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Registration information

The use of AI to inform policy

Organized by:

UNU MERIT

Training details

Modality: Online instructor led
Dates: *07 Sep 2026 - 18 Sep 2026*
Training fees: $150.00
Language: English
Application deadline: 02 Sep 2026
Payment methods: bank_transfer, Bank transfer
Training code: 26OI500581MUL-E-D
Contact: cdo.atc@merit.unu.edu

Training description

As the volume of global data surpasses traditional analytical capacities, artificial intelligence has become an indispensable tool for modern policy makers. This course provides an introduction to the use of AI for policy. Specifically, it zooms in on how AI can assist by utilizing Machine Learning (ML) frameworks, from Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Large Language Models (LLMs) to Computer Vision (CV), to transform raw information into actionable policy evidence.

In this course, the focus is on

Nowcasting:

Modern policymaking requires timely and quality data. However, most policy-relevant indicators (from macroeconomic statistics to sector-specific information on employment, industrial activity, or innovation) are released with delays ranging **from 30 days to several years**. As a result, policymakers are often *“driving while looking in the rearview mirror.”*

The problem is even more severe for granular insights—such as regional dynamics, sectoral shifts, or the adoption of new technologies—where data may simply not exist.

AI-powered nowcasting addresses these gaps by leveraging proxy data and non-traditional sources to infer real-time conditions:

- **Satellite Imagery:** Nighttime light intensity to estimate economic activity; port and shipyard activity to track trade; land use patterns to monitor agriculture, infrastructure, and urbanization; housing characteristics to proxy inequality.
- **Search Trends:** Online search behavior (e.g., queries about unemployment benefits) to anticipate labor market dynamics ahead of official statistics.
- **Textual sources:** LLMs applied to news, central bank communications, patents, and job postings to extract signals on economic sentiment, technological change, and skill demand.

Evidence synthesis:

Policymakers face an overwhelming and rapidly growing body of evidence—from academic publications to policy reports and legislative documents. AI enables systematic and scalable synthesis of this information.

- Automated literature reviews using NLP and LLMs
- Classification and summarization of policy documents
- Extraction of key findings, consensus, and disagreement across studies
- Mapping of research landscapes and identification of gaps

These tools allow policymakers to move from anecdotal or selective evidence toward more comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible knowledge aggregation methodologies.

Causal Machine Learning:

While Machine Learning has traditionally been associated with prediction and often criticized as a “black box”, recent advances have increasingly integrated causal inference into ML frameworks. This part of the course focuses on how AI can move beyond prediction to support **policy-relevant causal questions**, such as: *What is the effect of a policy? What would happen under alternative interventions?*

Policy research examples

Our researchers inform participants not only on how their research uses AI to derive at new findings and conclusion, but also how this research is used to directly inform governments to influence their policy process

- Use of satellite data (Stephan Dietrich).
- Application of Natural Language analysis to innovation and employment (Tommaso Ciarli).
- Evidence Synthesis: Scan ODA landscape to understand how to make aid more impactful (Lindsey Moore).

For more information about the training objectives, target population, entry requirements, methodology, evaluation and content, consult the page here.

How to apply

In order to register for the training, applicants should:

1. Create an ITU Academy account here
2. Apply for the course here
3. The selection of participants for the course will be made by the course coordinators, based on the course's entry requirements, selection criteria and available number of seats. If selected, you will receive a notification by email.

How to pay for the training

This course is organized by United Nations University-Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT), an ITU Academy Training Centre, which will collect the training fees directly.

You will find details about the payment process of this Centre at the following link or alternatively in your ITU Academy account under My courses.

Kindly note that payment must be made by 02 Sep 2026

Group registration and payment

Registration and payment for multiple people from an organization is possible through institutional contacts.

To become an institutional contact:

1. Go to your profile page by clicking on the “My account” button in the user menu and click on the “Apply to be an Institutional Contact” button
2. Fill in the required information and click “continue”, a request will be created.
3. An ITU Academy manager will manually review this request and accept or deny it accordingly.
4. If accepted, you will find a new menu tab “Institutional Contact” appearing in the top bar. You can now request multiple seats in a course and assign them to people from your group. Kindly note, each individual must create an ITU Academy account.



The ITU Academy is the International Telecommunication Union leading platform for capacity development initiatives.

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