

Introduction to Political Science

AI as both teaching tool and object of political-science critique — at UAS BFI Vienna



INFORMANT

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INTERVIEW

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INSTITUTION

UAS BFI · VIENNA

COURSE AT A GLANCE

A first-semester bachelor's course applying political theory through AI-powered prompt work and critique

3

ECTS CREDITS

55

STUDENTS

1st

SEMESTER

BA

BACHELOR LEVEL

COURSE OVERVIEW

Introduction to Political Science

UNIVERSITY

**University of Applied Sciences
BFI Vienna**

PROGRAMME

**European Economy and Business
Management**

COURSE LEVEL

Bachelor · 1st semester · 3 ECTS

TYPICAL STUDENT BACKGROUND

First-semester bachelor students with no or little university-level political science or AI training; highly international backgrounds

PREREQUISITES

None

SUMMARY OF AI USAGE

“ AI was integrated as both a teaching tool and an object of political-science critique. Students developed theory-based prompts to generate and compare election manifestos and speeches across multiple LLMs while using the same prompt in each LLM. They then reflected on bias, propaganda, hegemony, and the politics of information control contained within the generated manifestos. What sets this practice apart is that in addition to students’ reflections, the prompt quality was also assessed, allowing for simultaneously tackle course contents, improve prompt writing skills, and critical AI skills by experiencing and reflecting the bias behind different LLMs.

— BERNHARD ZEILINGER, COURSE TEACHER

SECTION 02

02

Learning outcomes

What the course set out to teach — and where AI deepened understanding.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Four outcomes spanning political theory, critical analysis, and academic interpretation

01 Describe and explain the main theories, concepts, and terms of political science.

03 Apply theoretical models and develop a critical, analytical way of thinking for interpreting and evaluating daily politics and social structures.

02 Identify the main aspects of political-science problems.

04 Summarize and interpret scientific texts, and identify and evaluate findings and key statements.

AI SUPPORT · ILO 1

A tutor chatbot as a first entry point into political concepts and definitions

01**INTENDED
LEARNING OUTCOME**

**Describe and explain
the main theories,
concepts, and terms of
political science.**

“

AI was used as a tutor for concepts and definitions, and later students had to formulate prompts/briefings grounded in course theory.

AI SUPPORT · ILO 2

Identifying political problems through AI-generated bias and class debate

02

INTENDED
LEARNING OUTCOME

Identify the main
aspects of political-
science problems.

“

No AI support

AI SUPPORT · ILO 3

Generating manifestos, speeches, and AI avatars — theory applied in practice

03

**INTENDED
LEARNING OUTCOME**

Apply theoretical models and develop a critical, analytical way of thinking for interpreting and evaluating daily politics and social structures.

“

Application of theory through generating an electoral program; Creating a prompt for a virtual AI Avatar according to electoral program; generate electoral speech and a video or audio statement.

AI SUPPORT · ILO 4

Cross-model comparison as a pathway to critical interpretation

04

INTENDED
LEARNING OUTCOME

Summarize and interpret scientific texts, and identify and evaluate findings and key statements.

“

AI supported comparison and interpretation.

SKILLS ENHANCED

Four skill areas sharpened through theory-grounded AI work

Prompt writing: Students were introduced to prompt writing basics and good practices.

Critical thinking: Critical comparison of LLM outputs, bias/propaganda detection, reflection on AI in politics deepened students' understanding of power asymmetries, information control, and the non-neutrality of AI systems.

Political theory application: Application of course contents in prompts.

Digital and media competency: Navigating and using different LLMs for text as well as audiovisual content.

AI-SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

No formal AI outcomes — but AI literacy ran through every task

NO FORMAL ILO

“

There aren't specific learning outcomes for AI according to the curriculum (no 'official' AI LOs), but: The course went beyond "using AI" and aimed to build AI-specific capabilities: documenting prompts, comparing outputs from several LLMs, critically reflecting on bias and non-neutrality, using AI for text and multimodal political communication, and disclosing AI use transparently. In addition, students learned to recognize AI as a political instrument as they recognize the connection between hegemony and different LLM providers.

SECTION 03

03

Purpose & benefits

Why AI was brought into this course — and what both students and the lecturer gained.

MAIN MOTIVATION FOR USING AI

Connecting political theory to AI-influenced communication — and making critique part of the task

“

AI was used to connect political-science theory with contemporary AI-influenced political communication and to teach students to use AI critically. It also made ambitious, otherwise unrealistic tasks manageable within the course workload while exposing bias, propaganda, power asymmetries, and the political interests behind LLMs.

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Realistic, theory-grounded tasks — and growing confidence with AI as a tool

“

AI let students **complete realistic, work-intensive tasks within limited time**: drafting manifestos, generating speeches, comparing multiple LLMs, and even experimenting with multimodal political communication. It strengthened their ability to **apply theory to practice**, detect bias and propaganda, reflect on non-neutrality, and improve prompt, media, and **digital competencies**.

In addition, **students no longer feel daunted by the idea of using AI**, since they now know how to do it.

Before that, some had been hesitant to use AI because they were afraid of making a mistake. Students also seem to have developed more respect for AI as a tool that requires know-how rather than producing trustworthy output automatically.

BENEFITS FOR THE LECTURER

Richer discussion material — and a cleaner path around grading AI-generated text

“

AI made it feasible to run ambitious, realistic exercises and generate rich discussion material at a scale students could not have managed otherwise. In addition, the transparency about AI usage as well as the lecturer's own AI knowledge and competencies improved the lecture-student relationship. As a result, students did not feel that they were not allowed to use AI or that they had to hide their use of it. Furthermore, the lecturer's transparency was perceived as a sign of digital competence, which builds trust in the instructor.

AI also provided a fitting way to link and exemplify political theory, bias, hegemony, and information power.

Finally, by assessing the students' prompts rather than the final texts, the lecturer bypass the problem of difficulty while grading texts alone (due to the difficulty of distinguishing AI and students' texts).

SECTION 04

04

Implementation details

How AI showed up in class — the tools, the tasks, and the structure around them.

HOW AI WAS USED IN CLASS

From tutor chatbot to multimodal political communication — in connected phases

“

AI was used in several connected phases. Early sessions included debates on **AI as political instrument** and students used a chatbot in Moodle as a tutor for definitions. Later, students drafted theory-based election manifestos for socialist, conservative, and liberal parties, entered the same prompt into ChatGPT, Mistral, DeepSeek, and Grok, and compared the outputs for bias. In a follow-up task, they turned one manifesto into a populist and a moderate speech, marked characteristic language, and created a text-to-video or text-to-speech version. AI use was embedded in class discussion, homework, comparison, and reflection rather than confined to one isolated exercise.

TOOLS & PLATFORMS

One Moodle tutor chatbot, four LLMs for comparison, and a suite of multimodal tools

01

AI TUTORING

AI Chatblock · Moodle

Deployed as a tutor for political science definitions and concepts at the start of the course, providing an interactive, course-grounded reference tool.

02

GENERAL-PURPOSE LLMs

ChatGPT · Mistral · DeepSeek · Grok

Students entered the same prompt into all four LLMs to generate and compare election manifestos and speeches — exposing bias, ideological framing, and non-neutrality across models.

03

TEXT-TO-SPEECH / TEXT-TO-VIDEO

ElevenLabs · Powtoon · Canva · Sora · Luma · Pictory

Used to create AI-generated political speeches, avatars, and video statements — extending the manifesto exercise into multimodal communication.

All LLMs accessed via free-tier web interfaces. Multimodal tools varied by student choice; free versions recommended for equitable access.

ACCESS TO TOOLS - FREE VS PAID

Free tools recommended — grading designed to compensate for unequal access

Free

AVAILABLE FOR ALL STUDENTS

All prescribed tools offered free versions.
Students mainly used the free tier for both
LLMs and multimodal tools.

“

The lecturer explicitly avoided grading text or media quality alone because some students had paid versions and professional content-creation experience while others did not. **Assessment focused on prompts and critical reflection** rather than production quality, making access differences less consequential for grades.

GUIDANCE & SUPPORT FOR USING AI EFFECTIVELY

Brief prompting guidance, task-embedded structure, and grading feedback as the main loop

“

Students received brief prompting guidance, were referred to the possibility of improving prompts with ChatGPT, had to base prompts on course content, and were required to document their AI use. The lecturer also provided information on political bias and propaganda in connection to AI, gave clear task instructions which were also available on Moodle, named tools students could use, and used grading feedback to show what worked or not. The main missing element, according to the focus group, was sufficient time for shared oral reflection afterwards.

AI IN STUDENT ASSESSMENT**Assessing the prompt, not the output — theory grounding as the key criterion****YES**

Part of continuous assessment — prompt quality and critical reflection as core criteria

“

Documented prompts were a major reference for grading. The lecturer deliberately shifted assessment away from outputs and toward whether prompts were anchored in course theory, whether students could critically reflect on generated outputs, and whether they could explain and compare what different models produced. The lecturer assessed the extent to which the prompt refers to course content, whether it includes original definitions or paraphrases, and whether additional elements—such as the behavior of fictional characters—have been incorporated into the prompt.

SECTION 05

05

Evaluation & risk management

How impact was tracked — and how unforeseen risks were caught and managed in real time.

HOW AI IMPACT WAS EVALUATED

Logbook, student survey, assessment data, and ongoing communication with students

“

The course assessments and final exam functioned as evaluation, since the lecturer examined prompts, reflections and exam grades to see whether AI helps acquiring the learning outcomes. In addition, regular communication with students served as a measuring tool, for example feedbacks after AI activities and student's pointing out difficulties in AI tool usage, resulting in **reduced workload for generating audiovisual media** in order to shift the focus towards course contents and away from individual AI tools.

METRICS & KPIS

Prompt quality, reflection depth, and weekly satisfaction as key indicators

YES

“

Indicators included:

- weekly satisfaction in the logbook
- the quality of prompts and reflections in graded assignments: complexity and structure of prompts, inclusion of course content
- and verbal feedback captured after grading.

FORMAL COURSE EVALUATION

Evaluated within AI-HED — not in the institution's standard course review process

NO

Outside the institution's standard process

The use of AI was not part of the formal institutional course evaluation. Impact was tracked through the AI-HED pilot logbook, student survey, course assessments, and regular communication with students throughout the semester.

RISK MANAGEMENT IN AI USE

Pedagogical controls — disclosure, theory-grounding, and reduced technical demands

YES

“

Students had to disclose AI use, submit prompts, and reflect on outputs from different LLMs to prevent overreliance on AI. To earn a good grade, prompts had to be carefully designed and grounded in course theory rather than based on free-form generation.

AI was prohibited during the reflection phase, so most reflections took place in class.

Where necessary, the lecturer reduced technical demands; for example, by allowing students to create an audio file instead of a full video.

Output quality itself was not graded heavily because differences in access, subscriptions, and prior media expertise made direct comparison difficult.

A further risk was that students might use AI for prompt generation so extensively that it became hard to distinguish between students' own work and AI contributions, especially since they were encouraged to use AI to improve prompts. This risk was accepted because of the expected benefits. In future, it will be addressed through a controlled environment that logs prompt development.

Mainly through pedagogical rather than technical controls.

SECTION 06

06

Overall impact

What the AI integration achieved — for engagement, for learning outcomes, and for the course design.

OVERALL IMPACT ON TEACHING & LEARNING

“

Overall, AI had a clearly positive but also demanding impact. It enabled realistic, theory-connected exercises that would otherwise have been too work-intensive, and it made bias, propaganda, hegemony, and the politics of information control discussable in concrete ways. It also strengthened reflection on AI's non-neutrality. Students were content and motivated to tackle complex tasks with the help of AI. This allowed for realistic and practical learning scenarios, within a context that is typically highly theoretical.

The main downside was workload and complexity: students sometimes felt overwhelmed, prompting quality varied widely, tool access was unequal, and there was too little time for shared post-task reflection.

In addition, assessment was rather difficult. Still, the available evidence points to a strong enhancement of teaching and learning rather than a counterproductive use.

— BERNHARD ZEILINGER, COURSE TEACHER

IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Progressively stronger prompts — and a sharper critical eye on AI-generated political text

“

Students used AI to apply political theory in prompts, compare models critically, identify ideological and rhetorical differences, and reflect on bias and propaganda. The lecturer reports that students learned by reflecting AI-generated outputs, and the final task explicitly targeted critical analysis of populist vs moderate framing plus media/digital competence. The positive impact is best seen in the students' prompts which were progressively better (more complex, structured etc.) in the course of the semester.

MAIN CHALLENGES & HOW THEY WERE MANAGED

Prompting gaps, overreliance, and too little time for shared reflection

“

Major challenges were **insufficient prompting**, students' occasional **overreliance on AI**, difficulty assessing effort and authorship, **unequal access to paid tools**, the lecturer's own limited experience with some AI applications, and too little time for live reflection after the tasks. These were managed by making prompts a core assessment object, requiring theory-based prompting and AI documentation, using grading feedback to correct weak practice, de-emphasising output quality where access was unequal, and flexibly adapting tasks.

Another challenge was differentiating student education and AI contributions within the prompts. This requires a phased approach in the future, where students formulate own prompts in class for example and improve them afterwards using AI.

However, most **challenges can only be effectively managed by structural changes in the curriculum and the institution**: more course time, stronger AI-literacy support classes, more prompt-focused assessment, and additional tutorials run by specialists.

SECTION 07

07

Scalability & transferability

Where this design can travel — and what institutional conditions would make it work.

SCALING TO OTHER COURSES AND NEED FOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Especially for courses in discourse, ideology, communication, and critical reasoning

YES

TRANSFERABLE

The design is highly transferable to courses dealing with discourse, ideology, communication, bias, public reasoning, or critical media literacy — and more broadly to any theory-based subject aiming to establish a practical connection. Reusable elements: theory-based prompting, same-prompt multi-model comparison, and assessment through reflection rather than output alone.

The design is highly transferable to courses dealing with discourse, ideology, communication, bias, public reasoning, or critical media literacy. However, it is generally transferrable to all theory-based subjects that aim to establish a practical connection. Furthermore, the scenario is suitable for courses with limited time for in class discussions or activities, such as lectures.

Reusable course elements are theory-based prompting, same-prompt multi-model comparison, and assessment through reflection rather than output alone.

To scale it well, lecturers would need **curated tool lists**, extra **time for live debriefing**, support with **prompt pedagogy** and assessment, clear institutional guidance on documentation/disclosure, and possibly an **AI-literacy foundation** offer for students. Flexible and individual support also matters, because technical confidence and access to advanced tools vary strongly across students.

KEY ADVICE FOR EDUCATORS

Four practices from a course that treated AI as both tool and subject

Trial and Error.**01**

Don't be afraid of trying out new teaching and learning scenarios with AI — even if it does not go as planned, you will benefit from the experience.

Build Transparency.**02**

Be transparent about your own AI knowledge and your expectations for students. AI is a journey where lecturers and students are in the same boat — we are all learning from each other.

Stay Open and Flexible.**03**

Stay open to spontaneously readjusting activities or to new tools students bring forward. AI tools evolve quickly and adaptability is a core pedagogical skill.

Put Yourself in the Students' Shoes.**04**

Make a test run for tasks to see if they are feasible and to adjust beforehand if necessary. What looks manageable from a lecturer's perspective may not be from a student's.

A course where AI became the subject, the method, and the mirror for political critique.

COURSE

Introduction to Political Science

INFORMATION

Bernhard
Zeilinger

INSTITUTION

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PROGRAMM

European Economy and
Business Management

ABOUT AI-HED

An Erasmus+ cooperation project on AI in higher education

The project "**Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education Teaching and Learning**" (AI-HED), launched with co-funding from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport for the 2021–2027 period, was submitted and awarded under **Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions**.

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