

AI Geopolitics & Geostrategy

UGRA_016596

Departments	Data, Analytics, Technology and Artificial Intelligence (DATA), Dept. of Operations, Innovation & Data Sciences
Teaching Languages	English
ECTS	5
Teacher responsible	Xavier Busquets Carretero - xavier.busquets@esade.edu

Course Goals

Understand AI as a Strategic Asset in Global Power Structures

Students will analyze how AI functions as a source of geopolitical leverage

Critically Assess the Role of AI Ecosystems

Students will evaluate the shift from AI value chains to ecosystems and network effects that shape global influence.

Compare National AI Strategies (U.S. vs China)

Students will contrast approaches to AI development between major powers, focusing on industrial policy, surveillance models, and military applications.

Examine AI's Role in Economic, Military, and Information Warfare

Students will investigate how AI enables cyber-attacks, financial manipulation, and social control, using case studies like the Colonial Pipeline attack.

Develop Strategic Thinking in AI Geopolitics: AI Governance and the raise of the Surveillance State

Students will apply knowledge in debates, crafting policy recommendations and evaluating AI governance models.

Teaching methodology

1. Case-Based Learning: Use real-world case studies (e.g., Colonial Pipeline, Maersk China's Safe Cities) to ground theory in practical events. Encourage students to analyze the strategic use of AI in each context.
2. Critical Readings & Discussions. Weekly assigned readings from leading thinkers (e.g., Kissinger, Thiel, Scharre, Marquis, Turchin). Structured debates to engage different ideological and strategic perspectives
3. Comparative Analysis: Students compare and critique AI strategies from various countries, particularly USA vs China. Assign short comparative essays or position papers.

4. Guest Lectures: Invite experts from military, cybersecurity, or AI policy to enhance learning. Allow Q&A to connect theory to practice.

Description

Short description

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a weapon of power, influence, and control. Nations that master AI will dominate the global economy, military conflicts, and information warfare. Those that fail will be at the mercy of AI-enabled surveillance states, weaponized financial systems, and cyber-attacks. AI is no longer just about automating business processes—it is reshaping the very nature of sovereignty, governance, and conflict.

This course takes an approach to AI geopolitics where states must treat AI as a strategic asset, on par with nuclear weapons, energy reserves, and financial infrastructure. A key theme of this course is the shift from AI as a value chain (computation, energy, data, talent) to AI as an ecosystem—where power is determined by network effects, strategic bottlenecks, and weaponized interdependencies. AI-driven warfare is not just about military conflicts; it extends to economic sanctions, energy grid attacks, financial AI manipulations, and information warfare.

We will examine AI weapons—from autonomous drones to cyber-attack algorithms—alongside AI's role in economic warfare, where AI-driven financial sanctions, algorithmic trading, and data monopolization are reshaping global power structures. Who controls AI will control the world.

By the end of this course, students will understand AI geopolitics through the lens of hard power, military strategy, and economic warfare—not idealistic regulatory debates. They will be equipped to analyze AI's role in war, trade, finance, and national security from a realist, security-first perspective.

Bibliography

Kissinger, H; Schmidt, E; Huttenlocher, D., *The Age of Artificial Intelligence*, Little, Brown and Company (Book)

Christopher Marquis and Kenyan Qiao, *Mao and Markets*, Yale University (Book)

Alexander Karp and Nicholas Zamiska, *The technological Republic*, The Bodley Head (Book)

Scharre, P, *Four Battlegrounds: Power in the age of AI*, Norton and Company (Book)

Assessment

Tool	Assessment tool	Category	Weight %
Learning journal	Learning Journal	Ordinary round	50.00%
Individual or team exercises	Mid term essay	Ordinary round	30.00%
Quizzes/tests	Quizzes	Ordinary round	10.00%

Tool	Assessment tool	Category	Weight %
Attendance and punctuality	Class Participation	Ordinary round	10.00%

PROGRAMS

G114-Global Governance Exchange Program (Undergraduates: Law)
 G114 Year 1 (Optative)

G114S-Global Governance Exchange Program (Undergraduates: Law)
 G114S Year 1 (Optative)

GEL23-Bachelor of Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)
 GEL23 Year 2 (Optative)
 GEL23 Year 1 (Optative)