University of St.Gallen

Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

8,729: Technologien/Technologies: Societal Responses to Generative AI

ECTS credits: 3

Overview examination/s
(binding regulations see below)
decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (60%)
Examination time: Term time
decentral - Presentation, Analog, Group work group grade (40%)
Examination time: Term time

Attached courses
Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer
8,729,1.00 Technologien/Technologies: Societal Responses to Generative AI -- English -- Rapoport Robert

Course information

Course prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites. However, you will enjoy the course more if you are broadly interested in systemic thinking.

Learning objectives

Students will learn to

* Analyze both historical and contemporary perspectives on human-machine interactions.
* Understand the epistemological and political challenges presented by LLMs (large language models).
* Engage critically and closely with course texts and peer presentations.
* Apply research skills and lateral thinking.

Course content

Generative AI poses numerous epistemic questions for politics, cultural production, and information ecology. These changes will occur along a compounded, or even exponential curve that has no clear precedent. The emergent capabilities of Large Language Models (i.e., skills not specifically authored by their creators) present us with an inflection point. To understand this space, we will take a case study approach—looking at the micro in an attempt to grasp the macro. Questions of scale will be intrinsic to this mode of inquiry. We will ask: What does it mean to train a generative model in terms of policy, sociology, and psychology? What will it mean for models to "understand" human perception on a level that we ourselves do not? Are Large Language Models a step-change in what Peter Galison called the "black boxing of the self" (1994)? How has scholarship sought to assimilate or resist this new mode of synthesis? How can academic research methods adapt to these new conditions of knowledge production?
The syllabus will draw on the history of artificial intelligence in an attempt to ground the current hype cycle. We will, however, seek to address new issues as they inevitably emerge during the semester. We will spread our inquiry across culture and governance, as well as the public and private sectors. Above all, what new research methods are available to those who want to critically study these emerging forces?

Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

Students are expected to attend each class session prepared to engage with the course material. This includes completing the assigned readings and reflecting on their relevance to contemporary issues. During the course, we will engage in the following topics and activities:

- Course Intro: Epistemological Questions Raised by GenAI
- Societal Responses to GenAI: Cultural Production
- Societal Responses to GenAI: Economics and Cognitive Labor - Case study presentations and discussion
- Societal Responses to GenAI: Regulation and Political Change - Case study presentations and discussion
- Closing plenary: Black boxing the Self

Contextual Studies are considered part of **Contact Learning**; thus, taking part properly implies **regular attendance**. It is the students' own responsibility to ensure that there is **no timetable clash** between the courses they have chosen. A detailed course outline and all relevant documents will be made available on **StudyNet**. Only the current timetable as published on **Courses** does apply.

Course literature

Amoore, Louise, et al. "A world model: On the political logics of generative AI." Political Geography 113 (2024): 103134.

Bender, Emily et al "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big?" FAccT '21: Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency, March 2021, https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3442188.3445922.

Galison, Peter. "The ontology of the enemy: Norbert Wiener and the cybernetic vision." Critical inquiry 21.1 (1994): 228-266.

Griffiths, Dai, et al. "A Cybernetic Perspective on Generative AI in Education: From Transmission to Coordination." International Journal of Interactive Multimedia & Artificial Intelligence 8.5 (2024).

Hito Steyerl, "Mean Images," New Left Review 140 (2023) https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii140/articles/hito-steyerl-mean-images

The Bletchley Declaration https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-safety-summit-2023-the-bletchley-declaration/the-bletchley-declaration-by-countries-attending-the-ai-safety-summit-1-2-november-2023.

Additional course information

Robert Rapoport received his Ph.D. from the University of Oxford in 2016, which brought visual anthropology into dialogue with procedural approaches to video editing. Since 2017, he has lectured at Leuphana in the Digital Media BA, developing a curriculum to teach theory alongside critical media production. His work focuses on the confluence of image sequencing and automation.

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	60%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark
--

Examination-aid rule
Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids
--

---

2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Presentation
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Group work group grade
Weighting	40%
Duration	--

Examination languages
Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark
--

Examination-aid rule
Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids
--

Examination content
1. **Written Work** (Research Paper, individual grade, 60%)
   Word Count: 12,000-14,000 characters (including spaces, excluding Table of Contents and References)
   Your research paper can focus on either the topic of your oral presentation or another relevant issue within the seminar. You should include at least one case study, taken from the past 24 months (see below).
   The paper should demonstrate a cross-disciplinary approach, drawing on multiple fields of study and show a strong understanding of the main concepts covered in the course. Ultimately, the paper should stem from a desire to share your ideas and engage in a dialogue with your broader peer group.
2. **Presentation** (group grade, 40%)
   The group presentation is a critical response to a current case study that aligns with the themes of the course.
   Students will provide a thematic overview of an argument from one of the course texts, engaging it in dialogue with

an independently chosen case study. You are not responsible for providing a comprehensive summary of the course text; rather, your task is to highlight its analytical power in relation to a current event.

Examination relevant literature

See course literature.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers' websites and information in lectures etc.
Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW21) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 13 (Monday, 25 March 2025) are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:

- Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 04 (Thursday, 23 January 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 17 March 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 14 (Monday, 31 March 2025);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 15 (Monday, 07 April 2025).

</div>