

Generative AI in the First-Year Composition Classroom

Handout created by Maggie Fernandes (updated August 2024)

Ice Breaker Question

For a few minutes, think and write about how you feel about generative AI in the classroom. What are your immediate reactions and/or concerns? What are five words that represent how you feel about generative AI, writing, and teaching?

Composition Office Policies and Guidelines

1. You should choose one of the policies from the handbook that either **prohibits** or **permits** usage of ChatGPT and other generative AI.
2. You should **never** input student writing into AI detectors like Turnitin.
3. You should talk to Megan, LewEllyn, or Kat if you have concerns about a student's use of generative AI **before** elevating your concerns to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Related concerns

ChatGPT raises many ancillary concerns for writing teachers. Here are a couple of concerns that you might consider while making decisions about incorporating generative AI in your classroom.

Intellectual Property and Data Privacy. Make sure students know that their writing is their intellectual property and that they can make personal choices related to protecting their personal data. Likewise, talk to students about being thoughtful stewards of course materials and peer writing by talking about why they shouldn't submit peer writing to ChatGPT or CourseHero. For more information, read Amidon et. al's "[Copyright, Content, and Control Student Authorship Across Educational Technology Platforms](#)"

Language Diversity and Linguistic Justice. Generative AI technologies default to producing text in a so-called academic style and tone that aligns closely with what is often referred to as Standard American English or White Mainstream English. UARK's grading contract works against privileging dominant language varieties. To that end, when discussing these technologies, we need to remember that they often erase or stereotype other language varieties. For more information, read Alfred L. Owusu-Ansah's "[Defining Moments, Definitive Programs, and the Continued Erasure of Missing People.](#)"

Plagiarism, Citation, and Authorship. As you know, surveilling student writing is not an appropriate response to generative AI. While generative AI may be stressful for new and experienced teachers alike, it offers a moment for us to think about how plagiarism, citation practices, and notions about authorship should be understood rhetorically and culturally. For more information, read Margaret Price's "[Beyond Gotcha: Situating Plagiarism in Policy and Pedagogy.](#)"

Digital Damage and the Environmental Cost of Using Generative AI tools. Generative AI tools cost enormous amounts of energy and water—so much so that Big Tech companies like [Google](#) and [Microsoft](#) are falling short of their climate goals. With this in mind, it's important for us to think about the material cost of experimenting with generative AI tools. For more information, read Dustin Edwards' "[Digital rhetoric on a damaged planet: Storying digital damage as inventive response to the Anthropocene.](#)"

4 Approaches to Teaching Writing With Generative AI

<p>Demonstrate how to use generative AI technologies for your class</p>	<p>Demonstrate how to use generative AI technologies like ChatGPT or Bard on your classroom projector. You might discuss how the skills of prompt engineering require skills required in the writing process, such as a keen awareness of the rhetorical situation, an cyclical attention to revision and editing, and thoughtful engagement with citations practices. For example, you might demonstrate how ChatGPT often “hallucinates” citations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prompt engineering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Essential Guide to Prompt Engineering in ChatGPT - Unite.AI <p>Additionally, you can use demonstrations to discuss the embedded sexism, racism, and linguistic injustice of ChatGPT. You might talk about how it presents information in a so-called objective and neutral tone AND how it defaults to a version of so-called academic English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ChatGPT Hallucinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Matt O’Brien’s Chatbots sometimes make things up. Not everyone thinks AI hallucination problem is fixable AP News ○ Lyle Moran’s Lawyer cites fake cases generated by ChatGPT in legal brief ● Algorithmic Oppression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Abby Ohlheiser’s AI can reinforce systemic racism. This is how to identify automated bias - Vox ○ Paresh Dave’s ChatGPT Is Cutting Non-English Languages Out of the AI Revolution WIRED 	<p>Permit</p>
<p>Discuss sample generative AI text and/or ideas as a class</p>	<p>Use samples of AI-generated text to discuss topics like algorithmic oppression and injustice, conventions for common writing genres like professional emails, and writing processes. Be mindful that discussions of algorithmic oppression and injustice may be damaging to marginalized students if you are not careful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Algorithmic oppression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ido Vock’s ChatGPT proves that AI still has a racism problem - New Statesman ● Genres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lakshmi Varansi’s I used ChatGPT to write 3 types of emails. If you thought the results would be amazing — think again. ● Writing processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tom Comitta’s 'Death of an Author' Propheesies the Future of AI Novels WIRED 	<p>Permit / Prohibit</p>
<p>Teach citation practices for AI-generated text and/or ideas</p>	<p>Teach students about how to cite usage of generative AI technologies for idea and text development. The following resources may be useful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● APA: https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt ● MLA: https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/ 	<p>Permit</p>
<p>Ignore (really!) generative AI technologies</p>	<p>Teach as normal! This is a real option! You do not have to take on the additional labor of figuring out how to respond to outside forces such as generative AI during your first semester of teaching. Focus on teaching the writing process and accept that there are things outside of your control. Do not add additional surveillance.</p>	<p>Prohibit</p>