

AI News Digest

01/12/2026 - 01/18/2026

WEEKLY DIGEST: HUMANITIES & CULTURAL STUDIES

Exploring Interdisciplinary Narratives of AI and Society

Recent articles highlight the evolving discourse around artificial intelligence, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in understanding intelligence. The MIT Siegel Family Quest for Intelligence aims to bridge various fields to deepen insights into intelligence. Additionally, critiques of speculative fiction reveal how narratives shape societal perceptions of AI, often reflecting colonial and gendered biases. These discussions underscore the need for reflexivity in AI narratives to foster a more inclusive future.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ MIT's new research unit focuses on interdisciplinary studies of intelligence.
- ✓ Speculative fiction often perpetuates colonial and gendered hierarchies in AI narratives.
- ✓ Fictional narratives influence emotional readiness for human-AI coexistence.

IMPLICATIONS

- Interdisciplinary approaches may lead to more holistic understandings of AI.
- Critiquing existing narratives can help reshape public perceptions of AI.
- Fostering trust in AI through narratives could enhance human-AI relationships.

1. At MIT, a continued commitment to understanding intelligence

Category: Research
Departments: Computer Science, Biological Sciences, Electrical & Computer Engineering, Psychology, Philosophy
Topics: Science & Research, Biological Intelligence, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Artificial System Engineering

Impact Score: 26.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 5	Educational Value: 4	Innovation / Novelty: 5
Practical Impact: 4	Interdisciplinary Potential: 5	Ethical / Policy Implications: 3

The MIT Siegel Family Quest for Intelligence (SQI) is a newly renamed research unit within the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing, aimed at understanding the principles of intelligence through interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers in various fields. The initiative focuses on both the biological basis of intelligence in humans and animals and the engineering of artificial systems that can replicate these capabilities to solve complex real-world problems. Supported by a significant endowment from the Siegel Family, SQI organizes its research around long-term missions that address foundational questions about intelligence, with the goal of advancing both scientific understanding and technological innovation in artificial intelligence.

<https://news.mit.edu/2026/continued-commitment-to-understanding-intelligence-0114>

2. The ghost in the gendered machine: AI, speculative fiction, and the illusion of inclusivity

Category: Policy & Ethics
Departments: Political Science & Public Administration, Communication, Philosophy, Sociology & Anthropology
Topics: AI Ethics, Decolonial Perspectives, Feminist Frameworks, Narrative Analysis

Impact Score: 26.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4	Educational Value: 4	Innovation / Novelty: 5
Practical Impact: 3	Interdisciplinary Potential: 5	Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article critiques the portrayal of artificial intelligence (AI) in Western speculative fiction, arguing that it reflects and perpetuates colonial and gendered hierarchies. It highlights how narratives surrounding AI often embody the Enlightenment ideals of mastery and individualism, reinforcing asymmetries related to race and gender. The author advocates for alternative frameworks from feminist, queer, and decolonial perspectives that reconceptualize intelligence as relational and collective, challenging dominant narratives that view AI as an extension of patriarchal control. By examining the interplay of literature, film, and political economy, the article underscores the need to recognize and elevate marginalized epistemologies in discussions of AI.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02864-7>

3. Fictional prototypes of AI-human coexistence and relationality

Category: Research

Departments: Philosophy, Political Science & Public Administration, Psychology, Educational Leadership

Topics: AI Ethics, Trust Dynamics, Emotional Engagement, Coexistence Models

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 5

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

This article explores how fictional narratives shape emotional, relational, and moral readiness for coexistence between humans and AI, categorizing narratives into three phases: Instrumental, Relational, and Autonomous. It highlights that trust in these narratives is relational and evolves through interaction, emotional continuity, and shared experiences, rather than being a static quality. The analysis identifies distinct coexistence models for each phase, ranging from functional complementarity in the Instrumental phase to emotional engagement in the Relational phase, and respect for autonomy in the Autonomous phase. The findings suggest that readiness for AI coexistence is contingent on recognizing the dynamic nature of trust and the complexities of emotional relationships with AI.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-025-02830-9>

4. Reflexive ecologies of knowledge in the future of AI & Society

Category: Research

Departments: Political Science & Public Administration, Philosophy, Communication, Educational Leadership

Topics: AI Ethics, Generative AI Challenges, Interdisciplinary Knowledge Integration, Responsible Authorship, Transparency in AI

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article discusses the journal AI & Society's unique approach to fostering interdisciplinary connections across various fields, including science, philosophy, art, and design. It emphasizes the journal's commitment to reflexivity and the idea that friction between different modes of knowledge can lead to new insights and transformations. The text highlights the challenges posed by generative AI systems in writing, advocating for a responsible approach to authorship that acknowledges the interplay between human creativity and technological tools. Ultimately, the journal aims to maintain a space for diverse ecologies of thought while promoting transparency and shared responsibility among contributors.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02859-4>