Avenues New York

Thirteen Ways of Looking at...

Artificial Intelligence

October 2026

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

by Wallace Stevens

I
Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II
I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III
The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV
A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V
I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI
Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII
O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII
I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX
When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X
At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI
He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII
The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII
It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

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I

Art and Creativity

AI Behind the Scenes: Supporting Children's Creativity Through Art

Faculty: Scarlett Cheng and Grace Hu

Description:

How can AI support children's creativity without taking over the creative process?

In this session, we'll explore how AI can work behind the scenes to help adults design creative experiences, help children visualize ideas, and extend or present their original artwork in new ways. Through examples from Lower Division art projects—including an interactive 3D grocery store, a Chinese character learning website, and animations created from students' original artwork—we'll explore possibilities that can extend from the classroom into the home. Parents will see simple demonstrations, try a short hands-on activity, and leave with practical ideas and strategies participants can use at home to create new art experiences with their children.

The Artist's Hand or Not? An introduction to the myth of making followed by a hands-on, collaborative experience originated by artist Sol Lewitt

Faculty: Kate Howard

Description:

What does it mean to create an artwork? From Renaissance workshops to photography and Sol LeWitt's instruction based pieces, artists have explored and tested the notion that authorship requires the artist's hand. Now, AI extends this conversation into uncharted waters, where artists can not only co-ideate / iterate with an AI co-pilot, but relinquish image generation entirely.

This talk explores the scope of how AI is reshaping our ideas of the creative process, including authorship, effort, and what defines a valued artistic experience. It will address the following questions: if the artist doesn't have to touch the work, what exactly is the art? Is it possible for the artist's AI assisted construction to be truly meaningful? And how much does a nostalgic view of the act of making influence us?

II
Children, Family Life, and Technology

The Killer AI App Is Confidence: Parenting and Teaching for AI Resiliency

Faculty: JP Connolly

Description:

Every new assistive technology has offered reduced friction and offloaded cognitive tasks, but AI's ability to produce something plausible and complete, immediately, with no struggle, represents a major shift in the learning and professional environments. This capacity makes our new tools helpful for those who have already developed a sophisticated and skilled creative practice; for others without the self-confidence that comes with skill and competence, AI offers simultaneous off ramps from productive struggle, and the feelings of uncertainty that punctuate the learning process.

In this session, we will explore a common theme that has emerged from conversations and workshops I've held with educators from private, public, and charter schools in over 10 states: specifically and explicitly fostering students' academic self-confidence—a well-founded belief that they can do hard things without being rescued—is the critical skill in the AI era. We'll examine that claim in an educational context briefly, then spend the majority of our time on what this moment asks of us as parents, working through real situations from home and school. The question underneath all of them is the same: will our children grow up steering, or getting steered?

Cultivating a Love of Reading in an Increasingly Digital World

Faculty: Marytere Garza, Charlene Sung, and Sara Hayes

Description:

As AI and digital technologies compete for children's attention, we'll explore in interactive ways how we can help children develop a lasting love of sustained, engaged reading. Together, we'll examine research on the power of choice in developing confident and motivated readers, reflect on our own experiences as readers, and consider how giving children greater autonomy in what they read can foster both engagement and a lifelong love of reading.

III
Culture and Politics

What the History of Education Technology Tells Us About Today: The Dangers of Using Commercial AI Products in Education

Faculty: JD Pirtle

Description:

The sudden, deliberate imposition of generative AI products, such as ChatGPT and Claude, on K-12 schools, colleges, and universities, is not a new phenomenon. The push by technology companies to intertwine their interests with schooling is part of a long history of private enterprise attempting to co-opt or capture schooling in the United States, to serve the material and ideological interests of those enterprises.

In this course, I will briefly detail the history of education technology in the United States in order to help us understand what is now at stake, and what parents, caregivers, and educators can do about it. We will discuss the dangers to teaching and learning posed by the introduction of AI chatbots and companion apps to children and adolescents, and examine what alternative technology movements and new technological imaginaries can offer to foster progressive education and social democracy in schools.

Along the way we will ask and attempt to collectively answer crucial questions about education technology, such as “Who decides what technology should be created and introduced to schools?”; “Who is creating education technology and for whom?”; “What purpose(s) does technology currently serve in education?”; “What purpose(s) should technology serve in education?”

Attention Sanctuaries

Faculty: Jonathan Scolnick

Description:

Some would argue that our attention is being fracked by the biggest companies or the smartest people in tech. This is the new economy. Talking heads debate the extent of the destruction: whether AI will supercharge the depletion of our attention spans, alter our common humanity, or even obliterate the human race.

I am no authority on any of this, and this workshop will offer neither another platform for debate nor despair. Instead, it is for those of us deciding what we can do, in community, to retain—and retrain—our attention.

Attensity! A Manifesto of the Attention Liberation Movement describes attention sanctuaries as protected spaces that shield human focus from digital exploitation and restore our collective attentional agency. Let's gather to identify the attention sanctuaries already thriving in our communities and explore how we might build and strengthen them—for our students and ourselves.

Beyond the AI Arms Race: What the US and China Can Learn from Each Other

Faculty: Jesse Field

Description:

The race between the US and China to develop superintelligent systems is often cited as the reason why neither country can afford to slow down the training of frontier models. When we look beyond the competition, we see that each country has very different approaches to regulation, architecture and vision for AI. In many ways, the two approaches are complementary and, taken together, could point to a safer, more environmentally sustainable, human-centered approach to AI. In this class we'll look at the approach that each country has taken and discuss what we might learn from getting beyond the hype of great power competition.

IV
Economy, Labor, and Law

AI and Government: Rivals and Allies

Faculty: Stephen Bonnett

Description:

A major theme of the current election cycle is government regulation of AI data centers. But the interconnections between the future of AI and government go far deeper. Investment in AI is pushing up the yields on government debt, increasing the burden of interest payments on the federal budget. And AI thought leaders have advocated for changes to tax policy given disruptions to the labor market that AI might bring.

So what is the most productive way for government to respond to and regulate this new technology? Let's talk about it.

Field Notes from the Rewiring: What I'm Hearing from CEOs, Governors, and Universities About AI and Work

Presenter & Avenues Parent: Blair Miller

Description:

Avenues parent, Blair Miller is helping build RAISE US, a national nonprofit launched this year to help American workers through the AI transition. Co-chaired by former Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and former Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, it has raised over $600M from Fortune 100 employers, the major AI labs, and national foundations, and works with a coalition of companies and a handful of states on what comes next for training and jobs.

Blair will share what she's learning from that work: where the evidence is solid, where it's thin, and what she's still unsure about—including what's happening to entry-level work, which is the part most relevant to anyone raising a teenager. She'll close with the question that keeps pulling her back: if machines keep getting better at producing answers, what becomes more valuable in people? Her tentative answer—what she writes about as "the humanist renaissance"—is judgment, attention, discernment, comfort with risk, and the ability to ask a good question.

There will be plenty of time for discussion.

The Jobs of Tomorrow: What History Teaches Us About Preparing Our Kids for an AI World

Presenter & Avenues Parent: Ranjan Roy

Description:

AI is changing work fast, and the relevant question on most parents' mind is what should we be teaching our kids? This session draws on over a decade inside AI, watching how the technology actually gets used by ordinary professionals rather than how it gets talked about. It pairs that ground-level view with the history of technological change, where the pattern is consistent: the thing that gets automated was never the valuable part. Through live demos and group discussion, we'll work together to identify the skills that will matter most for the jobs of today and tomorrow, and parents will leave with practical ways to help their kids build them. You don't need to understand AI to guide your child through this. You need to understand change, and you've already lived through several of them.

V
Education and Its Purposes

AI & The Evolution of Academic Equity

Faculty: Jonathan Deegan

Description:

There have always been gaps in the educational system. Access to technology, test prep, and private tutors has long given students from different socioeconomic backgrounds vastly different experiences in school. As AI tool adoption continues to grow, these equity gaps are simultaneously being bridged by free, on-demand tools and widened by unequal access to premium tech.

In this session, we will explore how AI is redefining academic fairness and digital literacy and will attempt to answer the question: "what we can do to ensure every student—regardless of background—is empowered to navigate this new educational landscape."

Information Literacy, Discernment, and Thoughtful Use

Faculty: Alia Methven and Yi-Ching Hsieh

Description:

Information literacy and AI literacy are becoming increasingly inseparable. Today's online environment is vast, complex, and ever-changing—never has so much information been at our fingertips. It can be challenging for students, and sometimes even adults, to distinguish what is reliable from what is not.

In this session, we'll explore how Avenues is helping students develop the critical-thinking and information-literacy skills needed to navigate this landscape. We'll also consider how large language models (LLMs) generate information and why understanding where information comes from—and knowing how to question, verify, and evaluate what AI produces—is becoming an essential part of information literacy.

We'll then apply that same lens of thoughtful evaluation to a few emerging AI tools, considering them against our teaching and learning framework and exploring when and how they can meaningfully support student learning, and consider how these principles might help parents navigate these same questions at home.

VI
Ethics and Morality

How Does AI Intersect with Ethical Dilemmas?

Faculty: Sarah Heard and Angela Hiner

Description:

AI is now pervasive in our lives. Yet we do not often give sufficient consideration to the underlying ethical questions inherent in our use of AI.

In this session we will examine an important question that our reliance on AI raises. Participants will be given a case study to review before October 15 in preparation for an Ethics Bowl style discussion. Familiarity with Ethics Bowl is not necessary to participate. Anyone who wants to think deeply about an ethical question is welcome regardless of experience or background!

(Spoiler alert, we will not spend our hour discussing the use of AI in schoolwork.)

VII
Higher Education

AI & The Student Journey To, Through, and After College

Faculty: Davin Sweeney

Description:

For parents thinking about their children's education, especially when it comes to their future as independent adults, it has always been uncertain and uncomfortable. The explosion of AI onto the educational and economic stage introduces a new brand of uncertainty into the parenting equation.

Let's examine the current conversations taking place about preparing and applying to college, approaches being taken once students arrive to college, and how the labor market is changing so we can understand how best to educate ourselves, guide our children, and remain calm in the process.

AI at MIT: A Glimpse into the Frontier of Higher Ed

Presenter & Avenues Parent: Sinan Aral

Description:

MIT has long been at the cutting edge of engineering and technological advancement. Avenues parent and AI Advisory Board member Sinan Aral will share his perspective on how technology and higher education are shifting in response to developments in AI.

Sinan is the David Austin Professor of Management, Marketing, IT and Data Science at the MIT Sloan School of Management and director of the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy. An internationally recognized authority on AI, digital platforms and social media, he is also an entrepreneur, investor and author of *The Hype Machine*.

VIII
History

Human to Human: Discussions in the Age of AI

Faculty: Alex Brinkman-Young

Description:

What can history teach us about this shift in how material is found and learned? What does it mean to carry out “research” using AI? How might schools and colleges shift their assessment practices in response to AI? How can we truly know if a student understands the material they have studied? What skills will become increasingly important as more and more tasks can be offloaded to AI tools?

We will explore these and related questions by looking at our 8th grade World Course curriculum, which is centered on public speaking and Harkness discussions. These fundamental skills nurture young adults who will be better equipped and clear-eyed to enter higher education and a workforce that is already infused with AI.

Come ready to discuss and think together.

IX

Human Nature, Anthropology, and Philosophy

Life, AI and Consciousness. Three Golden Threads?

Faculty: Warren Tappe

Description:

The relationships that exist between Life, AI and Consciousness have recently surged into the spotlight for many reasons. All three will inform the coming ethical dilemmas we will face as well as the existential risks that come along with them.

We will take a close look in this session.

X

John Henry: Humans vs. the Machines

Man v. Machine: Writing in the Age of AI

Faculty: Todd Shy, Emma Heath, and Kathleen Radigan

Description:

"Attention without feeling, I began to learn, is only a report. An openness — an empathy — was necessary if the attention was to matter." —Mary Oliver, Our World

We go to books for many reasons, but, ultimately, reading grants us a singular gift: to feel something specific to the human condition.

In this session, we will explore the relationship between text and feeling, noticing the ways through which language produces sensation. We will then ask the question: How does felt experience differ when reading texts by humans versus ones generated by machines?

By reading poetry and prose by humans and language models (Mary Oliver, Saul Bellow, ChatGPT + Gemini), we will contemplate the value of the human creative process: What does its inevitably illogical nature tell us about being alive? And what role does AI have in the great tradition of representing human experience?

XI
Science and Knowledge

AI and Health: Better Care, Without Losing Connection

Faculty: Nadine Bou Rached

Description:

What might artificial intelligence change about how we understand health and care for one another? This workshop explores AI's potential in health research and everyday care, with particular attention to individuals with complex developmental and health needs, whether they face communication challenges, difficult diagnoses, or require ongoing support to stay safe and well. Through real-world examples, we'll explore genetic and genomic research, communication tools, technologies that could make medical testing more accessible, and possible future treatment technologies and uses of assistive robotics. We'll consider what these developments might offer individuals and caregivers, distinguishing promising possibilities from what remains uncertain.

Care, however, is about more than finding the right tools. Everyday human interactions can offer opportunities to communicate, learn, build trust, and connect. Could AI strengthen these opportunities, or might relying on it too heavily reduce them? We'll also consider questions of privacy, consent, reliability, and whose decisions shape the support someone receives. Rather than assuming that more technology means better care, we'll explore where AI might help, where it could cause harm, and what we should be careful not to lose. No science or technology background is needed. Just bring your curiosity.

XII
Understanding Computers and AI

Vibe Coding: Understanding and Building with AI

Faculty: Chadd Clairmont and Sam Basuk

Description:

What if you could get up to speed on what AI can do—and experience it for yourself—in a single supportive session? In this interactive session, we will explore the emerging world of vibe coding, using conversational AI tools to design and build a functioning website—no previous programming experience required. Along the way, we'll explore how web development has evolved, experiment with practical ways AI can support everyday life, and consider what these rapidly changing tools mean for our children as learners and creators.

This is a session for anyone who wants to quickly understand what AI can now do. Come ready to experiment, ask questions, and perhaps leave having built something you never expected to build yourself.

Designing AI for Inquiry: From Answer Machines to Thinking Partner

Faculty: Chris Richter

Description:

Artificial intelligence can give students answers in seconds—but what if we designed AI to ask better questions instead? In this hands-on workshop, participants will explore how educators can create AI-powered learning experiences that encourage inquiry, reflection, and deeper thinking. Using a classroom chatbot developed for a 9th-grade humanities course as a case study, we'll examine how AI can act as a mentor: challenging assumptions, asking follow-up questions, helping students work with evidence, and guiding them through complex problems without simply doing the thinking for them.

Participants will experience an inquiry-based AI system from a student's perspective, look behind the scenes at how it was designed, and consider how similar approaches could work across different subjects and age levels. No technical or AI experience is necessary—just curiosity about what teaching and learning might look like when AI becomes a thinking partner rather than an answer machine.

XIII
Utopian and Dystopian Visions

The AI Revolution: Have We Been Here Before?

Faculty: Lia Muschellak

Description:

What if the future we fear and the future we hope for are both distracting us from the one we could build? Imagine your child growing up in a world where learning has no ceiling, creativity has fewer barriers, and once-impossible problems finally have solutions. Now imagine that same world making it harder to think independently, know whom to trust, or find a place to belong. Both stories sound plausible. Neither is the whole story.

Tomorrow is unknown territory, but some of our hopes and fears have been here before. Another technology once promised to transform human life while leaving even its creators wondering whether they should stop. What followed might surprise you. It might also change where you look for clues about what comes next.

Between “AI will save us” and “AI will ruin us” lies a much more interesting conversation about possibility, responsibility, and the choices that are still ours to make. This session is an invitation into that space. We do not need to know exactly what tomorrow holds to have a hand in shaping it. But we do need to ask: who is choosing the future while the rest of us are busy predicting it?