



**ACEPS**  
THE AFRICAN CENTRE  
FOR EPISTEMOLOGY AND  
PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

# Speaker Series: Safeguarding Democracy in the Age of AI

Drs. Katherine Furman & Mary Carman

30 July 2025 11:00-12:30 SAST

UJ on Empire

11<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom

Zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/92820327322>

## ChatGPT me like a friend: Lay-consultation and affective disruption in the context of AI

### ABSTRACT

Much of how we come to know about the world is by talking to other ordinary people, at various degrees of relational proximity to ourselves – family, friends, confidants, that guy at the coffee shop, the person we met on the bus that one time. We engage in deep talk, rumour mongering, chatter. These very ordinary epistemic practices can and do contribute to our decision making on important topics, such as who to vote for and which doctor to trust. Sometimes we take these “lay consultations” more seriously than “expert consultation” in our decision making. This is understandable and can be epistemically untroubling, because these encounters can be less affectively loaded than our encounters with experts, and we may look for different information from peers, such as experiential information on how a difficult situation was navigated, or information that closely aligns with our values. But practices may be disrupted in online spaces, especially in contexts of AI. Here, on one hand our affective ease and our sense of shared values might be misplaced, but on the other hand our encounters may become affectively loaded in ways that become epistemically troubling. This talk will consider whether our lay consultation practices, analysed against a backdrop of values and affect, can remain helpful in the face of AI developments.



**Dr Katherine Furman** is Senior Lecturer of Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the University of Liverpool. Previously, she was the director of the MA in Health and Society at the University College Cork, Ireland. She works on philosophy and public policy, specialising in health policy cases. She is concerned with health policy interventions in contexts of deep distrust.



**Dr Mary Carman** is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is interested in questions around emotions and rational agency, where she also explores the social and political dimensions of emotions. This has led indirectly to another research stream in the ethics of artificial intelligence (AI).

Inquiries: [pbenton@uj.ac.za](mailto:pbenton@uj.ac.za)

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<https://www.uj.ac.za/aceps>

Organiser: Paige Benton

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