The 2024 Critical AI Funding Landscape

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Introduction

This document is intended to provide an overview of Critical Artificial Intelligence (Critical AI or CAI) in the United States, with a particular focus on projects supported by major humanities funding organizations and the outputs of those projects. Following Rita Raley and Jennifer Rhee (2023), this document defines CAI to be a mode of engagement with artificial intelligence that, "while recognizing the reductive, even absurd aspects of the term," nonetheless undertakes an analysis of AI "as an assemblage of technological arrangements and sociotechnical practices, as concept, ideology, and *dispositif.*" In particular, CAI counters "the pervasive presentism of the discourse of AI" by attending to its history both as technology and as ideology. Although broad, this definition is also exclusionary—AI research institutes funded through the NSF's National Artificial Intelligence Research Institutes program, for instance, would not be considered part of the CAI landscape. The program's 2023 funding call (NSF 2023) seeks "new methods for strengthening AI," reflecting a pervasive assumption among funding bodies in the sciences: that the goal of research is to make progress in AI, where progress is typically understood to mean performance improvements on narrowly defined technical problems. Some of the NSF institutes engage research in the social sciences and ostensibly seek to promote "trustworthiness" or "equity," but these efforts remain limited by a broadly techno-optimist framing that investigates *how*, rather than *whether*, contemporary AI can be used for social good. The NSF-funded Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law & Society, which investigates strategies for participatory governance in AI, does so by "explor[ing] how policymakers at all levels in the U.S. and abroad can foster trust in AI systems" (TRAILS n.d.)—apparently precluding the very real possibility that *distrust* in AI systems is the more desirable research and policy outcome. Another NSF recipient, Carnegie Mellon's AI Institute for Societal Decision-Making, looks to build "hybrid human-AI decision systems that leverage AI capability while ensuring social acceptance" (Carnegie Mellon University n.d.). Leveraging AI comes first, ensuring social acceptance comes second. Both of these institutes do valuable work advancing accountability and explainability in areas where AI systems will inevitably be deployed, but the nature of NSF funding and its

explicit alignment with the geopolitical goals of the United States leaves little room for a broader examination of an ideology that always requires "advancement" and "promotion" (and never "critique" or "suspicion") of AI—thus the pressing need for the *critical* artificial intelligence projects reviewed below. In addition to critical-theoretical approaches, this document also considers research into the pedagogical utility and/or danger of AI to be Critical AI research; by its nature, such work tends to engage the broader problematic of whether AI is or can be socially useful in a way that strictly technical research often does not.

Unfortunately, the scope of this document is limited to the United States (although European organizations are sometimes involved as co-funders). Many of the projects discussed here engage researchers and case studies from across the world, but almost all are based in the U.S. and publish primarily in English-language journals. Humanities and social sciences funding outside the U.S., and especially outside the E.U., is somewhat opaque to those unfamiliar with local languages and academic and nonprofit structures. Identifying global opportunities for CAI research and funding would thus likely require a multilingual, multinational team.

This document examines the following categories of Critical AI research, organized first by scale and scope of project then by funding body:
- Critical AI research centers, particularly those funded through the NEH's "Humanities Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence" initiative;
- Smaller projects like conferences, panels, seminars, fellowships, and books funded by public and private institutions;
- Research clusters and reading groups, which can be assumed to draw funds from humanities departments but are not themselves named as recipients of particular grants.

The complete listing of projects is preceded by a brief set of recommendations for current and future Critical AI initiatives.

Recommendations

For the moment, Critical AI is an area of work that attracts considerable interest from funding bodies—but this interest is tied at least partly to a broader AI economic boom (or bubble), the fate of which is uncertain. This document offers three recommendations for Critical AI research, with the goal of taking advantage of existing investments and ensuring that the resultant work remains relevant in a quickly changing technological and academic environment.

First, existing Critical AI projects frequently lack a significant web presence. With the partial exception of papers published in academic journals, which are typically paywalled, many of the outputs of CAI centers and initiatives are difficult or

impossible for members of the public to find online. Most project sites, if they exist at all, have an "Events" page that lists workshops, conferences, talks, etc.—but these are typically listed as RSVPs or save-the-dates rather than recaps or reports. Together with the preference for broad, ambitious mission statements that appeal to funders, this can have the unfortunate effect of making CAI projects seem like big plans with little follow-through. Making outputs more visible online could help mitigate this problem. The 2023 AIAI Network Kickoff (AIAI 2023) or the NHC "In Our Image" Conference (National Humanities Center 2021) are exemplary in this regard—the respective webpages include video, audio, and text recaps along with recordings of speakers and panels. Although not every organization has the resources for that kind of production, a blog post summarizing a lecture series or an article about a conference in a campus newspaper would go a long way towards foregrounding the actual work being done. Partnering with local humanities organizations, like those discussed under "NEH State Affiliates," would also help to create a more robust record of CAI activities. Such groups lack the funding to support in-depth scholarly work, but can offer valuable infrastructure for public communication.

Second, although CAI projects frequently bring together researchers from multiple disciplines alongside engineers and policy advisors, outputs can sometimes reflect a methodological siloing. For instance, valuable work is being done both from a political-economic perspective that analyzes AI in terms of unequal resource extraction and labor exploitation and from a linguistic perspective that considers AI in terms of its effect on speech and writing patterns. When outputs are limited to journal articles and monographs, restrictions on scope can inhibit conversation between these (and other) perspectives. Critical AI projects, especially long-term projects like research centers, have the opportunity to bring together various strands of critique in less formal settings like workshops and panel discussions. Making these conversations visible to other scholars and the public can emphasize the generativity of the center as a space for original ideation, which can otherwise risk appearing as merely a repository for research work that was happening anyway.

Finally, CAI initiatives find themselves in a somewhat paradoxical relationship with tech boosterism: on the one hand staking scholarly credibility on the thesis that AI models are not as revolutionary as their promoters claim, and on the other relying on public excitement about AI to drive interest in (and funding for) their work. To ensure that the relevance of their research outlasts the current iteration of chatbot hype while remaining seriously engaged with artificial intelligence as such, CAI scholars should work towards *technospecificity*: attention to the technological substrate of AI as a heterogeneous material formation that conditions its social and political effects. Critical and humanistic analysis of microchip design or model

architecture is likely to prove more valuable in the long term than analysis of AI as purely a media discourse, a volatile abstraction subject to the mercurial inclinations of venture capital and popular media. Using "AI" metonymically to refer to a certain contemporary sociotechnical formation is coherent for now, but the term is likely to wear out quickly; the semantic bleaching of "AI" as valuations climb threatens to confine CAI scholarship to the very cultural moment it seeks to criticize. Simply writing "transformer-based language models are…" instead of "AI is…" would be a good first step in mitigating this problem, with further granularity securing further relevance beyond the current hype cycle. Technospecific scholarship can ensure that critical perspectives on machine learning remain useful regardless of changes to the advertising and public perception of AI.

Research Centers

For the purposes of this document, Critical Artificial Intelligence research centers are defined as research organizations that:
- Are dedicated primarily or exclusively to research in CAI;
- Expect to produce outputs in multiple modalities (i.e., not just scholarly publications);
- Expect to release substantial work under the name of the organization, rather than the names of the individual researchers;
- Have acquired funding to continue their work over a period of at least three years.

To date, only the NEH has openly called for proposals to establish new CAI research centers. This section first considers the centers funded through the initial round of the NEH "Humanities Research Centers on Artificial Intelligence" program, then reviews centers established through other means.

NEH Humanities Research Centers on Artificial Intelligence

In 2024, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded $2.72 million to support scholarly research centers across the U.S. dedicated to "exploring the ethical, legal, or societal implications of AI" ("NEH Awards $2.72 Million" 2024). Funding for five additional centers is expected in 2025. The program falls under the agency-wide *Humanities Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence* research initiative, which funds "projects that explore the impacts of AI-related technologies on truth, trust, and democracy; safety and security; and privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties" ("Humanities Perspectives" n.d.). The aims and outputs of the five 2024 awardees are discussed below. Directors are concentrated primarily in STS, cultural studies, and adjacent departments—a trend reflected in the aims of the centers, which tend towards pedagogical and political orientations. Besides scholarly articles, journal issues, and books, the newly established centers also expect to produce

public-facing workshops and expanded AI curricula for humanities students. Most of the centers plan to launch in 2025, so no actual outputs have been produced as of December 2024. Each has received roughly $500,000 (±$10,000) to be used over an initial three-year period.

UC Davis Center for Artificial Intelligence and Experimental Futures (CAIEF)

UC Davis's CAIEF has received $500,000 in NEH funding plus unspecified matching funds from UC Davis College of Letters and Science, Office of the University Provost, Office of Research, and Office of Graduate Studies and plans to begin activities in October 2024. The center seeks to "promote the democratic governance of AI systems by engaging diverse stakeholders in processes of creative worldmaking—crafting the world of tomorrow, together" and "experiment with new AI systems and community-design methods to prototype democratic modes of AI governance and responsible innovation" (Sestito 2024). Director is Colin Milburn (English, STS, and Cinema and Digital Media), whose existing research examines video games and science fiction and their relation to civic engagement (Milburn et al. 2023, Milburn & Wils 2021). Planned outputs for the center include six collaborative projects, three public engagement workshops, one conference, and an online handbook of best practices relating to civil rights and the democratization of AI in the United States ("NEH Awards $2.72 Million" 2024)

Wihanble S'a Center at Bard College

Bard College's Wihanble S'a Center has received $500,000 in NEH funding and plans to begin activities in January 2025. The center seeks "to explore and address the ethical, legal, and societal implications of AI through an Indigenous lens" through "groundbreaking research aimed at developing ethical AI frameworks deeply rooted in Indigenous methodologies," "ensuring that AI technologies reflect diverse perspectives and contribute positively to society" (*Bard News* 2024). Director is Suzanne Kite, an Oglála Lakȟóta artist and academic who has engaged with machine learning in both her scholarly and creative work; her writing on AI has appeared in two recent collections: *Against Reduction: Designing a Human Future with Machines* (Noelani et al. 2021), which Kite also edited, and *Atlas of Anomalous AI* (Vickers & McDowell 2020). Planned outputs for the center include a collaborative research program, interdisciplinary symposia, educational workshop modules, an interdisciplinary fellowship, a visiting scholars program, scholarly articles, and a book on Indigenous protocols for AI development that will guide the creation and refinement of AI wearable and digital technologies ("NEH Awards $2.72 Million" 2024).

Embedding AI in Society Ethically (EASE) Center

North Carolina State University's EASE Center has received $500,000 in NEH funding and plans to begin activities in July 2025. The center seeks "to establish a platform for the necessary integration of humanities perspectives" in conversations about AI and "be the powerhouse behind reflection and development of ethical AI" (Garbarine 2024). Director is Veljko Dubljevic (Philosophy and Religious Studies, STS) with co-directors Alice Cheng (communication), Paul Fyfe (English), Munindar Singh (Computer Science), and Kevin Lee (Law). Dubljevic has published several articles in *AI & Society* (e.g. Pflanzer et al. 2023b) and *AI and Ethics* (e.g. Pflanzer et al. 2023a). Planned outputs for the center include a postdoctoral fellow mentoring program, a graduate minor in AI ethics, an annual conference, and special journal issues on topics such as ethical considerations related to autonomous vehicles, large language models (LLMs), and AI-based technologies for eldercare ("NEH Awards $2.72 Million" 2024).

OU Center for Creativity and Authenticity in AI Cultural Production

The University of Oklahoma, Norman's AI research center has received $498,129 in NEH funding and plans to begin activities in July 2025. The center seeks "to create and sustain means for collaboration regarding the meaning of generative AI for artistic and cultural experience" with special attention to questions of Native American cultural sovereignty (DeLozier 2024). Co-directors are Hunter Heyck (History of Science, Technology, and Medicine), Kim Marshall (Anthropology), and Pete Froslie (Art, Technology, and Culture). None of the co-directors have published scholarly work on AI. Planned output for the center constitutes six research teams investigating questions related to AI and creative and intellectual endeavors, public trust and governance, and Native American cultural sovereignty through a linked set of research projects, interdisciplinary conferences and associated edited volumes, and public lectures ("NEH Awards $2.72 Million" 2024).

[Center for Liberal Arts and AI (CLAAI)](#)

University of Richmond's CLAAI has received $491,863 in NEH funding plus $226,602 in matching funds and plans to begin activities in August 2025. The center seeks to "foster the analysis of, interpretability of, and access to AI by centering humanistic inquiry through the liberal arts" and "serve as a nexus for a consortium of 16 liberal arts colleges across the Southeast to collaborate on research into the social, cultural, and legal possibilities and challenges of AI" (University of Richmond n.d., "NEH Awards $2.72 Million" 2024). Director is Lauren Tilton (Rhetoric & Communication Studies), who has not published scholarly work on AI but has published in DH journals like *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (Arnold & Tilton 2019), *Journal of Cultural Analytics* (Arnold et al. 2019), and *DHQ* (Arnold et al. 2021).

Planned outputs for the center include research fellowships, faculty support grants to enhance AI expertise and expand course offerings in AI ethics, and a public symposium exploring issues related to AI and power and access and the effects of AI technology on the environment ("NEH Awards $2.72 Million" 2024).

Other CAI Research Centers

Currently operating Critical AI research centers are split between academic organizations based at research universities or liberal arts colleges and extramural institutes, all of which are funded primarily through direct grants from private funding bodies (as opposed to open funding calls like the NEH program). DAIR and AI Now, both discussed below, collaborate with academics but largely bill themselves as independent research institutes offering an alternative to corporate research at Google, Microsoft, and other tech giants. AIAI is led by humanities academics at a group of Atlanta-based universities but also involves community organizations and other local affiliates as part of its mandate. The research centers discussed in this section tend to foreground public-facing and community-driven efforts, but details of this work are not always readily available online. For the institutes listed below, scholarly publications and occasional op-eds are the outputs most visible on the web.

[Atlanta Interdisciplinary AI Network (AIAI)](#)

The AIAI Network was established in 2023 with a $1.3 million grant awarded by the Mellon Foundation to Emory University with partners at the Georgia Institute of Technology and Clark Atlanta University. AIAI defines itself as "Atlanta Focused" and "Humanities Forward"; their mission statement identifies Atlanta's history of civil rights as the starting point for a "justice-oriented approach to AI" that "is possible when humanistic ways of thinking come together with technical knowledge and community expertise" (AIAI Network n.d.). Although many of the projects funded through the network are Atlanta-specific, the first round of seed grants awarded in 2023 supports a variety of broader Critical AI and digital humanities projects. To date, the network has hosted an occasional speaker series and a workshop on applying AI methods to public records research. Projects funded through the network's seed grant program plan to host conferences, run coding workshops, and produce toolkits; unfortunately, lack of web presence makes it difficult to assess how much of this work has actually taken place. Compared to the other centers discussed in this section, AIAI takes a broader view of "AI" and includes projects that promote data work or digital humanities research without an explicit focus on artificial intelligence (AIAI Network 2024). The steering committee is made up mostly of humanities academics—members include Charmayne Patterson (History, Clark), Lauren Klein (English, Emory), Brandeis Marshall (CEO,

DataedX), Carl DiSalvo (Computing, Georgia Tech) André Brock (Media Studies, Georgia Tech), Dan Sinykin (English, Emory), and Ben Miller (Writing, Emory).

Distributed Artificial Intelligence Research Institute (DAIR)

DAIR was founded by Timnit Gebru in 2021 shortly after her departure from Google following the publishing of the "stochastic parrots" paper (Bender et al. 2021), with initial funding from the MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Kapor Center. DAIR emphasizes a "distributed" research ethos, pursuing "independent, community-rooted" scholarship that counters the centralizing and standardizing tendencies of "Big Tech's pervasive influence" (DAIR n.d.)—a personal issue for Gebru and colleague Alex Hanna, who also left Google to join DAIR (Irfan 2022). Because of the public controversy surrounding Gebru's dismissal from Google, DAIR's launch received considerable attention in the press (Coldeway 2021, Simonite 2021, Tiku 2021). Both the initial coverage and DAIR's subsequent work emphasize an oppositional stance towards Google, OpenAI, and other representatives of "Big Tech." DAIR produces a biweekly podcast called "Mystery AI Hype Theater 3000" and supports scholarly work through fellowships and internships. Research funded by DAIR has recently been presented at ICLR (Hadgu et al. 2023) and NeurIPS (Sefala et al. 2021) and published in *First Monday* (Gebru & Torres 2024) and *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* (Miceli & Posada 2022). This selection of publishing venues, most of which cater to tech researchers, reflects the backgrounds of Gebru and Hanna as career computer scientists and former Google researchers.

AI Now Institute

The AI Now Institute is an independent research institute launched in 2017 with funding from the Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, Mozilla Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and others. They aim to "develop policy strategy to redirect away from the current trajectory: unbridled commercial surveillance, consolidation of power in very few companies, and a lack of public accountability" ("About US," n.d.). AI Now produces essay collections and policy recommendations; the institute also held an annual symposium from 2016 to 2019. Recent Critical AI projects include "AI Nationalism(s)" (2024) and "Confronting Tech Power" (2023). Most of the leadership and contributorship of AI Now is composed of extramural researchers and policy advisors, but the institute often publishes work by academics; frequent contributors include Susannah Glickman (History, Stony Brook University) and Rashida Richardson (Law and Political Science, Northeastern University). Current Co-Executive Directors are Amba Kak and Sara Myers West, both of whom recently completed terms as Senior Advisors on AI for the FTC. West has written extensively about data and AI and has published work in humanities and social sciences journals

including *New Media & Society* (Paris et al. 2023, West 2018), *Catalyst* (West 2020), and *Media and Communication* (West 2017). Most of the research undertaken through AI Now is published directly on their website, but fellows and directors often publish summaries of the center's findings in outlets like *The Atlantic* (Kak and West 2023), *MIT Technology Review* (Kak et al. 2023), and *Financial Times* (West 2023).

Humanities Understanding of the Machine-Assisted Nexus (HUMAN)

The HUMAN initiative at Lake Forest College's Krebs Center for the Humanities received a 3.5 year, $1.2 million grant from the Mellon Foundation in November of 2023. Led by English professor Davis Schneiderman, the initiative aims to "address the urgent need for an informed understanding of the interplay between the humanities and the fast-evolving realm of artificial intelligence to ensure ethical developments, promote equitable technological advancement, and nurture meaning-ful human-AI collaboration" (Lake Forest College 2024). HUMAN plans to sponsor twelve courses for the 2024-25 academic year in departments including English, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, Linguistics, Philosophy, and Religion. The initiative supports several sub-projects, including a multi-year book club, a chatbot for exploring the collections of the Chicago History Museum, a student internship through the Sweet Water Foundation, an artist residency program planned for 2025 and 2026, and a capstone symposium planned for 2027 (Lake Forest College n.d.).

Critical AI

Rutgers University's Critical AI interdisciplinary initiative was launched in 2021 with funding from Center for Cultural Analysis and the Rutgers Center for Cognitive Science and seeks to facilitate "collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches" on AI "to envision new thinking, anticipate social and environmental outcomes, shape forward-thinking policies, engage broad publics, and educate a new generation of students and citizens" (Critical AI n.d.). The initiative is directed by a steering committee helmed by Lauren M.E. Goodlad (English). Since 2023, Critical AI has published an eponymous journal that "hopes to bring critical thinking of the kind that interpretive disciplines foster into dialogue with work by technologists and others who share the understanding of interdisciplinary research as a powerful tool for building accountable technology in the public interest" (Goodlad 2023). Besides the journal, the center also sponsors a wide array of programming:
- Pedagogical resources for teaching on and with AI, including of a "living document" on the pedagogy of Critical AI literacies (Stoerger & Goodlad 2024) and a complementary Critical AI literacies guide for students (Critical AI @ Rutgers & Design Justice Labs n.d.);
- Public symposia on "Research in the Era of Generative AI" (Critical AI 2024) and "Critical AI Literacy in a Time of Chatbots" (Critical AI 2023) respectively;

- The Design Justice AI Global Humanities Institute, a two-week meeting convened at the University of Pretoria in July 2024 to "explore community-centered, humanistic, and interdisciplinary engagement of "Generative AI," the statistical modeling of human languages, communication, arts, and cultures" (Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes n.d.).

Unfortunately, important parts of the criticalai.org website were down at the time of writing, preventing a more detailed description of the outputs described above.

Humanities for AI

Princeton's Humanities for AI research group, funded through the Center for Digital Humanities @ Princeton and an assortment of intramural and extramural grants, "is a series of projects, initiatives, and conversations that centers humanities values and approaches in the development, use, and interpretation of the field broadly known as 'AI'" ("Humanities for AI" n.d.). Most recently, Humanities for AI has hosted a speaker series on "African Languages in the Age of AI" and a yearlong forum on large language models ("Princeton LLM Forum" n.d.). The research group hosts a number of projects, mostly related to NLP infrastructures for text extraction and processing. One such effort is "The Ends of Prosody," which applies ML-enhanced distant reading methodologies to the Princeton Prosody Archive and plans to hold a conference in May 2025 ("The Ends of Prosody" n.d.).

Smaller Grant Awardees

Besides the large grants for research centers discussed above, public and private funding organizations have also sponsored smaller-scale scholarly and public outreach work in Critical AI. This section first reviews projects funded by the NEH through grant programs other than the Humanities Research Centers. The next subsection examines CAI projects funded through state NEH affiliates, most of which take the form of one-off lectures or workshops. The final subsection considers a variety of CAI projects funded primarily by private foundations.

National Endowment for the Humanities

The NEH "Humanities Research Centers on Artificial Intelligence" grant program discussed earlier is part of an agency-wide *Humanities Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence* initiative. However, the other grant programs listed as part of the initiative are not AI-specific. Most of the CAI funding has been awarded through the the "Dangers and Opportunities of Technology: Perspectives from the Humanities" program, which included a "special encouragement" for AI-related projects in its 2023-2024 call for proposals ("Dangers and Opportunities of Technology"). CAI

work funded through this program is listed below; unless otherwise specified, information comes from the NEH's public Award Search function.

- "Robot Existentialism: Artificial Intelligence and the Limits of Rationality" ($147,840, October 2023-June 2025), to Ariela Tubert and Justin Tiehen (both Philosophy, University of Puget Sound) for a monograph of the same name. To date, the grant has resulted in articles published in *Philosophical Studies* (Tubert & Tiehen 2024) and *Inquiry* (Tubert & Tiehen 2023), as well as a guest appearance by the PIs on the "Ethical Machines" podcast ("Existentialist Risk" 2024).

- "Machine Listening in the Age of Artificial Intelligence" ($149,840, September 2024-August 2026) to Edward B. Kang (Media, Culture, and Communication, NYU) and Juana Becerra Sandoval (IBM) for a public-facing speaker series, a special issue on machine listening systems, a piece in *The Atlantic*, and a whitepaper for NEH. To date, none of the proposed outputs are available online.

- "Constructing the 'I' in Artificial Intelligence: Perceptions of Teaching with Chat GPT in Relation to Cultural Identity" ($144,151, June 2024-May 2026) to Cristina Stephany (Teacher Education, CSU Dominguez Hills), Mike Karlin (Liberal Studies, CSUDH), and 'Alohilani Okamura (Teacher Education, The University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa) for an ethnographic study of ChatGPT in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. To date, none of the proposed outputs are available online.

- "Bringing the Past to the Future: Slavery and Artificial Intelligence on the Battleground of Popular Culture" ($137,974, August 2024-July 2026) to Anna Mae Duane (English, University of Connecticut) and Stephen Dyson (Political Science, UConn) for a podcast series and book chapters on the role of slavery in shaping popular understanding of ethical engagement with emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence. To date, none of the proposed outputs are available online.

- "Imagining AI in organized labor: Struggles over the value of cultural work" ($149,971, June 2024-May 2025) to Julia B. Ticona (Communication, University of Pennsylvania) and Caitlin Petre (Journalism and Media Studies, Rutgers) for scholarly writing on generative AI and organized labor in the culture industries. To date, none of the proposed outputs are available online.

- "[Teaching Art History with AI](#)" ($66,329, October 2023-April 2024) to Alison Langmead (Visual Media Workshop & School of Computing and Information, University of Pittsburgh) for a peer-supported pedagogy convening to create resources for integrating image generation technologies into teaching in art history and visual and material culture. To date, the grant has resulted in a how-to-guide for similar workshop series, a bibliography of popular and scholarly sources, and teaching modules (Open Educational Resources) available on the project website (Teaching Art History with AI n.d.).

- "AI and the Future of U.S. Intelligence" ($74,928, August 2024-July 2026) to Kathleen Vogel (School for the Future of Innovation in Society, Arizona State University) for a monograph and articles on the implications of AI for the U.S intelligence and national security apparatus. Vogel has since published in related areas, but none of the articles mention the NEH as a funder.
- "AI-Powered Influence, Deception and Manipulation" ($74,991, June 2024-May 2026) to Peter Asaro (Media Studies, The New School) for a book about "Digital Manipulation" aimed at general audiences. To date, the book is still forthcoming.

The NEH has also supported AI-related projects through the "Digital Humanities Advancement Grants" program, but this work generally focuses on applying AI and machine learning methods to text retrieval or archival work and thus falls outside the scope of "Critical AI" as defined here. CAI work funded through other (non-DH) NEH programs includes the following:

- "Developing a Public Liberal Arts Humanities Curriculum: Empowering Students to Navigate an AI World" ($25,000, June 2024-May 2025) through the "Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education: Exploration Grants" program to Emily Todd (Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Eastern Connecticut University) and Miriam Wallace (Dean of College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, University of Illinois Springfield) to develop humanities curricula on generative AI (Jessee 2024).
- "Unboxing Artificial Intelligence: An International Collaboration Bringing Humanities Perspectives to AI" ($24,970, October 2021-September 2022) through the "Collaborative Research" grant program to Lauren Goodlad (English, Rutgers) to promote international collaboration on humanities perspectives in AI research. Outputs from this project are available via the Rutgers Critical AI initiative; see "Critical AI" under "Other CAI Research Centers" for more.

NEH State Affiliates

NEH-funded state and jurisdictional humanities councils have supported talks and panels that could be classified as Critical AI work. While these events naturally lack the depth of a well-funded research project, they do play an important role in bringing the concerns of CAI to a broader public. All are open-invite, and most are hosted in public libraries or community centers. Select examples include:

- Talks and webinars sponsored by Arizona Humanities (2023a, 2023b) on "Staying Human in the Age of AI"and knowledge creation in the era of generative AI, HumanitiesDC (2023) on generative AI in creative fields, FloridaHumanities (2023) on AI and creative writing, New Hampshire Humanities (2019) on ethical challenges of AI, Humanities Texas (2023) on ChatGPT as a pedagogical tool, and Vermont Humanities (2024) on AI and the digital humanities;

- Panel discussions funded by Connecticut Humanities (2024) on AI in education, Illinois Humanities (2017) on the ethical and geopolitical implications of AI, New Jersey Council for the Humanities (2023) on ChatGPT and the public humanities, and Vermont Humanities (2023) on AI ethics ;
- A $20,000 grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities (2017) to Montclair State University to produce public discussions and film screenings comparing Western and Japanese perspectives on AI;
- An 8-week free virtual class by Humanities North Dakota (2023) titled "Artificial Intelligence and Its Impact On Humanity";
- An 8-week free in-person course by Oregon Humanities (n.d.) on artificial intelligence, futurism, and modern art planned for spring 2025.

Private Foundations

Private funders have also supported a variety of smaller-scale Critical AI projects. As with research centers, the largest of these grants tend to go to researchers in the computational sciences—programs like the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's "Trust in AI" initiative or Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's "Humboldt Professorships for AI" frequently engage questions of ethics and transparency, but do so through a relatively narrow technical lens that assumes further advancements in AI to be both possible and desirable. Critical AI projects, by contrast, are typically funded by humanities-focused organizations and tend to foreground pedagogical, social, or aesthetic concerns. Select examples, organized by funder, are listed below.

- The **Mellon Foundation** awarded $150,000 to Carleton College in 2018 to assess the "challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence in liberal arts education" and respond with new classes and updates to curricula (Carleton 2019). Mellon also awarded $225,000 to Cambridge University to support a seminar titled "[Histories of Artificial Intelligence: A Geneaolgy of Power](#)" hosted jointly by the departments of English and History and Philosophy of Science. From May 2020 to December 2021, the seminar hosted a weeklong summer school, a monthly reading group, a series of public events, and a concluding symposium (University of Cambridge n.d.). A summary of the seminar's findings and related papers were published in a special issue of *British Journal of the History of Science Themes* (Ali et al.2023);
- The **Getty Foundation** granted $160,000 for research and $200,000 for implementation through the Pacific Standard Time program (Getty 2024) to *All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace*, an ongoing multimedia exhibition and performance series on AI by REDCAT arts center in Los Angeles that "addresses one of the most pressing issues of our time—the impact of artificial intelligence—by proposing alternative directions for its future and how it changes the relationship between the human and non-human (REDCAT 2024);

- The **Henry Luce Foundation** awarded $425,000 to launch the Iliff Artificial Intelligence Institute at the Iliff School of Theology (Henry Luce Foundation 2018), which hosted four virtual AI conferences from 2019 to 2021 on topics including "AI, Tech, and the End of the Anthropocene" (ai.iliff, 2021) and "Race, Surveillance, and Technology of Resistance" (ai.iliff, 2020);
- The **National Humanities Center** has sponsored several Critical AI events and initiatives. The 2021 "In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Humanities" virtual conference brought together humanities academics with tech researchers and software professionals and produced a series of webinars, podcast episodes, and pedagogical resources (National Humanities Center 2021). A donation from Google supported the 2021-2024 NHC "Responsible AI Project," which supported development of fifteen undergraduate AI courses in humanities departments (NHC 2024a) and was renewed for 2024-2026 to develop similar courses at community colleges and minority-serving institutions (NHC 2024b).

Research Clusters, Working Groups, etc.

Because the field is relatively new, most Critical AI research happens outside of explicitly AI-focused projects. Small-scale CAI initiatives like research clusters and reading groups are often hosted in digital humanities centers or humanities research institutes and funded intramurally or through small extramural grants. In contrast to full-fledged research centers, these groups generally do not produce major events and instead focus on facilitating scholarly research and publishing within a particular institution. PIs and affiliated faculty tend to have extensive publishing records in digital humanities, but most have not written directly about artificial intelligence; as such, events and articles often reflect an interest in AI as a research methodology rather than a research subject. Select examples are listed below.

- The Humanities Institute at **UC Santa Cruz** sponsors the "Humanities in the Age of Artificial Intelligence" cluster, which seeks to facilitate "humanist experi-mentation... focusing on the promise of large language models (LLMs) in conjunction with other machine learning systems" (The Humanities Institute n.d.). PI is Minghui Hu (History), with affiliated faculty in History of Conscious-ness, Computational Media, Linguistics, and Literature. Since October 2023, the cluster has hosted a series of lunch meetings and invited talks, most recently by Wenyi Shang on November 18, 2024 (The Humanities Institute 2024).
- The Simpson Center at the **University of Washington** sponsors the "AI, Creativity, and the Humanities" crossdisciplinary research cluster, which "explores humanistic approaches to AI and its impacts on historic and contemporary notions of human creativity as pertains to writing, artistic creation, reading and interpretation, translation, as well as research" (Simpson Center n.d.). PIs are Geoffrey Turnovsky (French & Italian), Anna Preus (English), Melanie Walsh

(Information), and Golden M. Owens (Cinema & Media Studies). The cluster has hosted a works-in-progress meeting on Poetry and LLMs and has a prompt engineering workshop planned for February 2025.

- The Humanities Research Institute at the **University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign** sponsors the "Generative AI Futures" reading group, which seeks to "sustain a community at the intersection of arts, humanities, and technology with a focus on speculative fiction, science fiction, and generative artificial intelligence" (HRI, n.d.). The group hosts monthly meetings to discuss SF films, novels, and stories and their relation to generative AI.
- The Institute for Research in the Humanities at the **University of Wisconsin-Madison** sponsors the "Uncertainty and AI (Un-AI)" interdisciplinary research team, which "endeavors to establish lasting institutional and intellectual linkages to grapple with AI holistically… starting from its most disquieting feature—the sense of *uncertainty* surrounding its future trajectory, present reality, and historical contingencies" (Institute for Research in the Humanities n.d.). PIs are Devin Kennedy (History) and Annette Zimmerman (Philosophy), who has written about AI for *Nature Machine Intelligence* (Porter et al. 2022) and the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (Zimmerman & Lee-Stronach 2022, Zimmerman et al. 2022). Un-AI holds weekly work-in-progress meetings.
- The Critical Digital Humanities Initiative at the **University of Toronto** Digital Humanities Network sponsors the "AI and Humanities Lab," which "focuses on building critical AI literacy that humanities scholars, students, and the public need to navigate the challenges of the AI Age" (Digital Humanities Network n.d.). PI is LK Bertram (History). The lab hosts virtual workshops and talks.
- The Humanities Institute at the **University of Connecticut** sponsors the "Humanistic AI Working Group," which meets to share research and funding opportunities; the Institute has also hosted panels on AI companionship and generative AI art (Humanities Institute 2024).
- The Humanities Institute at **The University of Texas at Austin** sponsors the "AI, Science & Culture Initiative (AISCI)," which "serves as a hub for humanistic and humanistically led collaborative projects devoted to better understanding the social, political, ethical, and cultural dimensions of science, technology, health, and the environment" (Humanities Institute n.d.). PI is S. Scott Graham (Rhetoric & Writing). Despite its name, AISCI has mostly funded health humanities projects. Future plans include seed funding for collaborative scholarship and research training for graduate students.
- The Cogut Institute for the Humanities at **Brown University** sponsors the "Models-Scale-Context: AI and the Humanities" collaborative humanities lab, which considers the imagination and implementation of AI as "an invitation to explore the modes of thinking, being, and doing that have shaped AI and could

shape its possible futures" (Cogut Institute n.d.). PIs are Holly Case (History) and Suresh Venkatasubramanian (Computer Science). In the fall of 2024, the lab hosted an inaugural mixer, an invited talk by Luca Viganò on AI and fairy tales, and a series of reading groups. The Cogut Institute has funded the lab through the 2027-28 academic year.

- The Institute for Public Knowledge at **New York University** sponsors the "AI in Society" working group, a "collaborative, cross-disciplinary forum" dedicated to "research on real-world applications of AI and the practices surrounding them, including their development, dissemination, and usage" (Institute for Public Knowledge n.d.). PIs are Simone Zhang (Sociology), Nahoko Kameo (Sociology), and Edward B. Kang (Media, Culture, and Communication), who has published work on AI in *Big Data & Society* (Kang 2023) and presented on AI at *FAccT* (Orr & Kang 2024, Kang 2023). The working group hosts works-in-progress meetings on AI and its relation to labor, creativity, and democracy, among other topics.
- The College of Arts and Sciences at **Texas Tech University** has proposed the 'HumainTech" center, which would "investigate the transformative impact of AI on education and the workplace, but also its inherent dangers of systemic bias, misinformation, and misuse of intellectual property" from a critical and ethical perspective (College of Arts and Sciences n.d.). The center would host an annual conference, develop pedagogical tools, and create a "Mobile AI Lab" to deliver public workshops and information sessions.

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