

AI 510: Seminar in AI Ethics

COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2024 • January 29 – May 10, 2024
Sections & CRNs: 01W (28899) • 100% Online



INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Gavin P. Johnson (he/him)
Email: gavin.johnson@tamuc.edu

Student Visiting Hours: (Zoom)
Wednesdays, 1:00–3:00 pm
*other times available upon request;
appointment preferred*

COURSE INFORMATION

AI 510: Seminar in AI Ethics • 3 credit hours

From the catalog: As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to transform various aspects of our lives, it becomes imperative to examine the ethical implications of its development, deployment, and impact on society. This course is a topical seminar designed to engage students in critical discussions surrounding the ethical challenges and dilemmas posed by AI technologies. Topics may vary, but may include: bias and fairness; transparency and accountability; environmental sustainability; AI and social justice, legal implications, emerging technologies, case studies, privacy issues, ethical guidelines and policy development.

For Spring 2024: This version of the course will provide a wide survey of current issues with the opportunity to conduct specialized research on a topic of your choice.

Required Materials

This course does not require you to purchase any textbooks. All readings will be supplied through our D2L site and/or the Waters Library collection. To fully participate in this course, you will need:

- Access to our D2L course website & hypthes.is (embedded in D2L)
- Access to your leomail/A&M-Commerce email
- Access to a word processing program and/or other digital composing software
 - *Note: D2L does not work well with Pages*
 - *Note: Free access to Microsoft Office 365 for students:*
<https://inside.tamuc.edu/facultystaffservices/academictechnology/documents/Office-365-Students.pdf>
 - *Note: Free access to Adobe Creative Cloud for students:*
<https://www.tamuc.edu/adobe/#tamuc-section-267428>
- Digital storage (e.g., flash drive or cloud storage [iCloud, Google Drive, DropBox, etc.]

Suggested Materials

While you are not required, if you prefer a physical copy when reading an academic book, you can purchase *Atlas of AI*. An e-book is available through Waters Library.

- Crawford, Kate. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, politics, and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence*. Yales University Press. ISBN: 9780300264630 (\$18.00).

Instructional Methods

This section of AI 510 is taught 100% online and can be completed asynchronously. As needed, I will host *optional* meetings. Weekly assignments will be due on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The syllabus/schedule are tentative and subject to change.

Access

Access is the process of designing for all types of bodies, minds, and experiences. This class design strives to be inclusive of all students. I recognize that our classroom is made up of a diverse array of learners and am happy to make any reasonable accommodations to make sure every student has an equitable experience in my class. Please talk to me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. If you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services including the Counseling Center are available to all students. I recognize that disabilities can be visible and invisible, and I am dedicated to ensuring that all students succeed in my course. Please also see the **Resources & Support section** below and course webpage for additional support services.

Instructor's Support for Student Learning Objectives and Goals

As your instructor, I have a few goals for our course. By the end of the course, I would like for each of you to:

- Demonstrate confidence discussing AI and ethics in a manner appropriate for your future academic or professional career;
- Identify the rhetorical use of AI in contemporary media and culture;
- Articulate the ethics surrounding major concerns/dangers of AI, especially in terms of human dignity, racism, sexism, disability, labor, and environmental impact;
- Compose arguments/persuasive media that attends to AI in accountable ways;
- Define and pursue your own goals and learning objectives related to this topic.

Throughout this course, you and I will work together to interpret, revise, and remix these learning objectives and goals. That is, our goals are flexible and will necessarily change as we move through our course. We may struggle to achieve every goal we set, and that is okay! But, as your instructor, I provide the following resources to aid us in developing our critical reading, writing, and research skills:

- **Engagement with a wide range of texts** related to our course topics and goals. These texts will provide insight into the possibilities and challenges of ethical engagement with AI. Furthermore, the texts—which may include academic essays, textbook chapters, popular news articles, social media content, video lectures, podcasts, etc.—will challenge you to (re)consider your understanding of technology, ethics, agency, and accountability.
- **Insight through discussion** of those texts with your classmates, other scholars, and me. Discussions are primarily built through social annotations and discussion boards. Sharing our expertise is the best way to enrich our knowledges and design practices to sustain ourselves and our communities.
- **Frameworks for analysis and action** based on rhetorical practices outlined by scholars, teachers, activists, elders, and ancestors. Most prominently, we will engage critical practices for rendering visible dangerous gaps in research, pedagogies, and ideologies that are shielded by tradition, bigotry, and institutional bureaucracy
- **Responsible and honest feedback** toward your work. The most important part of my job is not delivering content – you can look most of this stuff up yourself – but rather guiding your engagement with that content through conversations and assessments. Feedback on your assignments is based on my engagement with your writing as a reader as well as my professional expertise.

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COURSE WORKLOAD

As a student in this graduate course, you will read, think, and write constantly. You should plan for 50-100 pages of academic readings that you will be responsible for annotating and/or responding to each week. These readings are mostly philosophical in content, and you may need to read each multiple times to feel confident with your understanding of the topic discussed. As the course progresses, you'll receive feedback on your formal writing from me, and you'll have the chance to continue to develop and revise those pieces based on that feedback.

Tips for Success in the Course

An online graduate course is intensive, moves quickly, and requires a lot of self-direction and motivation. If you struggle to stay on track, know that there is no shame in the struggle! My best tips:

- **Establish a routine** and set consistent times (in a calendar or planner) to focus solely on this class. Use this time to check your email, check D2L, and work on assignments.
- **Return to readings** to see what your peers and Dr. Johnson are saying. The practice of social annotation allows us to have discussions *in the texts*, and you should return to the readings constantly and especially as you craft your major projects.
- **Begin working on your projects early and use resources** such as the Writing Center, Waters Library, and student visiting hours with Dr. Johnson.
- **Communicate and meet with Dr. Johnson regularly**, especially if you find yourself struggling! I will work with you to strategize the best ways for you to reach your learning goals.
- **Take breaks to rest, relax, and do the activities that bring you joy.** Whether it's taking a walk, drawing, playing a video game, or talking on the phone with a friend, schedule these things into your calendar. They are necessary parts of your success. And if you're ever feeling overwhelmed by this class, please reach out to me!

Assignments

Below are brief descriptions of our assignments for AI 510. No exams are given. Full prompts for each assignment will be available in D2L.

- **Assessment Dialogues:** Opportunities for you to consider your learning processes and set goals for our course in dialogue with Dr. Johnson and your peers. Assessment Dialogue #1 will be due in Week 1, Assessment Dialogue #2 will be due in Week 8 at your Midterm Meeting, and Assessment Dialogue #3 will be due in Week 14 at your Final Meeting. Each should be 250-500 words or approximately a 3 minute recording.
- **Weekly Reading Annotations:** Each week you will be responsible for several required readings by Wednesday at 11:59 pm CST, using the open-access tool Hypothes.is linked in D2L. For each reading, you should aim for *at least* 3 engagements (note: highlighting without a comment remains private and will not count toward your expected annotations).

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- **Weekly Questions and Peer Responses:** After completing your weekly annotations, you should post to the corresponding discussion board on D2L, which will invite you to submit post-reading questions or quotes for further consideration. These should be posted by Wednesday at 11:59 pm CST. By Friday at 11:59 pm CST, you should engage with your peers' questions and/or quotes. You should aim to engage at least one peer significantly (composing a robust response to their questions or offer an interpretation of a posted quote) or multiple peers less significantly (follow up questions, general comments of agreement, Likes).
- **Semester glossary of terms:** Many of our readings are filled with both philosophical and technical jargon. As non-experts, I suspect that you will encounter many terms and concepts that are unfamiliar to you (I know I have while preparing this course). Throughout the semester, maintain a glossary of terms and concepts that you find interesting, confusing, or provocative. Provide brief definitions and, when appropriate, examples or related news stories for each entry. By midterm, you should have collected at least 10 terms. You should collect another 10 terms after midterm. In total, you should have at least 20 defined terms by the end of the course. 20 is a minimum not a limit.
- **AI Policy Review and Remediation:** This short assignment asks you to engage with the language of privacy and security in official policies related to AI technologies. Following the work of Woods and Wason, we will identify, examine, discuss, and (re)mediate privacy policies.
 - **Option 1:** Identify a privacy policy from a publicly available generative AI technology. Perform a brief rhetorical analysis of the policy before remediating for "meaningful access."
 - **Option 2:** Collect AI policies released by universities or other educational institutions. Draft a brief comparative analysis demonstrating points of agreement and disagreement with institutional approaches to AI use. Remediate (or compose your own) privacy policy that provides "meaningful access" to students.
- **Critical/Creative Project:** This final assignment will ask you to compose a digital project that demonstrates a deep understanding of the content of the course while attending to the ethical implications of your use of the technology.
 - **Option 1:** Produce a podcast episode or video essay (5-10 minutes) with script for accessibility that focuses on a concept or constellation of concepts that you have gravitated towards this semester.
 - **Option 2:** Expand your AI Policy Review and Remediation project.
 - **Option 3:** Profile a publicly available AI technology and experiment with its capabilities.
 - **Option 4:** Propose a completely different project as a capstone to our course (Dr. Johnson's approval required).

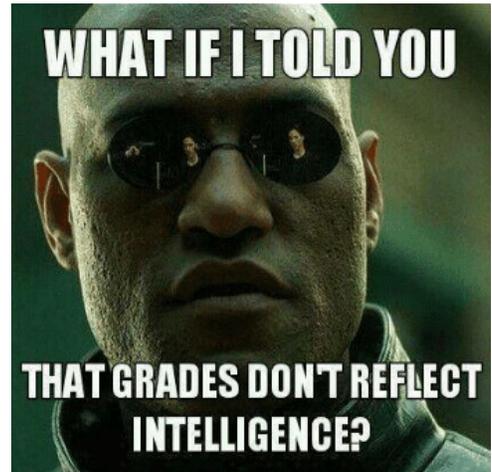
Regardless, you will be expected to follow a scaffolded process including

- **Brief proposal:** In about 250 words, explain what option you intend to compose.
- **Outline or Storyboard:** Map out your project.
- **Rough Draft:** Pull together a draft. It can be rough...like really rough.
- **Submission Draft:** The "final" product. This should be a polished composition in line with one of the listed options as well as a brief reflection on the composing process.

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Grades Feedback & Assessment

I thoroughly believe that grades are technologies of surveillance and control. I never liked grades, and I have always felt that they limit the learning process, create nasty habits designed to “get the A,” and cause more anxiety than they are worth. However, I also realize that grades are important data points for you – your financial aid, future jobs, and ability to graduate are all tied up in the grades you receive. To balance my distrust of grades with the requirements of the university, we will work on a *feedback and collaborative assessment model*. In this model, **you will not receive individual letter grades on assignments**. Instead, your assignments will receive constructive feedback that you should use to revise, rethink, and remix your work.



In the D2L gradebook, assignments will be marked

- **Full Credit** when the project is fully completed according to the assignment prompt and turned in promptly. Strong effort is evident and only minor revisions would be beneficial.
- **Half Credit** when elements of the project are incomplete and/or the project was not turned in promptly. Some effort is evident but major revisions would be beneficial. *For assignments marked Half Credit, you are able and encouraged to revise and resubmit.*
- **No credit** when a project wasn't completed and/or wasn't turned in.
- **Excused** when a project is incomplete due to uncontrollable circumstances that you have clearly communicated (within reason) to Dr. Johnson.

With that being said, this course is not “gradeless” because I, begrudgingly, have to enter final course grades. These final grades will take into account your work completion, my various responses to your work, and your laboring toward meaningful compositions and engagement. You will outline your own evaluation of your labor in Assessment Dialogue #3. Using our collaboratively composed Assessment Agreement, I will determine a grade using the (very limiting) A&M-Commerce standard grading scheme of A-F. I am committed to your learning and promise that your assignments will receive feedback based on my professional expertise. You are always welcome to meet with me to discuss any feedback on your writing and your general progress in this course (though don't expect me to give you a “grade” in lieu of a discussion of your progress).

COURSE & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Communicating & Meeting with Dr. Johnson

Communication is a key part of success in this course. I rely on D2L announcements for general information and email for individual communication. I respond to emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday (often sooner). I highly encourage you to attend student visiting hours as often as you would like. This is time I set aside for you!

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For Spring 2024, I am available to meet:

- Wednesdays 1:00–3:00 pm CST (in Talbot 229 or zoom). Other days & times are available upon request.

I prefer that you schedule an appointment with me so that I am sure to be available and ready to focus on your concerns.

Crisis Response

We live in a complicated and often overwhelming world. Each of us, over just the last few years, have lived through a global pandemic, political unrest, environmental disasters, and financial disruption. I imagine each of you have also been impacted by personal, familial, and community-based life shaping experiences. Many of us are mentally and physically exhausted. It is a privilege that we can engage each other in intellectual conversations through this course and I have high expectations for the work you will compose in this course. However, I also understand that sometimes school can't come first. Indeed, it is very likely that you (individually) or we (collectively) will need to respond to a crisis during the semester. In my role as you instructor, I will do my best to support your learning and make our course accessible and accommodating. Please review my Access Policy, Tips for Success, and Campus resources for more information on how I can help or schedule a meeting with me.

Learning Coalition

This classroom is a community of researchers that, I hope, will form a learning coalition in which we can build and maintain a respectful space to share our thoughts, writing, and research. A coalition is a group of diverse thinkers who come together for with various knowledges and beliefs to accomplish common goals. We won't always agree with one another on every issue, and that is okay. You will probably feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or challenged at some point in this class. In fact, those moments can often lead to greater insight and understanding. However, I will not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, ablest, xenophobic, or otherwise intolerant language or behavior in the class meetings, on our D2L course site, in emails, or in your assignments. If I deem your language or behavior as inappropriate, I will give you a verbal warning. If the inappropriate behavior continues you will be asked to leave the course and will be reported for misconduct.

While your continued participation is expected, you are never required to participate in conversations, discussions, or readings that you feel will cause you harm in any form beyond the expected rigor of the college classroom. Keep self-care your priority and excuse yourself from these spaces—no explanation needed.

University Policy on Student Conduct & Nondiscrimination Notice

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

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<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Academic Integrity

I believe it is our shared responsibility to honor others as we build our own knowledges and tell our own stories. One topic we will discuss extensively in this course is the idea of ownership – who owns knowledge? This, of course, is a very complex question that cannot easily be addressed in a policy on a syllabus. So, let me be honest: **I expect your work to be your work.** I want to know YOUR thoughts, YOUR ideas, and what YOU have to say based on the relations you are building through reading, writing, and living. Your work doesn't have to be perfect – it just needs to be from you. If you are struggling with an assignment or believe you may have misused a source, please come talk to me and we will figure it out! Our goal as teachers and researchers is to build knowledge in relational and accountable ways.

If I suspect that a submitted assignment is not your work, I will reach out to you immediately. My first instinct is to help you revise any potentially plagiarized (stolen/appropriated) material. If a pattern of dishonesty becomes apparent, I will move the case forward based on the University procedures listed below.

- [Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10:
https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf](https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf)

University Note on Artificial Intelligence (AI) [May 25, 2023 version]

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

~~Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.~~ In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

As a course on the ethics of AI, I suspect that you will likely experiment with AI technologies. I encourage it (to the extent that you are comfortable)! Any use should be meaningful, ethically considered, and properly documented.

Grievance Procedure

If you have concerns regarding this course, please first address those concerns with Dr. Johnson to reach a resolution. If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of that conversation or have not

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been able to meet individually with me, whether in-person, by email, by telephone, or by another communication medium, you should then schedule an appointment the **College of Innovation and Design (CID)**. Where applicable, consult University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05 (“Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation”).

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the modification of the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Collection of Data for Measuring Institutional Effectiveness

To measure the level of compliance with the university’s Institutional Effectiveness guidelines, throughout the semester, I will collect some of the ungraded texts you produce. The texts will be part of a portfolio created on your behalf and will be measured to ensure that our program “promotes practices that result in higher student academic achievement; an enhanced student experience; aligned and transparent decisions; and readily available information for improvement, accountability, and accreditation” (see “Department of Institutional Effectiveness,” <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutus/institutionalEffectiveness/default.aspx>). This is solely an assessment of program effectiveness and in no way affects students’ course grades or GPAs.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce
Waters Library- Room 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148

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Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Mental Health Support

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

International Student & Scholar Services

The ISSS provides services to international students and scholars including immigration advising, cultural adjustment and personal advising, cultural and education events, trips to the Dallas/Fort Worth area and other destinations, and programs for our new international students and scholars. Learn more at <https://www.tamuc.edu/international-student-scholar-services/>

Writing Center

The Writing Center offers writers free, one-on-one assistance. We welcome all writers, majors, and disciplines—undergraduate and graduate students alike. In fact, we work from the premise that all writers, no matter their ability level, benefit from the feedback of knowledgeable readers. The Writing Center staff is trained to provide writers with just this service. In short, we are here to help you help yourself. The Writing Center offers one-on-one sessions with writers—both face-to-face and online—begin on the hour and last up to 45 minutes. You cannot sign up for back-to-back appointments, but you may sign up for as many appointments as you'd like each day and week. For more information, visit <https://www.tamuc.edu/writing-center>

Accessing the Course Website

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Technical Requirements

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

- LMS Requirements: <https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>
- LMS Browser Support: https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm
- YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements: <https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>
- If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, you can contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Detailed course schedule is provided on D2L.

WEEK	DATES	TOPICS
1	January 29–February 2	Unit 1: Technoethics & Artificial Intelligence, an overview
2	February 5–9	Unit 1: AI Ethics
3	February 12–16	Unit 1: Rhetoric of AI
4	February 19–23	Unit 1: Privacy and Surveillance Capitalism
5	February 26–March 1	Unit 2: Cultural Depictions
6	March 4–8	Unit 2: Cultural Depictions, continued
7	March 11–15	Spring Break
8	March 18–22	Midterm Meetings
9	March 25–29	Unit 3: <i>Atlas of AI</i> – Intro & Earth
10	April 1–5	Unit 3: <i>Atlas of AI</i> – Labor & Data
11	April 8–12	Unit 3: <i>Atlas of AI</i> – Classification & Affect
12	April 15–19	Unit 3: <i>Atlas of AI</i> – State, Power, & Space
13	April 22–26	Unit 4: Governmentality and Accountability
14	April 29–May 3	Unit 4: Accountability and Trust
15	May 6–10	Finals

SYLLABUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Like all writing and knowledge making, this syllabus is composed of constellated knowledges, spaces, histories, affects, and bodies. Elements of this syllabus have been built, borrowed, and remixed with/from my friends and colleagues. I recognize and honor their efforts and the things they have taught me through our shared intellectual relations.

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