Here are 10 discussion questions for each topic, designed to encourage meaningful conversations between an experienced AI professor/research scientist and a group of students or early-career professionals.

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1. Finding a Job in Industry

1. What are the biggest differences between research roles in industry and academia?
2. How can someone with an academic background make themselves more appealing to industry employers?
3. What skills do AI employers value most beyond technical expertise?
4. How do you decide whether to apply for startups, big tech, or mid-sized companies?
5. What strategies have you found effective for preparing for AI job interviews?
6. How important is having a PhD when applying for AI roles in industry?
7. Can you share an example of a research project that translated well into an industry job application?
8. What are some common mistakes job seekers make when transitioning from academia to industry?
9. How can job seekers evaluate whether a company's AI team is a good fit for them?
10. How do you stay up to date with the latest AI trends to remain competitive in the job market?

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2. Finding a Job in Academia

1. How do you choose between a postdoc, faculty position, or research scientist role in academia?
2. What factors make a strong academic job application in AI?
3. How important are publications compared to teaching or service in landing a faculty job?
4. What advice do you have for crafting a compelling research statement?
5. How can early-career researchers build strong collaborations that help with academic job prospects?
6. What are realistic timelines for transitioning from PhD to faculty positions?
7. What's the best way to prepare for an academic job talk and interview?
8. How can someone demonstrate leadership potential if they don't have a long publication record?
9. What are key funding sources or grants that help new professors establish their labs?
10. What's one thing you wish you had known before starting an academic career?

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3. Teaching

1. What are the biggest challenges in teaching AI and machine learning to beginners?

2. How do you balance research responsibilities with teaching duties effectively?
3. What strategies have you found useful for making AI courses engaging and accessible?
4. How do you handle students with vastly different levels of prior experience in AI?
5. What's your approach to incorporating ethics and societal impacts into AI coursework?
6. How do you design hands-on projects that effectively reinforce AI concepts?
7. What role does mentorship play in teaching, and how do you approach mentoring students?
8. How has AI education changed over the last decade, and where do you see it going?
9. What advice do you have for first-time AI instructors?
10. How can educators help students transition from coursework to research or industry applications?

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4. Non-Traditional Career Pathways

1. What are some less common career paths for AI professionals beyond academia and industry?
2. How can someone leverage AI expertise in roles like policy, consulting, or entrepreneurship?
3. What skills are transferable from AI research to fields like science communication or design?
4. Have you seen examples of AI professionals successfully moving into creative or artistic careers?
5. What are some ways AI researchers can contribute to public policy and ethical AI discussions?
6. How can someone transition from technical AI roles into leadership or management positions?
7. What are the challenges of working as an independent AI consultant or freelancer?
8. How do you build credibility in an unconventional AI career path?
9. What are some examples of AI being used in humanitarian or nonprofit work?
10. What advice would you give someone considering a career pivot out of traditional AI roles?

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5. Networking

1. What are the best ways to network in AI if you're an introvert?
2. How can students and early-career professionals get noticed at AI conferences?
3. What's the value of online communities like Twitter, LinkedIn, and AI Slack groups for networking?
4. How do you maintain professional connections over time without it feeling transactional?
5. What are some effective ways to reach out to potential mentors or collaborators?
6. How can one use open-source contributions to build a professional network?
7. What are common mistakes people make when networking in AI?

8. How do you approach cold emailing AI researchers or industry professionals?
9. What's the best way to find networking opportunities outside of conferences?
10. How has networking impacted your own career in AI?

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6. Stress Management

1. What are the biggest sources of stress in an AI career, and how do you manage them?
2. How do you balance publishing pressures with personal well-being?
3. What strategies do you use to avoid burnout in long-term AI research projects?
4. How do you set boundaries between work and personal life in academia or industry?
5. What role does mindfulness or exercise play in handling stress as an AI professional?
6. How do you manage impostor syndrome when surrounded by high-achieving peers?
7. How do you deal with the uncertainty of research when results don't go as planned?
8. What's your approach to managing time effectively without feeling overwhelmed?
9. How do you handle rejection in research, job applications, or funding proposals?
10. What are some ways AI professionals can seek support when dealing with stress?

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7. Research Hacks

1. What's your process for staying on top of new AI papers and breakthroughs?
2. How do you decide which research projects are worth pursuing?
3. What strategies do you use to write research papers efficiently?
4. How can early-career researchers find good collaborators for AI projects?
5. What are some underrated tools or techniques that help speed up AI research?
6. How do you balance breadth vs. depth in AI research—knowing a little about many topics vs. specializing?
7. What's your advice for handling writer's block when working on research papers?
8. How do you keep research ideas organized and avoid getting overwhelmed by too many directions?
9. How do you make sure your research has real-world impact rather than being purely theoretical?
10. What's one unconventional research tip you've found particularly useful?

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8. Starting a Family

1. How do you balance family life with the demands of an AI career?
2. What challenges do parents in academia or industry face, and how do they navigate them?
3. How does parental leave typically work in academic vs. industry settings?
4. What's your advice for managing time effectively as a parent and AI professional?

5. How can workplaces better support parents working in AI?
6. What are some strategies for maintaining productivity while raising young children?
7. Have you found AI or automation useful in managing work-life balance as a parent?
8. How do you handle travel demands (e.g., conferences) while raising a family?
9. What role do mentorship and community support play in balancing career and family?
10. What's something you wish you had known about starting a family while working in AI?