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STLI Community Conversation: Generative A.I. and Writing for Learning



Welcome



Stephanie J Blackmon

School of Education



Dave Gilbert

Associate Dean of Students



Matthew Haug

Philosophy (Chair)



Elizabeth Losh

English & American Studies

ChatGPT



Examples

"Explain quantum computing in simple terms" →

"Got any creative ideas for a 10 year old's birthday?" →

"How do I make an HTTP request in Javascript?" →



Capabilities

Remembers what user said earlier in the conversation

Allows user to provide follow-up corrections

Trained to decline inappropriate requests



Limitations

May occasionally generate incorrect information

May occasionally produce harmful instructions or biased content

Limited knowledge of world and events after 2021

A.I., evolution or revolution?

No wonder Microsoft is taking so much interest! It all makes sense now.



Posted by Bout3Fidy, on [Reddit](#)

"Robots rebelling against humanity. In the style of dystopian comic books."



Pablo X [Dall-e](#)

Today's Goals

- 1- **Overview** the capabilities of generative artificial intelligence in relation to writing and synthetic creative products.
- 2- **Discuss** implications of student and faculty use of ChatGPT.
- 3- **Identify** strategies for incorporating or limiting ChatGPT use in writing assignments.

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Why does generative A.I. represent an important moment for technology integration in higher education?



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Historical Technological Context

- Chat GPT exists within a larger technological context
- Previous advances in technology, particularly when used in higher education, have resulted in similar conversations
(see Major, 2010; Cuban, 2001; Ehrmann, 2000)

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Technology Integration in Higher Ed

- Rapid changes in tools and solutions (Rosalsky & Peaslee, 2023)
- The need remains for critical conversations
 - specific technologies
 - the existing relationship with tech integration in higher ed, particularly for privacy

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Technology Integration in Higher Ed

- Current uses of Chat GPT
(Kelly, O'Connor, & Intagliata, 2023)
- This integration exists alongside growing concerns about data use and commodification
(Komljenovic, 2022; Paris, et al., 2021)

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Technology Integration in Higher Ed

Caveats and Critical Questions

(Blackmon & Moore, forthcoming)

- Mandating certain tech can create a differentiated privacy impact for students.
 - **Question:** What are the implications of a tool's use for students' privacy across various groups? (similar example provided in Blackmon et al., 2021)

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Technology Integration in Higher Ed

Caveats and Critical Questions

(Blackmon & Moore, forthcoming)

- Banning certain tech may prevent opportunities to support students.
 - **Question:** What are the implications of this tool's use for support across student groups?
- Sometimes student engagement is overlooked when discussing support.
 - **Question:** How can I engage students across groups to understand what would be helpful and non-invasive for them?



What questions or issues arise around writing for learning and the creation of knowledge?



AI, Large Language Models (LLMs), Learning & Knowledge

1. Concerns about reliability
2. ChatGPT in the classroom
3. The broader epistemic context

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1. Concerns about reliability

- LLMs good at *some* tasks
 - summarizing material
 - writing in a given style
- LLMs can produce a fluent yet false output. ([Ji et al. 2022](#))
 - ~1/2 of the time(?), ChatGPT produces false answers to basic questions about logic and epistemology.

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2. ChatGPT in the classroom

- Pedagogical reflection
 - What are the learning outcomes of a given assignment?
 - Consider scaffolding *and* reflection
 - Not all assignments need be “ChatGPT-proof”
- Learning reflection
 - What is the value of education?
 - “Shallow” vs “Deeper” instrumental value (grades, credentials vs transferable skills)
 - Intrinsic value
- Try to cultivate an environment in which students don’t want to use these tools in unacceptable ways.




3. The broader epistemic context

- How should generative AI be used in the production of knowledge?
- Using LLMs in research ([Nature editorial](#))
 - No LLMs as co-authors
“any attribution of authorship carries with it accountability for the work, and AI tools cannot take such responsibility”
 - “researchers using LLM tools should document this use in the methods or acknowledgements sections”

3. The broader epistemic context


- Can we be justified in believing the outputs of a “deep learning” network?
 - Yes, in some cases (e.g., [protein folding](#))
 - But, for some cases, *why* we are justified is a very hard, unanswered question.
 - Opacity and interpretability
 - Is “deep learning” a new, qualitatively different source of knowledge?

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How does generative AI impact the university's expectations regarding academic integrity and how does the Honor Code address generative AI?



- 
- General Rule Applies: Honor Code prohibits use of *unauthorized* resources
 - If you have not authorized use of AI, it is considered unauthorized
 - Recommendation:
Discuss and provide students written guidelines as to whether you permit use of AI tools and if so, how & to what extent

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How might generative AI interact with assessment approaches and affect students at different levels of privilege?



Assessing what ChatGPT isn't good at

- Tasks with cutting-edge analysis, reading against the grain, or the support of controversial hypotheses.
- Oral, visual, electronic, or nonverbal communication
- Engaging with real-world audiences
- Fact-checking and evaluating sources
- Writing as a process rather than a product

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Assessing your own assessment

1- How much do your courses depend upon summative rather than formative feedback?

2- Why are academic essays or research papers central to your pedagogy?

3- How much do your assignments depend upon competence using the conventions of established genres?

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Assessing your own assessment

4- How much does your assessment reward the use of particular kinds of academic sentence structures?

5- Is quantity rather than quality a measure of success?

6- How much does it cost to have the tools to succeed in your courses?

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Please explain GPT to a lay user



GPT stands for Generative Pretrained Transformer...



Think of it like a very smart person who has read a lot of books and has a vast knowledge of various topics. When you ask them a question, they use their knowledge to generate an answer that sounds like it was written by a human. That's what GPT does, it generates text based on the input it receives, trying to mimic human writing.

