Course Report WASP Graduate School

Date: 2026-06-05
Authors[1]: Nina Khairova

Name of course: "Ethical, Legal and Social Impact of AI and AS"

Semester: Spring 2025
Number of registered students: 69
Answering frequency (course evaluation): 20 (29%)

Examination results

Number of students examined: 69
Fail: 0 (0%)
Pass: (69) (100%)

Brief summary of student viewpoints and suggestions

In the 2025 survey, 60% of students rated the course highly, assigning scores of 4 or 5. In contrast, only 5% and 10% of respondents gave the course a rating of 1 and 2, respectively. Notably, this represents a marked improvement in lower ratings compared to the previous year. Although the proportion of students awarding scores of 4 or 5 remained consistent at 60%, the share of students giving the lowest ratings (1 or 2) was significantly higher last year—5% rated the course as 1 and 25% as 2, amounting to nearly 30% in total.

A similar shift in response patterns is evident in the question regarding students' enjoyment of the course. While the proportion of students who rated their enjoyment as 1 or 2 remained constant at 20%, the percentage of those who rated it highly (4 or 5) increased significantly—from 45% in 2024 to 60% in 2025.

However, only 60% of students felt that they spent their time well on the course. This includes 15% who rated their time investment as 3, 20% as 4, and 25% as 5. These figures are nearly identical to those reported in the 2024 survey, indicating no significant change in students' perceptions regarding the value of their time spent.

A significantly larger proportion of surveyed students appreciated this year's interactive assignments: 65% rated them as 4 or 5, while only 15% gave ratings of 1 or 2.his positive feedback may be partly attributed to the course being delivered in a winter school format, which was well received—75% of students rated this format as 4 or 5, although 15% expressed dissatisfaction.

Answers to free text-questions to be (shortly) summarized under "Strengths" and "Weaknesses"

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[1] *The report should be written by the examiner together with the teachers and possibly others, such as teaching assistants*

"Strengths"

Participants highlighted several key strengths of the course. The most frequently mentioned positive aspects included the opportunity for interaction and discussion, both with fellow participants and invited speakers. Many appreciated the insights shared by external speakers, particularly on topics such as European data protection laws, policy brief writing, and academic career paths.

The broad range of topics covered and the diversity of perspectives presented were also valued, as was the onsite format, which facilitated networking and social engagement. Notably, some participants found the critical perspectives on AI refreshing. A few respondents appreciated the compact two-day format.

"Strengths" according to students:

- Engaging interactions and discussions
- Insightful contributions from external speakers
- Broad and diverse range of topics
- Opportunities for socializing and networking
- On-site format supporting face-to-face engagement
- Valuable sessions on policy writing and data protection
- Honest and critical perspectives on AI
- Compact two-day structure

"Weaknesses"

Some students expressed concerns about the course being held in person, particularly in Umeå, which was viewed as an inconvenient and remote location within the WASP network. Several respondents questioned the necessity of in-person attendance, suggesting that the course could have been delivered just as effectively online. Additionally, a few students felt that the strong emphasis on AI—particularly due to its connection with the Lemur project—shifted the focus away from the intended ethical and societal aspects of AI, making the content less relevant for those not working directly with AI technologies. One respondent articulated broader dissatisfaction with the WASP course offerings, noting a lack of options aligned with their research interests and a perceived overemphasis on AI across the curriculum. Minor organizational issues were also mentioned, including a lack of readiness at the start of sessions. Finally, while most presentations were well received, a few were considered less suited to the course's objectives, and it was suggested that more structured group activities could help encourage participation from students who may be hesitant to socialize on their own.

"Weaknesses" according to students:

- Inconvenient course location (Umeå)
- Unnecessary in-person format for this type of course
- Overemphasis on AI, with limited relevance for non-AI students
- Course focus shifted away from ethics due to connection with Lemur

- Lack of diverse course options within WASP
- Minor organizational issues (e.g., unpreparedness at session start)
- Some presentations not well aligned with course goals
- Limited structured opportunities for social interaction

Comments from teachers on the implementation and outcome of the course[2]

The course was successfully delivered in a compact two-day format with strong engagement from students. Interactive components such as discussions and informal chats were well received, and the presence of external speakers contributed valuable perspectives. Many students appreciated the diversity of topics and the opportunity to network with peers across disciplines. The winter school format was also positively noted, as it fostered a focused and collegial environment that supported both learning and social interaction.

While the majority of students rated the course positively, feedback also indicated that a portion of the cohort found the content less aligned with their research focus—primarily due to the strong emphasis on AI—even though the course is inherently focused on the ethical, legal, and social impact of AI.

Proposed changes/comments/measures

- Consider a rotating course location to improve accessibility for participants from different WASP-affiliated universities. Feedback indicated that Umeå was not regarded by students as a conveniently accessible venue.
- Incorporating more structured group activities or social events would likely have a positive impact on student interaction and inclusion. While some students appreciated the opportunities for informal networking, others reported difficulty engaging socially, particularly those who are less extroverted or new to the PhD community. Introducing facilitated group exercises, small breakout discussions, or guided social events focused on the ethical, legal, and social dimensions of AI could help foster a more inclusive academic environment, promote interdisciplinary engagement, and strengthen students' connections within this area of study.

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[2] *Including changes effected during the course*