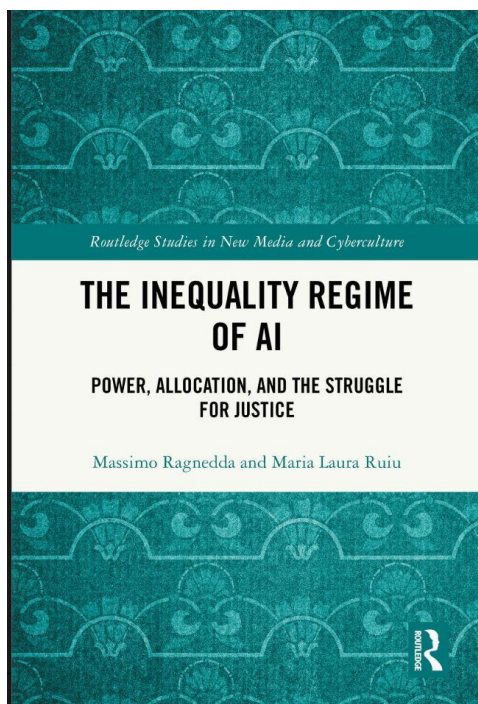




## EXPANDED TEACHING GUIDE

### Teaching AI, Power and Inequality

A ready-to-use guide to *The Inequality Regime of AI: Power, Allocation, and the Struggle for Justice*

**Massimo Ragnedda & Maria Laura Ruiu**

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>PUBLISHER</b>           | Routledge                  |
| <b>PRIMARY FORMAT</b>      | Single 90-120 minute class |
| <b>OPTIONAL ADAPTATION</b> | Two shorter classes        |
| <b>BOOK DOI</b>            | 10.4324/9781003689379      |

This expanded guide complements the 2-page Teaching & Adoption Guide and the 20-slide sample teaching deck.

*Author-prepared teaching resource. Concepts are paraphrased from the book; no book figures or pages are reproduced.*

### How to use this expanded teaching guide

Designed for a single class; easily divisible into two sessions if needed.

This resource is built around one coherent class that introduces the conceptual architecture of *The Inequality Regime of AI*. The book remains the leading source throughout: slide references, activities, reflective questions, and further readings are organized to help students engage with the book rather than replace it.

| PRIMARY USE                                                                                                      | OPTIONAL SPLIT                                                                                                                                 | LEVEL & FIELDS                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| One 90-120 minute seminar or lecture combining conceptual explanation, a short mapping activity, and discussion. | Class 1: diagnosis and mechanisms (Slides 1-13).<br>Class 2: lived experience, political economy, extraction, and alternatives (Slides 14-20). | Advanced undergraduate / postgraduate. Digital sociology, media & communication, STS, AI ethics, political sociology, technology policy, environmental sociology. |

### Learning outcomes

- Distinguish inequalities of access and participation from inequalities of prediction, classification, and allocation.
- Analyze AI as a sociotechnical, institutional, and infrastructural system rather than only as a technical model.
- Explain how the data, algorithmic, and governance divides interact in the AI Stratification Spiral.
- Connect AI inequality to subjectivity, institutional decision-making, environmental extraction, and global power.
- Evaluate alternatives centered on contestability, critical AI literacy, algorithmic commons, and redistributive infrastructures.

### Core teaching principle

Use the book as the conceptual spine. External readings should deepen or challenge particular dimensions of the framework, not displace the book as the principal source for the session.

## SINGLE-CLASS PLAN

### A 100-minute class: from digital divides to redistributive infrastructures

The timing can be compressed to 90 minutes or extended to 120 minutes by expanding the mapping activity and final discussion.

| Time       | Stage                      | Teaching move                                                                       | Deck         |
|------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 0-8 min    | Opening problem            | Why is “algorithmic bias” an incomplete language for understanding AI inequality?   | Slides 1-3   |
| 8-20 min   | Historical bridge          | Move from access, skills, and outcomes toward prediction and allocation.            | Slides 4-5   |
| 20-40 min  | Regime & fractures         | Explain the regime properties and the data, algorithmic, and governance divides.    | Slides 6-10  |
| 40-55 min  | Allocation & recursion     | Introduce the Allocative Turn and AI Stratification Spiral.                         | Slides 11-12 |
| 55-65 min  | Mapping activity           | Students map one consequential AI system and identify possible intervention points. | Slide 13     |
| 65-78 min  | Subjectivity & recognition | Algorithmic Habitus, Intelligibility Inequality, and institutionalization.          | Slides 14-16 |
| 78-90 min  | Material & global orders   | Computational Metabolism, Techno-colonialism, Digital Feudalism, and Lex Digitalis. | Slides 17-19 |
| 90-100 min | Alternatives & synthesis   | Algorithmic Commons, Redistributive Infrastructures, and final discussion.          | Slide 20     |

#### If you split it into two classes

A natural break falls after Slide 13. Class 1 then ends after students have mapped and challenged the AI Stratification Spiral. Class 2 begins with Algorithmic Habitus and moves from lived experience to global political economy and alternatives.

## PREPARATION

### Before class: readings, prompts, and instructor preparation

#### Core reading from the book

- Recommended minimum: Introduction + Chapter 1, “AI as an Inequality Regime,” or Chapter 2, “The Roots of AI Inequality: From Digital Divides to the Allocative Turn.”
- For a theory-heavy class: add Chapter 3, “The Core Fractures: Data, Algorithm, and Governance.”
- For a two-class adaptation: assign Chapters 4-6 before Class 2 and use Chapters 7-11 selectively for student-led extensions.

#### Opening prompt

##### Ask before defining any concept

Imagine an AI system that predicts accurately. Who benefits from that prediction? Who bears the costs when it is wrong? Who decided what should be predicted in the first place?

#### Instructor preparation checklist

- Choose one consequential domain familiar to your students: hiring, welfare, education, health, credit, migration, policing, or public services.
- Prepare one example that involves an institutional decision, not only a model output. The teaching goal is to move from bias to allocation and governance.
- Decide whether the class will complete the mapping activity in small groups (recommended) or collectively on the board.
- Keep the distinction between access/skills and predictive/allocative power visible throughout the class.
- Close by asking students to propose changes to ownership, governance, or institutional purpose - not only technical fixes.

##### Leading source throughout

Ragnedda & Ruiu, *The Inequality Regime of AI: Power, Allocation, and the Struggle for Justice* (Routledge), especially the Introduction and Chapters 1-3 for the conceptual foundations of this class.

## Framework and historical shift

### 1. The AI Inequality Regime

The overarching framework treats AI not as a collection of isolated tools but as a social, institutional, and infrastructural order through which data, algorithms, and governance organize visibility, value, voice, opportunity, resources, and risk.

**Leading source:** Introduction; Chapters 1-3.

**Teaching note:** Ask students to identify what must be present before a series of unequal outcomes can reasonably be described as a regime: durability, a governing logic, and a normalizing force.

**Reflect:** *When does an individual technological decision become a structural pattern?*

**Further reading:** Acker (2006); Joyce et al. (2021); Joyce & Cruz (2024).

### 2. The Allocative Turn

The Allocative Turn names the shift from digital inequalities centered on access, skills, and participation toward infrastructures that predict, classify, rank, and distribute opportunities, protections, resources, visibility, and risk.

**Leading source:** Chapter 2; Chapters 5-6 for institutional consequences.

**Teaching note:** Use a familiar case - hiring, credit, welfare, or education - and ask students to separate participation in a digital system from the consequences of being classified by it.

**Reflect:** *What changes when technology no longer only mediates participation but anticipates who is likely to be valuable, risky, eligible, or credible?*

**Further reading:** Eubanks (2018); Fourcade (2021); Ananny & Crawford (2018).

## Recursive inequality and lived adaptation

**3. The AI Stratification Spiral**

Unequal social conditions shape data; data inform algorithmic interpretation; classifications influence institutional decisions; those decisions generate new outcomes and data that can appear to confirm earlier classifications. Inequality becomes recursive rather than episodic.

**Leading source:** Chapters 1 and 3; open companion paper on the AI Stratification Spiral.

**Teaching note:** Draw a loop rather than a linear pipeline. The key teaching move is to show that an intervention at only one point may leave the larger recursive structure intact.

**Reflect:** *Where could the spiral be interrupted - data, model, institution, governance, or the social conditions that precede data collection?*

**Further reading:** Bowker & Star (1999); Fourcade & Healy (2017); Eubanks (2018).

**4. Algorithmic Habitus**

Extending Bourdieu, Algorithmic Habitus describes how people learn to anticipate scoring, ranking, recommendation, and automated judgment and adjust their conduct, self-presentation, and expectations accordingly.

**Leading source:** Chapter 4.

**Teaching note:** Move the discussion from “what algorithms do to people” to the ways people orient themselves toward anticipated algorithmic evaluation. Everyday examples can include platforms, ratings, productivity metrics, or automated screening.

**Reflect:** *Do people need to understand an algorithm technically in order for it to shape their behavior?*

**Further reading:** Bucher (2018); Beer (2017); Bourdieu (1990).

## Recognition, ownership, and private rule

### 5. Intelligibility Inequality

Intelligibility Inequality concerns unequal capacities to appear, be recognized, be interpreted, and influence the categories through which computational systems make people legible. Some groups fit dominant datasets and classifications more readily; others become misclassified, hyper-visible, or invisible.

**Leading source:** Introduction; Chapters 2-4.

**Teaching note:** Distinguish inclusion in data from fair recognition. More visibility may produce benefits in one context and intensified scrutiny in another.

**Reflect:** *Who has the power to define the categories through which people become intelligible to AI?*

**Further reading:** Benjamin (2019); Noble (2018); Fricker (2007).

### 6. Digital Feudalism and Lex Digitalis

Digital Feudalism describes dependency created by concentrated ownership of platforms, cloud infrastructures, models, interfaces, and computational capacity. Lex Digitalis names the private normative order enacted through code, terms of service, ranking, moderation, and automated enforcement.

**Leading source:** Chapter 9.

**Teaching note:** Treat feudalism as a structural analogy centered on rent, dependency, and jurisdictional asymmetry - not as a claim of historical equivalence. Ask what happens when public institutions become dependent on privately governed infrastructure.

**Reflect:** *If access to social participation depends on proprietary infrastructures, where does practical sovereignty reside?*

**Further reading:** Pasquale (2015); Cohen (2019); Zuboff (2019).

## Material foundations and alternatives

### 7. Computational Metabolism and Techno-colonialism

Computational Metabolism connects AI to energy, water, minerals, semiconductors, data centers, labor, and waste, emphasizing how ecological costs can be displaced geographically. Techno-colonialism examines how data, labor, infrastructure, and epistemic authority can reproduce global dependencies and dominant ways of knowing.

**Leading source:** Chapters 7-8.

**Teaching note:** Counter the image of AI as immaterial. Ask students to trace an AI service backward through compute, supply chains, labor, data, and environmental inputs, then outward to the places where benefits and burdens are distributed.

**Reflect:** *Can an AI system be socially “fair” at the point of use while remaining environmentally or geopolitically unequal?*

**Further reading:** Crawford (2021); Gray & Suri (2019); Mohamed, Png & Isaac (2020); Milan & Treré (2019).

### 8. Algorithmic Commons and Redistributive Infrastructures

The constructive horizon of the book moves beyond fair outputs toward the redistribution of data, compute, epistemic authority, participation, governance, and ecological responsibility. Algorithmic commons emphasize collective stewardship; redistributive infrastructures ask how material resources, recognition, participation, and care are allocated.

**Leading source:** Chapters 9-11.

**Teaching note:** Require students to propose changes at the level of purpose, ownership, governance, and infrastructure. A better fairness metric alone should not count as a complete alternative.

**Reflect:** *What would it mean to redistribute predictive power rather than only regulate its outcomes?*

**Further reading:** Ostrom (1990); Costanza-Chock (2020); D’Ignazio & Klein (2020).



### Three ready-to-use activities

#### Activity 1 - Map an AI allocation system (10-20 min)

In small groups, choose one domain: employment, welfare, education, health, credit, migration, policing, or public services. Map the system using six questions:

1. DATA - What data are collected, and whose histories do they represent?
2. PREDICTION - What is being predicted, scored, ranked, or classified?
3. CONTROL - Who owns or controls the data, model, and computational infrastructure?
4. ALLOCATION - What institutional decision follows, and who gains or loses?
5. FEEDBACK - How might the decision generate new data for future predictions?
6. CONTESTATION - Who can challenge, correct, refuse, or redesign the outcome?

#### Activity 2 - Bias or regime? (10 min)

Give students a case of discriminatory or uneven AI performance. Ask Group A to propose a technical correction and Group B to identify institutional, governance, or ownership changes. Compare which harms each intervention can and cannot address.

#### Activity 3 - Redistribute predictive power (15 min)

Ask groups to redesign the same system under four headings: purpose, ownership, decision rights, and ecological responsibility. Each group must state who gains new authority and what form of power is actually redistributed.

#### Debrief move

Bring every activity back to the same question: did the intervention change an output, or did it change the conditions under which prediction acquires authority?

### Questions that move from comprehension to critique

7. How does AI inequality differ from the traditional digital divide?
8. Why might a statistically accurate model still participate in an unequal institutional arrangement?
9. Who possesses the power to classify, predict, and define the categories on which prediction depends?
10. At what point does prediction become the allocation of opportunities, resources, risks, or scrutiny?
11. Can greater data inclusion reduce one inequality while increasing surveillance or extraction?
12. How does Algorithmic Habitus change our understanding of agency under algorithmic systems?
13. What is lost when social complexity is translated into computationally intelligible categories?
14. Can AI be “fair” if its environmental and labor costs are displaced elsewhere?
15. When do platform rules function as a form of private law?
16. What would redistributing data, compute, epistemic authority, and governance look like in a concrete institution?

### Assessment ideas

**500-word conceptual reflection:** Choose one concept from the book and use it to reinterpret a familiar AI case.

**1,000-word case analysis:** Map an AI allocation system across data, prediction, institution, feedback, and contestation.

**Policy memo:** Recommend one structural intervention that changes governance or ownership, not only model performance.

**Group presentation:** Compare a fairness-centered solution with a redistributive-infrastructure solution.

**Concept map:** Show how at least four concepts from the book connect across micro, meso, macro, and normative levels.

### **Selected readings to extend the book**

The book is the leading source for the class. These readings can be assigned selectively to deepen particular debates.

### **Regimes, classification, and allocation**

- Acker, J. (2006). Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender & Society*, 20(4), 441-464.
- Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (1999). *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. MIT Press.
- Fourcade, M. (2021). Ordinal citizenship. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 72(2), 154-174.
- Eubanks, V. (2018). *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*. St. Martin's Press.

### **Algorithmic power, bias, and governance**

- Ananny, M., & Crawford, K. (2018). Seeing without knowing: Limitations of the transparency ideal and its application to algorithmic accountability. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 973-989.
- Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Polity Press.
- Birhane, A. (2021). Algorithmic injustice: A relational ethics approach. *Patterns*, 2(2), 100205.
- Joyce, K., Smith-Doerr, L., Alegria, S., Bell, S., Cruz, T., Hoffman, S. G., Noble, S. U., & Shestakofsky, B. (2021). Toward a sociology of artificial intelligence: A call for research on inequalities and structural change. *Socius*, 7.

### **Materiality, labor, and global inequality**

- Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. Yale University Press.
- Couldry, N., & Mejías, U. A. (2019). *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford University Press.
- Gray, M. L., & Suri, S. (2019). *Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Global Underclass*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Mohamed, S., Png, M.-T., & Isaac, W. (2020). Decolonial AI: Decolonial theory as sociotechnical foresight in artificial intelligence. *Philosophy & Technology*, 33(4), 659-684.

### **Commons, participation, and alternatives**

- Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*. MIT Press.
- D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2020). *Data Feminism*. MIT Press.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Milan, S., & Treré, E. (2019). Big data from the South(s): Beyond data universalism. *Television & New Media*, 20(4), 319-335.

### Keep the book visible as the leading source

The sample teaching deck is intentionally designed so that every substantive slide carries a short “Leading source” footer pointing back to the relevant chapter. Instructors are encouraged to retain those source lines if they adapt the slides for their own classes.

### Canonical book citation used in this guide

#### Book

Ragnedda, M., & Ruiiu, M. L. (2027). *The Inequality Regime of AI: Power, Allocation, and the Struggle for Justice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003689379>

### Open companion resources

#### The Architecture of AI Inequality

Free video and podcast series explaining the book’s key concepts for academic, policy, student, and general audiences.

<https://www.massimoragnedda.com/the-inequality-regime-of-ai/>

#### AI Stratification Spiral - open conceptual paper

Ragnedda, M., & Ruiiu, M. L. (2026). *The AI Stratification Spiral: How Predictive Systems Turn Historical Inequality into Statistical Common Sense*. Zenodo.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22111477>

#### Book DOI and publisher record

Use the book DOI for citation and discovery.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003689379>

### Recommended adoption pathways

- Single class: use this guide + the 20-slide sample deck, with Introduction and Chapter 1 or 2 as the core reading.
- Two-class adaptation: Slides 1-13 for diagnosis/mechanisms; Slides 14-20 for subjectivity, global political economy, and alternatives.
- Short module: pair Chapters 2, 5, and 6 for institutions and structural/algorithmic violence, or Chapters 7-9 for environmental and global inequalities.
- Postgraduate theory/dissertation reading: use the full book as an analytic framework for studying AI, power, allocation, governance, and inequality.

#### Teaching-kit principle

The purpose of these materials is to make the book easier to adopt, discuss, and teach while preserving conceptual attribution. Adapt freely for teaching, while retaining the leading-source references to Ragnedda & Ruiiu.