



and

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,
& SOCIETY (STS)

jointly invite you to a colloquium talk with

Silvia Lindtner

University of Michigan

Feeling Like a State: Control in the Age of AI



Abstract: Both the Chinese and American state position AI as a “return” to a past of national strength. While the detailed articulations vary, each frames the other country’s approach to AI as a threat to its national rebuilding. Their political leaders rely on the production and circulation of feelings from fear of a threatening enemy to happiness attached to a strong nation, wholesome family values, and a “simpler” past. In this talk, I offer a theory of governance and power amidst a global embrace of AI that examines the enduring role of affect in the data-driven management of land, populations, and industries. I draw from in-depth ethnographic research on the uptake of AI to transform the countryside, agricultural industries, and various bureaucratic organizations in both China and America. I challenge the idea that the authoritarian state is capable only of coercive control enabled by an all-seeing machinery of vision technology. And I show that America’s and China’s approaches to AI have much in common, with AI functioning as a useful “emotional technology” for political regime formation.

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

3:00PM

Rockefeller Hall 300