AI and Society - Public sector applications, ethics and regulation

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Course description

Artificial intelligence is increasingly shaping how societies make decisions, deliver public services, produce knowledge, and understand the relationship between humans and technology. But what do we mean by "artificial intelligence" and how should its growing role in society be understood and governed?

This interdisciplinary course examines AI as a technical, social, political, and ethical artefact, with particular attention to Sweden and the European Union. Drawing on philosophy of technology, science and technology studies (STS), AI ethics, public administration and regulatory scholarship, students will critically examine how AI is defined and imagined, how technologies mediate human action and decision-making, and how questions of fairness, responsibility, transparency, power, and accountability arise in practice. The course examines the emerging European regulatory landscape and explores applications of AI in the public sector and higher education. Through lectures, seminars, deep reading, case analysis, discussions, and a field visit, students will develop conceptual and analytical tools for critically evaluating the role of AI in contemporary society.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- discuss and compare major definitions of artificial intelligence
- demonstrate basic knowledge about theories and concepts within philosophy of technology and science and technology studies (STS)
- identify and evaluate key ethical issues in relation to artificial intelligence and society
- examine the main features of the European Union's AI governance framework
- design and conduct a rigorous critical literature review with a transparent search and selection strategy, and provide a clear, evidence-based, constructive scholarly opposition to another student's work

Attendance and active participation

Attendance is expected for all sessions, and unexcused absences will impact students' final grade negatively. In case of sickness or other valid reasons for absence, the student must contact the course responsible in advance to determine whether it is possible to compensate for the absence. Active engagement is essential for students' learning. Participation in this course requires active

involvement in discussions and group activities. Preparatory readings or coursework will be assigned before each class and is required to participate in a productive manner.

Classroom Rules

Students are expected to maintain a respectful and professional environment by arriving on time, being prepared, giving full attention to speakers, and treating both peers and instructors with respect. Sometimes students might disagree with others' opinions or conclusions and that is ok, as long as discussions are handled in an appropriate and constructive fashion.

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or undisclosed use of AI programs for assignments, is prohibited. Because the course studies AI, students will sometimes use AI systems as objects of analysis and, when explicitly permitted, as tools. Fabricated or unverifiable sources, undisclosed generated text presented as the student's own analysis, or use that violates Swedish Program academic integrity rules is not permitted. Phones should be switched off, and laptops or tablets may only be used for course-related activities, like notetaking or group presentations.

Examination and grading

The final grade of the course is based on several components including a) attendance and active participation, b) a mid-term essay, c) an opposition report and seminar and d) course paper and oral defense.

Unexcused absences or even extended excused absences may negatively affect the final grade. Assignments that are submitted slightly after the deadline will be marked down. In case of severe lateness, the assignment will not be accepted anymore. Contact the course responsible if you are struggling with a deadline well in advance. It is up to the course responsible whether additional time is granted (against a late penalty).

Components of the final grade and description of assessment form

% of the final grade	Type of assessment	Description	Deadline
25% A-F scale	attendance and active participation	Attendance is mandatory	-
		Active participation means that students are expected to come prepared to class, participate and contribute to group discussions	-
		End-of session in-class PM	At the end of each session
15% A-F scale	Mid-term essay	1000-1200 words essay on analyzing an AI claim using	Just before session 5

		argumentation analysis and the concepts discussed throughout the philosophy of technology and STS lectures	
30% A-F scale	Course paper	Literature review 3500-4500 words excluding references and search appendix	Just before session 11
10% A-F scale	Oral defense	Oral defense of the course paper content at the opposition seminar	Session 12
20% A-F scale	Opposition	Each opponent is assigned another student's course paper and needs to prepare and opposition report aprox 1000 words	Just before session 12
		Oral opposition seminar and dialogue	Session 12

Schedule

Week	Theme	Activities	Readings
1	What is AI?	In our first meeting we will warm up with short introductions and brief presentations of each student expectation of the course. The main focus of this meeting is to explore and examine the definitions of AI.	- Crawford, K. (2019)– introduction chapter - Dignum, V. (2019) - chapter 2 "What Is Artificial Intelligence?" - Flasiński, M. (2016) - Chapter 1, History of Artificial Intelligence" *Non mandatory but recommended readings:* The shortest history of AI
2	Discourses of AI + argumentation analysis	In the first part of this session, we will examine the discourses of AI in the literature. The second part will focus on argumentation analysis.	- Bearman et al. (2023) - McGrath et al. (2025) - Crawford, K. (2019)– conclusions chapter - Jordan (2019) - Bowell et al. (2020) – chapter 1 and 3

		The third part will include exercises for students to experiment and practice argumentation analysis.	
3	Philosophy of technology + literature review	In the first part of this session, we will draw a historical map of foundational works within the field philosophy of technology. In the second part we will focus on Postphenomenology and Technology Mediation theory In the third part we will focus on methodological issues of literature reviews	- Vallor (2022) – chapter 1, and 3 - Ihde (1990) – chapter 2, and 3 - Verbeek (2005) – chapter 4 - Verbeek (2011) – preface, and chapter 1 - Grant, M. J., & Booth, A. (2009)
4	Philosophy of technology and STS	In this session we will introduce STS and focus on seminal work that has critically examined how scientific knowledge and technological systems are constructed, maintained, and transformed. Q&A on midterm essay	- Law (2008) - Gorur et al. (2019) - Winner (1980) - Star (1990) - Bowker & Star (1999) – introduction chapter - Cockburn, C. (1981) - Hicks (2019)
5	AI ethics	In the first part session we will have an introduction to AI ethics literature and its critiques, and in the second we will focus on UNESCO and EU ethical guidelines for AI.	- Crawford, K. (2019)– chapter 1 and 2 - Bostrom, N., & Yudkowsky, E. (2014). - Floridi (2013) - Floridi (2019) - Hagendorff, T. (2020) - Farazouli A. (2024) - UNESCO (2022) - UNESCO (2026) - European Commission (2019) - European Commission (2026) *Non mandatory but recommended readings:* Dignum, V. (2019) - chapter 4 Floridi (2023) van de Poel (2023) Holmes et al. (2022) Whittlestone et al. (2019) Vallor (2016)

6	Regulation of AI	In the first part of the session, we will focus on unpacking the European law on AI (AI act) ** Possible guest lecture* In the second part of the session, students will present the research question of their project, and a feedback seminar will follow.	- Veale, M., & Borgesius, F. Z. (2021) - European commission. (2024). - Colonna, L. (2024) - Colonna, L. (2026)
7	Data and AI in the public sector	In this session, we will first focus on data and AI drawing on critical data studies, and present cases of AI in the public sector. ** Possible guest lecture* In the second part of the session, students will present the research design of their project, and a feedback seminar will follow.	- Crawford, K. (2019)– chapers 3, 4 and 6 - D'Ignazio & Klein (2019a) - D'Ignazio & Klein (2019b) - Toll, D et al. (2019) - Lindgren, I. et al. (2019) - Peretz-Andersson et al. (2026) - Albrecht, E. (2025a) - Albrecht, E. (2025b) *Non mandatory but recommended readings:* Molin, A. et al. (2024) Kronblad, C. et al. (2024)
8	AI in higher education and the future of work	In the first part of the session, we will focus on emerging AI technologies in the context of higher education. The second part - Academic writing seminar	- Farazouli, A. (2026) – pp 8–27, 81-104 - Cerratto Pargman, T. et al., (2024) - Farazouli, et al., (2025) - Farazouli, et al., (2024) - Figueras et al., (2025) - Holmes, W., & Tuomi, I. (2022) - Luo (Jess), J. (2025) - Sporrong, E., et al.(2025) - Zawacki-Richter, O., et al (2019)
9	Reading seminar	Student led jigsaw seminar on selected readings. Final assignment Q&A session	See list of optional readings
10	Field visit at Tekniska Museet	In this meeting we will approach the museum of technology as empirical material. Students examine how technology is staged, narrated, made visible/invisible, and connected to ideas of progress, society, expertise, and the future in the context of Sweden.	*Non mandatory but recommended readings:* Cave et al. (2020)

		Debrief at the museum café.	
11	Opposition seminar part 1	In this session, we will begin the peers' oppositions. Opponents need to have prepared a 20' presentation of their assigned peer course paper. All students are expected to contribute with critical questions and dialogue.	Peers' course papers
12	Opposition seminar part 2 – end of the course reflections + course evaluation	In this session, we will continue with the rest of the oppositions and end the course sharing our reflections and key takeaways. Evaluation forms of the course will be distributed.	Peers' course papers

Literature list

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15 pages

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Crawford, K. 2021. The atlas of AI: Power, politics, and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence. New Haven: Yale University Press.
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D'Ignazio & Klein 2019b "Show Your Work", Chapter 7 in *Data Feminism*. Tillgängligt här: https://direct.mit.edu/books/book/4660/Data-Feminism
Dignum, V. (2019). Responsible Artificial Intelligence: How to Develop and Use AI in a Responsible Way. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30371-6
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