

## CS182 Final Reflection Assignment

### Ethics, Policy, and Technological Change

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**Due:** 11:59pm (Pacific Time) on March 17th, 2026. Submit on Gradescope.

#### **Assignment Overview**

Please write two short reflection essays in the form of letters to your future self. The letters should be personal and can be breezy and conversational while also intellectually serious and rigorous.

Letter #1 should be 750–1000 words. Letter #2 should be 500–750 words.

- **Letter #1** is required for everyone.
- For **Letter #2**, choose one of the prompts.

For citations, use any style you prefer but remain consistent throughout. When citing lecture materials, cite the lecture date (Lecture, 2/28) in-line or as a footnote depending on your citation style.

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#### **Framing: Letters to Your Future Self**

We are living through the early stages of an extraordinary and rare transition. Artificial intelligence is a general purpose technology, its capabilities continue to advance rapidly, and its social effects are just beginning to take shape. AI is transforming the labor market, redefining professional roles, and raising urgent questions about what it means to build a career—and a life—in a world where the ground beneath our feet is shifting. You have spent this quarter studying the ethics, politics, and history of technological change. Now it is time to turn that lens inward.

Each of your essays should be written as a letter addressed to your future self. Imagine opening this letter one year, five years, or ten years from now. What do you want that person to remember about how you thought and felt at this moment? What commitments do you want to hold yourself to? What questions do you want to keep asking?

As you write, you are encouraged to engage with the essay collection *Letters to a Young Technologist* ([letterstoayoungtechnologist.com](http://letterstoayoungtechnologist.com)), particularly the opening essay “What is Technology?” by Saffron Huang. Huang argues that technology is not neutral: it is the product of human will and judgment, a chosen path that endorses certain futures over others. As you reflect on your own path, consider: what futures are you choosing to endorse? What kind of person do you want to be in a world of extraordinary machine intelligence?

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## Letter #1 (Required)

### ***Dear Future Me: On Navigating the AI Transition***

Write a letter to your future self that reflects on what it feels like to be a young adult entering the workforce—or preparing to—during the early stages of the AI transition. Your letter should address the following:

- **Anxieties and uncertainties.** What concerns do you have about the job market, career stability, and the changing nature of work? Be honest about the fears and pressures you are experiencing right now. How do the conversations we have had this quarter—about automation, labor displacement, and inequality—shape or intensify those concerns?
- **Ambitions and aspirations.** Where do you see yourself professionally in one year, five years, and ten years? What kind of work do you want to do, and what kind of impact do you hope to have? How do you plan to remain adaptable and relevant as AI capabilities continue to evolve? *Be sure to state clearly what your dream job (or jobs) would be in the year after graduation, five years after graduation, and ten years after graduation.*
- **Values and commitments.** Drawing on course materials and section discussions, what values and commitments do you want your future self to uphold? Huang writes that the technologist “actively participates in determining what that wish is, rather than having clearly defined problems handed to them.” What is *your* wish for the world you want to help build?

*You may also wish to consider: What advice would you give your future self for moments of doubt? What do you want to remember about who you are right now?*

## Letter #2 (Choose one of the following)

### *Option A: Dear Future Me — On Power, Responsibility, and the Companies We Build*

The companies driving the AI transition—from frontier model developers to the tech giants deploying AI at scale—wield enormous influence over the economy, public discourse, and the daily lives of billions of people. As AI concentrates power in fewer hands, questions about corporate responsibility, governance, and democratic accountability become increasingly urgent. And so too questions about democracy and the rule of law.

Write a letter to your future self about the obligations that AI companies have to the communities and societies they reshape. What should these companies be doing that they are not? What role should government play, and where does corporate self-governance suffice? If you imagine yourself in a position of influence—as a founder, engineer, policy maker, elected official, civil society leader, or investor—what commitments will you make? What lines will you refuse to cross?

Use examples from class and from current events to ground your argument. Letters to a Young Technologist asks us to reckon with our agency: “Making technology involves an ongoing attempt to bring the world closer to the way one wishes it to be.”

### *Option B: Dear Future Me — On AI and the Transformation of Personal Life*

Social media promised connection. It delivered it—and also anxiety, comparison, misinformation, and a restructuring of how we form identity, friendship, and self-worth. A generation raised on Snap, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter has lived through a vast, largely uncontrolled experiment in how technology reshapes inner life. Now AI is arriving in our most intimate spaces: as a companion, a therapist, a tutor, a creative collaborator, an always-available presence that knows us better over time.

Write a letter to your future self that reflects honestly on both the gifts and the costs that social media has brought to your personal life—to your relationships, your mental health, your sense of self, and your experience of the world. Then turn that lens forward: based on what you have observed and experienced, what do you anticipate AI will bring to your personal life?

Consider the particular ways AI is already entering personal life: as a mental health companion or surrogate therapist, as a romantic or social partner, as an omnipresent aide that shapes how we process experience. What boundaries, if any, do you want to set for yourself? What will you protect? What are you eager to embrace?

Draw on what you have learned this quarter about the social consequences of prior technological transitions. Consider how the promises and failures of social media might inform how we—individually and collectively—navigate the arrival of AI in personal life. Letters to a Young Technologist reminds us that technology is never neutral: every tool encodes assumptions about what a good life looks like. What assumptions do you want to interrogate, and what kind of person do you want AI to help you become—or not become?

## **A Note on Tone and Honesty**

These letters are meant to be personal and reflective. You are not writing a policy memo or a research paper—you are writing to yourself. Be candid about what you do not know. Be specific about what you hope for. The best letters will combine intellectual rigor with genuine self-reflection.

We encourage you to revisit these letters at the milestones you set for yourself. Your future self will thank you for your honesty.

You can arrange to have these letters sent to you at some future date at <https://www.futureme.org>

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## **Required Background Reading**

*Letters to a Young Technologist* — <https://letterstoayoungtechnologist.com>

A collection of essays by young technologists reflecting on the meaning, history, and ethics of their work. Especially relevant are:

- “What is Technology?” by Saffron Huang
- “Value Beyond Instrumentalization” by Jasmine Sun
- “To be a Technologist is to be Human” by Maran Elancheran