

## **SERC Scholars Group 2025-26**

### **Future of Jobs in the Age of Platforms, AI, and Automation**

**SERC Group Leader:** Dr. Elif Birced

**Email:** ebirced@mit.edu

**Meeting time:** Tuesday, 12:00-12:50 PM (During Spring 2026)

**Location:** E51-361 (During Spring 2026)

**Office:** E94-1558c (245 First Street)

**Office Hours:** By appointment, make an appointment [here](#)

#### **Description:**

Today, questions surrounding the relationship between work and technology remain as vital as ever. Software companies are developing new methods for connecting buyers and sellers of labor online. The rise of big data and machine learning underlies new forms of artificial intelligence and robotics that could affect nearly every aspect of occupations and jobs. How do software algorithms affect how employers hire and monitor their workforces? How are platform companies like Uber changing what it means to be an employee? How are social media and influencer culture transforming creative industries and beyond? Or will these questions soon be irrelevant when intelligent machines take over our jobs? And what, if anything, can be done about it? In this group, we will discuss these questions and explore how technology, with a particular focus on platforms, AI, and robots, reshapes the future of jobs and occupations. Participants will develop individual projects exploring the relationship between technology and their chosen area of work, while also addressing significant questions about the consequences of platform work or the implementation of AI into work processes by companies, as well as the new opportunities technology brings for workers.

#### **Reading Group Deliverables**

- **Engaging with Assigned Materials:**
  - Participants will be expected to review assigned materials, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or videos, each week by reading, listening to, or watching.
  - Being prepared includes not only having reviewed the material, but also **coming to meetings with 1-2 questions, ideas, concerns, and comments**, and being ready to discuss them.
- **Leading Discussions:**
  - Participants will be expected to lead **one discussion session** in our meetings.
    - There can be **a maximum of 2 discussion leaders** in a single meeting.

- Discussion leaders will be expected to summarize key arguments from the assigned materials, prepare discussion questions, or plan an activity for the group.
- **Final deliverable:**
  - Participants will be expected to complete an **individual final project**. We will work together to ensure that everyone has a topic and research question that is appropriately scoped and supported.
  - **You need to present your final deliverable in poster format at the SERC Poster Presentation, scheduled for the end of April/beginning of May (exact date to be announced).**
  - Final projects can take a variety of formats: (1) a 20-30 page long (double-spaced) empirical research paper using qualitative, quantitative or mixed research methods, (2) a public science project in the form of (2a) an Op-Ed (800-1200 words) which can be publishable in various outlets like Conversation, Ms Magazine, etc., (2b) a 7–10-minute podcast episode, or (2c) a 7–10-minute YouTube video/videocast. Participants will work with Elif to develop a strong research question, work plan, and appropriate finished format.
    - If you decide on Option 2, I want you to 1) conduct a review of literature on a topic related to future of work and technology, and summarize it, OR 2) conduct and summarize empirical research (using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research methods) for a **broader, non-specialist audience (like your peers, friends, or family members)**.
  - Some useful resources if you're interested in podcast recording:
    - <https://ist.mit.edu/av/audio-production-gallery>

## Reading Group Syllabus, Materials, and Resources

- Our syllabus and all readings will be shared through our group [Google Drive](#). Each week's reading will be available at least a week before the meeting.
- The links to all the videocasts/videos on YouTube are available on the syllabus.

## Reading Group Expectations and Policies

- Students can use their devices in class, but should attempt only to use them to view the reading group resources as opposed to multi-tasking/social media etc. There will be times when the reading group facilitator will organize activities without using electronic devices.
- Students are required to attend **at least 10 meetings**.
- Students are being paid for their work, so class time should be viewed as paid time, and should be reported accurately and honestly.
- If students need to miss a session due to a conflict, they should notify the reading group facilitator (Elif).

- If there are issues with being able to manage coursework, other campus activities, and the reading group, students are encouraged to discuss this with the SERC Scholars staff as soon as possible before requirements are not completed.

| FALL 2025                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                              |                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Week                                             | Assigned Materials & Outline of the Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Tasks for Final Deliverables                 | Discussion Session Leader |
| Week 1 (Oct 6 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> )  | <b>No assigned materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Review Syllabus</li> <li>• Assign Discussion Leaders</li> <li>• Share interests, expectations, and goals for SERC Scholars Group</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | N/A                                          | Elif                      |
| Week 2 (Oct 13 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> ) | <b>Why Occupations Differ In New Tech Implementation: Sociological Approach</b><br><br>Diane Bailey and Paul Leonardi. 2015. Technology Choices: Why Occupations Differ in Their Embrace of New Technology. Chapter 1: “Explaining Technology Choices in the Workplace: Proposing an Occupational Perspective” (pp.19-42).<br><br>Christin, Angèle. 2018. “Counting Clicks: Quantification and Variation in Web Journalism in the United States and France.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 123(5):1382–1415. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1086/696137">10.1086/696137</a> . | N/A                                          | Elif                      |
| Week 3 (Oct 20 <sup>th</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup> ) | <b>Why do firms implement technology?: Lessons from History</b><br><br>Braverman, Harry. 1974. <i>Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the 20th Century</i> . New York, London: Monthly Review Press. <b>Read CH 7 (The Scientific-Technical Revolution) (pp. 107-115)</b><br><br>Edwards, Richard. 1979. <i>Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century</i> . Nachdr. New York: Basic Books. <b>Read CH 7 (Technical Control) (pp. 111-129).</b>                                                                                | N/A                                          | Elif                      |
| Week 4 (Oct 27 <sup>th</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup> ) | <b>From Platforms to the Rise of AI and Automation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Come up with a case for your project related | Jennifer                  |

|                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                      |      |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------|
|                                                  | <p>Casilli, Antonio, and Julian Posada. 2019. "The Platformization of Labor and Society." Pp. 293–306 in <i>Society and the Internet: How Networks of Information and Communication Are Changing Our Lives</i>, edited by M. Graham and W. H. Dutton. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p><b>READ ONLY SECTION "SITUATING AI"</b> in Joyce, Kelly, Laurel Smith-Doerr, Sharla Alegria, Susan Bell, Taylor Cruz, Steve G. Hoffman, Safiya Umoja Noble, and Benjamin Shestakofsky. 2021. "Toward a Sociology of Artificial Intelligence: A Call for Research on Inequalities and Structural Change." <i>Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World</i> 7.</p> | to your course theme |      |
| Week 5 (Nov 3 <sup>rd</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> )   | <p><b>Hidden Labor Behind Platforms and Its Potential Impact on Automation</b></p> <p>Shestakofsky, Benjamin. 2017. "Working Algorithms: Software Automation and the Future of Work." <i>Work and Occupations</i> 44(4):376–423. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888417726119">10.1177/0730888417726119</a></p> <p>Vertesi, Janet A., Adam Goldstein, Diana Enriquez, Larry Liu, and Katherine T. Miller. 2021. "Pre-Automation: Insourcing and Automating the Gig Economy." <i>Sociologica</i> 167-193 Pages. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.1971-8853/11657">10.6092/ISSN.1971-8853/11657</a>.</p>                                              | N/A                  | Elif |
| Week 6 (Nov 10 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> ) | <b>There will be no meeting, as November 11th (Tuesday) is a holiday.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | N/A                  | N/A  |
| Week 7 (Nov 17 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> ) | <p><b>How Platforms Operate: Opaque Algorithmic Control</b></p> <p>Rosenblat, Alex, and Luke Stark. 2016. "Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries: A Case Study of Uber's Drivers." <i>International Journal of Communication</i> 10:3758–84.</p> <p><b>WATCH Book Talk:</b> <a href="#">Inside the Invisible Cage</a> by Hatim Rahman (2024)</p> <p>Duffy, Brooke Erin. 2020. "Algorithmic Precarity in Cultural Work." <i>Communication and the Public</i> 5(3–4):103–7.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                  | N/A                  | Elif |

|                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                        |               |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Week 8 (Nov 24 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> )   | <b>Platforms and the Changing Nature of Work 1: Rise of Gig and On-Demand Labor</b><br><br>Schor, Juliet B. 2020. <i>After the Gig: How the Sharing Economy Got Hijacked and How to Win It Back</i> . 1st ed. University of California Press<br><b>READ INTRODUCTION (pp.1-17).</b><br><br>Ravenelle, Alexandra J. 2019. <i>Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy</i> . Oakland, California: University of California Press. <b>READ CH 3 (pp.61-89)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | N/A                                                    | <b>Rudiba</b> |
| Week 9 (Dec 1 <sup>st</sup> -Dec 5 <sup>th</sup> ) | <b>There will be no meeting, as Elif will be traveling for a job talk.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>N/A</b>                                             | <b>N/A</b>    |
| Week 10 (Dec 8 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> )   | <b>Platforms and the Changing Nature of Work 2: Cultural Industries and Creative Work</b><br><br>Poell, Thomas, David B. Nieborg, and Brooke Erin Duffy. 2022. <i>Platforms and Cultural Production</i> . Cambridge , UK ; Medford USA: Polity. <b>READ sub-sections from Ch 5: Labor &amp; 6: Creativity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pp. 109- 119 (read till the subsection “Individuality”)</li> <li>• Pp.124- 127 (read the section: Insecurity)</li> <li>• Pp.132-137 (read till the subsection “Tensions”)</li> <li>• Pp.143-147 (read the subsection “Metrification”)</li> <li>• Pp.151-154</li> </ul> Prey, Robert. 2020. “Performing Numbers: Musicians and Their Metrics.” Pp. 241–59 in <i>The Performance Complex: Competition and Competitions in Social Life</i> , edited by D. Stark. Oxford: Oxford University Press. | Finalize your research question and deliverable format | <b>Shreya</b> |
| WINTER BREAK                                       | <b>No meetings during Winter Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Work on your literature review                         | N/A           |

| SPRING 2026                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                              |                           |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Week                                            | Assigned Materials                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Tasks for Final Deliverables | Discussion Session Leader |
| Week 11 (Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> ) | <b>Why Is Gig Work through Platforms Appealing to People?</b><br><br>Milkman, Ruth, Luke Elliott-Negri, Kathleen Griesbach, and Adam Reich. 2021. “Gender, Class, and the Gig Economy: The Case of Platform-Based Food Delivery.” <i>Critical Sociology</i> 47(3):357–72. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920520949631">10.1177/0896920520949631</a> . | N/A                          | Elif                      |

|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                             | Vallas, Steven P., and Juliet B. Schor. 2024. "Labour Platforms as Mechanisms of Class Reproduction: Middle-Class Interests as the Basis of Worker Consent." <i>Work in the Global Economy</i> 4(2):235–58. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1332/27324176Y2024D000000023">10.1332/27324176Y2024D000000023</a> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                          |
| <b>Week 12</b><br>(Feb 9 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> )  | <p><b>Why Is Content Creation Appealing to People?</b></p> <p>Bishop, Sophie. 2023. "Influencer Creep: How Artists Strategically Navigate the Platformisation of Art Worlds." <i>New Media &amp; Society</i> 14614448231206090. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231206090">10.1177/14614448231206090</a>.</p> <p>Mears, Ashley, and Taylor Beauvais. 2025. "Learning to Like the Likes and the Hate: The Labor of Internet Fame in the New Attention Economy." <i>Social Problems</i> spaf028. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaf028">10.1093/socpro/spaf028</a>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Prepare an annotated bibliography consisting of at least 7-8 academic resources (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books) | <b>Krystal</b>                                                                                           |
| <b>Week 13</b><br>(Feb 16 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> ) | <b>No SERC meeting, due to the Monday class schedule on Tuesday.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | N/A                                                                                                                                          | N/A                                                                                                      |
| <b>Week 14</b><br>(Feb 23 <sup>rd</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> ) | <p><b>AI and End of Expertise and Work?</b></p> <p>Lebovitz, Sarah, Hila Lifshitz-Assaf, and Natalia Levina. 2022. "To Engage or Not to Engage with AI for Critical Judgments: How Professionals Deal with Opacity When Using AI for Medical Diagnosis." <i>Organization Science</i> 33(1):126–48. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2021.1549">10.1287/orsc.2021.1549</a>.</p> <p>WATCH: <a href="#">Nobel Laureate Busts the AI Hype</a> in MIT Sloan Management Review Channel on YouTube</p> <p><b>AI &amp; Future of Creativity?</b></p> <p>Öztaş, Yunus Emre, and Balca Arda. 2025. "Re-Evaluating Creative Labor in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Qualitative Case Study of Creative Workers' Perspectives on Technological Transformation in Creative Industries." <i>AI &amp; SOCIETY</i> 40(5):4119–30. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-025-02180-6">10.1007/s00146-025-02180-6</a>.</p> <p>WATCH: <a href="#">How AI-Generated Influencers are Earning Millions on YouTube</a> on the CNBC YouTube Channel</p> | N/A                                                                                                                                          | <p><b>AI and End of Jobs: Yi &amp; Hanyong</b></p> <p><b>AI and Creativity: Krystal &amp; Shreya</b></p> |
| <b>Week 15</b><br>(Mar 2 <sup>nd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> )   | <p><b>Negative Consequences of AI, Robots, and Automation: Local and Global Level</b></p> <p>Lei, Ya-Wen, and Rachel Kim. 2024. "Automation and Augmentation: Artificial Intelligence, Robots, and Work." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 50(1):251–72. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-090523-050708">10.1146/annurev-soc-090523-050708</a>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Only for participants doing an empirical research paper or data-based public science project: Finalize data collection                       | <b>Hardi</b>                                                                                             |

|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |            |                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| <p><b>Week 16</b><br/><b>(Mar 9<sup>th</sup></b><br/><b>-13<sup>th</sup>)</b></p> | <p><b>Moving Forward</b></p> <p><b>CLICK AND READ: <a href="#">AI needs to be more ‘pro-worker.’ These 5 policies can help</a> (Acemoglu et.al. 2023)</b></p> <p>Rafael Grohmann, Andre Campos Rocha &amp; Guilherme Guilherme (2025): Worker-led AI governance: Hollywood writers' strikes and the worker power, <i>Information, Communication &amp; Society</i>, DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2025.2521375</p> <p><b>CLICK AND READ: <a href="#">On Connective Labor and Automation- An Interview with Allison Pugh.</a></b></p> | <p>N/A</p> | <p><b>Hardi &amp; Elif</b></p> |
| <p><b>After March 10th- April 30th</b></p>                                        | <p><b>Work on your data analysis (if you are conducting an empirical project), finalize your literature review, prepare your poster presentation (date to be announced), and complete your final deliverables.</b></p> <p><b>One-to-one check-in on your progress</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p>                     |
|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p>                     |
|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p>                     |
|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p>                     |
|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p>                     |