

Teaching Strategy Handout

Your name: Junius F. Brown V

Your title: Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Economy

Your institution: Duke Kunshan University

Contact details: junius.brown@dukekunshan.edu.cn

1. Title of Teaching Strategy

A Guided Brainstorming Activity to Foster Critical Thinking about the Social Effects of AI

2. Foundational Skill(s) Addressed

Critical thinking

3. Learning Outcome & Artifacts/Evidence

Students should develop the ability to interrogate how social forces and power structures influence the development and deployment of AI technologies.

Evidence of achievement: Quality of students' ideas in the group brainstorming activity; online survey of students afterwards (optional)

4. Teaching Strategy Overview (with sources, if applicable)

Step 1: A 5-minute mini-lecture introducing students to the "human element" behind assessing AI: "Don't just ask what AI can do, ask what people will do with it." The sample mini-lecture I give is applicable to a wide range of topics, but you can also tailor it to your course's subject matter (e.g., digital arts, computer science). Assigning relevant readings or videos beforehand can further deepen discussion.

Step 2: In small groups, students brainstorm answers to the following four questions:

- 1) What people or organizations currently influence the development of AI?
- 2) What people or organizations influence how AI is deployed in practice?
- 3) Who are the winners from the current path of AI development and use?
- 4) Who are the losers from the current path of AI development and use?

Step 3: The small groups re-convene as a class and share their findings on the board. The professor can use this time to clarify concepts, organize ideas, or highlight key points.

5. Teaching Strategy Implementation

I implemented a prototype of this lesson in an undergraduate course on International Political Economy (200-level, mostly 1st and 2nd years, 18 students overall). At the time, it was

part of a day on international technological competition, with assigned readings on rival AI programs in the US, China, and middle powers.

6. Evidence of Impact (Plan for assessment & evidence collection in advance)

After class, I sent students an online survey about this activity. Because of the small class size and voluntary nature of the survey, a 28% response rate yielded 5 responses.

- Quantitative results: Respondents overwhelmingly reported that this activity improved their critical thinking about AI.
- Qualitative results: In the short-answer questions, one student mentioned that this was their first time thinking about AI from this angle.
- Teacher observations: Among the lessons I taught in this course, this one got one of the highest levels of student engagement.

7. Implementation Challenges & Refinements

When preparing the lesson for this talk, I made a few adjustments and refinements. What you see in this talk is the updated version.

- 1) I overhauled the mini-lecture to be shorter and more engaging, while better highlighting the learning objective of the activity.
- 2) I changed some of the brainstorming questions (replaced one question on “risks and criticisms” with two questions on who controls research and deployment).
- 3) I expanded the lesson from a discipline-specific “Political Economy of AI” to make it more broadly transferrable across disciplines.

8. Transferability Across Disciplines

In its current, stripped-down form, the lesson is a portable module that can easily be integrated into courses in other disciplines, including the humanities and STEM fields.

9. Specific Implementation Challenges & How to Overcome Them

In its current, stripped-down form, the module assumes that students have some background familiarity with debates on AI, since this is a topic of much media and social media discussion. One possibility is that not all students will have adequate knowledge of how AI tools are developed; assigning news articles or videos to refresh them before class could give them more material to work with.