

Newsletter



Ozan Gurcan, Postdoctoral Instructor in Science, Society, and Public Policy

An Enhanced Therapy-Enhancement Distinction

OZSW Annual Conference, Eindhoven University of Technology, August 31, 2024

The traditional therapy-enhancement (t-e) distinction in bioethics is still a strong force supporting the impermissibility of “enhancements.” In this presentation, Ozan put forth a revised understanding of the t-e distinction that is informed by the social model of disability. The implication of his argument is that disability rights advocates and those who favor the permissibility of certain enhancements may be relying on the same principles (autonomy and fairness) to justify their own positions.

Equality and Reproductive Autonomy in the Genomic Era

2024 Forum on Philosophy, Engineering, & Technology, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Sept 14, 2024

In this presentation, Ozan provided a novel perspective on how the argument from human dignity can be reconceptualized to better set limits on the use of human genetic technologies. Tying the “dignity of humans” to being free from unjustified harm and disrespect, Ozan argued that there may be certain enhancements that would not violate the dignity of humans, given that prior reasonable and feasible societal protections are enacted.

Office Hours, a webinar series presented by the Caltech 2024 Election Integrity Project



Office Hours with Prof. Alvarez

In order to better learn about how election officials and stakeholders are working to protect elections in 2024, we have been talking directly with election officials, election technologists, and other researchers. How have they worked to improve accessibility and security of the election process in this election cycle? What are they concerned about? Are they encountering election disinformation and how do they promote the facts about elections in America? We’ve called these conversations “Office Hours,” with Professor Alvarez talking directly with election officials and stakeholders. These episodes of “Office Hours” will continue until January 20, 2025 and we are making the recordings available on YouTube and on Spotify as a podcast.





Navigating the New Frontier: The Political and Economic Implications of AI

The Caltech Linde Center for Science, Society, and Policy recently hosted the conference at Caltech, "Navigating the New Frontier: The Political and Economic Implications of AI" on September 13-14, 2024, bringing together an international group of scholars to discuss the impacts of AI on politics, economics, and society. Organized by Michael Alvarez and Beatrice Magistro (Caltech), alongside Sophie Borwein (UBC), Bart Bonikowski (NYU), and Peter Loewen (Cornell), with the invaluable support of Sabrina Hameister, the event featured panels on the political consequences of AI, its influence on elections and public opinion, and the distributional effects of emerging AI technologies.

Key panels examined how AI regulation is perceived by the public and highlighted the media and elite narratives that shape these opinions. The final day of the event culminated in discussions about the challenges and opportunities for liberal democracy and capitalism in an AI-driven world, with closing remarks addressing the urgent need for proactive policy responses to ensure that AI benefits are broadly shared. The conference sparked dynamic debates on government intervention and regulation, and the Center looks forward to making this an annual event, continuing the dialogue on the societal implications of AI. Some of the participants have started international collaborations after connecting at the conference.

Papers and Articles of Interest

"In Teaching with Gen AI, Consider Sustainability" by Susanne Hall, teaching professor of writing and director of the Hixon Writing Center at Caltech, discussing how faculty lack information about generative AI's environmental impacts, and how universities should prioritize sustainable computing.

"Persistence of Wildfire-Related School Disruptions" by Ransi Clark, graduate student at Caltech and R. Michael Alvarez, Flintridge Foundation Professor of Political and Computational Social Science and Co-Director of the Linde Center for Science, Society, and Policy, asking do wildfires affect the educational outcomes of elementary and middle school students and are these effects immediate and transitory, or do they persist over time?