



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

## **PADM-GP 4419**

# **Communications in the Age of Ai Spring 2024**

### **Instructor Information**

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- [Office Hours](#)

### **Course Information**

- Course Number: PADM-GP 4419
- Class Meeting Times: 6:45-8:25pm
- Class Meeting Dates: Thursdays: January 25; February 8, 22; March 7, 28; April 11; and May 2 (client presentations)
- Class Location: In person: Bobst LL142

### **Course and Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand the role and impact of AI in communications;
2. Use AI tools such as GPT, Bard, Bing, GrammarlyGo, and other resources to produce high-quality documents;
3. Critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of AI tools;
4. Apply ethical considerations in using AI in the public square; and.
5. Improve fluency in a single content area.

## Teaching Methods

In addition to short lectures, class discussions and case-based exercises, the course will utilize a real world case that will require working on either a self-directed “client project” or a client project for an industry pro arranged by the professor.

## Clients

This class has a required client component. You are 100% encouraged to identify your own “client.” This is actually a very light lift for an outside person. You will do some industry research and research their job and position. You will be asking them to do a couple of things and they will receive two deliverables:

- 1) Schedule 15-30 minutes for an informational interview where you try to figure out the various processes they do at work. Their current familiarity with Ai applications and some of the tasks that they think might be made easier with one of the LLMs or Ai applications out there.
- 2) (Optional for them) Client Presentation in-person during class. We will also create recordings separately you can share with them.
- 3) (Optional for them) Client Consult on zoom. Finally you will create a prompt cheat sheet for the client. You must make yourself available with them for a follow up on how to use the prompt cheat sheet. We will share this after sending the recorded presentations.

Miranda Bernstein Ainsley Natta

Office of Career Services, NYU Wagner Rachel Dubois Sam Frank

Others TBD

## Chat GPT, Bing, Bard, GrammarlyGo and other LLMs and Ai resources.

Ethical uses of ChatGPT, Bard, and other generative AI tools must be used in this class. As a reminder, please review Wagner’s Academic Integrity Policy, which is also mentioned separately on this syllabus. But we are going to try to break some of these systems to figure out how they work, what their limits are and where the blind spots are in their current iterations. Remember always we are in the pre-history of some kind of singularity general Artificial Intelligence future.

## Resources to buy/subscribe to:

- 1) GPT Premium. Highly recommend the \$20/mo premium version, but you *may* use the free version.
- 3) Bard: free, but requires gmail account and an opt in;
- 4) Bing: also uses openAi's Gpt, but has more robust integration with the internet and is sometimes more accurate due to this and it is currently free.
- 5) Grammarly Premium—one of the best writing aids on the market. Their ai integration is still second rate, but their post-writing reports and suggestions will make you a better writer and communicator. The free version is just okay and is 2-3 years behind the new, paid stuff.
- 6) One other premium service—I'm going to ask you to subscribe as a consumer to another ai service. Ideally this would be something that you either plan to use in your career or one that might benefit a client for the client presentation part of the semester.

## Readings

Are all on Brightspace. An overview is below in the module by module description. I reserve the right to add or subtract readings as the semester goes on. This class is going to be flexible.

### A NOTE ON ATTENDANCE AND ITS EFFECT ON GRADES:

Normally my rule is one absence can be excused with prior notification to the professor for no penalty. Barring true emergencies, each unexcused absence will subtract 1/3 of a letter grade from your final grade (i.e. an A+ would become an A.)

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

## **Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## **NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide the course to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

# Detailed Course Overview

## Communications in the Age of Ai

### Semester Schedule

Class		Notes
<b>Class 1: January 25</b>	Ai Pre-History: What Could Possibly Go Wrong; or How I stopped worrying about the end of days and Robot-Pocalypse	
<b>Class 2: February 8</b>	Prompt engineering 101	
<b>Class 3: February 22</b>	National Policy Landscape with Guest Julia Lane	
<b>Optional</b>	Watch Party:	If I can swing a room for it, pizza, BYOB and conversation.
<b>Class 4: March 7</b>	Client facing work	
<b>Optional March 27</b>	Ai Debate Audience	This is a debate from my other class. Those students work very hard on preparing for the debate, but they are amateurs at the form. Kindness is key, but we have to help crown a winner. That's where you come in. Voting and Audience Questions.
<b>Class 5: March 28</b>	Studio: Deciphering client interviews	
<b>Class 6: April 11</b>	Cheat Sheet Workshop	
<b>Class 7: May 2</b>	Presentations for clients	Team Presentations: 1) Pre-history is now: What are Ais and how do they work; 2) Ethical considerations for use of Ai and LLMs at work in public service; 3) Applied Ai prompt engineering —how to think about these tools to get the most out of them; 4) The future: 10-30 years— Dystopia; 5) The future10-30 years— Utopia; 6) The futre—5-10 years for us in this room.



### Due Dates and Where to Upload

Class #	Assignment	Grade %
<b>Class 1</b>	First class email	10%
<b>Class 2</b>	Presentation: How did you Use Ai this month? (In class)	10%
<b>Class 3</b>	10 Questions for Julia Lane (Assignment)	10%
<b>Class 4</b>	Presentation Overview of your interviewee.	10%
<b>Class 5</b>	Post Interview Incident Report (assignments)	10%
<b>Class 6</b>	Client Cheat Sheets	10%
<b>Class 7</b>	Team Presentations to clients, Final cheat sheet and recorded presentation.	40%

# Session 1: What Could Possibly Go Wrong

Today our session is going to be wide ranging and we are going to likely have more questions than answers. Come ready to

Readings, podcasts and videos:

Practical Ai for Instructors and Students Part 1: Introduction to Ai

Video: (~10min) This is produced by Wharton and while it is a little old (8 months) It is an excellent overview of the things we will be talking about this semester. We will watch three more of their videos next week.

(Article~15min) [Vox: Ai Experts are increasingly afraid of what they're creating](#). This is a little over a year old, but it is important to see that the people creating these models are not sure what comes next and there are some very serious people who think this is the beginning of the end for humans.

(Article~10min) [Stanford Ai Institutes short history of Ai pre GPT commercial launch](#). This is a very good overview of where we came from.

(Article~3 min; survey~5 min) [NYU's chief Ai Czar, Clay Shirkey asks the NYU community to weigh in on the use of ai at our University](#). I am actively using some of the data from the linked survey. It's worth it to read this call out and fill out the survey.

(Article~10 min) [MIT Technology Review: How to make a chatbot that isn't racist or sexist](#). One of the major knocks against most of the large language models is that they are trained on the internet which means it is trained to replicate all our worst (but also maybe best?) tendencies. This article was written before the new safeguards put in place by GPT 4 and 3.5, but there is still work to be done.

(Podcast~45 min) [Ezra Klein Show](#): Catch up on Ai one year after GPT launched Movies Choose

One:

Brian and Charles

No two ways about it, this movie is very weird, but also very funny if you like offbeat stuff, which I do.

The Creator

This is an action movie that is fairly non-stop. If that isn't for you read no further. It takes an even further step than the other two dystopian Ai stories as we begin in the midst of a war with Ai robots.

2001: A Space Odyssey

Stanley Kubric's Ai character, Hal, stars in this futurist movie that follows basically none of the rules movie-makers follow today. It is long and beautiful, but modern viewers tend to complain that every single scene and shot is 3-10 seconds too long.

Her

**I plan to hold an optional watch party for this on February 29. If you plan to come to this, pick another movie.** This is a romance of a kind. The central question here is whether we might

actually love an ai and if we do, will they love us back. Fair warning there's lots of nudity and two fascinating sex scenes.

### **Assignment:**

#### **1) Email Introduction**

You have read the assigned readings/podcast/video and watched at least one of the commercial movies. We are in the pre-history of Ai and these are a start to understanding where we are right now. Tell me if something in one of these got you to thinking about your own life or career or past and how it made you want to stay in the class.

**Why I assign this:** I assign it to be turned in before class because these small assignments improve class discussion. Also: I want to see how you write the most common form of professional written communication: an email. I want to have something to remember you by. I want to hear your thoughts on one of these pieces of writing.

## **Class 2: Prompt engineering 101**

This week we are going to work on best practices for prompt engineering using primarily the three main Large Language Models. You will each present

Readings:

On Brightspace:

Practical Ai for Instructors and Students Part 2: Large Language Models

Part two of the Wharton video series. This is a great overview of the foundational Ai models that are powering most of the ai integrated applications.

Practical Ai for Instructors and Students Part 3: Prompting Ai

This is part three of the Wharton video series. This is a very useful step by step guide to making prompts. It is already a little out of date, but the overall idea that interacting with the Ai is the key.

### [Priming for prompts](#)

Who knew a whole organization had already popped up to corner the prompt engineering market?

**Assignment: In Class Presentation 3-5 minutes.**

**Title: How I used Ai this month.** This presentation should be geared toward the students in this class. You want to give an overview of the various ways you used Ai this month. Flaws you found and one lesson that will be useful for people in the class. Keep your slides to 4-5 at most but the real goal is under five minutes. For the lesson you are teaching us be sure to use screen shots of your prompts and the answers.

## **Session 3: The National Policy Landscape with Guest Lecturer, Julia Lane.**

This week we have a guest lecture from Wagner's own Julia Lane who is working on President Biden's Ai policy working group.

Reading:

[A vision for democratizing government data](#)

[Cheat sheet for Biden's EO on AI](#)

[Op-Ed by Anthony Blinken and Gina Raimondo](#)

Published in the financial times and republished by the Department of Commerce on usa.gov.

Pahlka, J (2023). Recoding America. Macmillan

Notes: I give you the first two chapters of the book. You should buy and read the whole thing, but for this session you really need to get an understanding of how important implementation is to making good policy and why so many major policy failures are due to the way we handle digital data

This is the report Lane's team delivered to the Biden Administration in December. Skim for the interesting parts.

**Assignment:**

10 Questions for Julia Lane: Before class, prepare 10 questions for Julia based on these readings or your questions about national Ai policy. Be creative and let your interest be your guide.



## Module 4—Interviewing Clients

You can recruit your own client, such as a current employer/supervisor, capstone client or someone you admire and would like to meet and do something for. The ask for them is fairly simple: get interviewed for 15-30 minutes and then come to our optional client presentations at the end of the term. You can also choose to be assigned a random client: currently we have

- 1) An insurance adjuster who only insures small new york bodegas and other small businesses and non-profits;
- 2) A healthcare communications consultant
- 3) Head of the Office of Career Services, NYU Wagner
- 4) Education non-profit
- 5) Head of training and development of an Electronic Health Record company

This week we will practice public speaking and interviewing and build a rubric to for a post-interview report.

### Readings

Why this article: This one is a pretty decent guide to figuring out and achieving your goals while interviewing an expert, but also leaving yourself open to directions that surprise and inform you in ways you had not prepared for.

**Assignment: prepare a 5 minute presentation about the person you will be interviewing.**

**You must include:**

- 1) Industry overview;
- 2) Bio info about the person;
- 3) A short overview of the current and near future ai applications in that industry;
- 4) Potential problems that ai adoption could create
- 5) 3 ai applications you anticipate could make your interviewee's work faster, easier or more fun.

In class: present and work on interview questions.

## Module 5—Studio: Interpreting Client interviews

By this class you will have completed, recorded and looked at the transcript of your zoom client interview. Have the transcript ready for an in-class studio that will lead to the Assignment this week: a post interview incident report.

**Assignment:** Post interview incident report. Rewatch your interview and review the transcript. You will create a post interview memo that will guide you in your creation of a cheat sheet for that person.

## **Module 6—Cheat Sheet workshop**

Before we meet, prepare an outline for a prompt guideline cheat sheet. This should include 30-40 sample prompts with a 20-30 word analysis of why the prompt works. This is a draft that we will hone in class. View sample cheat sheets on Brightspace. Much of this can be repurposed for our clients.

## **Module 7—Client Presentations.**

This week we will be presenting in pairs in person in class. The format of these presentations will change during the course of the class but the current scaffolding I am imagining looks like this:

- 1) Introduction about this class (Blaylock)
- 2) Pre-history is now: What are AIs and how do they work (2 students)
- 3) Ethical considerations for use of AI and LLMs at work in public service (2 students)
- 4) Applied AI prompt engineering—how to think about these tools to get the most out of them (2 students)
- 5) Client Cheat Sheets and how to use them (2 students)
- 6) Projecting the Future: 10-30 years—Dystopia (2 students)
- 7) Projecting the Future: 10-30 years— Utopia (2 students)
- 8) Near future—Next 5-10 years for us in this room (2 students)