

Critical A.I. Literacies Collective Winter Town Hall Meeting on A.I. and Environmental Impacts
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Critical A.I. Literacies Collective (CALC) will hold a Winter town hall meeting on Monday, March 2 in Fraser Hall 101 from 4:00-5:00 PM on “Environmental Impacts of A.I.” This event is open to all Western faculty staff, and students. Aspen Clark of Information Technology Services and Robyn Dahl, Professor of Geology and SMATE (Science, Math, and Technology Education), will give brief opening remarks on the environmental impacts of the A.I. industry, and the rest of the time will be dedicated to an open townhall-style discussion. The event will be followed by a tea and cookies reception from 5:00-5:30 to encourage more informal conversation and connections.

Aspen and Robyn will lay the groundwork for a conversation about A.I. and environmental impacts by introducing the state of climate change today, WWU’s contributions to climate change, WWU’s sustainability goals, and the environmental impacts of A.I. use by WWU faculty, staff, and students.

The most important goal of the event is to bring together community members who are concerned about A.I. and its environmental impacts and to create a forum for participants to speak and listen to one another. CALC affirms that there is no single person who can answer every question on A.I. and its environmental impacts, and there is no single department or area of expertise that offers a comprehensive understanding of this topic. By talking with members of our campus community across various disciplines and areas of practice, CALC hopes to deepen critical perspectives on the local and global environmental impacts of the A.I. industry. CALC approaches these topics from a commitment to creating life-affirming futures for all of us together on this planet.

The idea for this open meeting comes from feedback the collective received during the October 6 teach-in on “A.I. in Education: Dreams, Nightmares, Realities.” During the teach-in, participants worked in small groups to share their ideas on topics to explore in more depth at future events. A large portion of participant responses centered on environmental impacts of A.I. For example, participants reported wanting to talk more about the A.I. industry’s impacts on the climate crisis, on water supply, and on human health.

CALC is planning future events in Spring quarter to address other topics of interest to past teach-in participants, including legal issues around A.I. tools and privacy and the impacts of chatbots on users’ health and well-being.