

## SYLLABUS

### Mellon Seminar on Work, Labor, and the Professions – 2022-2023

#### Work and the Humanities in the New Global Economy

Mondays 5:30-8pm, Atlanta & Oxford campuses

In the fourth and final iteration of this faculty seminar, supported by the Mellon Foundation, we will focus on three key dimensions of the contemporary labor experience in global perspective: the “Great Resignation” debate, the development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies, and recent waves of unionization. The seminar will meet six times (three meetings per semester, alternating between the Oxford and Emory campuses) to discuss a series of readings, movies, and other media. The goals of this Mellon Faculty Seminar are to foster new intellectual conversations with faculty across disciplines, to build community among colleagues on both campuses, and to integrate the reflection on work, labor, and the professions into our scholarship and teaching.

#### Fall 2022

##### 1<sup>ST</sup> Meeting / September 19 (Atlanta): “The Great Resignation” I

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###### *Film:*

*Nomadland*, Dir. Chloé Zhao (USA, 2020).

- Or: Graham Fuller, “Chloe Zhao on *Nomadland* and the Road to Rediscovery,” *British Film Institute* (blog), April 13, 2021, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/interviews/chloe-zhao-nomadland-american-western-road-rediscovery>.

###### *Readings:*

- Jill Lepore, “What’s Wrong with the Way We Work,” *The New Yorker* <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/01/18/whats-wrong-with-the-way-we-work>
- Kim Parker and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, “Majority of Workers Who Quit a Job in 2021 Cite Low Pay, No Opportunities for Advancement, Feeling Disrespected,” *Pew Research Center* (blog), March 9, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/>

- Vipula Gandhi and Jennifer Robison, “The ‘Great Resignation’ Is Really the ‘Great Discontent,’” Gallup.com, July 22, 2021, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/351545/great-resignation-really-great-discontent.aspx>.
- Elsie Chen, “These Chinese Millennials Are ‘Chilling,’ and Beijing Isn’t Happy,” *The New York Times*, July 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/03/world/asia/china-slackers-tangping.html>
- Gavin Mueller, “Decelerate Now,” *Logic Magazine*, December 20, 2020, <https://logicmag.io/commons/decelerate-now/>

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting / October 17 (Oxford): “The Great Resignation” II

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### *Required readings:*

- Ben Tarnoff, *The Making of the Tech Worker Movement* (Logic, 2020), <https://logicmag.io/the-making-of-the-tech-worker-movement/full-text/>
- Alison Mountz et al., “For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University,” *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 14, no. 4 (August 18, 2015): 1235–59. <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1058>
- Nick Mitchell, “Summertime Selves (On Professionalization),” *The New Inquiry* (blog), October 4, 2019. <https://thenewinquiry.com/summertime-selves-on-professionalization/>
- Aguilera-Skvirsky, *The Process Genre: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Labor* (2020). <https://www.dukeupress.edu/the-process-genre> Ch. 2, “On Being Absorbed in Work”

### *Suggested:*

- Danika Medak-Saltzman, Deepti Misri, and Beverly Weber, “Decolonizing Time, Knowledge, and Disability on the Tenure Clock,” *Feminist Formations* 34, no. 1 (2022): 1–24. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/855751/pdf>

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting / November 14 (Atlanta): A.I. and Labor, I

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### *Film:*

*Sleep Dealer*, Dir. Alex Rivera (USA-Mexico, 2008)

- Or: Carolina Miranda, “Border Drones and Labor-Bots: Alex Rivera’s Prescient ‘Sleep Dealer,’” *Los Angeles Times*, August 2, 2014,

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-alex-rivera-sleep-dealer-prescient-border-drones-20140801-column.html>.

Reading:

- Jane Hu, "The Problem with Blaming Robots for Taking Our Jobs," *The New Yorker*, May 18, 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/the-problem-with-blaming-robots-for-taking-our-jobs>

[Hu's essay discusses these two books:

- Aaron Benanav, *Automation and the Future of Work* (Verso Books, 2020). <https://www.versobooks.com/books/4029-automation-and-the-future-of-work>
- Jason E. Smith, *Smart Machines and Service Work: Automation in an Age of Stagnation*, Field Notes (Reaktion Books, 2020), <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/S/bo70564105.html> ]

Choose one of the two following lists:

**a) Technology and Exploitation**

- Arntz, Melanie, Terry Gregory, and Ulrich Zierahn. "Digitization and the future of work: macroeconomic consequences." *Handbook of labor, human resources and population economics*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019. 1-29. [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6\\_11-1?noAccess=true](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6_11-1?noAccess=true)
- Gibbs, Michael. "How is new technology changing job design?." *IZA World of Labor* (2017). <https://wol.iza.org/articles/how-is-new-technology-changing-job-design/long>
- Wenjuan Liu and Datu B. Agusdinata, "Interdependencies of Lithium Mining and Communities Sustainability in Salar de Atacama, Chile," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 260 (July 1, 2020), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959652620308854>
- Benjamin K. Sovacool, "When Subterranean Slavery Supports Sustainability Transitions? Power, Patriarchy, and Child Labor in Artisanal Congolese Cobalt Mining," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 271–93, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214790X20303154>

**b) Reconfiguring Autonomy and Intimacy**

- The Guardian Series: "Automating Care: How the caring industry is being transformed by artificial intelligence," <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/series/automating-care>

- Benjamin Weil, "Sex Work Is (Gig) Work," *The Baffler*, May 2, 2022, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/sex-work-is-gig-work-weil>
- Alex Rosenblat, *Uberland: How Algorithms Are Rewriting the Rules of Work*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv5cgbm3> Ch. 5: How Uber Manages Drivers with Algorithms  
[https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Uberland.html?id=UHpnDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp\\_read\\_button&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Uberland.html?id=UHpnDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

## Spring 2023

### 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting / February 6 (Oxford): A.I. and Labor, II

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#### Readings:

- Tim Wu, "Bigger Brother," April 9, 2020  
<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2020/04/09/bigger-brother-surveillance-capitalism/>
- Shoshana Zuboff, "Opinion | You Are Now Remotely Controlled," *The New York Times*, January 24, 2020, sec. Opinion,  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/24/opinion/sunday/surveillance-capitalism.html>.

#### **A.I. at Emory**

"AI Systems Can Detect Patient Race, Creating New Opportunities to Perpetuate Health Disparities | Emory University | Atlanta GA," May 27, 2022.

[https://news.emory.edu/stories/2022/05/hs\\_ai\\_systems\\_detect\\_patient\\_race\\_27-05-2022/story.html](https://news.emory.edu/stories/2022/05/hs_ai_systems_detect_patient_race_27-05-2022/story.html).

"Emory + Georgia Tech A.I.Humanity Seed Grant Recipients Announced | Emory University | Atlanta GA," July 21, 2022.

[https://news.emory.edu/stories/2022/07/er\\_ai\\_humanity\\_seed\\_grant\\_20-07-2022/story.html](https://news.emory.edu/stories/2022/07/er_ai_humanity_seed_grant_20-07-2022/story.html).

"Shaping the Future of Artificial Intelligence to Serve Society: Emory's AI.Humanity Initiative | Emory University | Atlanta GA," May 3, 2022.

[https://news.emory.edu/stories/2022/05/er\\_ai\\_humanity\\_initiative\\_03-05-2022/story.html](https://news.emory.edu/stories/2022/05/er_ai_humanity_initiative_03-05-2022/story.html).

#### **Mellon-Funded A.I. Initiatives at Other Institutions**

"Carleton Awarded Presidential Leadership Grant from Mellon Foundation to Explore Artificial Intelligence in Education - Carleton College." Accessed July 30, 2022.

<https://www.carleton.edu/news/stories/carleton-awarded-presidential-leadership-grant-from-mellon-foundation-to-explore-artificial-intelligence-in-education/>.

"CMU, R.K. Mellon Foundation Announce Historic Partnership - News - Carnegie Mellon University," May 20, 2021. <http://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2021/may/rkm-grant.html>.

“Grant Will Expand University Libraries’ Use of Machine Learning to Identify Historically Racist Laws – UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries,” January 19, 2022. <https://library.unc.edu/2022/01/grant-will-expand-university-libraries-use-of-machine-learning-to-identify-historically-racist-laws/>.

The Business Fame. “Mellon AI- Cost, Quality and Access with Cutting Edge Technologies,” March 27, 2021. <https://thebusinessfame.com/mellon-ai-cost-quality-and-access-with-cutting-edge-technologies/>.

“Mellon Foundation Grant Supports Development of a Plan for Using Artificial Intelligence to Plumb the National Archives,” July 1, 2020. [https://liberalarts.vt.edu/content/liberalarts\\_vt\\_edu/en/news/articles/2020/07/national-archives-searchability.html](https://liberalarts.vt.edu/content/liberalarts_vt_edu/en/news/articles/2020/07/national-archives-searchability.html).

Norris, Melissa Cox. “UC Awarded a \$700K Grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.” *UC News* (blog), October 14, 2020. <https://www.uc.edu/news/articles/2020/10/uc-awarded-a-700k-grant-from-the-andrew-w-mellon-foundation.html>.

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## 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting / March 13 (Atlanta): Unionization, I

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### Film:

*American Factory*, Documentary. Dir. Steven Bognar & Julia Reichert (USA, 2019). <https://www.netflix.com/title/81090071>

Or: Turan, “Review: ‘American Factory’ Manufactures Insight into U.S.-Chinese Collaboration,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 20, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/movies/story/2019-08-20/american-factory-review-documentary-china-barack-michelle-obama-netflix>

### Tweet

More Perfect Union [@MorePerfectUS], “BREAKING: In a Town Hall Meeting, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz Just Told Workers That Starbucks Is ‘Being Assaulted in Many Ways by the Threat of Unionization.’,” Tweet, *Twitter*, April 4, 2022, <https://twitter.com/MorePerfectUS/status/1511068876905357325>

### Readings:

- Adam Dean et al., “Resident Mortality and Worker Infection Rates From COVID-19 Lower in Union Than Nonunion US Nursing Homes, 2020–21,” *Health Affairs* 41, no. 5 (May 2022): 751–59. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.01687?journalCode=hlthaff>
  - Charles Bethea, “The Alabama Workers Trying to Unionize an Amazon Fulfillment Center,” *The New Yorker*, March 17, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/us-journal/the-alabama-workers-trying-to-unionize-an-amazon-fulfillment-center>.
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## 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting / April 10 (Oxford): Unionization, II

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### Readings:

- Dana Goodyear, "The Social-Justice Imperative Behind the L.A. Teachers' Strike," *The New Yorker*, January 15, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-social-justice-imperative-behind-the-la-teachers-strike>
- Eric Blanc and Angelika Maldonado, "Here's How We Beat Amazon. An Interview with Angelika Maldonado," *Jacobin*, April 2, 2022, <https://jacobin.com/2022/04/amazon-labor-union-alu-staten-island-organizing>
- Eric Dirnbach, "How Socialists and Trade Unionists Built a New Labor Organizing Model During the Pandemic," *Jacobin*, February 12, 2022, <https://jacobin.com/2022/02/ue-dsa-ewoc-covid-19-new-organizing-labor>.
- Ian Prasad Philbrick, "Why Union Drives Are Succeeding," *The New York Times*, July 17, 2022, sec. Briefing, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/17/briefing/union-drives-college-graduates.html>.
- Shamira Ibrahim, "Redefining the Working Class," *The Baffler*, May 2022, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/redefining-the-working-class-ibrahim>

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### Mellon Seminar 2022-2023 Cohort

#### Co-Facilitators

Pablo Palomino (Oxford, Latin American and Caribbean Studies)

Yanna Yannakakis (ECAS, History)

#### From ECAS

María Montalvo (History)

Tom Rogers (History)

Javier Villa-Flores (Religion)

Peter Wakefield (Institute for the Liberal Arts)

#### From Oxford College

Chris Blake (Economics)

Sarah Fankhauser (Biology)

Andrea Fitzroy (Sociology)

Devon Goss (Sociology)

Daniel Walter (Linguistics/German)

Steven Watts (English)