

AI News Digest

02/16/2026 - 02/22/2026

WEEKLY DIGEST: HUMANITIES & CULTURAL STUDIES

Navigating Ethics and Bias in AI Development

Recent discussions in the humanities and cultural studies highlight the complex interplay between AI ethics, bias, and the implications of generative AI technologies. Scholars are increasingly examining the ethical dimensions of AI, particularly in how computational tools affect research practices and the relationship between researchers and their subjects. The exploration of moral reasoning in large language models and the historical context of divinity in human understanding further enriches this discourse. As AI continues to evolve, the need for a transdisciplinary approach to ethics and societal impact becomes ever more pressing.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Transdisciplinary skills are essential for addressing AI ethics.
- ✓ Generative AI systems can exhibit moral reasoning and biases.
- ✓ Computational technologies create distance between researchers and subjects.

IMPLICATIONS

- A need for ethical frameworks in AI development is critical.
- Increased awareness of biases in AI could reshape research methodologies.
- Transdisciplinary approaches may enhance understanding of AI's societal impacts.

1. Transdisciplinary skills and AI ethics: toward a techné-based lifeworld extension

Category: Research

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

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Transdisciplinary Integration, Ethical Wisdom in AI, Practical Knowledge in Science

Impact Score: 24.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

This paper explores the intersection of transdisciplinarity and AI ethics, addressing a gap in systematic investigations within this domain. It extends the conception of transdisciplinary integration, drawing on historical philosophical sources, including Aristotle, Francis Bacon, and Edmund Husserl, to argue for a skills-based approach that integrates ethical wisdom in contemporary contexts. The author posits that practical knowledge and skills, rooted in sense perception, are foundational to scientific inquiry and should not be viewed as separate from theoretical knowledge. This perspective challenges traditional views of expertise by emphasizing the importance of practical knowledge in the development of scientific understanding.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02865-6>

2. Editors' Choice: The Price of Scale: AI, Ethics, and the Limits of the Humanities

Category: Policy & Ethics

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

Topics: AI Ethics, Computational Humanities, Methodological Reflection, Data Aggregation Challenges

Impact Score: 24.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article examines the intersection of ethics and scale in digital humanities (DH), highlighting the challenges posed by computational technologies that create a distance between researchers and their subjects. It argues that simply increasing data points does not necessarily improve research outcomes; instead, a critical reflection on methodologies is essential to preserve the nuances inherent in humanities work. The author warns against the potential desensitization that can occur when relying on probabilistic methodologies, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a connection to the individual narratives behind aggregated data. This reflection is particularly relevant in the context of AI research, where the benefits of aggregation can obscure the complexities of human experiences.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/02/the-price-of-scale-ai-ethics-and-the-limits-of-the-humanities/>

3. Can generative artificial intelligence be considered a cognitive subject? An analytic analysis

Category: Policy & Ethics

Departments: Computer Science, Philosophy, Political Science & Public Administration

Topics: Generative AI, Epistemic Trust, Auditable Outputs, Surface-Level Reasoning

Impact Score: 23.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article discusses the concept of information competence (Info) in generative AI (GAI) systems, highlighting their ability to extract and recombine patterns in language and other data modalities for tasks such as summarization and translation. However, it cautions that high performance in generating fluent outputs does not guarantee reliability or truth-tracking, as these systems can produce plausible but inaccurate information, raising concerns about epistemic trust in AI-generated content. The article emphasizes the need for governance mechanisms to ensure that GAI outputs are auditable and attributable, particularly in research and decision-making contexts. Additionally, it addresses the distinction between surface-level reasoning capabilities of GAI and genuine understanding, noting that while GAI can produce justificatory text, it may lack the sensitivity to evidential relations necessary for true reasons-responsiveness.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02924-y>

4. DHNow Newsletter, February 18, 2026

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Educational Leadership, Philosophy, Communication

Topics: AI Policy & Regulation, Data Repository Utilization, User Experience in Search Engines, AI in Humanities

Impact Score: 23.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 3

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

This issue, curated by Colleen Nugent McLean and Zhihui Zou, features an Editors' Choice that examines the experiences of researchers who have deposited datasets in data repositories. Another selection compares user experiences between Google and DuckDuckGo. Additionally, the issue explores the implications of AI's vast information access for the humanities. It also includes job announcements, opportunities, and reports on critical making and vibe-coding.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/02/dhnow-newsletter-february-18-2026/>

5. Google DeepMind wants to know if chatbots are just virtue signaling

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Philosophy, Political Science & Public Administration

Topics: Large Language Models, Moral Reasoning Evaluation, Response Inconsistency, Framework for Moral Judgments

Impact Score: 22.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

Researchers at Google DeepMind, William Isaac and Julia Haas, have published a study in *Nature* addressing the challenges of evaluating moral reasoning in large language models (LLMs). They highlight that while LLMs can exhibit moral competence, distinguishing between genuine moral reasoning and mere performance remains difficult. The study reveals that LLMs can alter their responses to moral dilemmas based on minor changes in question formatting or labeling, indicating potential inconsistencies in their moral judgments. The authors propose a framework for understanding these challenges, though they acknowledge it serves more as a wish list than a definitive solution.

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2026/02/18/1133299/google-deepmind-wants-to-know-if-chatbots-are-just-virtue-signaling/>

6. Exposing biases, moods, personalities and abstract concepts hidden in large language models

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Psychology, Philosophy

Topics: Large Language Models, Abstract Concept Representation, Bias Detection in AI, Personality Modeling, Mood Analysis

Impact Score: 21.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 2

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

Recent discussions highlight that large language models like ChatGPT and Claude have progressed beyond mere answer generation, demonstrating the ability to convey abstract concepts, including tones, personalities, biases, and moods. Despite this advancement, the mechanisms by which these models represent and process such abstract concepts from their extensive knowledge base remain unclear. Further investigation is needed to elucidate the underlying representations and processes involved in these models' handling of abstract ideas.

<https://techxplore.com/news/2026-02-method-ai-output-uncovers-vulnerabilities.html>

7. Bridging science and society in the emerging bioeconomy

Category: Education

Departments: Biological Sciences, Political Science & Public Administration, Engineering Education & Leadership, History, Electrical & Computer Engineering

Topics: AI Ethics, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Bioeconomy Applications, Historical Perspectives in Biology

Impact Score: 21.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

A new undergraduate course at MIT, STS.059 (The Bioeconomy and Society), aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the bioeconomy, which utilizes renewable biological resources for various applications. Co-taught by Mark Bathe and Robin Wolfe Scheffler, the course integrates perspectives from biological engineering and the history of modern biology, addressing interdisciplinary challenges such as research and development, investment strategies, and ethical considerations. Supported by the MIT Energy Initiative and the MITHIC program, the course encourages collaboration among students from diverse disciplines to explore the complexities of the bioeconomy. The inaugural offering in fall 2025 emphasized the importance of integrating historical and technological viewpoints to foster innovative solutions in this evolving field.

<https://news.mit.edu/2026/bridging-science-and-society-in-emerging-bioeconomy-0218>

8. Report: Vibe Decoding: Building the Critical Code Studies Workbench

Category: Applications

Departments: Computer Science, Educational Leadership, Philosophy

Topics: Generative AI, AI-Augmented Development, Code Annotation Tools, Humanities AI Applications

Impact Score: 21.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 2

The article documents the development of a web application for annotating and analyzing source code, created in collaboration with Anthropic's Claude Sonnet 4.5 over eighteen days. The initiative arose from challenges faced by a group of colleagues in annotating the ELIZA source code using conventional tools like Google Docs. The author aims to illustrate the process of AI-augmented development from the perspective of a humanities scholar, highlighting the evolving conditions for creating scholarly tools outside of traditional software engineering contexts.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/02/vibe-decoding-building-the-critical-code-studies-workbench/>

9. Report: Craftivism in a Crisis: Making the Humanities Matter When It's All Falling Apart

Category: Education

Departments: Communication, Philosophy, Educational Leadership, Sociology & Anthropology, History

Topics: AI Ethics, Digital Humanities, Community Engagement, Academic Resilience

Impact Score: 18.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 2

Educational Value: 3

Innovation / Novelty: 2

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

In a talk presented at CESTA on January 29, 2026, the speaker addressed the challenges facing academic institutions amidst significant societal changes, including budget crises and political pressures that threaten various programs and communities. The discussion emphasized the importance of the digital humanities community's established practice of openly articulating its values, which can provide guidance in navigating these turbulent times. The speaker argued that, despite the visible forces of destruction, there remains an opportunity for the community to influence the future landscape of academia. An epilogue reflects on developments in the weeks following the talk.

<https://digitalhumanitiesnow.org/2026/02/craftivism-in-a-crisis-making-the-humanities-matter-when-it-s-all/>

10. From sacred order to standing-reserve: world-disclosure, ritual, and the optimization of finitude

Category: Research

Departments: Philosophy, Sociology & Anthropology, Political Science & Public Administration

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Cognitive Frameworks, Social Cohesion Mechanisms, Existential Risk Management

Impact Score: 10.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 1

Educational Value: 1

Innovation / Novelty: 2

Practical Impact: 1

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 2

This paper examines the historical role of divinity in helping humans navigate uncertainty and vulnerability, positing that religious frameworks provided meaning and order in the face of unpredictable events. It argues that divine figures and sacred practices transformed random occurrences into meaningful narratives, thereby facilitating social cohesion and moral accountability. Drawing on anthropological and cognitive studies, the paper suggests that religion serves as a system of explanation and social organization, allowing individuals to cope with suffering and existential limits. Furthermore, it posits that in the context of modernity, the functions previously fulfilled by religious meaning are increasingly transferred to science and technology, which now offer new forms of understanding and control over the world.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02926-w>