

The 58th Texas Tech University Comparative Literature Symposium
“Artificial Intelligence and the Futures of the Human”
April 10-11, 2026
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, USA

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Alan Liu, Distinguished Professor of English, University of California, Santa Barbara

Dr. Kalindi Vora, Professor of Ethnicity, Race, and Migration, Yale University

Dr. Neda Atanasoski, Professor and Chair of the Harriet Tubman Department of
Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Maryland, College
Park

Dr. Bruce Clarke, Paul Whitfield Horn Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Literature
and Science, Texas Tech University

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been profoundly transforming our world and our ways of being in it, from global geopolitics to the practices of everyday life. On the global stage, it underpins military power, economic growth, and global governance, fueling what critics call “Cold War 2.0” between the United States and China through advances in autonomous weapons, cyber capabilities, and industrial production, while also enabling authoritarian surveillance and undermining democracies with disinformation. Digital divides between the Global North and the Global South, as well as between the haves and the have-nots within societies, have been widening at a phenomenal pace. At the local level, AI also permeates our daily routines, powering recommendations, virtual assistants, smart devices, and automation that make tasks appear more convenient, personalized, and efficient while putting many of the processes that order our existence beyond our direct comprehension and control.

Meanwhile, AI has been impacting the humanities by accelerating research, expanding access to cultural knowledge, and reshaping creative expression in unprecedented and controversial ways. On the one hand, it has enabled large-scale analysis of texts, art, and historical data, uncovering patterns previously invisible or inaccessible to scholars, while also generating new forms of literature, art, and music with machine assistance. On the other hand, it has also raised critical questions about authorship, authenticity, bias, and the role of human creativity, pushing the humanities to both use AI as a tool and critique its ethical, cultural, and philosophical implications. In this “brave new world,” what are the place of the “human” in the humanities and the role of the “humanities” in defining the human? How do we—and how do literature, cinema, and art—reconsider creativity, meaning, and culture in a world where machines can generate and purport to interpret texts, images, and ideas? What new ethical, philosophical, and pedagogical challenges arise when human and machine intelligence intersect? And how does the need to reconceive the humanities in the face of the rise of AI clarify, challenge, or transform our understanding of what it means to be human?

If this question feels particularly urgent in our own “posthuman” moment, as Katherine Hayles popularized it back in 1999, it connects to a long history of cultural representations of and reflections on the thrilling and threatening ways in which human consciousness, subjectivity, sociability, and creation are (or might be) conditioned by technological

supplements and prostheses. Human encounters with machine agency have provoked desire and fear from Pygmalion and Galatea through medieval and early modern automata and nineteenth-century science fiction to the twentieth-century robot and current news reporting on the emotional and romantic bonds forged between human users and their “AI companions.” Meanwhile, philosophers and linguists have sought for millennia to identify or construct technologies of knowledge—“perfect” languages or scripts, encyclopedic knowledge “systems” like Llull’s thirteenth-century *ars combinatoria*—capable of organizing and expanding individual and collective access to truth, while avant-garde writers, visual artists, and composers have experimented with both serious and ludic ways of automatizing the production of art. How do such past attempts to think the limits and the potential of the human in relation to technology anticipate and seek to answer the questions with which AI forces us to grapple today?

This symposium brings together scholars, educators, artists, and technologists to reflect critically on the future of humanistic inquiry and the futures of the human in the age of AI. We invite contributions that explore the opportunities and challenges AI presents for literature, history, philosophy, art, languages, and cultural studies.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

1. AI, authorship, and the question of originality
2. Creativity, collaboration, and machine-assisted art
3. Philosophical and ethical reflections on humanity and machine intelligence
4. Speculative fiction and the imagined futures of humanity
5. Digital humanities and AI research tools
6. Pedagogy in the age of AI: teaching, learning, and academic integrity
7. The future of interpretation, translation, and textual analysis
8. Technology and historical transformations of knowledge
9. The limits of AI as “reader” of culture: emotion, embodiment, aesthetic taste
10. Technological determinism and the question of agency
11. Algorithmic bias, ethics, and social justice in cultural contexts
12. Tech-Orientalism and the reimagining of the Asia-Pacific and the Indo-Pacific

Please submit your 100-word abstract and 1-paragraph bio and direct any questions to Dr. Yuan Shu (eng.complit@ttu.edu). The deadline for submission is December 1, 2025.