

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

RESIDENTIAL FELLOWSHIPS | 2027–2028

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE | INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY | PRINCETON, NJ

Open to junior and senior scholars in the social sciences and related disciplines.
Applicants may apply for the theme described below or on the basis of other projects.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 15, 2026



Understanding AI

2027–2028 COLLABORATIVE THEME SEMINAR

From mechanical automata to generative models, each new form of artificial intelligence has arrived as a provocation—to existing ideas about knowledge, labor, governance, and what it means to be human. Today, the use of AI tools promises to reshape the distribution of goods, services, wealth, and opportunity; generates narratives with real effects in policy, employment, and geopolitics; and threatens to unsettle categories that once seemed stable: expertise, rights, and institutions. Despite this reach, we do not yet have a rich accounting of AI as a social, cultural, historical, economic, and political phenomenon. Nor do we yet have conceptual frameworks adequate to understanding its histories, social forms, and meanings. Building this accounting and these frameworks calls for theory, interpretation, and empirical study, and for the cross-fertilization among them that a collaborative seminar makes possible.

What makes AI an unusual object of study is that it is simultaneously the subject of the stories told about it. It functions as infrastructure for meaning-making and social action while also acting as a meaning-maker and actor in its own right. The question is not only what uses of AI do to society, but also how we think with these tools, how that alters thinking, and what we and AI are becoming together.

Understanding AI invites scholars from across the social sciences—anthropology, sociology, political science, law, economics, history, and related fields—to study the uses and implications of AI. What does it mean to be a person, a citizen, a worker, a rights-holder when algorithmic systems increasingly mediate social life? What narratives and imaginaries accompany AI, and how do they authorize particular futures while foreclosing others? How have different historical periods, world regions, and intellectual traditions approached questions of artificial intelligence and human agency? How does the development and deployment of AI intersect with the concentration of capital, geopolitical competition, and the infrastructures of war and empire?

Applications are invited for projects that engage these themes across a range of cases, contexts, and methods. Because the questions at stake exceed any single research agenda, collaborative work is integral to the seminar, and applicants should be prepared to engage this dimension of the work.

Understanding AI will be convened by Alondra Nelson, Harold F. Linder Professor in the School of Social Science.

APPLICATION INFORMATION



1 Einstein Drive | Princeton, NJ 08540

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