TAMING THE MACHINES

AI AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

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PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

About the lecture

Debates about the future of work and AI can easily swing between panic and optimism. Economic orthodoxy tells us that technological innovation is better for society in the long run. But, in the short term, automation can cause widespread job loss. And, it can lead to more precarious, dangerous, or undesirable work. In addition, some have pushed back against economic orthodoxy, arguing that AI technologies have the potential to substitute for human labor across a wide range of tasks without creating enough new work. However, the direction of innovation is neither magic nor inevitable. And, in order to guide innovation towards the creation of a better future of work, we need to theorize around the fundamental values at stake in work, and how AI can help or hinder them.

This talk argues that debates over the future of work ought to draw much more on egalitarian theories of justice than they currently do. I will illustrate the power of egalitarian theories by making three specific arguments: that AI should be deployed so as to enable people to develop equal capabilities across their lives; that equal meaning at work is a distraction, but the nearby value of relational equality is not; and, that AI could help to realize more gender egalitarian workplaces, although it currently does not.

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