

# Artificial Intelligence Policy

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COURSE INFORMATION	<i>Term:</i> Spring 2025 <i>Level:</i> Intermediate Seminar <i>Meet:</i> W/F, 12:45-2:05 <i>Room:</i> Marley 325	<i>Instructor:</i> Jack Reilly <i>Office:</i> Eggers 225F <i>Appointments:</i> <a href="https://jackreilly.github.io">jackreilly.github.io</a> <i>Office Hours:</i> Mon & Wed, 2:15-3:15; by appt
DESCRIPTION	This course serves as an introduction to the politics and policy of artificial intelligence. It presumes no particular prior knowledge of artificial intelligence, political science, public policy, or computer science; rather, it will introduce students to what artificial intelligence is as well as to the ethics of AI, its social implications, and the policy choices around AI that currently face governments, corporations, and organizations worldwide. This is a "non-technical" course: assignments will include reading, class discussion and leadership, debates, writing, and learning about the use of AI tools and prompts to generate output. Students will not be expected, however, to program or write any formal code.	
STRUCTURE	<b><i>Principle - Practice - Politics - Policy</i></b> The course has four sequential units. First, we start with an introduction to the philosophy of artificial intelligence itself. What is "intelligence" and "consciousness" in the first place? What are minds? What are agents and legal persons, and when are agents responsible for their actions? What is artificial intelligence, and what is artificial "general" intelligence? Second, we proceed to discuss the mechanics of current computational approaches to AI, with a particular focus on large language models (such as OpenAI's ChatGPT), including approachable, non-technical overviews of the principles behind machine learning, neural networks, and assorted technologies that have given rise to the current state of the art in AI. Third, we consider the societal impacts of current artificial intelligence systems, including data practices as well as current AI applications, uses, risks, and ethics. Fourth, we turn to policy, examining the decisions in front of governments, companies, and organizations in the United States and worldwide as well as complications in the policy process for producing effective AI legislation.	
PREREQUISITES	Introductory coursework in (any) related area(s). No particular knowledge is expected, but the reading level is high and this course may not be suitable for first year students.	

## Materials

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BOOKS	<p><i>Readings will include selections from:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mitchell, 2019. <i>Artificial Intelligence: A Guide for Thinking Humans</i>. Picador.</li><li>• Haugeland et al, 2023. <i>Mind Design III: Philosophy, Psychology, and Artificial Intelligence</i>.</li><li>• Marcus, 2024. <i>Taming Silicon Valley: How We Can Ensure That AI Works for Us</i>. MIT.</li><li>• Crawford, 2022. <i>Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence</i>. Yale.</li><li>• Bullock, et al (editors). <i>The Oxford Handbook of AI Governance</i>. Oxford.</li></ul> <p><i>Readings will be available electronically</i></p>
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COMPUTATION We will use a variety of AI models in class as end-users, so you should have a computer you can use to access them. No coding will be required in the course.

## Course Requirements

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OVERVIEW This is a seminar-style class.

1. Seminar Preparation (20%)
  - (a) Attendance, Reading, and Participation
  - (b) Discussion Questions
  - (c) AI News Submissions
  - (d) Discussion Leadership
2. Prepared Work for Class (50%)
  - (a) Debates (30%)
  - (b) AI System Presentation (5%)
  - (c) Short Assignments (15%)
3. Core Exam (10%)
4. Final Project (20%)
  - (a) Presentation
  - (b) Paper

SEMINAR  
PREPARATION

**Daily Attendance, Participation, and Reading.** This is an upper level preceptorial-style seminar taught at a high level: it only works if everyone takes part. I have a high opinion of your intellectual capability and a similarly high opinion of the quality of your potential contributions - make sure to show them to me!

**Discussion Questions:** Submit discussion questions or points (broadly construed) to the class by 9 AM on the day of class. Make sure to send emails to the course email list, and title your e-mail [AIP] Questions: Week X.X.

**AI News Submissions:** Each Wednesday, we'll take formal time in class to discuss AI news from the past week. (If something particularly interesting happens, we'll do it Friday, too). If you come across interesting AI news - or broad tech industry news - submit it to our blackboard page.

**Discussion Leadership:** Each class has an assigned discussion leader from among the students. While all students are under an obligation to read (or listen, or watch) the material each day from class, the discussion leader has a special role as the person to starts our discussion for the day rolling, and steps in should our discussion of the day's material falter.

Finally, a note on seminar **etiquette:** course participants should be courteous to the professor and fellow students. Attend class on time, listen to fellow students when they talk, and disagree (or agree) with others arguments professionally . Keep cell phones and other technology silenced and out of sight unless doing something directly relevant to the discussion in the class.

**Preparation Grading Policy:** A seminar like this doesn't work if everyone only seeks to do the bare minimum. Informed class participation is expected and required each day in class; you shouldn't be counting things like "I submitted a requisite number of news articles already this semester, so I no longer need to submit news articles". Participate across all elements of the seminar as and when the spirit moves you, and keep that participation up through the semester, and you'll do fine for this portion of the class.

With that said, it is useful to have some baselines and expectations for everyone to keep in mind. A few that are useful:

- *Attendance:* Everyone has a few bad days. You can miss up to two days of class without excuse or penalty.
- *Discussion Questions:* At least one each day. (Although do note: you should sometimes submit more than one, too!)
- *In-Class Participation:* We should hear your contributions every day. (We'll have systems in class to make sure that everyone gets a turn).
- *News Submissions:* At least four news submissions per semester (hopefully more!)
- *Discussion Leadership:* Split evenly according to the number of students in the class.

#### CLASS WORK

**Debates:** We will have six formal debates in the class, following a modified Lincoln-Douglas debate format (if you are unfamiliar with these rules, don't worry! We'll cover them.) Each student will have a role in each debate, although not all roles are equal: it is easier to *judge* than it is to *affirm* or *negate*. All students will have equal debate responsibilities across the class.

**AI System Presentation:** Each student will give a short (5-10 minute) presentation about a major historical AI system or AI advancement. (Examples include: Eliza, Deep Blue, Alpha Go, etc). Students will not necessarily be expected to give deep technical overviews of the AI system, but will be expected to give discuss the *historical* importance of the system to the overall development of AI.

**Short Assignments:** Small assignments using AI tools will be given through the semester.

#### CORE EXAM

A short in class quiz on AI basics.

#### FINAL PROJECT

A final project on an aspect of AI, including both a 10-minute presentation and 5-7 page paper. (There will be options.)

#### ASSORTED CLASS POLICIES

**Office Hours:** I encourage you to stop by my office hours at any point if you have questions about the course, the readings, school, etc. I have drop-in hours regularly scheduled, as well as additional hours by appointment (schedule by email or at [jackreilly.github.io](mailto:jackreilly.github.io) ).

**E-mail:** Students can generally expect a response to all e-mails within 24 hours, excepting weekends. Im happy to answer any questions over e-mail that require less than a paragraph in response. Questions that require more than a short paragraph in response should be addressed in person.

**Blackboard:** We will organize our class primarily over Blackboard; including reading availability and assignment submission. Make sure you are able to access it effectively.

**Artificial Intelligence and Class Technology Policy:** To be discussed (and decided upon!) in class.

## Schedule

LIST OF TOPICS *Subject to change*

W	Wednesday	Friday
UNIT I: AI IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE		
1	Jan 13 Class Introduction	Intelligence, Consciousness, Sentience
2	Jan 20 Emergence	DEBATE I
3	Jan 27 Evaluating Intelligence	AI Embodiment, Robotics, & Agency
4	Feb 3 Language & Intelligence	DEBATE II
5	Feb 10 Computation: A Crash Course	Silicon: An Geopolitical Story
6	Feb 17 The Business of AI: Moats and Strategies	DEBATE III
7	Feb 24 Harms of AI	CORE EXAM
UNIT II: AI IN POLITICS AND POLICY		
8	Mar 3 Data Problems: Bias, Long Tails, & Ethics	DEBATE IV
SPRING BREAK		
9	Mar 17 Labor Replacement I	Labor Replacement II
10	Mar 24 Environmental Factors	DEBATE V
11	Mar 31 Democracy & AI	Autocracy & AI
12	Apr 7 Geopolitics Redux	DEBATE VI
13	Apr 14 Governance and AI	Singularities, xRisk, & AGI
14	Apr 21 FINAL PRESENTATIONS	FINAL PRESENTATIONS
FINALS WEEK		

### READINGS AND SCHEDULE

Consult the class blackboard for an updated reading list (look for the document "AIP Schedule", as opposed to "AIP Syllabus"). While the topics we cover are relatively set, the course is highly dynamic: articles that have not even been published yet may find their way into our reading list at appropriate times, and students will have the ability to make recommendations to the reading list as well.

All readings may be found on the course blackboard page. Readings will be posted at least one week ahead of time. Each day will have one primary reading that should be read closely, a series of simpler secondary readings (often, news coverage, podcasts, and/or videos) that should be browsed or scanned, and (frequently) further secondary reading for those interested in diving deeper. The first week's reading may be found below as an example.

### SEMINAR 1.1

#### Course Introduction

1. Think: *What does "Artificial Intelligence" mean to you? What are you expecting to learn from this class?"*
2. Read: Syllabus

### SEMINAR 1.2

#### Intelligence, Consciousness, and Sentience, Oh My!

Getting clear on terms and possibilities

1. Think: *What is the difference between Intelligence, Consciousness, and Sentience? What about between Autonomous Systems, Artificial Intelligence, and Artificial General Intelligence? How can we become sufficiently precise in our language and thinking?*

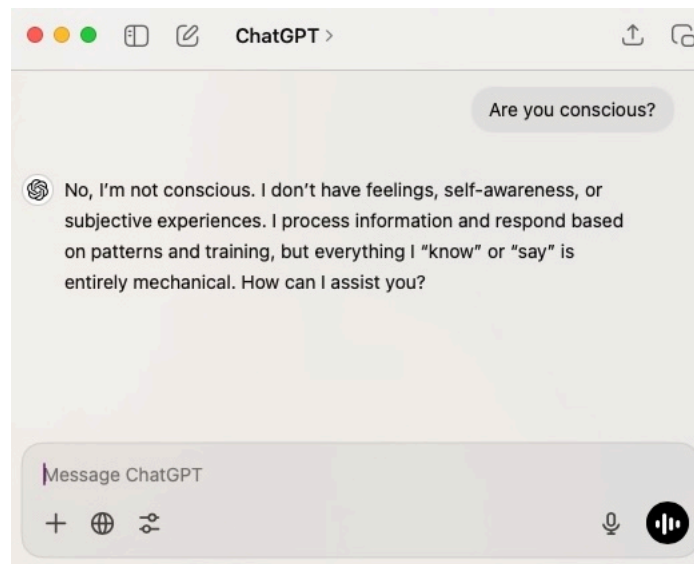
2. Read: Mitchell, Melanie. 2023. "Why AI Is Harder than We Think". from *Mind Design III*.

3. Browse:

- Lenharo, Mariana. 2023. "Decades-long bet on consciousness ends - and it's philosopher 1, neuroscientist 0" *Nature News*
- Lenharo, Mariana. 2024. "What should we do if AI becomes conscious? These scientists say it's time for a plan". *Nature News*
- Marcus, Gary. 2025. "Sam Altman thinks that AGI is basically a solved problem. I don't. Here's why." Blog post.

4. Consult as desired:

- Altman, Sam. 2025. "Reflections". Blog post.
- "Consciousness". Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
- "Artificial Intelligence". Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.



## Campus Academic Resources & Policies

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### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting [class.syr.edu](https://class.syr.edu), selecting, Academic Integrity, and Expectations and Policy.

Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty's intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors' course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

#### DIVERSITY

It is the intent of this course for students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives to be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is also critical to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let your instructor know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

#### INCLUSION

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process.

If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit Center for Disability Resources. Please call (315) 443-4498 or email [disabilityresources@syr.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@syr.edu) for more detailed information.

The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

#### DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The University does not discriminate and prohibits harassment or discrimination related to any protected category including creed, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, gender, pregnancy, disability, marital status, age, race, color, veteran status, military status, religion, sexual orientation, domestic violence status, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender.

Any complaint of discrimination or harassment related to any of these protected bases should be reported to Sheila Johnson-Willis, the University's Chief Equal Opportunity & Title IX Officer. She is responsible for coordinating compliance efforts under various laws including Titles VI, VII, IX and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. She can be contacted at Equal Opportunity, Inclusion, and Resolution Services, 005 Steele Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-1120; by email: [titleix@syr.edu](mailto:titleix@syr.edu); or by telephone: 315-443-0211.

FAITH AND  
RELIGIOUS AC-  
COMMODATIONS

Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For observances occurring before the drop deadline, notification is required at least two academic days in advance. Students may enter their observances in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.

HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS

Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources effectively to navigate stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/>) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000.