



Department of Computer Science Distinguished Lecture

AI and Democracy

Moshe Y. Vardi
Rice University



Hosted by Shantanu Sharma & Vincent Oria

Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Coffee: 2:15 PM – 2:30 PM

Time: 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Location: Tiernan Building Lecture Hall 2

Zoom Link: <https://njit-edu.zoom.us/j/92409697651?pwd=Q01xZlk5bFhCakRCTmt5M1pqYmsyUT09>

Abstract:

U.S. society is in the throes of deep societal polarization that not only leads to political paralysis, but also threatens the very foundations of democracy. The phrase "The Disunited States of America" is often mentioned. Other countries are displaying similar polarization. How did we get here? What went wrong?

In this talk, I argue that the current state of affairs is the results of the confluence of two tsunamis that have unfolded over the past 40 years. On one hand, there was the tsunami of technology -- from the introduction of the IBM PC in 1981 to the current domination of public discourse by AI-driven social media. On the other hand, there was a tsunami of neoliberal economic policies. I will argue that the combination of these two tsunamis led to both economic polarization and cognitive polarization, and the emergence of Generative AI puts our democracy in an even graver risk.

BIO:

Moshe Y. Vardi is University Professor and the George Distinguished Service Professor in Computational Engineering at Rice University. His research focuses on the interface of mathematical logic and computation -- including database theory, hardware/software design and verification, multi-agent systems, and constraint satisfaction. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the ACM SIGACT Goedel Prize, the ACM Kanellakis Award, the ACM SIGMOD Codd Award, the Knuth Prize, the IEEE Computer Society Goode Award, and the EATCS Distinguished Achievements Award. He is the author and co-author of over 750 papers, as well as two books. He is a Guggenheim Fellow as well as a fellow of several societies, and a member of several academies, including the US National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Science, and the Royal Society of London. He holds nine honorary titles. He is a Senior Editor of the Communications of the ACM, the premier publication in computing.