The Business Ethics of AI: Creating Good Jobs or a Good Jobs Crisis?

Friday, September 22nd, 12:30 P.M. – 1:45 P.M.

Hybrid event - LaCava 325 AB

Register for Zoom

Advances in AI promise to significantly widen the range of tasks that can be successfully automated, including "non-routine" tasks such as drafting legal documents, providing medical diagnoses, designing buildings, and creating music and film. In the process, they generate widespread speculation about the future of work and society. Will workers, after an initial period of disruption, jump on the productivity bandwagon, as rapid growth leads to rising demand for workers? Or, will society need to adjust (for better or worse) to a world with far less work, changing our norms and values in the process? Or, perhaps most pessimistically, will there be plenty of jobs for workers, but in an economically polarized society where the vast majority of society occupy jobs with low pay, status, and security, and little possibility for advancement?

Rather than treating the future of work and technology as given, this talk emphasizes the role of business and government policy in shaping the path of technological development. After briefly setting the stage, I consider what it means for a job to be a good job, distinguishing just work from edifying work. Then, I discuss the sort of reforms that may be essential to a just (and perhaps also more edifying) future of work. Finally, I provide an argument for why it is both ethical and profitable for business to pursue these reforms. This argument has important implications for general theories of business ethics and the role of business in society.

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