

Buffett Undergraduate Research Fellowship Opportunity

The Geopolitics of AI: How Global LLMs Frame and Shape Understanding of Democracy

Faculty Mentor: Erik Nisbet, Professor, School of Communication

Project Synopsis: The unprecedented growth of AI technology and Large Language Models (LLMs) has become a critical geopolitical concern. This project explores the emerging role of LLMs as a channel of influence and how their framing of political concepts affects public opinion and audience understanding. Specifically, our research focuses on benchmarking how LLMs developed within authoritarian contexts, such as Russia, China, and the UAE, interpret and define fundamental elements of democratic governance, compared to counterparts developed in more democratic contexts, like the United States and Europe (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, and Mistral). We aim to investigate potential differences in their conceptual frameworks and political assumptions.

To evaluate the alignment of these LLMs, we will conduct a study by systematically querying nine different models from various global contexts about the essential principles of democratic governance and how they rate the quality of democracy in countries worldwide. By simulating responses thousands of times for each LLM and employing a standardized coding framework, we will be able to evaluate and measure their value alignment and outputs in comparison to one another and to widely recognized democracy benchmarks used in political science. The results will help us identify key themes, biases, and patterns in how different AI models interpret democracy, influencing their responses and the sources they provide users about democracy and politics.

Through this work, research assistants will gain practical experience in prompt engineering, qualitative and content coding/analysis methods, understanding AI behavior, and the geopolitical factors underlying AI development, while contributing to our knowledge of how artificial intelligence may shape political discourse across different cultural contexts.

Project Term: Summer and Academic Year

Project Location: Remote

Job Description: Research assistants will assist with coding AI output related to democratic understanding. For this project, we will use 9 different AIs from across the globe, including models such as ChatGPT, Llama, Gemini, DeepSeek, Qwen, Mixtral, Falcon AI, and YandexGPT. RA's will interact with content from these AIs as they answer questions about how they understand democracy. You will be

responsible for coding these answers using a pre-made codebook to analyze key themes, biases, and patterns. Additional opportunities include:

1. Contributing to literature reviews on related topics
2. Attending lab meetings at the Center for Communication and Public Policy
3. Gaining exposure to the cutting-edge work in the fields of AI and political analysis

Ideal candidates will have an interest in political science, international relations, computer science, or related fields. If you're passionate about exploring how technology influences global democracy, we'd love to have you on our team!

Time Commitment: This project hours are flexible, ranging from 20 to 35hrs a week depending on student interest and availability. Work can be completed either in person, remotely, or hybrid with regular meetings and check-ins with project supervisors and faculty.

Number of available positions: Two

