

**Ambassador Milton A. Wolf Seminar
on Media and Diplomacy 2026**
***Tech Juggernauts: AI, Freedom of Expression,
and Shifting Geopolitical Alliances***
Vienna, Austria April 13-15, 2026

About The Milton Wolf Seminar Series

Launched in 2001, the Milton Wolf Seminar Series addresses developing issues in diplomacy and journalism – both broadly defined. The University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication, The American Austrian Foundation (AAF), and the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (DA) have jointly organized this seminar since 2010. Panelists include individuals working for state and multilateral organizations, journalists, civil society actors, representatives from media and internet companies, and academics. The Milton Wolf Seminar Series particularly emphasizes the contribution of young and mid-career scholars, and each year, a select group of outstanding graduate students is invited to attend the seminar in Vienna as Emerging Scholar fellows.

The organizers envisage the Milton Wolf Seminar as a meeting place for all participants to share their perspectives, formulate new ideas, and identify areas for further research and discussion. While the seminar incorporates various speakers and panels, we design it as a two-day continuing conversation in which all participants are encouraged to openly engage in dialogue and explore potential synergies and future collaborations. To encourage an open exchange of ideas, seminar attendance is limited only to invited participants and students. We also ask that participants and panelists attend all sessions and events, whenever possible.

About the 2026 Seminar

Generative AI is propagating seismic shifts in information environments globally. While AI enables easier and faster access to tailored media content, through search engines, personalization and translation, these same AI-powered curation tools are imbued with the algorithmic bias of their corporate creators, who serve as gatekeepers with outsized power over public debate and knowledge. AI-generated disinformation and deepfakes chill democratic participation and the health of the public sphere. Microtargeting and personalization narrow exposure and create information silos and feedback loops, imperiling citizens, journalists, and public figures alike.

As the oligarchizing of media and tech platforms continues unfettered, how we define and operationalize the right to freedom of expression is increasingly contested. Powerful entities increasingly use threats, violence, legal pressure, troll farms, and political intimidation over media institutions to silence critics and control the narrative. Many of these efforts to manipulate public opinion now take place under the guise of freedom of expression. Over the last year, we have seen: the United States sanction anti-hate speech and anti-misinformation organizations in Europe, teachers lose jobs for opining on free speech crusader Charlie Kirk's death, universities lose funding for not policing student speech, and allies spar over digital sovereignty issues. Increasingly, global information policy seems schizophrenic, corrupted, and distorted, without internal logic and the plaything of ideological maneuverings. This year's Milton Wolf Seminar hopes to diagnose and disentangle some of the threads in this complicated nexus.



**diplomatische
akademie wien**
Vienna School of International Studies



AGENDA

Monday, April 13, 2026

6:30 – 8:30 PM Welcome Reception and Registration (Diplomatic Academy)

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

9:00 – 10:00 AM Welcome Tea & Introduction

- **Katharine Eltz-Aulitzky**, Executive Director, The American Austrian Foundation
- **Martin Eichinger**, Director, Diplomatic Academy Vienna
- **Victor Pickard**, Co-Director, Media, Inequality & Change Center, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Panel 1: Information Sovereignty and Information Rights in an AI-Driven Economy

Panelists will set the stage for two days of debate and discussion, looking at the physical and philosophical changes shaping the media and communications landscape for media and diplomacy. AI trade details, shifting geopolitical alliances such as US security policy with respect to the EU, and the UK's Online Safety Act are complicating historical friend/foe relationships. Concerns over big tech's complicity in the rise of authoritarianism, state capture through unfettered growth, and the metabolization of competitors are beginning to seep into public consciousness and legislative agendas. Big tech firms increasingly write their own rules and have tentacles in every industry. Panelists will discuss the implications of these trends for media and diplomacy. How are states responding to structural changes in the media and information system? What are the implications for freedom of expression? How has the debate over information sovereignty shifted, and to what effect?

- **Andreas Fraunberger (Moderator)**, Founder, chim.ai
- **Susannah Glickman**, Assistant Professor of History, Stony Brook University
- **Mary Brooks**, Co-Author, *New Cold Wars* (2024) and formerly Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, US State Department
- **Vivian Wang**, China Correspondent, *The New York Times*

12:00 – 1:30 PM Lunch

GROUP PHOTO

1:30 – 3:00 PM Panel 2: The Geopolitics of Communications in the Age of AI

Large-scale AI models train on datasets hoovered without consent, from copyrighted media to personal images. Data centers consume as much energy and water resources as entire nations' power grids. For example, between 2022-23, Google, Microsoft, and Meta exceeded the combined consumption of Jordan, Iceland, and Ghana. Rare earth mining for AI hardware devastates ecosystems and Indigenous communities. Behind "autonomous" or "self-learning" AI lies an obscured workforce, including data annotators, content moderators, and gig workers who are often in the Global South, facing precarious conditions under what the critics term "AI

colonialism.” This concern grows as AI deployment leads to widespread job loss and displacement. This panel considers the lived and environmental effects of the AI explosion.

- **Eric Frey (Moderator)**, Managing Editor, *Der Standard*
- **Gavin Sullivan**, Reader, International Human Rights Law, Edinburgh Law School
- **Brett Zehner**, Lecturer, AI and Communications, University of Exeter
- **Věra Jourová**, Advisory Board, GLOBSEC
- **Cathleen Berger**, Head of Office (Policy and Research), German Parliament

3:00 – 3:15 PM Tea Break

3:15 – 5:00 PM Panel 3: Techno-feudalism, Media, and Diplomacy

Techno-feudalism is an economic theory, primarily advanced by economist Yanis Varoufakis, which posits that traditional capitalism has been supplanted by a new system dominated by "cloud capital" and rent-extraction. Unlike traditional capital (machinery or land), this consists of networked software, AI algorithms, and digital infrastructure (e.g., server farms) designed to modify human behavior and extract value. Major platforms like Amazon, Google, and the Apple App Store now act as digital lords or fiefs. Not subject to state or national-level checks and balances, power is centralized in transnational corporations, leading to a new form of corporate hegemony. As the vassal of techno-feudalism, AI economies are determining political alliances, trade networks and supply chains, and policy agendas, with consequences for everything from basic communication to our imaginaries, from the built environment to resource distribution, energy consumption, warfare, and information production and consumption.

- **Wendy O’Brien (Moderator)**, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, Division of Treaty Affairs, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- **Róisín Á Costello**, Assistant Professor of EU and International Law, Trinity College
- **Natali Helberger**, Professor of Law and Digital Technology, University of Amsterdam
- **Jillian York**, Director for International Freedom of Expression, Electronic Frontier Foundation
- **Julia Christina Hess**, Programme Lead, Global Chip Dynamics, Interface

6:30 Bus Transfer from DA to Motto am Fluss

6:45– 9:00 PM Dinner Motto am Fluss

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

9:00 – 10:00 AM Coffee and Conversation with the Emerging Scholars

Supporting junior scholars is a key part of the Milton Wolf Seminar. Please join us for morning coffee and a lively roundtable discussion with our 2026 Emerging Scholar Fellows, who will present their research and explain how it relates to the 2026 Seminar theme.

10:00 – 10:15 AM Tea Break

10:15 AM – 12:00 PM Panel 4: Media and Sovereignty Revisited

In the early 1980s, countries across the developing world rallied against the dominance of news agencies like the Associated Press and Reuters, citing Western media hegemony. More than 30 years later, information sovereignty is even more fundamental to diplomatic engagements but has become increasingly complicated. Information hegemony is now not simply about controlling media delivery platforms but the entire tech stack, from shovels in the ground to the cloud. Countries around the world are instituting new policies and forming new alliances designed to reassert information sovereignty domestically and protect the freedom of expression of their citizens and corporations abroad. From Saudi Arabia's proposed "digital embassies," which would host data centers operating under the data owner's laws, to the controversial trade deal allowing China to purchase Nvidia chips, the realignment of allegiances to accommodate the proliferation of AI is problematizing an already unsettled and in-flux global order. Case studies in this session will unpack examples on a more granular level.

- **Martin Eichinger (Moderator)**, Director, Diplomatic Academy Vienna
- **Gavin Sundwall**, Executive Director of Communications, Politico
- **Kate Wright**, Professor of Media and Communication, Politics and IR, University of Edinburgh
- **Jayson Harsin**, Director, Research Center for Media, Communication & Global Change, American University Paris

12:00 – 1:30 PM Lunch

1:30 – 3:00 PM Panel 5: Dystopian Visions: What is Freedom of Expression in 2026?

Over the last decade, authoritarian and democratic regimes alike have moved from digital strategies like censorship, internet shutdowns, and online propaganda toward more covert, preventive, and targeted forms of digital repression. This 'Authoritarian Informationalism' transforms traditional authoritarian strategies along three dimensions: (1) Actors; from state to private, from organizations to individuals, (2) precision; from reaction to prevention, from blunt to fine-grained control, and (3) scope; from local to global and across regime types (Garb and Maertz, 2025) From 'collaborative authoritarianism' in Saudi Arabia facilitated by nationalist journalists and influencers who rely on Western tech platforms to the export of 'authoritarian-friendly' digital tech from one repressive regime to another, to democratic states surveilling social media, accessing personal data, and disseminating misinformation that increasingly imperils civil liberties and accountability—In this paradigm, who has freedom of expression? Who wants it? How do we get it? How have traditional Freedom of Expression tenets been co-opted by the rise of far right and populist ideologies and figureheads, and how does big tech aid and abet authoritarian survival?

- **Giulia Pelillo (Moderator)**, Head of Cultural Studies, Diplomatic Academy Vienna
- **Hossein Kermani**, Senior Researcher, Political Communication Research Group, University of Vienna
- **Mandy Tröger**, Institute of Media Studies, University of Tübingen
- **Lisa Garbe**, Research Fellow, Institutions and Political Inequality, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung

- **Inna Melnykovska**, Jean Monnet Fellow, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute

3:00 – 3:15 PM *Tea Break*

3:15 – 5:00 PM Panel 6: Davids and Goliaths: Challenges to Tech Oligarchy Across the Political Spectrum

Across the globe, different stakeholders have sought to counter and control big tech's dominance in both the physical and digital world. From citizens protesting data centers in their communities to political hearings about AI-fueled rising energy costs, to lobbying for more expansive social safeguards to protect children, social awareness of the economic and environmental impacts on everyday life is on the rise. Beyond the material lies the philosophical: what is the appropriate balance between the right to design and market information technology and the right to control and regulate that same technology? How should we think about freedom of expression in 2026? Where are innovative attempts to ameliorate the harm introduced by AI while maximizing the technological promise?

- **Victor Pickard (Moderator)**, Co-Director, Media, Inequality & Change Center, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- **Shae Omonijo**, Political Theorist and Intellectual Historian, Harvard University
- **Jürgen Geuter**, Research Director, Art+Com Studios
- **Des Freedman**, Head of Department and Co-Director of the Leverhulme Media Research Centre, Goldsmiths

6:15 Bus Transfer from DA to Fuhrgassl Huber

7:00 – 9:00 PM Heurigen Fuhrgassl Huber

Thursday, April 16, 2026

DEPARTURES

THE PANELISTS

Berger, Cathleen



Cathleen Berger brings 15+ years of professional experience at the intersection of tech policy, change management, and environmental sustainability. She has worked across sectors and with globally distributed teams in academia, government, non-profit, corporate, and currently parliament. She brings structure to complex challenges, thrives in collaborative and impact-focused environments, and often finds herself driving processes to improve organisational culture, sustainability, and political direction.

In July 2025, she joined the German parliament as head of office for research and policy for the Deputy Chair on the Digital Committee. Before that, she worked with the Bertelsmann Stiftung as Co-Team Lead for [Upgrade Democracy](#) and Research Director on future technologies and sustainability. In earlier roles, she launched and headed [Mozilla's environmental sustainability programme](#), for which she set strategy for Corporation and Foundation, oversaw data collection, analysis, and visualisation for Mozilla's Greenhouse Gas emissions ([GHG assessment](#)), planned for [mitigation](#), set and implemented company-wide emissions reduction targets, and recruited, trained, and worked with organisational change agents, Mozilla's environmental [champions](#). Prior to that, Cathleen led [Mozilla's work on Global Governance](#), where she represented Mozilla at fora such as the [G20](#), the [United Nations](#), or the [World Economic Forum](#) and [developed policy and impact strategy](#) for the Office of the Chair.

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Brooks, Mary



Mary Brooks was most recently a program manager and grants officer representative for cybersecurity foreign assistance in the Bureau of Cyberspace & Digital Policy at the U.S. Department of State. Prior to that, she served as co-author of "New Cold Wars: China's Rise, Russia's Invasion, and America's Struggle to Defend the West," a 2024 New York Times bestseller and Pulitzer Prize-nominated book that tracks the period from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the return of superpower competition. She was selected as a Public Policy Fellow at the Wilson Center from 2022-2023, where she wrote on cybersecurity and Ukraine. Prior to that, she

was a policy fellow for the R Street Institute, worked as an associate producer and consulting producer on Emmy-award-nominated HBO documentaries, and served as special assistant for a human rights law firm. She has written and/or spoken for Lawfare, the Aspen Security Forum, BBC radio, the Hill, Morning Consult, the National Interest, and at multiple conferences. Mary graduated from Harvard University with a bachelor's degree in Government and a language certificate in Arabic.

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Costello, Róisín Á



Dr. Róisín Á Costello is an Assistant Professor in the Law School at Trinity College Dublin and a practicing barrister. She is the author and editor of volumes published by Hart, Bloomsbury and Edinburgh University Press on issues in privacy law, and in language rights. Her work has been published in *Global Constitutionalism*, the *Human Rights Law Review* and the *Irish Judicial Studies* journal, and her most recent research is forthcoming in the *German Law Journal*. Róisín is currently the Deputy Director of the Trinity Centre for Constitutional Law and Governance and is Director and principal investigator for "DEMCONEX" The Jean Monnet Centre for Excellence in Freedom of Expression and Democratic Resilience in Europe's Digital Age which will run from 2025-2028.

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Fraunberger, Andreas



Andreas Fraunberger (Dr. phil.) is the founder of chim.ai, an AI Transformation Agency based in Vienna. With a background in philosophy and creative production, he helps organizations turn AI from a buzzword into actual business results. Andreas lectures on AI at FH St. Pölten, FH BFI Wien, and the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and advises companies across the DACH region on implementing AI where it counts - from autonomous agents to content automation. His work sits at the intersection of research, entrepreneurship, and the question most leaders are still avoiding: what happens when the machine can do the thinking, too?

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Freedman, Des



Des Freedman is Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London and Co-Director of the Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre. He was a founding member of the Media Reform Coalition, led the 2016 Inquiry into the Future of Public Service Television chaired by Lord Putnam and is interested in the relationship between media and power together with the political and economic contexts of journalism, media policy and media reform. Des is the author of *The Politics of Media Policy* (2008), *The Contradictions of Media Power* (2014) and co-author of *The Media Manifesto* (2020, with Natalie Fenton, Justin Schlosberg and Lina Dencik) and *Misunderstanding the Internet* (2016, with James Curran and Natalie Fenton). His latest book, *Capitalism and the Media*, will be published by Polity in 2026.

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Frey, Eric

Eric Frey is the managing editor at [DER STANDARD](#), where he began in 1991 in the foreign policy department. He was head of the foreign affairs and business sections, is responsible for the business and law section, and writes the blog "Krisenfrey" (Crisis Frey).



Eric earned his BA in international relations at Princeton University and his doctorate in political science at the University of Vienna. He often teaches at Webster University Vienna and at the Institute for Journalism at the University of Applied Sciences Vienna. He was a longstanding correspondent for the "[Financial Times](#)" and the "[Economist](#)." He has published several books about the USA, world politics and economics, and in 2016, was awarded the Horst Knapp Prize for Economic Journalism.

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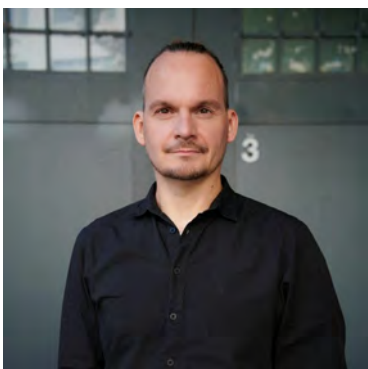
Garbe, Lisa



Lisa Garbe is a research fellow in the Institutions and Political Inequality section of the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. She earned a Ph.D. in political science from the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland and was a visiting researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute (2019/2020) and the Centre for Digital Governance at the Hertie School (2020/2021). Her work explores how digitalization affects core democratic institutions such as elections and shapes government-citizen relationships.

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Geuter, Jürgen



Jürgen Geuter/tante studied Computer Science and Philosophy and works on the conceptualization, implementation and testing of new technologies as Research Director in a studio for spatial new media. As a freelance consultant, writer, sociotechnologist and keynote speaker he focuses on issues at the intersection of technology, society and politics. He's a founding member of the interdisciplinary [Otherwise Network](#), which connects experts from different domains as a platform working on the changes that digital technologies have brought. He writes for many German and international publications (DER SPIEGEL, VICE, DIE ZEIT among others) and advises NGOs, political parties as well as the German parliament.

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Glickman, Susannah



Susannah Glickman is an assistant professor at Stony Brook University. Her research and teaching focus on the history and political economy of computation and information through the transformations in global American science that occurred at the end of the Cold War. She also writes about risk and uncertainty in other fields (for example, in the history of economics). Her current book project examines the infrastructures which make ever-improving semiconductors and quantum technologies possible historically, with particular attention to how ideology and other kinds of narratives get translated into policy and granular practices, and how reciprocally those material practices get

translated back into ideology.

Glickman has a background in mathematics and anthropology and works between the fields of science and technology studies and history, mixing archival and oral history methods. She is broadly interested in how institutions deal with the category of the future and the origins of the category “tech.” Her work has been supported by the Science History Institute, the Mellon Foundation, IEEE, IBM, the Heyman Center for Humanities, and the Weatherhead East Asian Institute.

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Harsin, Jayson



Jason Harsin joined the American University of Paris in 2003, after having taught at Northeastern University and, earlier, worked as a music and culture journalist and dj. Currently the director of AUP's research Center for Media, Communication & Global Change, Harsin is a critical scholar who has published seminal work on the media and communicative forms and processes of what is popularly called “post-truth politics,” such as “fake news,” conspiracy theory, rumor, lying, and disinformation. His research especially emphasizes critical cultural aspects of gender, dis-/trust, emotion, and cognition, in the digital attention economy.

His work theorizes, critiques and empirically analyzes communication and culture dynamics between professional and amateur-citizen political communicators, journalists, and social movements. Professor Harsin is the former chair of the Philosophy, Theory & Critique research division of the International Communication Association. His edited book, journal issues, and own peer-reviewed research has been published widely in journals such as *Communication, Culture & Critique*, *International Journal of Communication*, and *French Politics, Culture & Society*. He is the recipient of the 2022 International Award for Excellence for Information, Medium, and Society—The Publishing Studies Research Network—for his article “Post-truth Reflections on Public Origins and Functions of Publishing” (2021). He presents peer-reviewed research at professional conferences such as the International Communication Association. Professor Harsin is currently preparing a book manuscript that critically examines a renewed academic and popular fascination with “information” in a new cultural context of digital dystopia.

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Helberger, Natali



Natali Helberger is Distinguished University Professor of Information Law and Digital Technology at the University of Amsterdam and a member of the Executive Board of the Institute for Information Law (IViR). Helberger is an elected member of the Royal Holland Society of Sciences (KHMW), the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the Social Science Council of the KNAW. Helberger's research focuses on how AI and ADS (algorithmic decision systems) are changing society and what the implications are for law and governance. She is the founder and co-director of the AI, Media & Democracy Lab, and of the AlgoSoc (Public Values in the Algorithmic Society) Gravity Consortium.

In her function as expert, Natali frequently advises the European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe, and national regulators and civil society organisations. The Artificial Intelligence Magazine *Becoming Human* has listed Helberger as one of the “[100 brilliant women in AI ethics to follow](#).”

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Hess, Julia Christina



Julia Christina Hess leads interface's work on semiconductors through the Global Chip Dynamics Programme. Her research examines the strategic importance of semiconductors for Europe and the global, interdependent value chain, considering both its significant ecological footprint and evolving geopolitical context. An expert on semiconductor-related policies from national industrial strategies to chip diplomacy, Julia has spoken at national and international conferences, events, and hearings. Most recently, she presented her work as a subject matter expert during New York Climate Week and to the Committee on Industry,

Research and Energy of the European Parliament. She is regularly interviewed or provides commentary for outlets including die Zeit, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Politico, Deutschlandfunk, Internationale Politik, and IPG Journal.

Julia has been with interface since 2019, initially conducting research at the intersection of AI and foreign policy, with a focus on AI governance. In 2021, she was a fellow at the Gesellschaft für Informatik's AI Camp.

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Jourová, Věra



Věra Jourová currently serves as an advisor to the Czech President, Member of the Advisory Board of GLOBSEC, and Commissioner of the Club de Madrid. Most recently, she was the Vice-Rector for the Development of Human Resources and New Technologies at Charles University.

She was the Vice President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency between 2019 and 2024 and dealt with democracy, the rule of law, and media freedom among other topics. From 2014 to 2019, she served as EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers, and Gender Equality.

In 2014, before joining the European Commission, Ms. Jourová held the position of Minister for Regional Development in the Czech Republic. From 2006 to 2013, she worked in her own company as an international consultant on European Union funding and was also involved in consultancy activities in the Western Balkans relating to the European Union Accession. She holds a Master's Degree in Law and a Master's degree in the Theory of Culture from Charles University, Prague.

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Kermani, Hossein



Hossein Kermani is a senior researcher at the Political Communication Research Group of the University of Vienna, Austria. Hossein is studying social media, digital repression, computational propaganda and political activism in restrictive contexts, with particular attention to Iran. His research mainly revolves around a) the discursive power of social media in changing the microphysics of power and playing with the political and social structures, and b) the strategies that have been employed to manipulate and dismantle social media activism in non-democratic societies. In order to do so, Hossein is chiefly combining social and communication theories with computational techniques, in particular Social Network Analysis (SNA), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and critical discourse analysis. He is the principal investigator of the BeyondCBA project, which is funded by WWTF. Hossein has recently published in, among others, *Political Communication, New Media and Society, Big Data & Society, and Information, Communication, and Society*. His first book, *Social Media Research in Iran* (in Farsi), was published in 2020. His first English-language book, *Twitter Activism in Iran*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2025. Hossein is now working on his second monograph, *The Art of Delirium: Social Media Suppression in Authoritarian Regimes*, which will be published by Nature Springer in 2027.

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Melnykovska, Inna



Inna Melnykovska is a Jean Monnet Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute, where she studies corporate agency, business–state relations, and resilience under geopolitical stress. Her research examines how firms — from post-Soviet oligarchic conglomerates to transnational tech platforms — reshape regulatory environments, capture governance structures, and exploit information ecosystems to entrench their power. A central thread is how corporate actors become the primary vehicles of authoritarian informationalism: moving capital, technology, and disinformation along the same networks, corroding democratic accountability

from within. She also works on transferring lessons from corporate resilience and transformation in Eastern Europe and Eurasia to boost EU preparedness for geopolitical uncertainties.

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O'Brien, Wendy



Wendy O'Brien works with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, based in Vienna. As Technology and Innovation Advisor and Artificial Intelligence Focal Point, Ms. O'Brien champions the integration of human rights principles into the design, adoption, and evaluation of technologies to advance justice, equity, and dignity worldwide.

Ms. O'Brien previously worked as Senior Specialist with the Australian Crime Commission, leading on the delivery of research, policy advice, and capacity-building to strengthen law enforcement and multi-sectoral supports to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. She has also held senior positions in academia in Australia, including as Discipline Convenor for Criminology at Deakin University in Melbourne. Ms. O'Brien holds a PhD and two master's degrees in international law and programme evaluation. She has published widely in leading international journals on violence prevention, technology, and human rights-led law reform. Her latest book, *Children's Rights and Criminal Justice in the Digital Age*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2024.

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Omonijo, Shae



Shae O. Omonijo is a historian, humanist, and founder who helps people think critically in the age of AI. She is a PhD candidate in History at Harvard University and the creator of [Critical Thinking in the Age of AI](#), a public scholarship series and the [critical thinking bot](#) designed to help educators, students, and professionals strengthen judgment and intellectual independence in an algorithmic world. She is also the founder of [Analog Social](#), a Harvard Innovation Labs venture and 2025 Harvard President's Innovation Challenge semifinalist.

Her research at Harvard examines the history of political thought, the global circulation of ideas, and the role of the humanities in shaping civic life. Shae holds an MA in History from Harvard University and a BA in Political Science with Honors from the University of Chicago. She received an Excellence in Teaching Award from Harvard's Office of Undergraduate Education. Her AI research agenda includes evaluating and creating AI systems that are safe, governable, and transparent.

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Pelillo, Giulia



Giulia Pelillo is Head of the Research Area Cultural Studies at the *Diplomatische Akademie Wien*. Her work lies at the intersection of language, media, and cultural studies, bridging the humanities and social sciences.

Her research and teaching examine the politics of culture in the context of globalization and mediatized communication, with particular attention to identity and diversity, heritage, culture wars and cultural diplomacy in the post-soft power era.

She has received multiple research grants and fellowships, including a fellowship at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural

Studies (Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context*), the Olympia Morata Fellowship, and funding from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the 4EU+ University Alliance. She is a founding member and Vice-Chair of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, where she co-chairs the “Transcultural Life-Worlds” section and co-edits the society’s book series.

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Pickard, Victor



Victor Pickard is the C. Edwin Baker Professor of Media Policy and Political Economy at the University of Pennsylvania’s [Annenberg School for Communication](#), where he co-directs the [Media, Inequality & Change \(MIC\) Center](#). Prior to Penn, he taught media studies at the [Department of Media, Culture, and Communication](#) at NYU and he received his doctorate from the [Institute of Communications Research](#) at the University of Illinois.

Previously he worked on media policy in Washington, D.C. as a [Senior Research Fellow](#) at the media reform organization [Free Press](#) and the public policy think tank the [New America](#)

[Foundation](#) where he continues to advise their Open Technology and Media Policy Initiatives. He also taught media policy at the University of Virginia and served as a policy fellow for Congresswoman Diane Watson. His research explores the intersections of U.S. and global media activism and politics, media history, democratic theory, and communications policy. His work has been published in a number of scholarly journals, including the *Journal of Communication*; *Global Media and Communication*; *International Journal of Communication*; *Media, Culture & Society*; *Communication, Culture & Critique*; *New Media and Society*; *Journal of Communication Inquiry*; *Newspaper Research Journal*; *Journal of Internet Law*; *International Journal of Communication Law and Policy*; and *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. With Robert McChesney, he is the co-editor of the book [Will the Last Reporter Please Turn out the Lights](#) (The New Press), and the author of [Democracy Without Journalism?](#) (Oxford) and [America’s Battle for Media Democracy](#) (Cambridge).

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Sullivan, Gavin



Gavin Sullivan is a Reader (Associate Professor) at Edinburgh Law School and leads the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship project, *Infra-Legalities: Global Security Infrastructures, AI and International Law*. This sociolegal research project examines how AI and automated decision-making is reconfiguring global security law and governance, including the global governance of ‘terrorist’ and ‘violent extremist’ online content by platforms and states. His first book, [The Law of the List](#), won the 2021 ISA International Law and STAIR-ISA Book Awards for research bringing STS into dialogue with global politics. His work has been published in leading journals, including the *German Law Journal*,

Journal of Law and Society, *Computer Law and Security Review*, the *American Journal of*

International Law (unbound), and *London Review of International Law*. Gavin has provided pro bono legal representation to people targeted by security lists worldwide since 2010, including before the UN Office of the Ombudsperson. Gavin is Vice-Chair of the International Advisory Committee of the [Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism](#) and co-editor of the academic journal, *Critical Studies on Security*.

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Sundwall, Gavin



Gavin Sundwall joined POLITICO as Executive Director of Communications in 2025. He leads teams in Washington, D.C. and London to amplify the work of more than 1,100 journalists and publishing professionals. He brings decades of diplomatic and communications experience and a deep understanding of how politics and policy are shaped in both capitals, while underscoring Brussels' importance in the evolving relationship between the United States and Europe.

Previously, Gavin was the Managing Director for Policy and Planning for the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs' Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources. A career member

of the Senior Foreign Service, rank of Minister Counselor, Gavin joined the Department of State in 1997 and has served overseas in Panama (1997-1999), Kuwait (1999-2001), China (2002-2005), Panama again (2006-2009), Portugal's Azores Autonomous Region as Principal Officer of U.S. Consulate Ponta Delgada (2009-2011), and Afghanistan as U.S. Embassy Kabul Spokesperson (2011-2012). He was the Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen (2014-2016) where he led innovative public diplomacy initiatives, including the first-ever documentary/reality television series about the work of a U.S. ambassador and embassy, "I am the Ambassador," which won a Danish "Emmy" and was a Netflix and iTunes feature.

Gavin served in Australia as the Minister Counselor for Public Affairs and briefly as Chargé d'Affaires a.i. (2018-2021). In Washington, he has served in the Office of Australian, New Zealand, and Pacific Island Affairs (2005-2006) and as Senior Advisor to the Counterterrorism Bureau's Office of Countering Violent Extremism (2017-2018).

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Mandy Tröger is a media and communication researcher and journalist. Born and raised in (East) Berlin, she received her PhD from the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) in 2018. She has held research positions at the University of Munich (LMU) and at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media, Germany. From 2023-2025, Mandy was a Walter Benjamin Fellow of the German Research Foundation (DFG) at the [University of Tübingen](#), Germany, where she is still a Privatdozentin (PD). She is also affiliated with the [Media, Inequality & Change \(MIC\) Center](#) at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of

Pennsylvania. In July 2026, she will take up the position of Associate Professor at [Södertörn University](#) in Stockholm, funded by the [Wallenberg Foundation](#).

Mandy's [research](#) focuses on (digital) media markets and communication history, critical theory, and the transformation of media industries and communication systems. At public events, she often talks about media history, issues of representation, journalism and (structural) diversity. A public author and speaker, she has been active in social justice work for years, and was a (media) columnist for the Berlin newspaper [Berliner Zeitung](#).

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Vivian Wang is a China correspondent for The New York Times, covering Chinese politics and society. She focuses on stories about ordinary people, and how China's global rise and ambitions are shaping their lives. She has covered gender issues, migrant workers, human rights activism, and education. She was part of the team that won the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in public service for coverage of the coronavirus pandemic, and a team that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in international reporting.

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Wright, Kate



Kate Wright is the Personal Chair in Media and Communications at the University of Edinburgh's School of Social and Political Science. Her award-winning research explores how journalism, digital media, and AI intersect with politics, focusing on political economy, media governance, and production practice. She brings a qualitative, policy-oriented perspective, spanning political communication, media ethics, and sociological analysis, with a broad, comparative approach across multiple regions and industry contexts.

Her current UKRI-funded project investigates how public service media implement [Responsible AI](#) in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, and Oceania. Her most recent book analysed global patterns of [media capture and democratic backsliding](#), including a detailed study of the Voice of America network under the first Trump administration. Her previous work examined the [reporting of humanitarian affairs](#) worldwide.

She is the founder and co-Lead for the 80-strong interdisciplinary research cluster in [Media and Communications](#) at [Edinburgh Futures Institute](#), a Fellow of the [Generative AI Laboratory](#), and is registered as a supervisor for the [CDT in Responsible NLP](#). She is a research associate of the [Centre for Governance and Human Rights](#) at the University of Cambridge and sits on the editorial boards of two of the 'top five' communications journals, [Digital Journalism](#) and the [International Journal of Press/Politics](#). She has also served on an expert panel, assessing research on journalism and platformisation for the [Observatory on Information and Democracy](#), which advises policymakers in 50 countries.

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York, Jillian



Jillian C. York is the Electronic Frontier Foundation's (EFF) Director for International Freedom of Expression and is based in London. Her work examines state and corporate censorship and its impact on culture and human rights, with a focus on historically marginalized communities. At EFF, she leads coalitions, writes about state and corporate censorship, conducts the [Speaking Freely](#) interview series, and contributes to various other areas of the organization's work. Jillian is the author of *Silicon Values: The Future of Free Speech Under Surveillance Capitalism* (Verso, 2021) and has written for *Motherboard*, *MIT Technology Review*, and *WIRED*, [among others](#). She is a visiting

professor at the [College of Europe Natolin](#) in Warsaw. She is also a [regular speaker](#) at global events.

Prior to joining EFF, Jillian worked at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, where she coordinated the work of the OpenNet Initiative and contributed to other projects including Herdict and research into DDoS attacks. She has also worked in fundraising and grant writing, as an EFL teacher, and as a travel writer.

Jillian is a fellow at the [Centre for Internet & Human Rights](#) in Berlin and a founding member of the [Deep Lab](#) collective. She currently serves on the board of [Digital Rights Advocacy Uganda](#), the [Open Tech Fund](#) Advisory Council, and the [Open Rights Group](#) Advisory Council, and previously served on the [IFEX](#) Council and the board of directors of [Global Voices](#).

Jillian holds a BA in Sociology from Binghamton University, where—like a surprisingly large number of individuals in her field—she also studied theatre.

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Zehner, Brett



Brett Zehner is a writer and critical theorist. He is currently a Lecturer in Artificial Intelligence and Communications, having joined the Department of Communications, Drama, and Film at the University of Exeter in the fall of 2024. Before coming to Exeter, he was a Postdoctoral Fellow at The Ohio State University in Comparative Cultural Studies and the Translational Data Analytics Institute. He also holds a PhD from Brown University and an MFA from UC San Diego.

His research focuses on Critical AI Studies from a cultural studies perspective. Since artificial intelligence ties together so many concerns, including racial justice, labor, gendered politics, and environmental futures, his approach is also interdisciplinary but grounded in critical theory.

Brett's current book project – *Capital and White Anxiety* – is a monograph theorizing the relationship between whiteness (as a cultural logic of racial capitalism) and the long history of artificial intelligence. This text provides a critical genealogy of artificial intelligence and white anxieties through various crises of capital accumulation and social struggle.

He is a co-director of the Critical AI Research Center at the University of Exeter, and a member of the Transversal Institutional Analysis Network and the Abolitionist Epistemologies Working Group. Brett is currently collaborating with artists and theorists on an intermedia project called *Late Night in Late Capitalism*.

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THE ORGANIZERS

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Ambassador Martin Eichtinger has been Director of the Vienna School of International Studies / Diplomatische Akademie since August 1, 2025.

From 1988-1992, he served as personal secretary to Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Alois Mock. His diplomatic assignments included Mexico, Washington, D.C. – where he headed the Austrian Press and Information Service from 1992-1999 – Romania, and the Republic of Moldova, where he was also accredited as Austrian Ambassador from 2007 to 2010. Between 1999 and 2007, he was Chief of Cabinet of the Austrian Special Representative for Payments to Former Forced and Slave

Laborers of the Nazi-Regime, Director for International Affairs at the Austrian Federation of Industry, and a manager in a private company; from 2003-2005 he served as Chief of Staff and later Secretary General of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economics and Labor. From 2010-2015 he served as Director General for Cultural Policy at the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, before he was assigned to the United Kingdom as Austria's Ambassador (2015-2018). From 2018-2023 he was Minister in the Regional Government of Lower Austria. At the completion of his term, he returned to the Foreign Ministry where he held the position of Special Representative and Coordinator of Austria's neighbourhood policy and the foreign policy dimension of the Danube Region. From 2024-2025, he was Austrian Ambassador to Italy. He received his J.D. from the University of Graz in 1983 and went on to acquire a Diploma in International Affairs from Johns Hopkins University's Bologna Center.

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Katharine Eltz-Aulitzky is the Executive Director of The American Austrian Foundation (AAF). The AAF conducts bilateral programs between the United States and Austria in medicine, media, and the arts. Since 1993, the AAF has operated a postgraduate educational program – the [Open Medical Institute](#) - with faculty from Weill Cornell Medicine, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Duke University, Cleveland Clinic, and Pasteur Institute for doctors from low-income countries at its campus at Schloss Arenberg in Salzburg. She oversees the AAF's programs in medicine, media, and the arts, and is responsible for fundraising

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Smith, Briar



Briar Smith is the Media Inequality Change (MIC) Center's associate director where she manages the Center's grants, research endeavors, conferences, and the COMPASS program. She was formerly the Associate Director at the Center for Global Communication Studies at Annenberg where she oversaw the Center's global grants, managed other research initiatives, and coauthored many CGCS/partner publications. While a graduate student at Annenberg, her research was focused on international cultural communications with particular focus on China and the Middle East. Briar has a master's degree in communication from the University of Pennsylvania and B.A.s in Chinese Language and Literature and Psychology from Swarthmore College.

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Nadja Wozonig is the Executive Assistant to the Director of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien – Vienna School of International Studies (DA). She also serves as the DA's press officer and as secretariat of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT).

Nadja studied Political Science and Communication Science at the University of Vienna. Prior to her current position, she worked on an EU Enlargement project, for the Austrian Parliament, for the ORF (Austrian Broadcasting Corporation) Enterprise, and on some other projects. She joined the DA in September 2009.

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EMERGING SCHOLAR FELLOWS

Badurak, Morgan



Morgan Badurak is a Ph.D. candidate in Media and Public Affairs at the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University. She holds an M.A. in Advertising and Public Relations from the University of Alabama and double-majored in Mass Communication (B.A.) and Music Industry Studies (B.S.) at Loyola University New Orleans. Her research uses mixed method approaches to examine platform governance, political communication, and the socio-political implications of digital media in the United States, with particular attention to content moderation, political expression, and online community formation. Morgan is affiliated with LSU's Social Media Analysis

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Baffour, Adwoa



Adwoa Baffour is a doctoral student in Media and Public Affairs at Louisiana State University. Her research examines how social media and emerging media technologies like AI shapes information seeking, sharing, and meaning making across strategic, health, and intercultural communication contexts. Her work explores how digitally mediated environments offer information, impact identity, and help in decision-making. Much of her intercultural research focuses on international students, analyzing how social media, AI, and related factors structure experiences of adaptation, support-seeking, and navigation of institutional systems. Adwoa is also a member of Social Media

Analysis and Creations (SMAC) Lab and the AI and Disinformation Lab at LSU, where she contributes to cutting-edge research on how social media and artificial intelligence shape public discourse, influence perceptions, and affect civic and social processes. Through her research, she strives to produce scholarship that is both theoretically rigorous and socially impactful.

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Brunnsteiner, Klara



Klara Brunnsteiner is a second-year student of DA's MAIS programme. She received a BA in Communication Studies from the University of Vienna, during which she also studied at Seoul National University. She is currently a research intern at the Austrian Institute of International Affairs. Her research interests span from public diplomacy to peace and security issues.

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Jamalof, Pegah



Pegah Jamalof is a second-year PhD candidate in Global Governance at the Balsillie School of International Affairs in Canada. She specializes in multilateral institutions, diplomacy, and global media governance. Her dissertation examines the role of the United Nations, particularly the UN Global Digital Compact, in shaping and promoting human rights-oriented regulatory approaches to social media companies within a multi-stakeholder governance framework. Her research analyzes how UN-led initiatives seek to influence platform governance standards, as well as how European Union digital rights regimes, including the Digital Services Act and the General Data Protection Regulation

(GDPR), shape global expectations around human rights protections on major platforms. Drawing on theories of orchestration, norm diffusion, and institutional legitimacy, her work explores the political and structural constraints facing non-binding multilateral frameworks in an era of tech oligarchy, AI-driven information ecosystems, and geopolitical fragmentation. Her broader scholarly interests include corporate accountability, international institutional design, and the politics of global digital regulation.

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Ledford, Theodore Dreyfus



Theodore Dreyfus Ledford is a PhD student in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His research examines how knowledge about artificial intelligence is constructed and evaluated across scientific, legal, and policy domains. Using agent-based modeling, scientometrics, and network analysis, he studies how expertise forms, how novelty and authority are recognized, and how outside ideas are legitimized or excluded within real and simulated epistemic communities. He is particularly focused on expert witness testimony as a site where scientific and legal standards

converge, shaping how expertise is refracted within AI systems to signal credibility and trust. His work also analyzes AI-related labor harms and the policy infrastructures used to track them, examining how incident reporting systems, governance frameworks, and international policy debates shape which harms become visible to regulators and which remain uncounted.

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Lin, Zhi



Zhi Lin is a PhD candidate in the School of Journalism and Media at the University of Texas at Austin. She combines computational methods, AI tools and conventional methods to examine how media technologies shape the creation, distribution and consumption of political information within online media ecosystems during international conflicts and contentious politics. Her research has appeared in leading academic journals such as *Political Communication*, *Information, Communication & Society*, *Media, Culture & Society*, and *Computers in Human Behaviors*. She has received prestigious research awards such as the International Communication Association Top Student Paper

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Mahsouli, Farid

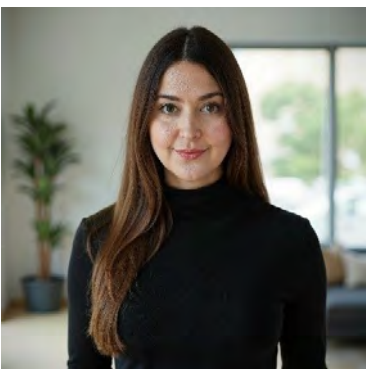


Farid Mahsouli is PhD researcher at the Civil Law faculty of Radboud University, Netherlands. He engages in interdisciplinary research on the governance of health data sharing in the European Union. He draws from the fields of law, science, technology studies and political economy. He takes a specific interest in how law enables the accumulation of infrastructural power, notably through Big Tech lobbying and the development of technical standards. Farid is affiliated with iHub, the multidisciplinary research centre of Radboud University where he works on socio-legal implications of the sharing of health data as part of a collaboration with Radboud University Medical Center. He

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Stephanie Ness is an interdisciplinary scholar and cybersecurity practitioner whose work focuses on information security, cyber resilience, AI security, and the governance of complex digital systems. She brings substantial professional experience in cybersecurity leadership, secure systems design, cloud and enterprise security, and the protection of sensitive digital infrastructure. Her work examines how organisations can build resilient, security-by-design environments in contexts where trust, safety, and system integrity are critical. Stephanie studied Information Technology and Computer Science at Harvard and Law at the University of Law and has developed a research profile

at the intersection of technical security, governance, and institutional resilience. In 2026, she submitted her PhD at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, which is currently pending evaluation. Her broader interests include adversarial threats, critical infrastructure protection focused on smart grids, cyber governance of media and telecommunication systems, and the societal implications of increasingly networked systems.

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Areli Rocha is a doctoral student at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania where she holds fellowships at the Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication (CARGC), Center on Digital Culture and Society, and serves on the advisory board of the Extended Reality Lab. Her research explores technological and discursive constructions of reality and personhood, with particular interest in the multimodal semiotic signs influencing ideas, representations, and interactions with non-human entities. Drawing on media studies, linguistic anthropology, visual culture, and art history, her work engages with themes of digital and virtual embodiment, and the multiplicity and necessarily social embeddedness of the self. Her current research examines how people in relationships with AI chatbots navigate and manage their concurrent romantic and social relationships with humans in everyday life. Her work has been published in *Signs and Society*. In addition to academic research, Areli maintains a creative practice, producing interactive games and installations, exhibitions, and technopoetic gifts.

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Mohamed Salama is an award-winning computational media scholar and Ph.D. candidate (ABD) at the University of Maryland, whose research examines the narrative structures of legacy journalism. He harnesses sophisticated computational linguistics methodologies over large-scale, chronological corpora of the press to examine the hermeneutical injustices and systemic epistemic exclusion of marginalized voices inscribed within hegemonic media architectures. As a former Fulbright Scholar, he aims to generate original, discipline-altering knowledge by developing equitable analytical models that render marginalized narratives structurally legible in the context of AI-probabilistic

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Winslow-Stephenson, Walker



Walker Winslow-Stephenson is a doctoral student in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). His research examines digital diplomacy, technology, and security, with a particular focus on how nation-states use emerging technologies to engage global audiences. He holds a B.A. in International Studies from North Carolina State University and an M.A. in Media and Communication from UNC.

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Dechun Zhang is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Communication at the University of Copenhagen, working on the ERC Advanced Grant project "*GREENWATCH – Green Surveillance: Imagining a Sustainable Internet of Things*." His research spans political communication, digital nationalism, and media governance, with a particular emphasis on China. Dechun holds a PhD from Leiden University. He is the author of *Digital Nationalism and Affective Governance: Propaganda, Public Sentiment, and Soft Authoritarianism in China* (Routledge, 2026). He has published extensively on topics such as digital propaganda, nationalism, and the intersection of AI and governance in China.

Dechun has also served on several editorial boards, and is currently the Managing Editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*. He is actively involved in international research initiatives and serves as the Student and Early Career Representative for the Mass Communication Division of the International Communication Association.

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Divine Boyembe is a second-year student in the Master of International Studies programme. She received a Bachelor in Political Science from the Lyon Lumière 2 University with a minor in English Literature, and participated in an exchange programme at the University of Vienna. Her professional journey has been deeply rooted in communication roles. Academically, her focus centers on cultural diplomacy, with her current thesis exploring the instrumentalization of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ethiopia's nation branding efforts. As an aspiring journalist, she

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Sonja Mayr, an Austrian citizen, is a second-year student of the DA's MAIS programme. She holds a Master of Education and completed her studies in Linz and Salzburg, including an Erasmus exchange at King's College London. She previously worked as a secondary school teacher and presently works as a research assistant. She is currently writing her thesis on the nexus between organised crime and hybrid threats.

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Gilbert B. Rodman is Associate Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Minnesota. From 1995-2006, he was a faculty member in the Department of Communication at the University of South Florida. He has also taught graduate seminars as a guest professor at the University of Turku and the University of Heidelberg. He is the former Chair of the Association for Cultural Studies, and the founder/manager of the CULTSTUD-L listserv: the oldest and largest listserv devoted to cultural studies.

Gil's research is situated at the intersection of cultural studies and critical media studies, with a particular emphasis on the cultural politics of race and racism, digital technologies, intellectual property, and popular culture. He is the author of *Why Cultural Studies?* (Wiley Blackwell, 2015) and *Elvis After Elvis* (Routledge, 1996), the editor of *The Race and Media Reader* (Routledge, 2014), and co-editor of *Better Stories: Mapping Cultural Studies with Lawrence Grossberg* (Imbricate! Press, 2025) and *Race in Cyberspace* (Routledge, 2000). He has co-authored more than 20 journal articles and book chapters. At the DA, Gil teaches seminars on "Digital Culture and Technology" and "The Politics of Popular Culture."

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Molly Wemah is a second-year student of the MAIS programme. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Ghana, and participated in an exchange programme at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Her work experience has been centred on multilateral diplomacy and digital rights. Molly is currently writing her thesis on data sovereignty under Big Tech dominance.

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