

Artificial Influence and the Engineering of Mass Persuasion



November 6 and 7, 2025

| Missouri S&T in Rolla, Missouri

Center for STS | KI Center for AI & Autonomous Systems | Miner AI

Persuasion has slipped its human skin and re-emerged as an artificial influence, the result of massive troves of personal data run through an increasingly sophisticated and pervasive computational infrastructure. We can still trace its ancestry from sophist rhetoric to wartime propaganda posters to cable news spin, but today, influence is hyper-personalized, highly automated, and increasingly subliminal. Text-generating models [ghostwrite political screeds](#), recommendation engines [choreograph our cultural diets](#), and armies of social-media bots [inflate or erase entire conversations](#) before most of us notice.

From [psychographically-tailored Facebook ads](#) that boosted click-through rates by 40 percent, to [GPT-generated propaganda](#) that rivals (and sometimes surpasses) state-crafted disinformation, AI is transforming how attitudes and behavior are shaped at scale. Empirical studies now show large-language-model [\(LLM\) chatbots winning 64 percent](#) of one-on-one debates against humans, while investigative journalism has exposed industrialized [“influence-as-a-service” operations](#) deploying tens of thousands of AI-controlled personas across global elections. At the same time, AI-driven “nudging” systems are being pitched as [tools for health promotion and pro-social behavior change](#), illustrating the technology’s double-edged potential. Psychologists and neuroscientists map the reward loops that keep thumbs scrolling; media scholars trace how outrage and empathy propagate through networks; game designers model social contagion in virtual worlds.

The dramatic AI advances described above can distract from serious limitations: lack of explanations of the results; inconsistent results; hallucinations, plagiarism, copyright violations, misunderstanding of prompts and other inaccuracies; lack of privacy from using the AI, both intentional and accidental; and high monetary or environmental costs. These issues are consequential to the point of impacting nearly all AI use cases, including mass persuasion.

The Artificial Influence and the Engineering of Mass Persuasion conference, co-hosted by the Center for Science, Technology, and Society (CSTS), the Kummer Institute Center for AI and Autonomous Systems (KCIAIAS), and Miner AI is calling for papers that deal with questions such as: How is artificial intelligence affecting mass persuasion techniques and technologies? What persists when persuasion migrates from broadcast to bandwidth? How

exactly do large language models draft propaganda? How do recommender graphs, neuromarketing sensors, location beacons, and “dark-pattern” interfaces collaborate to bend emotion toward action? When does a nudge become coercion? Are data subjects entitled to cognitive sovereignty? How do bodies feel algorithmic persuasion, and how might somatic knowledge inform the design of inoculation strategies? What mass persuasion practices cultivate resilience, and which ones toxify the public sphere?

Papers might revisit ancient rhetoric, Cold-War psychological warfare, or the public-relations revolutions of Bernays and Lee, reading them against today’s TikTok psy-ops or meme-stock frenzies. Researchers could unpack algorithmic pipelines; experience designers could demo tools that reveal hidden persuasion; artists might stage performances that embody algorithmic nudges. Philosophers, lawyers, and clinicians may test moral frameworks against real deployments like [micro-targeted vaccine campaigns](#), [payday-loan push notifications](#), and [political deepfakes that hijack personal grief](#). Also relevant are topics such as proposed ethical recommendations for designing persuasion campaigns; opt-in, opt-out or agentic AI for users; and the technological implications of reinforcement learning, attention methods, and other AI advances on mass persuasion.

Abstracts for single papers between 250-500 words should be submitted using [this form](#). Participants may also propose a complete session of no more than four papers (15 minutes each), or no more than three papers and a commenter (15 minutes each) using [the same form](#). Be sure to have the names, email addresses, and abstracts of each of the papers in your session ready for submission. Please submit by midnight, August 6th, 2025. Decisions will be made by August 31st, 2025. Keynote speakers will be announced soon.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kathleen Sheppard, Director, CSTS: SheppardKa@mst.edu, Dr. Don Wunsch, Director, KICAIA: DWunsch@mst.edu, or Dr. Jonathan Kimball, Miner AI: KimballJW@mst.edu