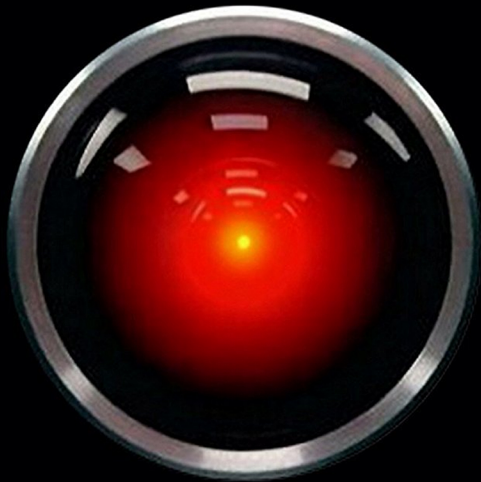


# AI MEDITATIONS

## The State of the Field



Hosted by the Intercollegiate Media Studies Program at the Claremont Colleges, with additional support from the Anne Abel Pinkel Lectureship in Media Studies at Pomona College, the Claremont McKenna College Film Studies Program, the Endowed Fund for Media Studies at Pitzer College, the O'Brien Distinguished Professorship at Scripps College, and the Office of Academic Affairs at Harvey Mudd College.

**Friday April 17 – Saturday April 18**

a two-day conference on AI across media, art, politics, and ethics  
featuring renowned scholars, curators, and artists

**Friday, April 17th****Politics, Ethics, and the Media Sphere****Broad Performance Space, Pitzer College**

9:15 - 10:00 am Coffee and Continental Breakfast  
(Broad Center Courtyard)

10:00 - 10:15 am Introductions

10:15 - 11:00 am David Bates, "On the Crisis of Decision in the  
Age of Artificial Intelligence"

11:15 am - 12:00 pm Tung-Hui Hu, "Normal and Abnormal  
Language, from Criminal Argot to Large Text Models"

12:00 - 1:00 pm Lunch (Broad Center Courtyard)

1:00 - 1:45 pm Charlotte Kent, "Talking about Art with 'AI'  
in the Picture"

2:00 - 2:45 pm Jeff Nagy, "Big Blue: Depression AI and Disability  
Technopolitics"

3:00 - 4:30 pm Roundtable conversation with audience Q&A

4:30-6:00 pm Public Reception (Broad Center Courtyard)

**Saturday, April 18th****Media Arts and Creative Practice****Broad Performance Space, Pitzer College**

9:15 - 10:00 am Coffee and Continental Breakfast  
(Broad Center Courtyard)

10:00 - 10:15 am Introductions

10:15 - 11:00 am N. Katherine Hayles, "Literary Theory of Mind  
and LLM Fictions: Implications for Awareness"

11:15 am - 12:00 pm Zsofi Valyi-Nagy, "Crippling AI Art: Disability,  
Radical Slowness, and the Leonardo CripTech AI Lab"

12:00 - 1:00 pm Lunch (Broad Center Courtyard)

1:00 - 1:45 pm Mashinka Firunts Hakopian, "Ancestral  
Intelligences: Data Feminist Interventions in Algorithmic Coloniality"

2:00 - 2:45 pm Memo Akten & Katie Hofstadter,  
"Cosmosapience: Embodying our Planetary Mind"

3:00 - 4:30 pm Roundtable conversation with audience Q&A

4:30 - 5:00 pm Closing remarks

**“Cosmosapience: Embodying our Planetary Mind”**

**Memo Akten (University of California, San Diego) and Katie Hofstadter (multidisciplinary artist)**

In this lecture-performance, Memo Akten and Katie Hofstadter explore the deeply entangled nature of intelligence, computation, and our planetary body and mind; weaving together ancient biotechnologies like poetry, dance, and ritual with artificial intelligence, simulations, and generative systems. As our tech influencers and media race to ascribe personhood and even consciousness to corporate machines that mimic human behaviors, we simultaneously deny the personhood and inherent intelligence of the natural systems that sustain us. This lecture-performance interrogates the limits and implications of these enclosed systems through the lens of planetary ecology and embodied simulation. We confront the vulnerability of our contradictions: the fact that we are made of trillions of living cells; the illusion of being a single, isolated individual inside our skin; and the reality that we are also part of a larger global organism. We are not discrete entities, but chimeras of ancient starlight, symbiotic microbes, flowing water, and the vast networks of human and non-human minds. How might we reclaim our externalized imagination, and repurpose emerging technologies to reconnect to our planetary consciousness, rather than further sever the connection?

**“On the Crisis of Decision in the Age of Artificial Intelligence”**

**David Bates (University of California, Berkeley)**

Times of crisis usually call for decision, which is what the etymology of crisis in fact reveals. However, in the age of AI and the emergence of the automatic society, a new form of crisis has appeared — namely the crisis of decision itself. With the rise of what are often called “decision machines” human judgment gives way to machinic processing of data. With a historical and theoretical perspective, this paper will look at the conceptual challenges — and political stakes — of decision in the automatic age.

**“Ancestral Intelligences: Data Feminist Interventions in Algorithmic Coloniality”**

**Mashinka Firunts Hakopian (ArtCenter College of Design)**

Countering dominant imaginaries of artificial intelligence, this talk attends to practices assembled under the rubric of ancestral intelligences: situated, embodied ways of knowing that are trans-generationally transmitted across diasporic time-spaces, or surfaced from the lacunae of omissive datasets and archives of dispossession. These ways of knowing introduce data feminist interventions into the disembodied, technoscientific “view from nowhere.” They refuse the algorithmic erasure of non-Western knowledge systems and visual cultures. They occasion the questions: Whose cognitive perspectives and modes of meaning-making do sociotechnical systems inherit? Which histories are presented as technological futures, and whose ways of knowing and sensing vanish from these tableaux of futurity? Turning to face occluded pasts, an attunement to ancestry works to conjure pluriversal outcomes.

**“Literary Theory of Mind and LLM Fictions: Implications for Awareness”**

**N. Katherine Hayles (University of California, Los Angeles)**

Theory of Mind (ToM) tests try to determine if an entity can imagine what another entity is thinking. Simple “false belief” tests have been used with chimpanzees, very young children, and neurodivergent adults such as autistics and schizophrenics. They have also been used with LLMs, and the results generally indicate LLMs such as GPT-5 do have ToM. Forty years ago, G. G. Gallup proposed that theory of mind strongly correlates with self-awareness, and in an even stronger version, that self-awareness is necessary for ToM to emerge. Empirical evidence for conscious animals such as chimpanzees has confirmed the first hypothesis, with mixed results for the second. This talk will discuss new evidence using the innovative approach of applying literary ToM techniques to ten fictions written by GPT-5, which to our knowledge has not been tried before. Literary ToM (LToM) differs from traditional ToM tests, which typically focus on behavior rather than language (necessary for nonhuman animals and young children), because it uses techniques developed through centuries of literary close reading. Devised to interrogate complex states of mind in literary fictions, LToM techniques have an even stronger correlation with self-awareness than does traditional ToM. The results of our analyses indicate a strong correlation with forms of awareness, but a consideration of LLMs’ cognitive capacities indicates they lack a persistent sense of self, emotions, and introspective knowledge of their instantiations. Rather, they infer these qualities from the human-authored texts they ingest, thus deriving them second-hand. The fictions we analyzed blended a nuanced sense of human selfhood with LLM functions, indicating that although the LLM did not have an interior sense of self, it had extensive knowledge of human selfhood. We call this kind of simulated or derivative awareness (awareness of human awareness) “inverse awareness,” because it inverts what the LLM knows about human selfhood and attributes it to its own functions, introducing innovative modifications appropriate to the LLM Umwelt. The talk will present excerpts from the stories, along with our analyses and conclusions.

**"Normal and Abnormal Language, from Criminal Argot to Large Text Models"****Tung-Hui Hu (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)**

This paper traces how "normal language" became a measurable, governable object. I offer a novel intellectual genealogy of the normal/abnormal distinction of the 19th century, in which philology and linguistics influenced statistics (not just the other way around). I then turn to criminal argot and seemingly aberrant dialects to understand how the British policed language in India. These forms of linguistic control, I argue, recur in contemporary forms of text generation, such as "smart compose" emails, spam filters, and LLMs (large language models). By recognizing how LLMs inherit older projects of classification and surveillance, we can better understand their limitations and potentially redesign them towards language justice.

**"Talking about Art with 'AI' in the Picture"****Charlotte Kent (Montclair State University)**

"AI" functions for the arts not merely as various creative tools but as a set of aesthetics, which can't be divorced from some common social ecologies, like politics, ethics, economics, but which can't be collapsed to those either. Distinguishing between medium and media, examining common aesthetico-political critiques, addressing the confusion of some loanwords, and introducing artworks to present technical and interpretive frameworks, this talk situates the arts' troubles with "AI". Ultimately, I am arguing that the ambiguities associated with the arts can productively frame the disorientation of this computational stack, and even provide a way to move through the intellectual and affective uncertainties of our responses.

**"Big Blue: Depression AI and Disability Technopolitics"****Jeff Nagy (York University)**

What does AI have to do with disability? What is AI doing to disability? This talk examines the remaking of psychiatric disability in an AI era through the case of algorithmic depression diagnostics. Tracing three decades of attempts to bring AI to bear on depression, it argues that the shift from clinic to platform and the substitution of machine learning features for diagnostic criteria are rewiring the political economy of diagnosis and overwriting disability itself. Close reading these systems and the datasets they depend on, it reveals an emergent technopolitics of disability in action, one that operates at cross-purposes with disability community and activism.

**"Crippling AI Art: Disability, Radical Slowness, and the Leonardo CripTech AI Lab"****Zsofi Valyi-Nagy (Scripps College)**

In this talk, I will speak about my participation in the Leonardo CripTech AI Lab, a fellowship for disabled artists, designers, and scholars working to critique, alter, and reinvent AI models, and its resulting virtual exhibition, "Slow AI," which opened on December 15, 2025. Leonardo's CripTech Incubator (2022—) is rooted in the provocation of "crip," the position that disability is not something to cure or overcome but a desirable part of present and future worlds, and Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch's concept of "Crip Technoscience," which centers disabled people and communities as critics and (re)makers of technologies. "Slow AI," in the words of artist/curator M Eilo, "positions crip bodyminds as living instruments to think with and against the speed of machine learning." Through a communal act of deceleration, "Slow AI" explores open source, locally run, and less resource intensive private ML models to reimagine our relationships to our tools and our data.