



Welcome to Maribor!

Artificial Intelligence, Innovation
and Human Creativity:
Lectures by Dr Jonah Lynch

15-17 April 2025

INVITATION

The University of Maribor, in cooperation with the University Medical Centre Maribor, is organising lectures by Dr Jonah Lynch on current topics related to digitalisation, artificial intelligence in education and research, and human creativity as part of the RRP project Effective Education for Green and Digital Transition.

The University of Maribor and the University Medical Centre Maribor are key players in promoting research and creating an environment that supports the development of new technologies for a sustainable future. The University of Maribor is significantly involved in shaping the digital future through innovative projects in the areas of green and digital transition, as well as research in the field of artificial intelligence and sustainable technologies. UMC Maribor is successfully introducing new technologies and digitalisation processes into the hospital environment through a series of research projects, thereby making an important contribution to the further development of the healthcare system.

The close cooperation between the two institutions goes beyond research projects (local, national and international). As the largest employer in the region, UMC Maribor also offers practical training and employment opportunities for professionals who acquire their skills at the University of Maribor. The joint efforts of both institutions are key to strengthening the local and national scientific research potential.

Dr Lynch's lectures will shed light on the future of research and digitalisation and provide insights into the latest trends in artificial intelligence. They are aimed at the wider scientific community, educators and the interested lay public, as we want to promote dialogue and understanding of the importance of these technologies for our future.

prof. dr. Zdravko Kačič
Rector of the University of Maribor

&

prof. dr. Vojko Flis, dr. med.
CEO of UMC MB

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Lectures by Dr. Jonah Lynch are part of the RRP project Effective Education for Green and Digital Transition at the University of Maribor.

The project is co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, and the European Union – NextGenerationEU. The project is implemented in accordance with the Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth development area, Strengthening of Competencies component, especially digital competencies and those required by new professions and the green transition (C3 K5), for the investment measure Investment F. Implementation of pilot projects, the results of which will serve as a basis for the preparation of grounds for the reform of higher education for a green and resilient transition to Society 5.0: the project Pilot projects for the Reform of Higher Education for a Green and Resilient Transition.

Presentation of the organisers

The University of Maribor was founded in 1975. With its 17 faculties, the University Library Maribor and the Student Dormitories, it is the second largest and second oldest university in Slovenia with a long tradition. In the 50 years of its existence, it has developed into a successful academic institution whose main task and guiding principle is the dissemination and enrichment of knowledge. It is rapidly developing new fields of activity, testing new study methods and seeking new ways of integration with its environment.

Interdisciplinarity is highly valued as the faculties cover natural sciences, mathematics, engineering, medicine, biotechnology, social sciences, humanities and other sciences. By creating a working environment that encourages academic freedom, the University of Maribor aims to stimulate scientific and artistic excellence.

Special attention is also paid to the involvement of students in research work and decision-making bodies and to cooperation with business, both in the field of knowledge and technology transfer to practise and in the field of connecting and networking students and graduates with employers with a view to transition to the labour market. The University of Maribor is an institution that offers numerous professional development opportunities. Graduates, researchers, professors and teachers are successful at home and abroad.

The University Medical Centre Maribor (UMC Maribor), founded in 1799, is a leading healthcare institution in north-eastern Slovenia, providing secondary and tertiary healthcare services. As a public institution funded by the Republic of Slovenia, it employs over 3,800 professionals, including 739 doctors and 1,836 healthcare workers. Every year, UMC Maribor treats around 60,000 inpatients and 400,000 outpatients and offers comprehensive and specialised medical care in various disciplines. UMC Maribor is ISO 9001 quality certified and ensures high standards of healthcare with a strong focus on continuous process improvement and patient safety. The hospital serves as a central teaching and research facility for the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Maribor.

UMC Maribor is dedicated to advancing research and education while at the same time collaborating with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and the University Medical Centre Ljubljana, to improve healthcare. The institution actively participates in numerous international research projects, some of them with the University of Maribor, and is involved in the Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, EU4Health, Interreg and CERV-LS programmes. Projects such as PERSIST, ENVISION, HosmartAI, TARA, eCREAM, DIOPTRA, Bio-Streams, FoodDataQuest, AI4HOPE, CERTAIN, SHIELD, EUnetCCC JA, Hack-IT-NET, CD SKILLS and Brave WOW underline its commitment to innovation in the healthcare sector.

Presentation of the RRP Project Effective Education for Green and Digital Transition

The University of Maribor (UM) has obtained 23 pilot projects as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan for a Green and Digital Transition to Society 5.0. The Office for Development and Support of Education and Study (Department of Education and Study) at the Rectorate of the University of Maribor coordinates, among others, the Effective Education for Green and Digital Transition project. The aim of this project is to redesign the curriculum by implementing

green and digital content with the aim of environmental and digital empowerment of the academic community and equipping learners with the knowledge and skills for a sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle. Training sessions in the form of lectures on green and digital content are organised as part of the project. The project has also launched a call for multipliers, where multipliers (university teachers, staff and assistants) visit a foreign institution or an international conference and then share an example of good practise in the form of a lecture with UM staff and students. A set of green and digital learning units will also be established as part of the project.

Presentation of the lecturer Dr Jonah Lynch



[Dr Jonah Lynch](#)¹ began his academic journey as a physics student at McGill University. He then turned to humanistic interests, including studies in philosophy, a doctorate in theology, service as a priest, and a second doctorate in artificial intelligence applied to ancient history. He resides in Italy and divides his time between scientific research, consulting, and teaching.

He has been programming since the age of seven and has written the bestselling book *The Scent of Lemons* about technology and human relationships. He has lectured worldwide at institutions such as Oxford, MIT, and the University of Chicago, L'Accademia Ambrosiana and the Catholic University of Milan.

His data science achievements include predicting hospital ER overflow 24 hours in advance, developing software for complex knowledge graphs and mapping ancient Mesopotamian gods using Natural Language Processing. He is currently finalising [innovationlens.org](https://www.innovationlens.org), a tool that helps scientists identify promising research topics.

Jonah Lynch has an M.Ed in Science Education and has taught at all levels. He also served as Vice-rector and Rector of a Roman seminary for eight years. He is currently Lead of the Neodata Group Academy, teaches at the University of Milan-Bicocca, and serves as Executive Director of the Opus 73 Foundation, an educational non-profit.

A long-time art enthusiast, Lynch has collaborated with musicians and artists and directed documentary films and museum exhibitions. Recently, he has collaborated on AI-driven art projects, including the EU-sponsored Compos[t]ing project and an AI translation of Shane Guffogg's paintings into music, which was showcased at the 2024 Venice Biennale.

¹ A login is required to view the LinkedIn profile.

Programme

Date	Time	Duration	Title	Target Audience	Place
Tuesday, 15 April 2025	10:00	90 min	<u>Preparing students for an AI world: from elementary to higher education</u>	Teaching staff of universities, researchers	Vladimir Bračič Hall at Rectorate of the University of Maribor
Tuesday, 15 April 2025	15:30-16.45	75 min	<u>Who are you? Who AI?</u> <u>Human creativity and artificial intelligence</u>	Teaching staff of universities, the general public	Fran Miklošič Hall at Rectorate of the University of Maribor
Wednesday, 16 April 2025	13:30-16:00	150 min	<u>InnovationLens presentation</u>	Teaching staff of universities, researchers	Big Hall at University Medical Centre Maribor (UMC, 16 th floor)
Thursday, 17 April 2025	10:00	90 min	<u>The Scent of Lemons: Technology and human relationships in the age of AI</u>	Teaching staff of universities, researchers	Fran Miklošič Hall at Rectorate of the University of Maribor

Event descriptions

1. Preparing students for an AI world: from elementary to higher education

The "AI Explorers" programme that will be presented in the workshop teaches core AI concepts through fun, tactile activities. Students will learn about pattern recognition by creating their own sorting games using objects like buttons, beads, and blocks. They'll explore prediction by designing simple paper "decision trees" to forecast outcomes. In one activity, students build a "robot" using cardboard, craft supplies, and basic coding ideas, implemented without the use of computers. They programme their robot to navigate a maze, recognizing patterns to predict the best path.

The focus is on tangible, creative projects that bring AI principles to life. Students work in teams, problem-solve, and learn key vocabulary. The goal is to spark interest in AI and build essential skills like critical thinking, sequencing, and spatial reasoning to prepare students for a deep understanding of what AI is and what it can and cannot do. This hands-on, craft-based approach makes complex topics accessible and engaging also for elementary learners.

The workshop is aimed at higher education pedagogical staff, with a focus on problems and methods regarding the need to prepare students for understanding and using AI. It focuses on how to implement these topics in early childhood education, as the basis for more advanced and specialized courses later on.

2. Who are you? Who AI? Human creativity and artificial intelligence

The interplay between human creativity and artificial intelligence (AI) is a dynamic and thought-provoking exploration of our capabilities as a species. When we look into AI, we are, in essence, looking into ourselves – our innate drive to innovate, adapt, and create.

This convergence raises a myriad of challenges and opportunities for the future. One fundamental challenge lies in defining the boundary between human and AI creativity. AI systems can produce art, music, and literature that rival human creations. This prompts questions about the essence of creativity and whether AI can truly possess it.

Join the thought-provoking discussion on Large Language Models and their implications for the world of AI, a dialogue that goes beyond the AI debate to explore the essence of humanity and its relationship with artificial intelligence.

3. InnovationLens presentation

InnovationLens helps researchers and funding agencies find new ideas, make better decisions and focus on projects that lead to important discoveries and real progress. The algorithms that help to identify the areas with high potential and low competition by analysing existing research. New solution that helps researchers, students and project developers avoid oversaturated topics and focus on underfunded but promising fields.

4. The Scent of Lemons: Technology and human relationships in the age of AI

'Touch, scent, taste. Three of the five senses that cannot be transmitted through technology. Three-fifths of reality, sixty percent.' This workshop is an invitation to notice that other sixty percent.

Inspired by The Scent of Lemons by Jonah Lynch, this workshop explores the exchange that occurs between humans and our technologies. Each gain comes with losses, and we feel the need to clarify our relationship with the technologies that in ever more elegant and hidden ways accompany our lives. Through personal reflection and group discussion, we will examine how our attention, perception of the world, and relationships are influenced by technology. We will also explore what it means to shift from saying, 'See you online!' to 'See you at the usual bar!', questioning, as the American writer Wendell Berry does, whether we have become too willing to let machines dictate the terms of our lives.

Lynch reminds us: "Every place is singular, and every person is unique." To truly embrace this reality, we may need to experiment with a little technological fasting — not as a restriction, but as a way to rediscover freedom and presence in our daily lives.

This workshop offers an opportunity to step back, reflect, and engage with the world in a more immediate and sensory way.

Registration

To ensure the quality of the programme, please register for the events on the dogodki.um.si website.

The links will take you to the published events and registration (for UM employees and students as well as for other participants):

1. **[Preparing students for an AI world: from elementary to higher education](#)** (opens in a new tab)
2. **[Who are you? Who AI? Human creativity and artificial intelligence](#)** (opens in a new tab)
3. **[InnovationLens presentation](#)** (opens in a new tab)
4. **[The Scent of Lemons: Technology and human relationships in the age of AI](#)** (opens in a new tab)

UM employees and students register for the events using the UM digital identity.

Other participants register by filling in their registration information (name, surname, e-mail address and organisation).

After successful registration, participants will receive an automatic confirmation email and a separate automatic reminder (two days before the event) from the email address izpopolni@um.si.

Venues

Tuesday, 15 April and Thursday, 17 April 2025: Rectorate of the University of Maribor

Address: Slomškov trg 15, SI-2000 Maribor



1. Rectorate of the University of Maribor

Wednesday, 16 April 2025: University Medical Centre Maribor

Address: Ljubljanska ulica 5, SI-2000 Maribor



2. University Medical Centre