

MODULE 5

AI in the Workplace

Automation, Jobs & Labor

STUDY GUIDE

AI Ethics for Higher Education

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1 Tasks, Not Jobs

AI replaces tasks, not entire jobs. When 80% of a job's tasks are automated, the role is restructured: fewer workers, higher skill requirements, often the same pay. Both blue-collar and white-collar routine tasks are vulnerable.

2 Algorithmic Management

AI systems that assign tasks, monitor performance, and make disciplinary decisions without human supervision. Amazon warehouses auto-generate termination notices. Uber deactivates drivers algorithmically. The defining feature: **total transparency in one direction, total opacity in the other.**

3 Workplace AI Surveillance

Employers can monitor: email content, keystrokes, screenshots, webcam feeds, GPS location, app usage, browsing history, and messaging. Most of this is legal in the U.S. Research shows monitored workers are **more likely to break rules, not less** — surveillance erodes self-regulation.

4 AI in Hiring

75% of large employers use automated screening. Resume scanners learn to prefer candidates who look like historical hires (perpetuating homogeneity). HireVue dropped facial analysis in 2021 after admitting it couldn't be scientifically validated. NYC Local Law 144 now requires annual bias audits of AI hiring tools.

5 The Productivity Paradox

Since 1979, U.S. worker productivity rose **64.6%**. Compensation rose **17.3%**. The gap represents value created by workers but captured by shareholders and executives. AI accelerates this pattern.

6 Just Transition

The principle that automation's benefits shouldn't come entirely at workers' expense. Includes: retraining funded by companies that automate, transition income support, worker participation in automation decisions, and shared productivity gains.

7 Deskilling

Workers who depend on AI for core tasks gradually lose the ability to perform those tasks independently. AI augmentation can hollow out the very expertise it was meant to assist.