

Call for Papers

AI and Ideologies: Navigating between Digital Capitalism and Illiberal theories

Over the past decade, scholarship on digital authoritarianism has rapidly expanded, highlighting how governments and political actors increasingly appropriate digital technologies to surveil, discipline, and mobilize populations. While much of this work has focused on state-driven practices of control, censorship, and surveillance, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI)—and more recently, generative AI systems—has introduced us to a new terrain on which ideological struggles play out.

Beyond the familiar logics of repression and manipulation, AI is being instrumentalized by political actors, intellectual entrepreneurs, and transnational networks—ranging from high-profile figures like Elon Musk to reactionary think tanks and ideological movements such as Catholic integralists—who seek to frame, deploy, and reorient AI in line with illiberal worldviews. The accelerating convergence between AI technologies and illiberal thought traditions demands urgent scholarly attention.

Building on the special issue “**Technological Illiberalism**” edited by Jasmin Dall’Agnola and published in the *Journal of Illiberalism Studies*, this call aims to explore the relationship between AI and ideology, asking whether and how AI systems embody, amplify, or resist particular ideological orientations. This includes interrogating the biases and preferences embedded in the communities that design AI—often shaped by techno-libertarian, accelerationist, or even reactionary subcultures as well as exploring the extent to which AI may itself be mobilized as a tool for illiberal political projects.

This call for papers seeks to foster dialog across different fields of study, including science and technology studies and ideology studies. A series of workshops will be organized in Europe and the United States to encourage collective and transnational reflection. The outcomes of these discussions will be published in the *Journal of Illiberalism Studies*.

Research Questions

In order to stimulate a productive interdisciplinary dialog, this call seeks to engage with a set of key questions.

Sociology and ideological mapping of tech environments

- To what extent are tech elites, digital capitalism and venture entrepreneurs permeable to illiberal, authoritarian, or even fascist currents?
- How do intellectual traditions such as national or revolutionary conservatism, libertarianism or the “TESCREAL bundle” (Transhumanism, Extropianism, Singularitarianism, Comism, Rationalism, Effective Altruism, longtermism) intersect with AI development?
- How can we better understand the ideological orientations of tech communities through sociological approaches, mapping their cultural backgrounds and networks of influence, and normative assumptions?

AI systems as ideologically-embedded artifacts

- Can generative AI systems be ideologically oriented, and if so, how?
- To what degree does the “black box” problem of large language models obscure their potential ideological biases, whether liberal, conservative, or reactionary?
- How should we interpret controversies surrounding the alleged biases of AI models, such as attacks on xAI’s Grok for being insufficiently aligned with MAGA politics?

AI in contemporary political theories

- How are AI technologies integrated into contemporary political theory, normative philosophy, and ideological projects within the New Right
- In what ways might illiberal actors envision AI as a substitute for traditional checks and balances, both formal and informal (such as the judiciary, the media, public debate) by leveraging algorithmic nudges to direct populations toward an “illiberal common good?”
- Can we identify a shift toward AI-enabled ideological engineering, whereby generative models are deployed to propagate, naturalize, or legitimize illiberal discourses?

Submission Guidelines

Paper proposals (max. 500 words, including title and short bibliography) should be submitted via email to illibstudies@gwu.edu no later than **October 31, 2025**. Notifications of acceptance will be communicated to authors by **December 1, 2025**. Proposals should clearly outline the research question, methodology, and expected contribution to the themes of the workshop. Submissions must include the author’s name, institutional affiliation, and contact information.