AI in Political Science

Department of Political Science – University of Florida

Time: T - Periods 5-6 (11:45 AM - 1:40 PM)
R - Period 6 (12:50 PM - 1:40 PM)
Room: TUR 2303

Prof. Badredine Arfi
Office: 221 Anderson Hall
Office Hours:
　　　T: 8:30 – 10:30 am.
　　　R: 2:30 – 4:00 pm
　　　Or: by appointment thru email

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COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

The course is designed as a broad introduction to contemporary issues, actors, theories, and scholarly debates in the study of AI in politics. The course introduces foundational assumptions, methods, and scope of AI in politics as defined by a variety of perspectives and approaches. In doing so the course guides the students to core concepts necessary for understanding how AI is playing an increasingly important role in the world in general, and politics more specifically.

The course will:

- Analyze the impact of AI on knowledge production and dissemination.

- Evaluate the ethical implications of AI in political decision-making.

- Investigate the role of AI in shaping political discourse and public opinion.

- Explore the epistemological challenges posed by AI-generated knowledge to understanding politics.

- Develop critical thinking and research skills in the context of AI and politics.

To achieve these goals, the course endeavors to provide instruction on key themes, principles, terminology, and underlying theory or methodologies used in the study of AI in politics. Students will learn to identify, describe, and explain institutions, structures, and processes that shape the role of AI in politics.

The course is structured into lectures, discussions, and small group work. The course takes a thematic approach to the various issues that define and shape the role of AI in politics. At the same time the thematic approach is seasoned with a reasonable amount of conceptual/theoretical discussion to anchor our understanding of AI in politics both on solid empirical and theoretical grounds.

At the end of the semester the students will have acquired enough knowledge (both empirical and theoretical) to be able to form their own critical and knowledgeable views on many important issues stemming from the role of AI in politics. This means that students will be able to identify, describe, and explain the historical, cultural, economic, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize AI in contemporary world politics.

In summary: By the end of the semester students will be able to skillfully engage the topic of AI in politics in terms of the following student learning objectives:

1. **Content**: Demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies, and theories used in the study of AI in politics.

2. **Critical thinking**: Carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the role of AI in politics.

3. **Communication**: Clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written and oral forms appropriate to knowledge of the role of AI in politics.

COURSE READINGS

All required readings are available on the canvas site for the course in the file folder (organized as themes). There is a supplementary folder for other readings on canvas – it is highly recommended (but not required) that students read a few (hopefully all) of these readings in addition to the required ones to increase their knowledge of the issues and themes being discussed during the specific theme of a theme.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Cumulative Grades Will Be Based On:

1. **One in-class exam (mid-term)**: The exam will be administered in class during the Tuesday lecture time. More explanations will be provided on this assignment as we get closer to the exam date. Students will be required to write an essay about topics from the lectures and the required readings. Students are required to bring in with them to the exam an 8-page (or more pages) exam-book (can be purchased at the bookstores or online) to use for the exam. No other format will be accepted.

2. **Participation in one group assignment** and its presentation to the class.

3. **One research paper divided in three phases**, each submitted at a specific date during the semester (see down below for details)

4. **Class attendance**: Students are required to be present and prepared for every class session. Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at:

   https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx.

   Regular attendance will better ensure that you engage in and properly absorb readings and lecture material. Much of the test material will come from lectures and discussions not fully represented by posted lecture slides. If you miss a class meeting, you will still be responsible for all course content and logistical information covered during the class.

5. **Class participation**: Participation means that students take part, not as passive consumers of knowledge, but as active participants in the exchange, production, and critique of ideas (their own and others'). Students are required to come to class having read the materials assigned for that day and prepared to discuss them as well as contribute thoughtfully and critically to the conversation. This practically means asking questions, answering questions, making comments, and engaging in general discussions in every session.

Because long-term learning and personal development depend primarily on one's active engagement in each class, our meetings will often take the form of group discussions of the themes listed in this syllabus and corresponding required readings, as well as broader issues relating to them. Not only is it therefore essential that you complete assignments promptly and thoughtfully, it is also important that you come to class prepared to share coherent and articulate ideas, questions, or opinions.

6. **Research paper presentation** at the end of the semester.

SPECIFICS ON THE RESEARCH PAPER

For the instructor to provide timely and useful guidance on the research paper, students will be required to turn in through canvas various brief intermediate papers throughout the semester.

Each student must in:

1. **Phase I:** Define a research question that interests him/her and that applies an approach (broadly speaking) from the materials covered in this course. Submit the research question and a 3-page summary of the proposed research and expected results. **Date: Feb 15th**
2. **Phase II:** Submit a 6-page paper discussing the relevant literature to the research question (empirical as well as theoretical). **Date: March 22nd**
3. **Phase III:** The final paper should be about 10-12 pages long, including the bibliography. **Date: Last day of classes for the course.**

All papers are to be uploaded to canvas site for the course at their specific dates.

Details of the Research Paper: Goal: Analyzing the Impact of AI on Politics

A. What is expected to be delivered at the end of the semester?

A well-structured research paper presenting findings from relevant literature, a case study of ethical, political, social implications, and democratic governance analysis, etc. The paper should include a clear introduction, methodology, discussion, and conclusion section.

B. Objectives:

The objective of this research assignment is to critically examine the role and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the realm of politics. Students are expected to research how AI technologies are being utilized in various aspects of political processes, such as policymaking, electoral campaigns, public opinion analysis, governance, and inter-state relations such as cyber-security, trade, immigration, etc. Students are expected to assess important ethical, social, cultural, economic, and political implications of AI in shaping the future of contemporaries democratic and non-democratic societies.

C. The paper should consist of the following parts:

1. A thematically driven and organized reading of relevant literature:
Students must conduct an adequate thematically organized reading and critique of relevant literature on the applications of AI in politics by identifying important recent studies, seminal

papers, and case studies. Students are to analyze and categorize this literature into themes (such as policymaking, electoral campaigns, public opinion analysis, cyber-security, and other relevant ones).

2. An analysis one case study:
Students must select one real-world case study where AI has been used in a political context. The case study could include, but is not limited to, areas such as campaign strategies, policy prediction, social media influence, cyber-security, economic and financial trade, war, etc. Students are expected to analyze the impact of AI in the case, highlighting successes, challenges, and ethical considerations as well as technological challenges and limitations.

3. A consideration of ethical and social Implications of AI:
Students should explore the ethical considerations of employing AI in politics, including issues related to transparency, accountability, bias, privacy, etc. Students are expected to discuss the potential societal consequences of relying on AI technologies in political decision-making, and in political processes more generally.

4. A consideration of the role of AI in democratic/or otherwise governance:
Students are expected to investigate how AI is influencing democratic/or otherwise governance here and/or abroad, including its effects on citizen participation, representation, and leadership accountability, and thereby analyze the potential for AI to enhance or hinder democratic principles and practices.

5. A consideration of future trends and policy recommendations:
Students must identify important emerging trends in AI technologies that are likely to impact politics in the near future. Building on this analysis, students must provide policy recommendations for governments and/or other political entities to ensure responsible and effective use of AI in political contexts.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

1. **Midterm exam**: 12.5% of overall course grade

2. **Group work and its presentation**: 12.5% of overall course grade

3. **Three phases of the research paper**: 5% + 10% + 20% = 35 % of overall course grade.

4. **Attendance**: 10% – attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Coming to class late is counted as absence.

5. **Class participation**: 20%

6. **Research Paper Presentation at the end of the semester**: 10%

Your final cumulative score will be translated into a letter grade according to the following schedule: 93 points or higher = A; 90–92.9 = A-; 87–89.9 = B+; 83–86.9 = B; 80–82.9 = B-; 77–79.9 = C+; 73–76.9 = C; 70–72.9 = C-; 67–69.9 = D+; 63–66.9 = D; 60–62.9 = D-; <60 = E.

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points. This may be achieved by including a link to the web page:

https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

Note that the instructor reserves the right to change any part or aspect of this document should a need for doing so emerge at any point in time during the semester.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Midterm Exam	TBA
Paper – phase I	February 15th
Paper – phase II	March 22nd
Paper – phase III	Last Day of Class

Important Information on Assessment Procedures: Guidelines

Assessment Rubric for Class Participation

2	1	0
Excellent	Good	No credit
Thoughtful, insightful observation or question (on assigned reading) that demonstrates solid understanding of text in question and any relevant analytical tools used to interpret it.	Sound, valid observation or question (on assigned reading) that demonstrates some understanding of text in question and any relevant analytical tools used to interpret it. Thoughtful, insightful observation or question on impromptu topic brought up in the course of lecture or discussion	Vague or off-topic observation that has little-to-no relationship to course themes, issues, or analytical tools.

Assessment Rubric for Required-Work Analyses

		5	4	3	2	1	0
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unacceptable	No credit
Analysis	Has your discussion of the source demonstrated mastery of a variety of issues, themes, and analytical tools learned in the course?	Solid, at times insightful and original analysis, demonstrating consistent mastery	Some problems or gaps in analysis, but not significantly diminishing overall impression of mastery	Noticeable problems with quality and/or breadth of analysis	Serious problems with quality and/or breadth of analysis	Assignment submitted, but bereft of any redeeming analytical features	Assignment not submitted, or submitted late
Delivery	Have you constructed a clear, logical and convincing argument, using concrete evidence organized in a coherent manner within the allotted space limits?	Few if any problems. Impressive in spots or consistently.	Some problems, but not greatly inhibiting communication	Enough problems to make comprehension difficult at times	Serious problems that make comprehension extremely difficult, if not impossible	Assignment submitted, but bereft of any redeeming stylistic features	Assignment not submitted, or submitted late

Assessment Rubric for Presentations

		5	4	3	2	1	0
		Excellent	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**	**Unacceptable**	**No credit**
Analysis	Has your discussion of the source demonstrated mastery of a variety of issues, themes, and analytical tools learned in the course?	Solid, at times insightful and original analysis, demonstrating consistent mastery	Some problems or gaps in analysis, but not significantly diminishing overall impression of mastery	Noticeable problems with quality and/or breadth of analysis	Serious problems with quality and/or breadth of analysis	Presentation delivered, but bereft of any redeeming analytical features	Presentation not delivered.
Delivery	Have you constructed a clear, logical and convincing argument, using concrete evidence organized in a coherent manner within the allotted time frame?	Few if any problems. Impressive in spots or consistently	Some problems, but not greatly inhibiting communication	Enough problems to make comprehension difficult at times	Serious problems that make comprehension extremely difficult, if not impossible	Presentation delivered, but bereft of any redeeming stylistic features	Presentation not delivered.

Outline of the Course

Theme 1	Introduction to AI in Politics and the Study of Politics
Theme 2	AI - Data and Analysis in Political Science
Theme 3	AI - Democracy and Political Participation
Theme 4	AI – Deployment in Policy Formation, Recommendation, Implementation
Theme 5	AI – Algorithmic Bias and Fairness
Theme 6	AI - Cybersecurity and Politics
Theme 7	AI - Ethics, Privacy, and Transparency
Theme 8	AI - World Politics
Theme 9	Case Studies

Themes for "Practical" Cases and Class Presentations

A. Analyzing AI-powered political news aggregation platforms.

B. Analyzing the role of AI in shaping political discourse on social media.

C. Identifying and addressing biases in AI-generated policy recommendations.

D. Debating ethical considerations in the use of AI in political decision-making.

E. Conducting a survey on public perceptions of AI in politics.

F. Speculating on the potential epistemological shifts induced by advanced AI technologies.

G. Others …

IMPORTANT NOTES

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/ Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/ Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public- results/

Students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 StudentHonor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Campus Resources: Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.
- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.uf for screening / testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.
On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.