Middlebury

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Greetings, Alumni College Students!

August is just one month away, and I am dreaming of long summer days on the mountain exploring and learning about AI alongside you.

AI is not an easy topic to teach or to learn—the term comprises a myriad of tools and technological approaches that are constantly changing, have wide-ranging impacts on our world, and are marked by intense cultural polarization. Huge questions surround AI, such as the following:

- In what ways will AI replace human labor? Human connection? Human agency?
- What does AI mean for the things we care most about?
- Who benefits and who is left behind by AI? When do the harms outweigh the benefits and (how) can we prevent those harms?
- What is the value of human-ness in an age of AI?
- What choices do we have as individuals about AI?

While our goal this Alumni College is to "Demystify AI," there will be no easy answers to these questions. Rather than seeking certainties, we'll engage in experimentation and conversation to deepen our curiosity, criticality, and care. We'll discuss the historical and social contexts in which AI has emerged and how those contexts shape AI's current and future implementations.

Our sessions will be a combination of discussions and hands-on learning. To prepare for discussions, I would like you to read the following:

Chapters 1, 2, and 4 in *AI Snake Oil* by Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor (108 pages).

Introduction and Chapters 1 and 6 in *Atlas of AI* by Kate Crawford (48 pages total). Note: Chapter 7 is included in the PDF for Chapter 6. We will read it during the week we're together.

"Which AI to Use Now: An Updated Opinionated Guide (Updated Again 2/15)" by Ethan Mollick.

Readings are available as printable or screen-readable PDFs here: https://tinyurl.com/25alumnicollegeAI-readings.

If you prefer to buy a physical copy of the books, feel free to do so. They are excellent reads worthy of your time. If you prefer to listen to the readings, you can [upload PDFs to Sensus Acess](#) and create an audio version: https://tinyurl.com/25alumnicollegeAI-sensus.

In addition to the readings, please complete this short survey to tell me a bit about yourself and your experience with AI: https://tinyurl.com/25alumnicollegeAI-survey.

It would be helpful to have all surveys completed by Friday, August 8, so I can plan classes based on responses.

For our hands-on sessions, you will be working with generative AI tools provided to you by the College. You will have access to Google Gemini, Google NotebookLM, and Microsoft Copilot. If you wish to use personal subscriptions to other AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, etc.) you are welcome to do so, but it is not required or expected. Hands-on sessions will provide structured opportunities to explore the capabilities of general-purpose generative AI tools. Please plan to bring a laptop or internet-connected mobile device (e.g., iPad) so that you can use these tools. If you do not have such a device, please let me know in the survey and I will pair you with another participant who has a device.

I am excited to meet you and to begin our explorations.

With warm regards,

Amy Collier
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