



# How to engage in critical and productive conversation about AI: Tips for teaching, scholarship, service and beyond

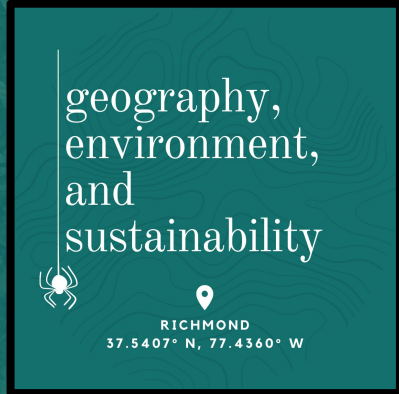
Mary Finley-Brook

Department of Geography, Environment and Sustainability

University of Richmond

[mbrook@richmond.edu](mailto:mbrook@richmond.edu)

June 19, 2026



# Infrastructure Acknowledgement

...In our fossil-fuel driven and energy-intensive consumer economy, we are all participating in different kinds of invisible destruction, toxicity, and harm to frontline communities affected by the uneven effects of pollution, climate change, and resource extraction. Using a company like Zoom and the many other built-in technologies that many of us take for granted are part of these invisible forms of "slow violence" ... **We acknowledge this and we are actively working to find ways to connect that do not contribute to inequality or climate harm.**

(Amy Woodson-Boulton, November 2025)

November 25, 2025

**Resisting GenAI & Big Tech  
in Higher Education**

Sign up here 

8 a.m. PST | 11 a.m. EST | 4 p.m. GMT | 5 p.m. CET  
Virtual on Zoom / Duration 90 min.



Generative AI is permeating higher education in many different ways—it is all around us and increasingly embedded in university work and life, even if we don't want to use it. What can we do? How do we resist? Join an interactive discussion with international scholars and activists on resisting GenAI and big tech, including:

**Christoph Becker**, University of Toronto, Canada / **Mary Finley-Brook**, University of Richmond, USA / **Dan McQuillan**, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK / **Sinéad Sheehan**, University of Galway, Ireland / **Jennie Stephens**, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Ireland / **Paul Lachapelle**, Montana State University, USA.

Co-sponsored by:



# Infrastructure Acknowledgement

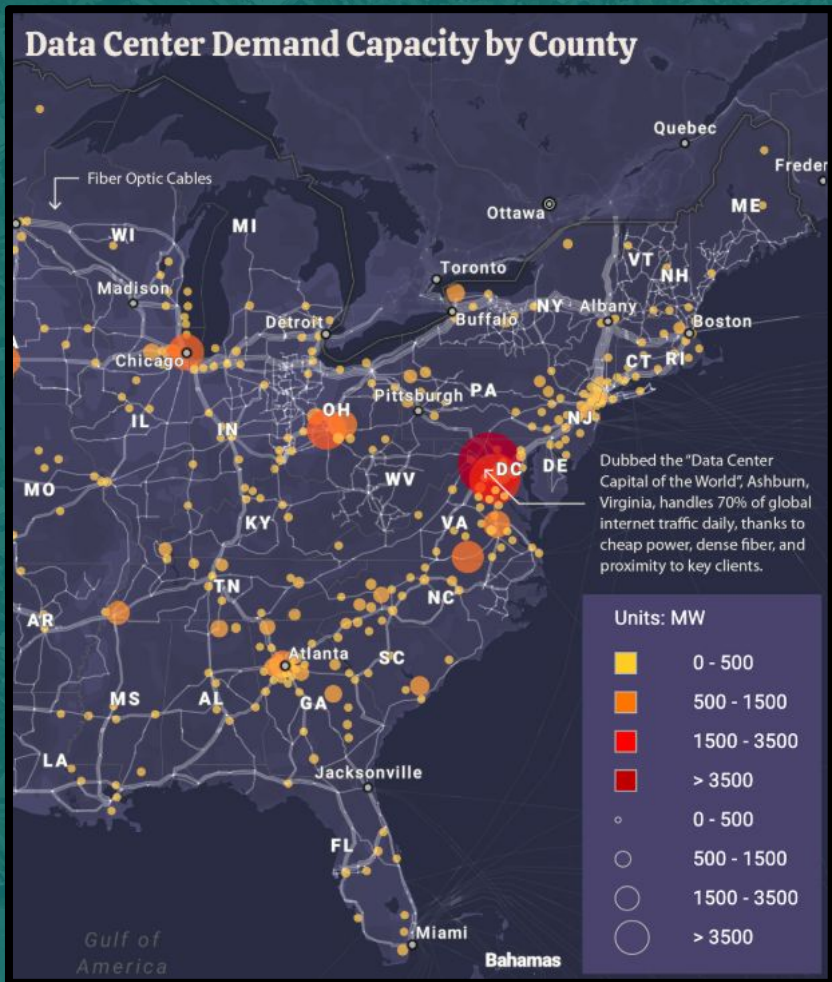
## Questions:

1. Can you name all the components of your energy and technology infrastructure in their full life cycle?
2. Who are the people and where are the places that have made your virtual computing possible?

Thanks to Christoph Becker, U of Toronto, [SavetheAI](#)

# Engaging AI Flash Talk

1. Theory, Positionality and Methods
2. Research
3. Teaching
4. Service and Beyond
5. Discussion




“VA will put a data center up your ass if you ain’t looking” 🤔




### DATA CENTER LISTENING TOUR

Your future. Your community. Your voice.  
The data center debate is shaping Virginia's budget.  
Come be part of the conversation.



**SEN. L. LOUISE LUCAS**  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE  
SENATE FINANCE CHAIR




**SEN. MIKE JONES**  
STATE SENATOR  
DISTRICT 15: CHESTERFIELD & RICHMOND

Joined by Virginia State Senators and Special Guests

**Tuesday, June 16, 2026**  
**6:00 P.M.-8:00 P.M.**  
**Manchester Middle School**  
7401 Hull Street Rd, N Chesterfield, VA

SCAN TO REGISTER



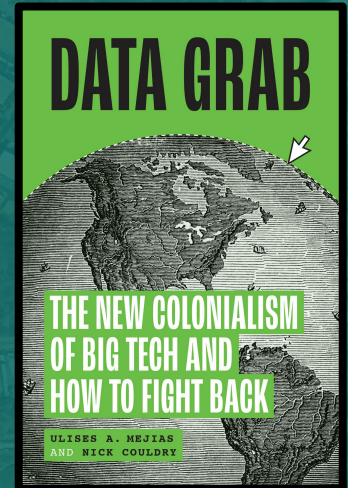
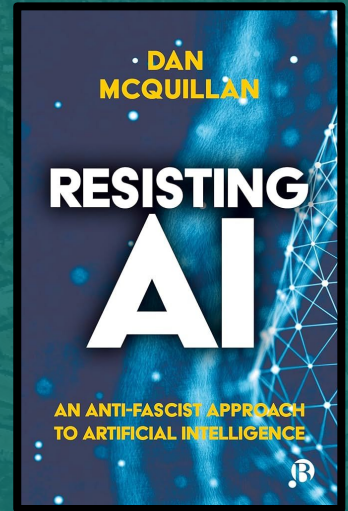
**FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** #POWERTOTHEPEOPLE



NO MORE DATA CENTERS

# Theoretical Underpinnings

- ‘Media quiteracy’ is an act of collective action and social transformation in a heavily mediatized and commercialized information environment (Good and Ciccone 2025)
- Data eco-feminism (Valdivia 2025)
- Anti-fascist approach to AI (McQuillan 2022)
- New colonialism of Big Tech (Mejias and Couldry 2024)
- Empire of AI (Hao 2025)





# Unpacking Google's Tactics

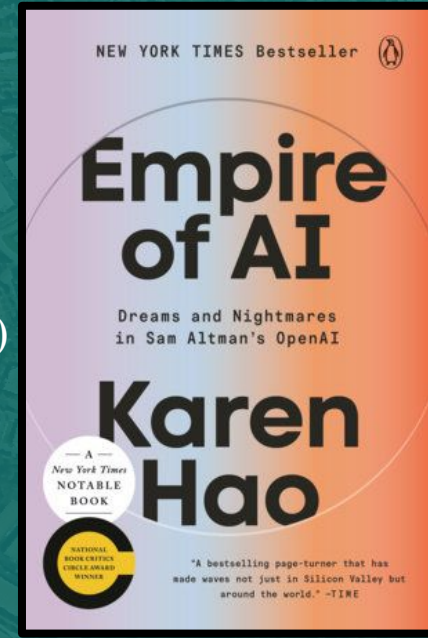
1. Eco-failures (Kairos Fellows 2025; Hao 2025, Ch 12)
2. Patterns of secrecy and deception (e.g., cases from Virginia, Chile, etc.)

## Google's Eco-failures

An Environmental Investigation into Alphabet Inc. 2025

Kairos is an organization that is building a multiracial movement to hold the tech industry and its executives accountable. As we have witnessed Big Tech's accelerating impact on the climate, we have escalated our campaigns to hold the industry responsible for its actions. We started digging into Google's environmental record months before the company released its 2025 report, so that we could examine its trends in behavior and transparency over time. Sure enough, the company's newest report is more of the same: Google's emissions are increasing at alarming rates, its energy and water use soaring, and the company's spokespeople are doing everything they can to put a positive spin on a dire situation.

Feel free to reach out to us with any questions or ideas:  
[campaigns@kairosfellows.org](mailto:campaigns@kairosfellows.org).



# Chesterfield Gov & Google - 7 yrs behind closed doors



Until Wednesday's announcement, Google's ownership of the three properties had been shielded from the public under a nondisclosure agreement with the Chesterfield Economic Development Authority.

"After seven years of working behind the scenes, we're thrilled to say Google – that's right, Google – has chosen to invest right here in Chesterfield," said Board of Supervisors Chair Jim Ingle (Bermuda District) in remarks during the event at Brightpoint Community College.

## TELL CHESTERFIELD COUNTY, VA:

# NO SECRET DATA CENTER DEALS

There are 100+ data centers built or proposed in the Richmond area. Chesterfield is moving forward with new data centers without meaningfully notifying their community.



You deserve a say in the future of your home. **Sign now.**



<https://tinyurl.com/mswrpf28>

[Petition](#)



## Dominion, Chesterfield County weigh 'site suitability' for natural gas plant proposal

Utility says grid reliability is needed. Community has concerns over air pollution.

BY CHARLIE PAULLIN - JULY 9, 2024 5:47 AM



Attendees at a rally against Dominion's proposed natural gas plant. (Charlie Paullin/Virginia Mercury)

Dominion: 8 new mega-gas plants by 2033, despite Virginia Clean Economy Act (NGI)

# Positionality and Methodology

## Positionality

- Embedded in complicit and complacent state and private institutions
- Embedded in community-based opposition / alternative visioning movements

## Methodology

- Ethnographic participant-observation
- Primary and secondary sources - quantitative and qualitative
- “Infrastructure Acknowledgment” as a teachable moment/instructional tool

The background of the slide is a grayscale aerial satellite map of a city, showing a dense network of streets, buildings, and green spaces. A semi-transparent teal color is overlaid on the entire map, creating a monochromatic effect. The word "Scholarship" is centered in the middle of the map in a white, serif font.

# Scholarship

Google

# Research team investigating implications of AI on Earth

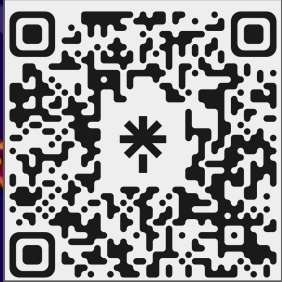


**eAirth** is a team of U. of Richmond faculty, staff, students, alums, community members, and independent researchers

**eAirth** aims to document, analyze and communicate the impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on Earth

## Pilot Research Projects

- 1) 'Infrastructure Acknowledgement'
- 2) Richmond-area data centers



# Data Center Defiance

Research Working Group





This article is more than 6 years old

## Tech firms make millions from Trump's anti-immigrant agenda, report finds

Amazon, Palantir and Microsoft provide tools that aid surveillance, detention and deportation, according to report

Google, Amazon, and Microsoft have taken advantage of a commonly used but little-known tool to quietly enter dozens of contracts with ICE and CBP

## 'Who's behind ICE?' Forum explains how tech companies profit from ICE operations

Employees of Microsoft's GitHub demand company cancel its contract with ICE

### DeFlock Maps

Crowdsourced ALPR surveillance map. Data from DeFlock & OSM contributors.

**.75,685**  
CAMERAS IN VIEW

BRANDS IN VIEW 65 brands

Flock Safety 63,227

Motorola Solutions 2,871

Genetec 2,009

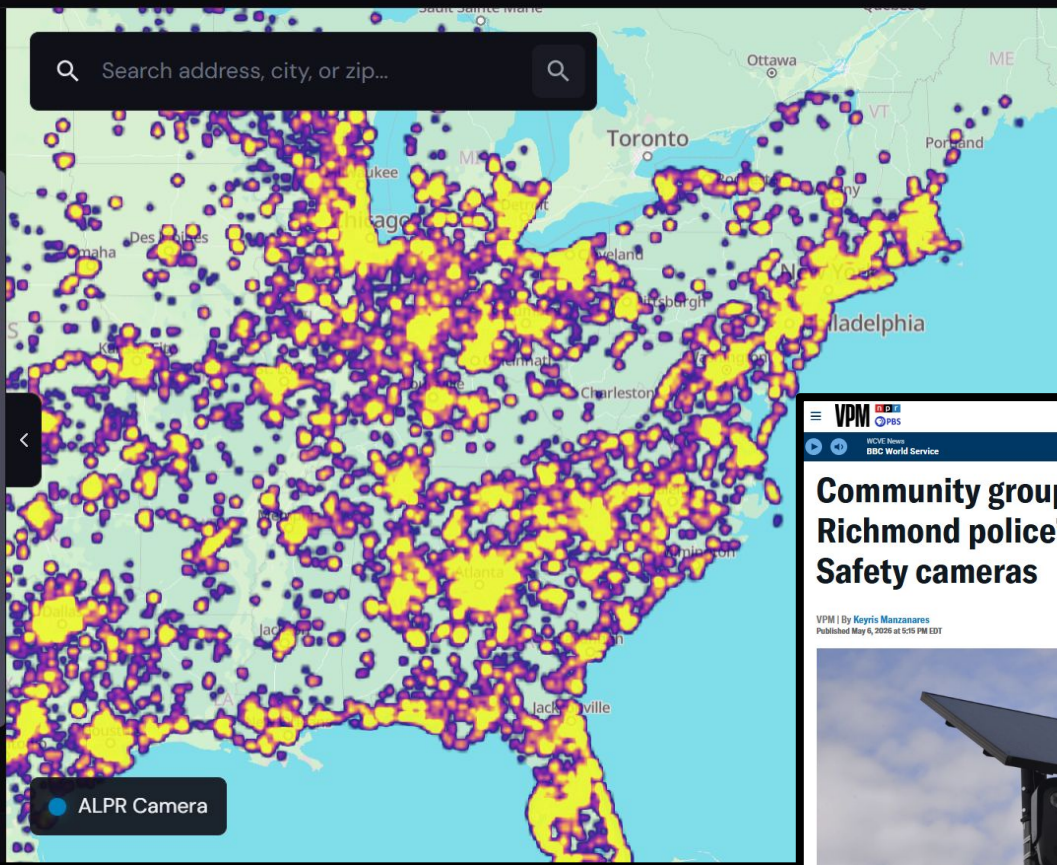
Other 3,589

Unknown 3,989

Layers

Filters

Maps by OpenRoad Labs LLC



VPM | WVCF News | BBC World Service

## Community groups question Richmond police's use of Flock Safety cameras

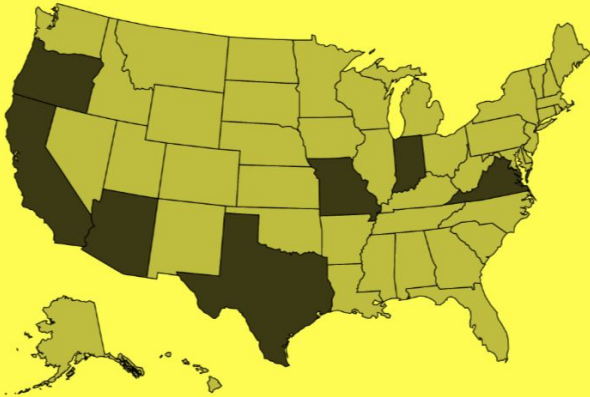
VPM | By Keyris Manzanaras  
Published May 6, 2026 at 5:55 PM EDT

Billy Shields / VPM News

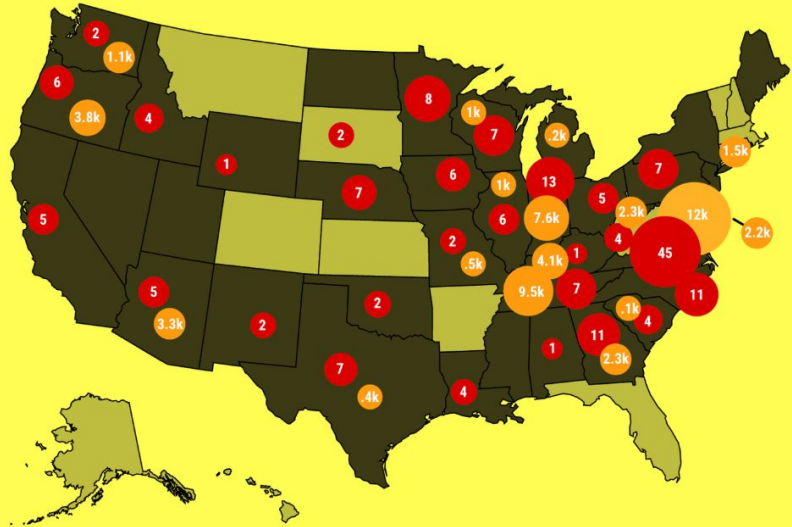
A Flock Safety automated license plate reader is photographed on Monday, March 30, 2026, in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

**\$64 billion of data center projects have been blocked or delayed amid local opposition**

# Data Center Watch



## 125% Surge in Data Center Opposition



<https://www.datacenterwatch>

Number of petition signatures, 000'

Number of activist groups


States with large data center projects (50MW+) in the pipeline

# Halt the Harm - Stop Bad Data Centers

## Gateways for Community Intervention

1. Site Selection & Land Acquisition
2. Power & Utility Interconnection
3. Water Rights & Environmental Permits
4. Tax Incentive Negotiations
5. Financial Structuring & Credit Approvals
6. Construction & Operational Permits

## Policy Tracker



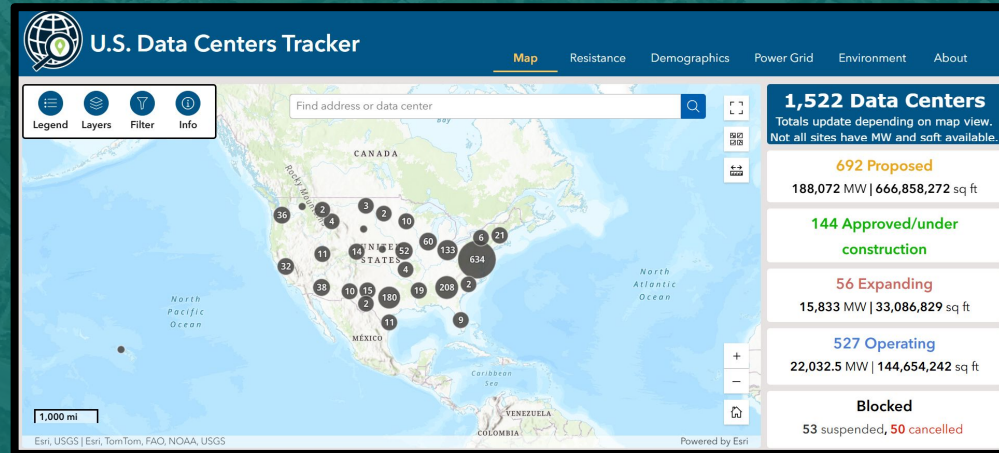
### Stop Bad Data Centers

Exposing AI Data Center Threats and Harms

About Events Gateways ▾

## Policy Tracker

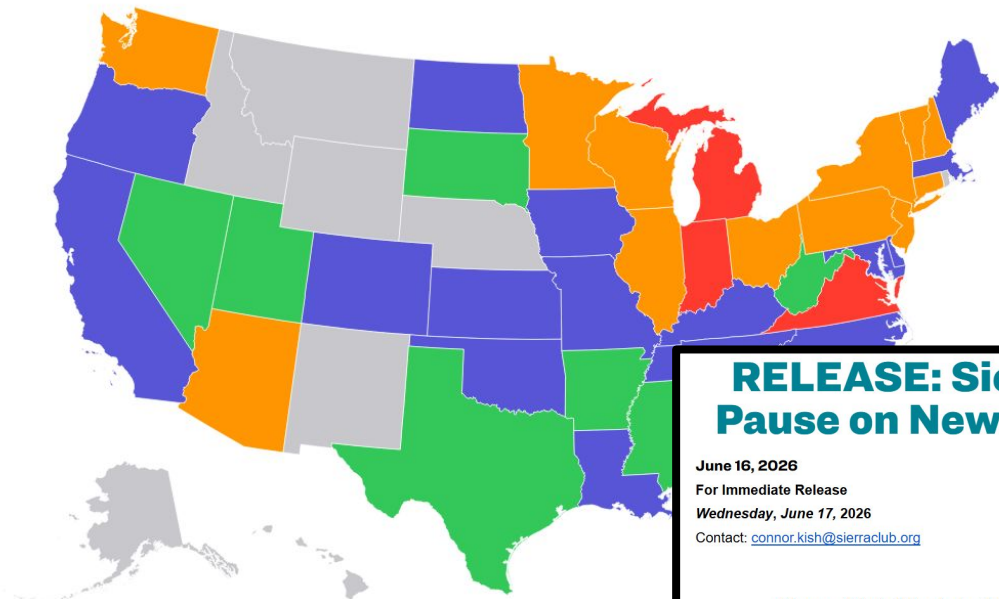
Keeping track of current legislation affecting data center development. [Please log in to comment](#) on specific posts. [Join the network](#) to participate in meetups and in-depth discussion on data center issues.



# Data Center Moratoriums

Tracking state-level data center legislation across the United States

Last updated about 23 hours ago



■ Active Bans / Moratoriums (4) ■ Legislation Advancing (13) ■ Under Discussion (16)

17 of 50 states restricting or considering restrictions

8 states with incentives



## RELEASE: Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Calls for a Pause on New Data Center Development in Virginia

June 16, 2026

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

Contact: [connor.kish@sierraclub.org](mailto:connor.kish@sierraclub.org)

### Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Calls for a Pause on New Data Center Development in Virginia

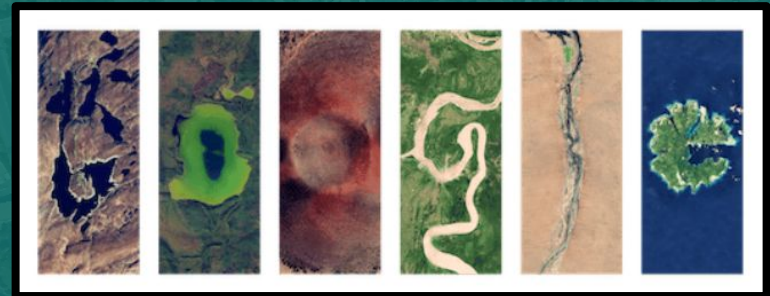
~ Inaction, study punt tactic, and pay-to-pollute charade by the legislature on critical issue of our time must be met with a temporary pause ~

# Deception

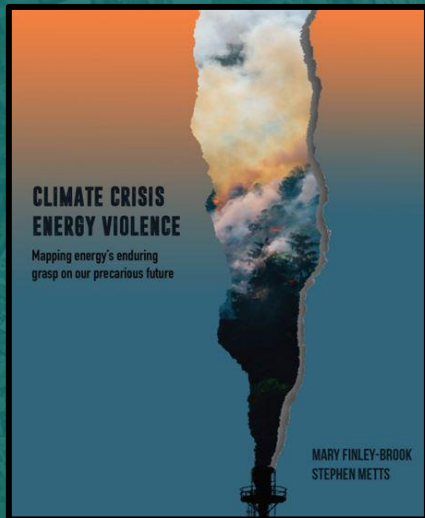
Tech industry announces token funding for human rights organizations when their global actions promote authoritarianism, surveillance and militarism.

# Deception

Tech industry publicizes ethics statements when their practices are widely criticized for advancing discrimination, disinformation and exploitation.



Deception	Descriptions
green by association	baseless virtue signaling
lack of definition	incomplete; vagueness
'smoke and mirrors'	misleading; exaggerating
bait and switch	distracts by drawing attention to the good while ignoring or hiding the bad
not cradle-to-grave	lacking Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)
hidden tradeoffs	impact paradox - negatives occur along with improvements
rally behind a low standard	race to the bottom; cheap, not holistic
rally behind a slightly improved standard	making huge claims while only being incrementally better
lesser of two evils	justifying a bad choice by comparing with a worse option
worshipping false labels	taking complex concepts and oversimplifying them while elevating to a fetish
reluctant enthusiast	will support renewable energy when profitable, but keep all energy sources' on the table
minimizing harm	using the minimal standards that exist in law as proxies
green product from a dirty company	a majority of operations pollute heavily, but one or more cleaner alternative is marketed
smokescreen	irrelevant or misleading claims
inflation of scores on scorecards	overly positive grading schematics for social or ecological scorecards



15 forms of  
green  
deception  
(or greenwash)

**Green by association**  
store data “in the cloud”

**Bait and switch**  
“water positive”

**Smokescreen**  
“zero carbon”

**Rally behind a low  
standard**  
“wetland offsets”

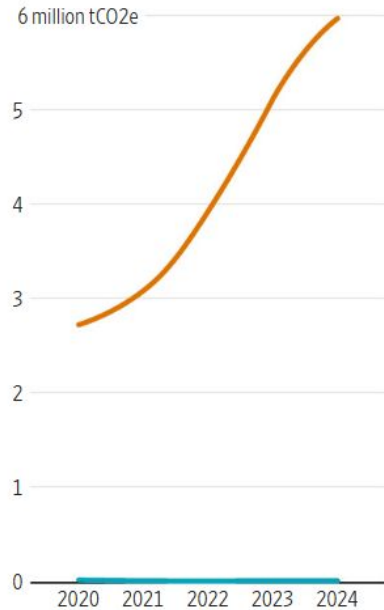
## Rising Emissions

Companies carbon footprints vary widely depending on how you measure it.

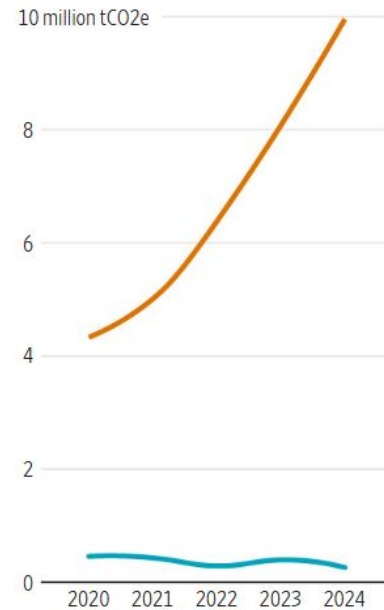
— Market-based carbon footprint which adjusts for clean power investments

— Location-based carbon footprint based on local grid mix

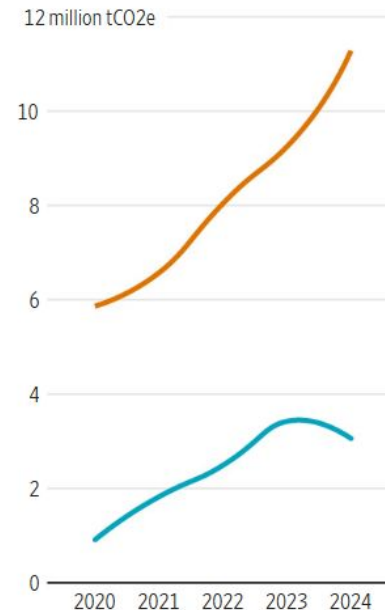
### Meta



### Microsoft



### Google



Source: Company Sustainability reports

hypocrisy  
bothsidesism  
greenwashing

## Microsoft Secretly Selling AI to Fossil Fuel Companies While Bragging About Environmental Progress

All while claiming the company will be "carbon negative" by 2030.

By **Noor Al-Sibai** / Published Sep 14, 2024 9:00 AM EDT

TECHNOLOGY

### Microsoft's Hypocrisy on AI

Can artificial intelligence really enrich fossil-fuel companies and fight climate change at the same time? The tech giant says yes.

By Karen Hao

## Greenwashing and bothsidesism in AI chatbot answers about fossil fuels' role in climate change

Published: 22 January 2025

SHARE    

**JPT** JOURNAL OF  
PETROLEUM  
TECHNOLOGY

DATA & ANALYTICS


## Big Tech Helps Big Oil Pump More, Belying Climate Pledges

Among other things, Microsoft is making it possible for Exxon to analyze reams of oilfield data. Amazon is helping drillers run simulations to maximize how much oil they can pump from existing wells.

August 19, 2022 By Bloomberg  
Data Science and Digital Engineering



 [Investigation](#)

 [Digital Threats to Democracy](#)

Generative AI chatbots fail to adequately reflect fossil fuel companies' complicity in the climate crisis, a Global Witness investigation has found

ENERGYWIRE 

## AI turbocharges US hunt for minerals, fossil fuels

By **IAN M. STEVENSON, HANNAH NORTHEY** | 06/05/2025 06:54 AM EDT

Federal agencies and oil companies are using artificial intelligence to map mineral deposits and assess drilling and mining opportunities.

## America's Data-Center Build-Out Is Falling Way Behind Schedule

Google, which is raising a fresh \$85 billion, has a strategy for getting around the biggest bottleneck

By [Katherine Blunt](#) [Follow](#)

Updated June 3, 2026 1:25 pm ET

[Share](#) [Aa](#) [Comments](#) 690 [Listen](#) (2 min) [More](#)



## Bypassing the Grid: How Data Center Developers Are Building Their Own Power Plants

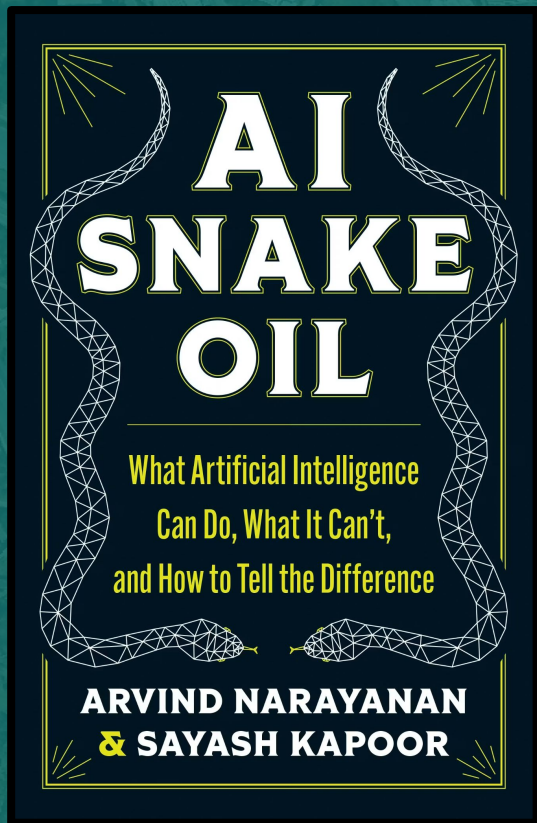


Satellite image of Meta's Socrates South power plant in New Albany, OH. Captured April 7, 2026. © Airbus DS (2026)



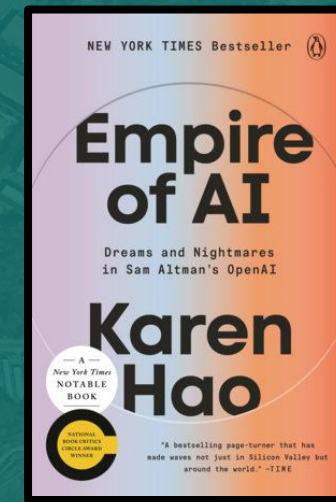
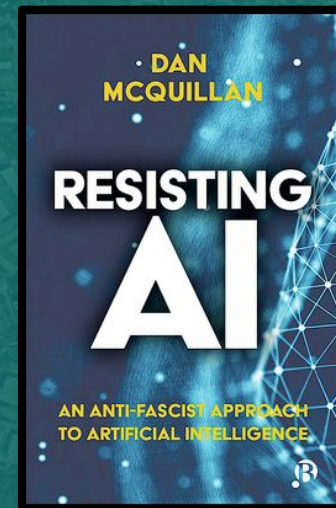
# Teaching

Google



## Artificial “Intelligence”

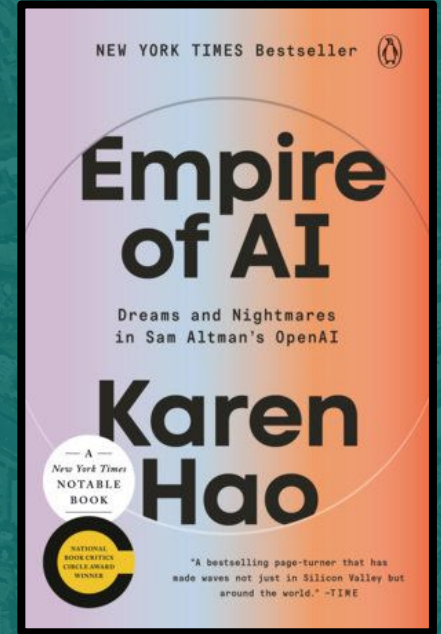
7	Why Do Myths about AI Persist?	227
	<i>AI Hype Is Different from Previous Technology Hype</i>	231
	<i>The AI Community Has a Culture and History of Hype</i>	235
	<i>Companies Have Few Incentives for Transparency</i>	239
	<i>The Reproducibility Crisis in AI Research</i>	241
	<i>News Media Misleads the Public</i>	247
	<i>Public Figures Spread AI Hype</i>	251
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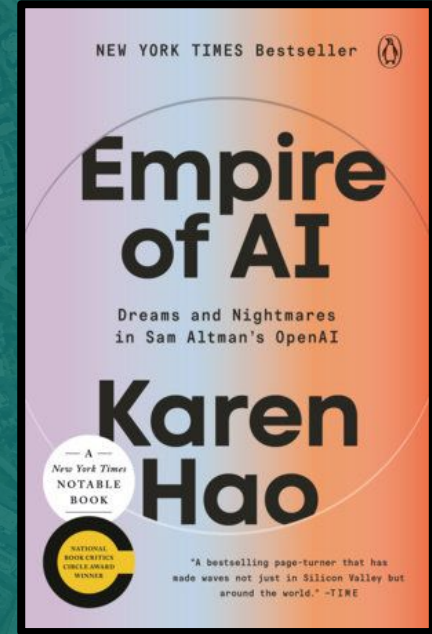
## Timnit Gebru on AI Bias, Google Firing & The Dark Side of ...

YouTube · Algorithmic Justice League · Mar 18, 2025

YouTube



## Science in Captivity Chapter 7



# Google in Chile and Uruguay

## Chapter 12 - Plundered Earth

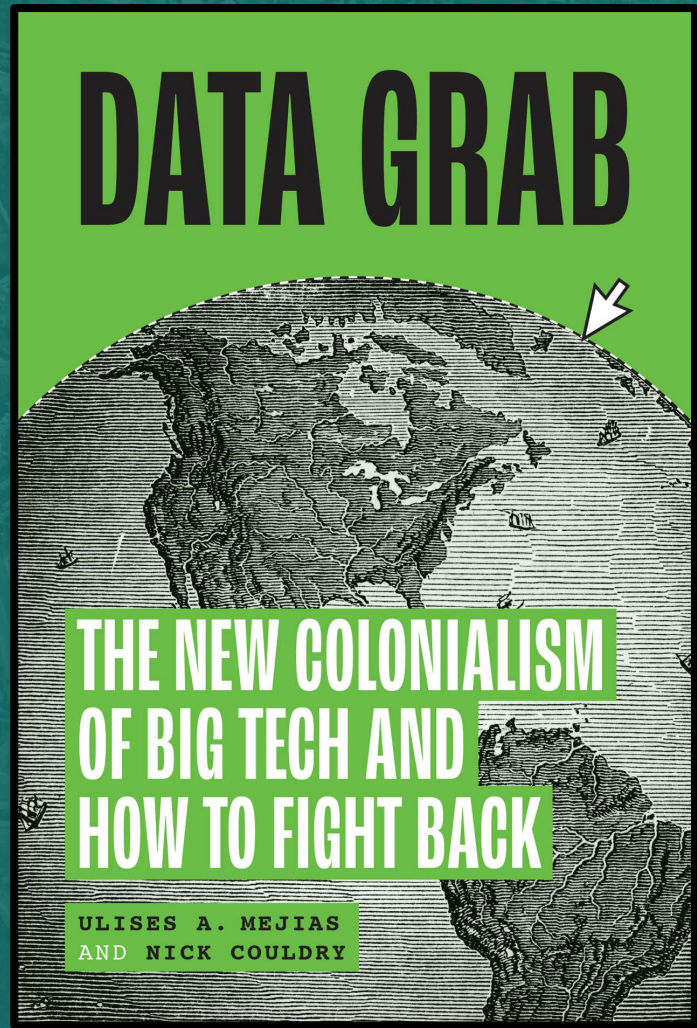
**Social Quantification Sector** describes the segment of the digital economy that appropriates human life, actions, and social relationships as raw data for capital. Driven by corporate profit and by data brokers, it turns everyday experiences into metrics used to predict human behavior and thus exert social control.

## From Landgrab to Data Grab

Data Territories

Data Harvesting

Platformization



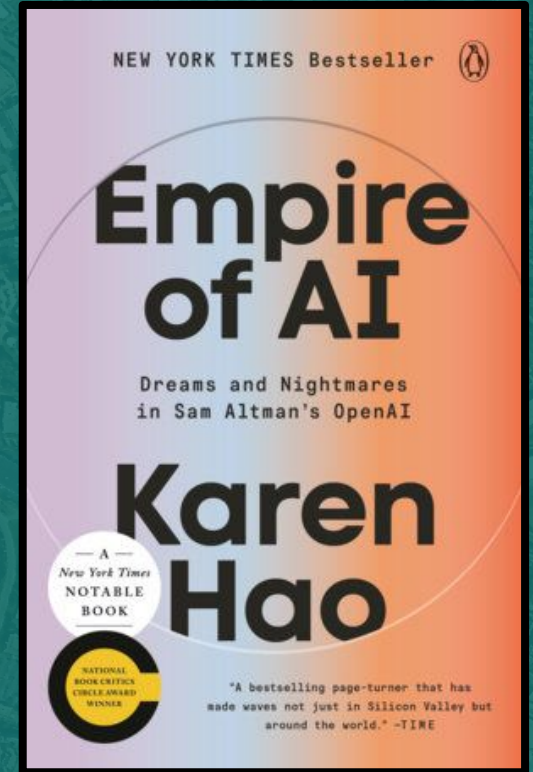
“  
"The empire's devaluing of the human labor that serves it is also just a canary: It foretells how the technologies produced atop this logic will devalue the labor of everyone else."

Karen Hao, "Empire of AI," p. 223

Compare labor exploitation and silencing across the workforce from Kenya to Silicon Valley




- **Ghost workers**
- **Gag orders**
- **Clawback clause** where employees lose vested equity if they don't sign a lifelong **nondisparagement commitment**
- **Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs)**



**Disaster Capitalism  
Chapter 9**

# Chapter 18 - A Formula for Empire (8 pages)

# Epilogue - How the Empire Falls (12 pages)

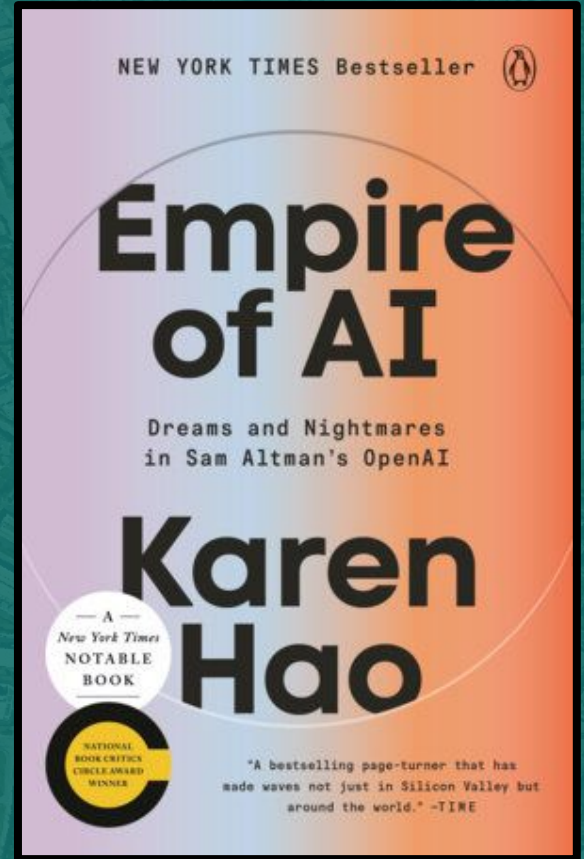
	When May 26th, 2026 6:30 PM to June 30th, 2026 8:00 PM
	Location Virtual via Zoom

VAIPL Book Club: Empire of AI Tuesday evenings for 6 weeks



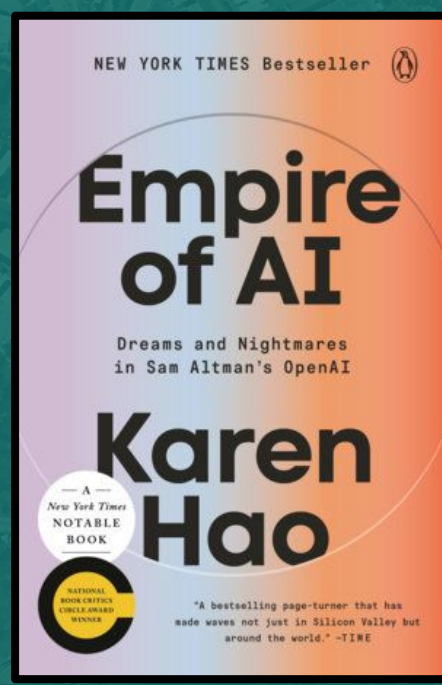
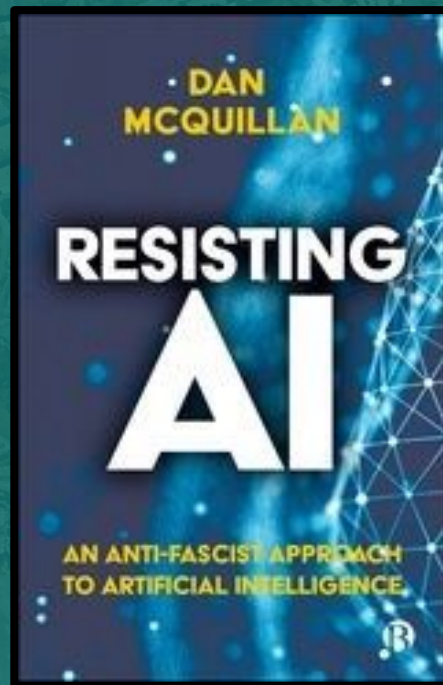
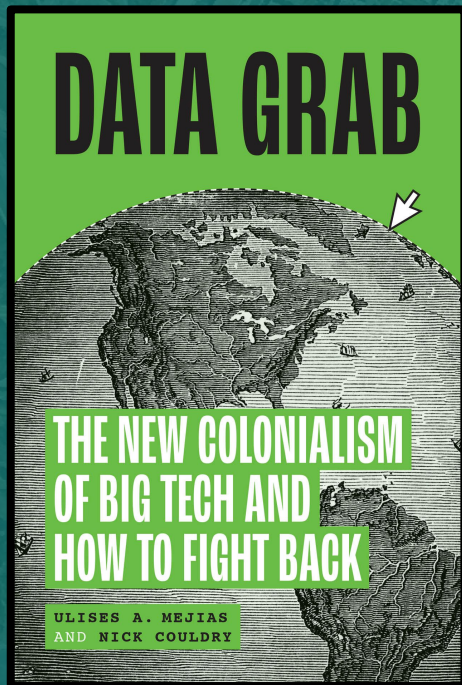
[Schedule](#)

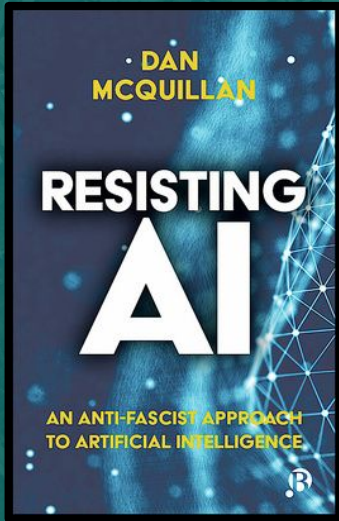
[Supplemental Readings](#)



# July Book Club - 90 min, once per week starting week of 7/6

Please take a [poll](#) to pick the book and day/time, if interested.





## Digital Degrowth

- Define what really matters and work toward it collectively
- Be clear about what we are opposition to AND what we are creating
- Appropriate technology can be transformative though connections across space

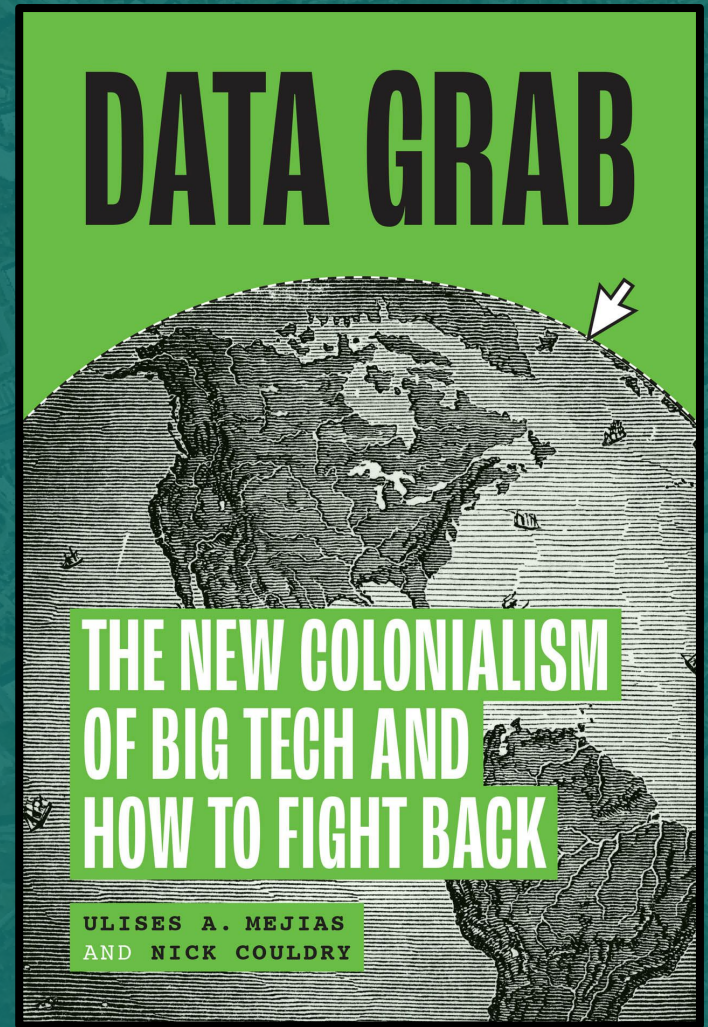
# Playbook for Resistance

## Chapter 6

**Play #1: Working within the System, p. 222-228**

**Play #2: Working against the System, p. 228-235**

**Play #3: Working beyond the System, p. 236-240**



*Media quiteracy:  
Why digital disconnection belongs in the media literacy curriculum*

Katie Day Good

Calvin University, USA

Michelle Ciccone

University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA



Peer-reviewed article

**Citation:** Good, K. D., & Ciccone, M. (2025). Media quiteracy: Why digital disconnection belongs in the media literacy curriculum. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 17(1), 150-165. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2025-17-1-10>

**Corresponding Author:**  
Katie Day Good  
[katie.good@calvin.edu](mailto:katie.good@calvin.edu)

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**ABSTRACT**

In this essay, we introduce *media quiteracy*, which we use to conceptualize and describe the valuable learning that can happen through the refusal to take up new media or the act of pausing or ceasing its use. We see media quiteracy as an active and generative approach to learning and argue for its inclusion in the media literacy curriculum. We trace the history of critical engagement with technologies within education and then articulate what media quiteracy can look like in practice. We surface and discuss three potential obstacles to teaching media quiteracy, which include the ways in which it problematizes assumptions around participation, progress, and efforts to limit tech use. Ultimately, we argue that media quiteracy can be an act of not only individual learning but of collective action and social transformation in a heavily mediated, commercialized, and digitized information environment.

**Keywords:** *digital disconnection, digital literacy, media refusal.*

Media quiteracy is informed, considered, and intentional acts of refusal, abstention, and disconnection.

“Opt out” and “Opt in”

Media quiteracy can be an act of individual learning and collective action and social transformation.

The background of the slide is a semi-transparent teal overlay on a satellite-style aerial map of a university campus. The map shows various buildings, roads, and green spaces. The text is centered on the map.

# Student/faculty refusal of AI Opt-out templates

6 July 2025

# An open letter from educators who refuse the call to adopt GenAI in education



We are a global community of education professionals who refuse the call for generative AI (GenAI) adoption in schools and colleges, and reject the narrative of its inevitability.

At its heart, education is a project of guiding learners to exercise their own agency in the world. Through education, learners should be empowered to participate meaningfully in society, industry, and the planet. But in its current form, GenAI is corrosive to the agency of students, educators and professionals.

1 — We will not use GenAI to mark or provide feedback on student work, nor to design any part of our courses.

2 — We will not promote institutional GenAI products built on unethically-developed foundation models like ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, Grok or Llama. We will not allow corporate-institutional partnerships to compromise our academic freedom.

3 — We will not accept without evidence the sales agenda of people who are not educators, nor will we spread hype at the expense of student learning and vibrant pedagogy.

4 — We will not train our students to use generative AI tools to replace their own intellectual effort and development. We cannot endorse the automation and exploitation of intellectual and creative labor.

5 — We will not ask students or staff to violate the spirit of academic integrity by promoting the use of unethical products.

6 — We will not rewrite curriculum to insert generative AI into it for the purposes of "scaffolding AI literacy".

7 — We will not contribute to the erosion of academic freedom and educator agency by forcing educators into compliance with technology they find unethical.

8 — We honor students' rights to resist and refuse as well.

# Service, Shared Governance, Community Engagement and Beyond



**What do we do? Resist, Reclaim and Restructure**

# AI and Academic Professions (AAUP 2025)

## Key Topics

1. Improving Professional Development Regarding AI and Technology Harms
2. Implementing Shared Governance Policies and Professional Oversight
3. Improving Working and Learning Conditions
4. **Demanding Transparency and the Ability to Opt Out**
5. Protecting Faculty Members and Other Academic Workers



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# Artificial Intelligence and Academic Professions

## 1. Improving Professional Development Regarding AI and Technology Harms

- Despite the widespread use of ed-tech, there is an overall lack of understanding about the relationship between AI and commonly used data-intensive educational technologies.
- Untested and unproven technologies are adopted uncritically

## 2. Implementing Shared Governance Policies to Promote Oversight

- AI integration initiatives are spearheaded by administrations with little input from faculty members and other campus community members, including staff and students.
- High levels of concern arose around AI and technology procurement, deployment, and use; dehumanized relations; and poor working and learning conditions.

## 3. Improving Working and Learning Conditions

- Preexisting work intensification and devaluation are the main reasons respondents give for using AI to assist with academic tasks.
- Implementing AI in higher education adds to faculty and staff workloads and exacerbates long-standing inequities.
- AI raises concerns around bias, discrimination, and accessibility because of the untested and uneven impacts on students and student learning.

## 4. Demanding Transparency and the Ability to Opt Out

- Faculty members and staff lack choice and meaningful avenues to opt out of both AI-based tools and other ed-tech.
- Few institutions have created transparent, equitable policies or provided effective professional development opportunities on AI use.

## 5. Protecting Faculty Members and Other Academic Workers

- Academic workers across job categories are worried about increased reliance on contingent appointments and declining wages.
- Respondents expressed concern about academic freedom and intellectual property rights.



What do we do? Resist, Reclaim and Restructure

**Digital Justice (Resist AI) Working Group**  
+  
**Shared Governance Working Group**

# CJUU is compiling resources for...



- Opting out
  - Templates for refusal (i.e., no AI due to religious objection)
  - Syllabi statements detailing AI use limits or restrictions
- Opting in
  - Collective action that resists Big Tech
- Faculty senate/union resolutions, petitions, statements
- Campus committees for faculty involvement in AI decision-making
- And more....

# Actions to Improve Digital Sustainability

- Opt out of companies and policies with harmful practices; find or create alternatives to platforms like X, Meta, Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, Microsoft, Google, Workday, etc.
- Make digital privacy and security top priorities; learn about ethical data and internet use

FOR REAL CHANGE WE NEED COLLECTIVE ACTION



geography,  
environment,  
and  
sustainability



  
RICHMOND  
37.5407° N, 77.4360° W

Thank you for listening!

[mbrook@richmond.edu](mailto:mbrook@richmond.edu)

