayanan & Kapoor's 2025 book, *AI Snakeoil*.

2. Weatherby, Leif, and Robin Manley. 2025. "[Language and Image Minus Cognition](#)": An Interview with Leif Weatherby." *JHI Blog*, June 11, 2025.

Session 2: Philosophy of AI I: Labor, Machines, and Intelligence

Crawford, Kate. 2021. "Labor." Chap. 2 in *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 53–88. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ensmenger, Nathan. "Is Chess the Drosophila of Artificial Intelligence? A Social History of an Algorithm." *Social Studies of Science* 42, no. 1 (2012): 5–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312711424596>

Pasquinelli, Frank. "Introduction: AI as Division of Labour," in *The Eye of the Master: A Social History of Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 1-22. London and New York: Verso Books.

Recommended Readings:

Pasquinelli, Frank. 2023. "The Material Tools of Algorithmic Thinking," Ch-1 in *The Eye of the Master: A Social History of Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 23-48. London and New York: Verso Books.

Pasquinelli, Frank. 2023. "Babbage and the Mechanisation of Mental Labour," Chapter 2 and "The Machinery Question" Chap.3 in *The Eye of the Master: A Social History of Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 49-94. London and New York: Verso Books (**highly recommended**)

Nick Dyer-Witheford, Atle Mikkola Kjøsén, and James Steinhoff – *Inhuman Power: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Capitalism* (Pluto Press, 2019)

Satyanarayan, Arvind, and Graham M. Jones. 2024. "Intelligence as Agency: Evaluating the Capacity of Generative AI to Empower or Constrain Human Action." *An MIT Exploration of Generative AI*, March. <https://doi.org/10.21428/e4baedd9.2d7598a2>.

Session 3: AI Politics, Ethics, and Governance

Pavlović, P., Hafner Fink. 2024. New ethnographic perspective on relational ethics in the field of Artificial intelligence. *Qual Quant* 58: 2413–2431.

Liu, Chungheng, and Zhifan Luo. 2025. "China as an Analytical Lens for AI and Society." *Big Data & Society* 12 (4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517251389844>.

Kingsmith, Adam. T. 2026. From rule of law to rule of algorithm: Generative Artificial Intelligence's threat to democracy. *Big Data & Society*, 13(2).

Recommended Readings on AI Ethics:

Dignum, Virginia .2019. "Can AI Systems Be Ethical?" Chap.5 In: Responsible Artificial Intelligence. Artificial Intelligence: Foundations, Theory, and Algorithms, 71-92. Springer, Cham.

Vallor, Shannon. 2024. *The AI Mirror: How to Reclaim Our Humanity in an Age of Machine Thinking*. New York: Oxford University Press.

To go beyond checklist ethics and locate the system dynamics of trusting AI's prediction models see, Bareis, Jascha. 2024. The trustification of AI. Disclosing the bridging pillars that tie trust and AI together. *Big Data & Society*, 11(2).

Session 4: August 24, 2026 | AI in Society I: Algorithms, Culture, Meaning and Controversy

Seaver, Nick. 2017. Algorithms as culture: Some tactics for the ethnography of algorithmic systems. *Big Data & Society*, 4(2).

Kommers, Cody, Ruth Ahnert, Maria Antoniak, et al. 2026. "Computational Hermeneutics: Evaluating Generative AI as a Cultural Technology." *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence* Volume 9-2026. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2026.1753041>

Bunz, Mercedes. 2019. "The Calculation of Meaning: On the Misunderstanding of New Artificial Intelligence as Culture." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 60 (3–4): 264–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2019.1667255>

Marres, Noortje, Katzenbach, Christian, Munk, A. K., & Jobin, Anna. (2025). On the controversiality of AI: The controversy is not the situation. *Big Data & Society*, 12(4).

Recommended: Nick Seaver's Sage [Interview](#) on 'Dissecting the Algorithmic Organism.'

Baert, P., Dorschel, R., Hall, M., Higgins, I., McPherson, E., & Philip, S. 2026. "Dialogues Towards Sociologies of Generative AI." *Social Science Computer Review* 44(1): 59–79.

Laba, N., Jethani, Suneel. 2026. "Perplexity is BS machine:" from controversy to AI ethics as discourse? *AI Ethics* 6: 314.

Lamoureaux, Siri, Michael Castelle and Anna Weichselbraun. 2026. "Language Machines: Toward a Linguistic Anthropology of Large Language Models." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 36(1): e70033. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.70033>

Session 5*: August 31, 2026 | AI in Society II: AI's Socio-Economic Assemblages

Commentary by Salaj, Ron "[In the Name of Efficiency. The Time of Monsters Has Arrived.](#)"

Brunila, Mikael. 2025. "Cosine capital: Large language models and the embedding of all things." *Big Data & Society* 12(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517251386055>

Bohner, Jason, and Janet Vertesi. 2026. "Towards a Socioeconomics of Hype: Hype Dynamics and Symbolic Boundary Work Within the Speculative AI Bubble." *Social Science Computer Review* 44 (1): 10–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393251361935>

Suggested Readings on AI and Political Economy:

Bolaño, Cesar, & Zanghelini, Fabricio. 2025. Data economy: A discussion on value, fictitious valorisation, and national sovereignty. *Big Data & Society*, 12(4).

Burrell, Jenna, and Marion Fourcade. 2021. "The Society of Algorithms." *Annual Review of Sociology* 47: 213–237. <https://doi-org.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/10.1146/annurev-soc-090820-020800>.

Durand, Cedric. 2024. Introduction and Chapter-1 in *How Silicon Valley Unleashed Techno-Feudalism: The Making of the Digital Economy*. Translated by David Broder. London: Verso.