Both Sides of the Issue

AI Revisited

A MiniGuide for Teachers

stosselintheclassroom.org

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Objectives

Students will be able to:

- list the main concerns about artificial intelligence (AI) that each video addresses, from data centers to jobs.
- paraphrase each video's argument about who should decide how AI is developed and used.
- inspect the figures an AI assistant gives about data centers and jobs by checking them against the sources it names.
- argue a position on whether government should approve major new AI projects before they launch, answering the strongest objection from the other video.

About This Pairing

This pairing sets *How to Protect Humanity From AI*, a video from Robert Reich, against *AI Hysteria: Fact or Fiction?*, from John Stossel. Reich, a former U.S. secretary of labor, proposes five "guardrails," including a national pause on new data centers and government approval of major new AI projects. Stossel's video features Alex Epstein, who writes about AI and energy, and Adam Thierer, a senior fellow at the R Street Institute. It argues that fears about AI are exaggerated and that government control of AI would do more harm than good.

Both videos use a clip of a resident saying "We do not want a data center in this county," and both expect AI to cost some people their jobs. They split on who should decide how fast AI moves forward: government, or the people building and buying it. Reich's is a scripted, narrated video of about six and a half minutes, with film and news clips. Stossel's is a reported segment of just over six minutes, built from interviews and news clips. Each includes short clips of people on the other side, and neither gives them a chance to respond.

The Stossel video was posted in September 2026, and the Reich video in October 2026. AI tools, laws, and job figures change quickly.

Concepts & Key Terms

The following terms appear across both videos in this pairing, or in the activities that follow. Understanding them will help students follow the arguments and engage in discussion.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Computer systems that perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as recognizing images, understanding language, or making predictions.

Automation: The use of machines or computer programs to do work that people once did.

Collective Bargaining: Negotiation between an employer and a group of workers, usually represented by a labor union, over wages, benefits, and working conditions.

Data Center: A building that houses large numbers of computer servers that store data and run software, including AI systems.

Deepfake: An image, video, or audio recording made or altered with AI to show a real person saying or doing something he or she did not say or do.

Dividend: A payment shared out to owners or members from an organization's earnings, such as the yearly payment Alaska makes to its residents from its oil-funded savings.

Dystopia: An imagined society in which life is frightening or miserable, often because of technology or government control.

Electric Grid: The network of power plants, transmission lines, and equipment that delivers electricity to homes and businesses.

Moratorium: A temporary halt on an activity, ordered by a government, such as a pause on new construction.

Permissionless Innovation: The idea that people should be free to try new technologies without first getting government approval, with problems addressed as they arise.

Precautionary Principle: The idea that a new technology should be restricted or delayed until it is shown to be safe.

Primary Source: An original record of an event or a finding, such as a government data table, a poll's published results, or a research study, rather than an article describing it.

Regulation: A rule issued by government that controls how businesses or individuals may act.

Surveillance Pricing: Charging different customers different prices for the same product based on personal data, such as search history, location, or demographics.

Universal Basic Income (UBI): A regular cash payment from government to every adult, whether or not he or she works, paid for with tax revenue.

Utopia: An imagined society in which everything is perfect.

Discussion Questions

Before watching, have students read through the questions below. After viewing both videos, use the questions to guide discussion—in small groups, as a whole class, or in writing. Encourage students to weigh the evidence on both sides before forming a view.

1. Name three of the five guardrails Robert Reich proposes for AI.
2. Why does Reich want a national pause on building data centers?
3. How does Reich say an AI dividend for all Americans could be paid for?
4. Which jobs does Reich say AI must never replace?
5. What mistakes does Alex Epstein say the anti-AI movement makes?
6. What does the Stossel video say happened to the number of radiologists?
7. Why does Adam Thierer say it matters whether American or Chinese AI wins? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
8. What does Epstein suggest data centers could do instead of drawing on the public grid?
9. Is a job that disappears always a loss? Who loses, and who might gain?
10. Who should decide whether a data center gets built in a town? Why?
11. If the government must approve new AI tools, who decides what counts as "safe"?
12. Laws are enforced by government. What would happen to a company that kept building during a national pause?
13. A pause on data centers might prevent some harms. What jobs, tax money, and products would it also stop?
14. Nothing is free. If AI companies are taxed to pay an AI dividend, who pays first, and how might the companies respond?
15. How exactly would government approval make AI safer? What could it cost to wait for approval?
16. If an AI company releases a tool that causes harm, who should be held responsible, and how?
17. Some heads of AI companies have asked Congress to license AI. How might strict rules help the biggest companies?
18. How can you tell whether a photo or video you see online was made with AI?
19. Reich compares AI to nuclear weapons and new types of cocaine. Stossel compares it to cellphones and the internet. Which comparison fits better? Why?
20. Both videos use a clip of a resident saying "We do not want a data center in this county." How does each video use it?
21. Reich cites a poll finding that most voters view AI negatively. Thierer says technology "has been a friend of humanity." Which kind of evidence is stronger here?

22. Reich wants every American to share in the wealth AI creates. Epstein says AI could make people "better teachers, better nurses." Could both happen at once? Explain.
23. Reich calls the leaders of AI companies "big tech oligarchs." Stossel calls those who want government control "clueless socialists." How do labels such as these influence what viewers think?
24. Both videos were posted in fall 2026. Which claim in either one would you check first a year from now?
25. What is the strongest argument on the side you disagree with?

Related Resources

Teachers looking to extend this discussion may want to pair it with these resources from SITC.org:

- Both Sides: *Artificial Intelligence*
- Both Sides: *Artificial Intelligence vs. Jobs*
- Both Sides: *Data Centers*
- Both Sides: *Universal Basic Income Revisited*
- *Capitalism Myths - Part 2*
- *China's Tech Totalitarianism*
- Lessons in Lyrics: *Creative Destruction*

Activities

The activities below may be used in any order. Each one requires students to engage with both videos. Worksheets begin on their own pages so they may be printed separately.

Activity 1: Common Ground Finder

These two videos reach opposite conclusions, and students tend to assume they share nothing. They share more than students expect, including a view about who should pay for data centers. Distribute the worksheet after both videos have been viewed, and allow about twenty minutes.

Students work in pairs to find three points both videos accept, record how each video expresses the point, and then locate the exact place where the two part ways. The Teacher Notes that follow the worksheet list the strongest points of agreement.

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Common Ground Finder: AI Revisited

Find three points both videos accept. For each one, write how the Reich video puts it and how the Stossel video puts it.

Point both accept	How the Reich video puts it	How the Stossel video puts it

If the two videos agree on these points, where exactly does their disagreement begin?

Which point of agreement surprised you most? Why?

Activity 1: Common Ground Finder—Teacher Notes

Students will find different wording, but the strongest shared ground usually falls into five areas.

AI is a turning point.

Reich says the outcome "depends on choices we make now." Early on, the Stossel video uses a *60 Minutes* clip saying, "We may look on our time as the moment civilization was transformed." Neither video treats AI as a passing fad.

Some jobs will be lost.

Reich says, "We may not be able to stop all AI job losses." The Stossel video says, "Some jobs will disappear." They disagree about what comes next, not about whether some work goes away.

Data centers should pay their own way.

This is the point students are least likely to expect. Reich wants to "make data centers cover their own costs, both financial and environmental." Epstein wants to make it "really easy for AI that wants to just power its own data centers" to build private grids. Neither video wants neighbors to pay the bill.

AI should benefit the public.

Reich's second guardrail is to "make the AI economy benefit everyone." Thierer says "the best way to do that is to allow AI to go out there to benefit the public." They share the goal and disagree about the route.

Misuse of personal data is a danger.

Reich calls for laws to "stop abuses of our data," including deepfakes and surveillance pricing. Thierer warns against AI built on values of "censorship, of surveillance, and control." Both see AI that watches people as a threat to freedom.

Where the disagreement begins

The videos disagree about whom to fear most and when to act. Reich fears "the big tech oligarchs" and wants government to set rules and grant approval before new AI arrives. The Stossel video fears control by government, whether "Bernie Sanders or anybody else," and control by the Chinese Communist Party, and wants problems solved as they appear. Ask the class which safeguard each video would rely on if it turned out to be wrong about the other side.

Activity 2: Timeline of the Debate

The argument in these two videos did not start in 2026. Since the release of ChatGPT in late 2022, lawmakers, governors, presidents, and other countries have taken sides through laws, vetoes, and executive orders. In this activity, students put fourteen events in order and decide which video's argument each one supports. Plan on one class period with device access.

Students look up the month and year of each event, number the events from earliest to latest, and mark whether each event supports Reich's argument, Stossel's, or both. Require a one-sentence reason, written on the back of the worksheet, for every "Both." The answer key follows the worksheet.

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Timeline of the Debate: AI Revisited

Look up the month and year of each event. Number the events from earliest (1) to latest (14). Mark R if the event supports Reich's argument, S if it supports Stossel's, or Both. Explain each Both on the back.

	Event	**Date**	**Order**	**R / S / Both**
A	The U.S. Senate votes 99–1 to remove a ten-year ban on state AI laws from a federal budget bill.			
B	OpenAI releases ChatGPT to the public.			
C	Colorado repeals its AI law and replaces it with narrower disclosure rules before the original law takes effect.			
D	President Joe Biden signs an executive order on the "Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy" development and use of AI.			
E	President Donald Trump revokes Biden's AI executive order.			
F	China's rules for generative AI take effect, requiring AI services to uphold "core socialist values."			
G	California Governor Gavin Newsom signs a law requiring the largest AI developers to publish safety plans and report serious incidents.			
H	OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman tells a Senate committee that licensing and testing requirements for powerful AI models would make sense.			
I	Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez introduce a bill to pause new data center construction.			
J	Newsom vetoes a California bill that would have imposed safety requirements on the largest AI models.			
K	Trump signs the TAKE IT DOWN Act, requiring websites to remove nonconsensual intimate images, including AI deepfakes, within 48 hours.			
L	Colorado becomes the first state to pass a broad law regulating "high-risk" AI systems.			
M	Trump signs an executive order directing the Justice Department to challenge state AI laws.			
N	The White House releases *America's AI Action Plan*, calling for faster permits for data centers and fewer regulatory barriers.			

Activity 2: Timeline of the Debate—Answer Key

Order	Letter	Date	Event	Supports
1	B	Nov. 2022	ChatGPT released	Both
2	H	May 2023	Altman Senate testimony	Reich
3	F	Aug. 2023	China's generative AI rules	Stossel
4	D	Oct. 2023	Biden executive order	Reich
5	L	May 2024	Colorado AI Act	Reich
6	J	Sept. 2024	California veto	Stossel
7	E	Jan. 2025	Biden order revoked	Stossel
8	K	May 2025	TAKE IT DOWN Act	Reich
9	A	July 2025	Senate drops state-law ban	Reich
10	N	July 2025	*America's AI Action Plan*	Stossel
11	G	Sept. 2025	California safety-plan law	Reich
12	M	Dec. 2025	Order to challenge state laws	Stossel
13	I	Mar. 2026	Data center pause bill	Reich
14	C	May 2026	Colorado law replaced	Stossel

Where more than one answer is acceptable

B (ChatGPT). Reich would point to how fast it spread before any rules existed. Stossel would point to how many people chose to use it.

K (TAKE IT DOWN Act). Reich calls for federal laws to take down deepfakes, and this law does part of that. A student may also argue that it supports Stossel: Congress addressed one specific harm after it appeared, without requiring approval before new AI could be released. Accept either placement if the student explains it.

J (California veto). Newsom said the bill focused only on the largest models and could miss risks from smaller ones, so the veto was not a rejection of AI rules as such. A student who marks it Both, or Reich, and gives that reason should be credited.

Teacher Notes

Seven events fall on Reich's side, six on Stossel's, and one on both. If a class sorts nearly everything to one side, ask students whether they sorted by the evidence or by the side they already favored.

Several of these stories were still moving when this guide was written in October 2026. Colorado's replacement law takes effect January 1, 2027. The Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez data center bill had not passed. Congress had not passed a law overriding state AI rules. Have students check the current status of each, and record the date they checked.

Activity 3: Devil's Advocate Round

Students take a position, then argue against it using the other video's best material. The goal is not to change anyone's mind. It is to make sure every student can state the opposing case well enough that a supporter of that case would accept the summary. Plan on one class period.

How to run it

- Write this statement on the board: "Government should approve major new AI projects before they launch."
- Have each student write "agree" or "disagree" on an index card, with one sentence of explanation. Collect the cards.
- Pair students who chose the same answer. Hand each pair a challenge card from the list below that argues against their position.
- Each pair has ten minutes to build the strongest version of the challenge, using at least one specific example from the video it comes from.
- Pairs present the challenge in two minutes. The class decides whether a supporter of that view would accept the presentation as fair.
- Return the index cards. Each student writes a new sentence stating whether his or her position changed, held, or became more qualified.

Challenge cards for students who agree with the statement (drawn from the Stossel video)

- Experts once said no one should train to be a radiologist because AI would take the job. Today there are more radiologists than ever. Who would have been approving AI based on that prediction?
- "Government doesn't have a very good history of creating hot new technologies that serve the public well."
- If American AI slows down, "the Chinese are there waiting," and "their values will come baked into their systems."
- A teacher "spending 50% of her time grading" could hand that work to AI. Every month of waiting for approval is a month she doesn't get that time back.

Challenge cards for students who disagree with the statement (drawn from the Reich video)

- "[W]e don't let corporations invent new types of nuclear weapons or new types of cocaine or new types of biological pathogens on their own." Why should AI be different?
- Reich cites a Goldman Sachs estimate that "roughly 300 million jobs worldwide could become automated over the next decade." A worker can't undo a layoff after the fact.
- Deepfakes can use a real person's face and voice against his or her will. "We have to know what's real and what isn't."
- AI "must never be the decider of who gets health care." Who would stop a company from using it that way if no one has to approve it first?

Activity 4: Socratic Seminar Prep

Use the prep sheet the day before a seminar so students arrive with evidence rather than impressions. Collect the sheets at the door; a student who has not logged evidence from both videos is not ready to speak.

Open the seminar with one of the questions below, and hold the last five minutes for each student to read the final line of his or her sheet aloud.

- If AI takes over a nurse's paperwork, has the nurse lost something or gained something?
- Who should decide whether a data center gets built: the town, the state, the country, or the owner of the land?
- Is it safer for one country to slow down on AI if other countries do not?
- Should some jobs be off-limits to machines no matter how good the machines get?

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Socratic Seminar Preparation

Evidence log. Record two specific quotations, figures, or examples from each video. A general memory of the argument does not count.

Video	Evidence	Why it matters
Reich		
Reich		
Stossel		
Stossel		

A question I want the group to wrestle with:

_____

_____

The strongest point on the side I disagree with:

_____

_____

One thing that could change my mind:

_____

_____

Activity 5: Exit Ticket Reflection

Use this at the close of the lesson. Collect the tickets and sort them by position before the next class, so students can see how the room actually divides rather than how they assumed it would. The second prompt matters most. It asks a student to hold on to a fact that cuts against him or her.

Distribute the ticket on the following page and allow five to seven minutes.

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Exit Ticket: AI Revisited

1. In one sentence, what do the two videos actually disagree about?

2. Think of the video you agree with less. Name one fact from it that you still cannot dismiss.

3. Who should have the most say over how AI develops? Circle one, then give your reason in one sentence.

Government Companies and customers

Local communities Not sure yet

4. What's the one thing you would need to find out before you could be more certain?

Activity 6: Source the Claim

This pairing is about AI, and it turns on numbers: how much water data centers use, how many Americans oppose them, and how many jobs AI could replace. That makes it a good place to teach students what happens when they ask an AI assistant to supply evidence. AI assistants produce citations that look correct and sometimes are not. The lesson is not that the machine is dishonest. It is that a fluent answer is not a referee, and a citation is only worth what checking it proves.

There are two ways to run this. (1) Whole class: the teacher projects one device, submits the prompt, and the class audits the response together. Allow about twenty-five minutes. (2) Small groups: groups of three work on school devices, each group taking one of the three questions in the prompt. Use whichever AI assistant your school permits. No particular product is required, and different assistants giving different answers is itself a useful result, so entering the same prompt into two assistants and comparing them is worth the time.

The prompt touches claims from both videos. The water question tests the Stossel video. The polling and jobs questions test the Reich video, and the jobs answer also tests the Stossel video's claim that predictions of job losses keep turning out wrong.

Step 1—Submit this prompt to an AI exactly as written.

How much water do U.S. data centers use, what share of Americans oppose having one built near them, and how many jobs could artificial intelligence (AI) replace in the next ten years? Give specific figures and cite your sources.

Step 2—Audit the response using the worksheet.

For every figure the assistant gives, students ask three questions: Does the source it names actually exist? Does that source actually say this? Is the figure current?

Step 3—Write a better prompt.

Students rewrite the request so the assistant is pushed toward primary sources, dates, and an honest statement of what it does not know. Submit the new prompt and compare. This step is the skill students can carry into their own use of AI.

There is no answer key for this activity, and there cannot be. AI assistants give different answers to the same prompt on the same day. The Teacher Notes below describe what a careful search turned up, so no teacher is caught flat-footed.

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Source the Claim: AI Revisited

Write down what the AI assistant told you, then check it. Mark each source Verified, Wrong, or Could not find.

Figure the assistant gave	Source it named	Verdict

Rate the response (circle one for each):

	Strong	Mixed	Weak
Sources exist and say what was claimed			
Figures are current and dated			
Both sides of the debate are represented			
The assistant admits what it does not know			

My better prompt:

_____

_____

What changed in the second answer:

_____

_____

Activity 6: Source the Claim—Teacher Notes

These notes assume no prior experience with AI assistants. Nothing here requires more than one account, on the device you project. What follows is what a careful search turned up while this guide was being written, in October 2026.

What responses usually look like.

Expect a confident, well-organized answer with real-sounding citations. Most assistants will give a national water figure for data centers, at least one poll, and a large jobs estimate from a bank or consulting firm. The figures will often be accurate in themselves. The thing to watch is whether each figure measures what the question asked.

Water—the Stossel video says data centers use "just a fraction of a percent of U.S. water use."

The most-cited national source is the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's *2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report*, published in December 2024. It estimated that data centers directly consumed about 17 billion gallons of water in 2023, mostly for cooling. It also estimated about 211 billion gallons used indirectly, at the power plants that generate data centers' electricity. Compared with the U.S. Geological Survey's 2015 estimate of total U.S. water withdrawals, about 322 billion gallons a day, both figures are well under 1 percent.

Three gaps are worth pushing on. First, direct use and indirect use differ by more than ten times, and an assistant may give one without the other. Second, the laboratory counts water consumed, and the national total counts water withdrawn, so the comparison is not exact. Third, the figures are national, and the fights in the videos are local. A share that is tiny nationally can be large for one town's aquifer. On "that water can be recycled," closed-loop cooling does recirculate water, but evaporative cooling uses water up, and that loss is what the laboratory counts.

Opposition—Reich says, "Over 70% of Americans oppose building AI data centers in their communities."

This matches a Gallup poll published in May 2026, which found 71 percent of adults opposed a data center in their area, with 48 percent strongly opposed. Other 2026 polls landed elsewhere. A University of Massachusetts Amherst poll released in September 2026 found 65 percent opposed, with 24 percent neutral, and other national polls that year ranged from the low 60s to the mid-70s. One survey from the Annenberg Public Policy Center found about half opposed.

Ask students what changes from one poll to the next: the wording ("in your area" or "in your local community"), whether a neutral choice is offered, and the month the poll was taken. An assistant that reports one poll as the answer has answered a narrower question than the one it was asked.

Jobs—Reich says "roughly 300 million jobs worldwide could become automated over the next decade."

The source is a Goldman Sachs report from March 2023. Its wording is that generative AI could "expose the equivalent of 300 million full-time jobs to automation." The same report says most jobs are only partly exposed and more likely to be helped than replaced. The ten-year period in that report belongs to a separate estimate, about growth in the world economy, not to the 300 million figure.

This is the sharpest test in the prompt, because the question asks how many jobs AI could replace. An assistant that answers "300 million" has turned "exposed" into "replaced," the same step the video takes. A student who catches it before the machine does has learned the whole point of the activity. A newer Goldman Sachs analysis, reported in January 2026, estimated that 6 to 7 percent of U.S. jobs could be displaced as AI is adopted. Ask students why a worldwide count and a U.S. percentage cannot be compared directly.

Two more worth checking

Reich: "71% of voters across the political spectrum have a negative view of AI." The closest match is a January 2026 survey from the Institute for Family Studies, which found that 71 percent "hold a negative view of how AI will affect society." That is a view of AI's effects, not of AI itself. Ask students whether the difference matters to Reich's argument.

Stossel: "We were told automation was going to eliminate office jobs and cause 15% unemployment." No source for this prediction turned up. The radiologist example in the same passage does check out: Geoffrey Hinton said in 2016, "People should stop training radiologists now," and *Fortune* reported in May 2026 that the number of active U.S. radiologists had grown about 10 percent over the previous ten years. A student who cannot find a source for the first claim has found something important.

The payoff question

Close by asking which figure was hardest to pin down, and why. The water figure shows that a true national number can still miss a local problem. The jobs figure shows that a real source can be repeated in words it never used. Tell students that finding a more recent figure counts as a success, not a failure, and have them record the date beside every number they write down.

If the class gets a well-balanced, well-sourced answer, that is a good result and not a failure of the exercise. Ask what the assistant did well, and whether a balanced-sounding answer is the same thing as a well-sourced one. The goal is students who use these tools skeptically and skillfully, not students who are afraid of them.