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3203 SE Woodstock Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97202



China, the U.S., and the AI Race

Kendra Schaefer

Tuesday, November 10, 2026
7 p.m.
Vollum lecture hall

Free and open to the public.

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If you read the news, you've probably heard that the United States and China are locked in a race for the future of artificial intelligence. But what are we racing toward, exactly? Where is the finish line, and what would it mean to "win"? In this lecture, China technology policy specialist Kendra Schaefer looks past the headlines to the race as it is actually being run: not a single contest but many, playing out in chip fabs and data centers, in classrooms and city streets, in the stories each nation tells about itself. She traces how the Chinese government imagines its own future with AI and what that imagination reveals about America's. Along the way she unsettles familiar assumptions about what China wants and what the United States fears.

Kendra Schaefer is a partner at Beijing-based policy consultancy Trivium China, where she heads the company's Tech Policy Division. She leads a team of analysts keeping investors, companies, and governments briefed on Chinese tech policy and regulation, serving as a key expert for heads of state and Fortune 500 companies on China tech issues, with a focus on AI, big tech, and Chinese government digital infrastructure systems. She is a non-resident fellow at the National Bureau of Asian Research and a 2025 fellow of the Penn Project on the Future of U.S.-China Relations. Kendra lived in China from 2002-2022. She began her career as a developer and user researcher in the early days of China's internet boom.