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Fall 9-7-2023

Developing Writing Assignments in an Age of AI

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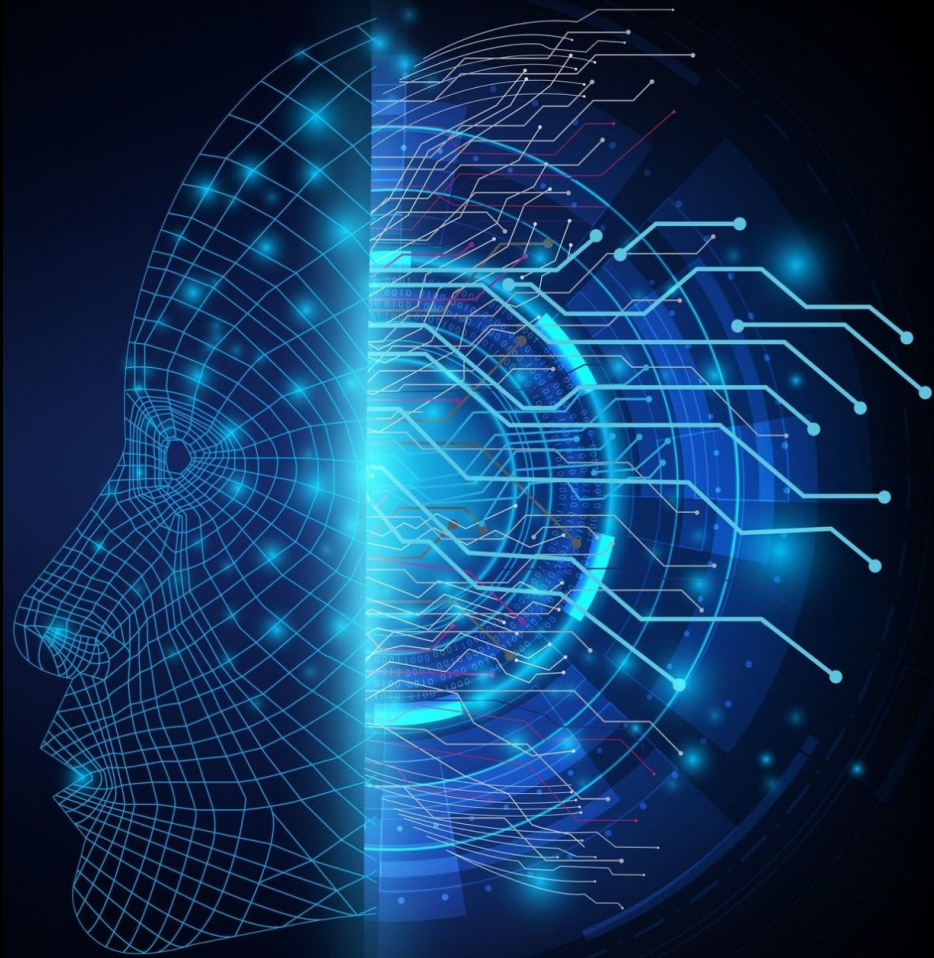Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.onu.edu/cafe_workshops

Recommended Citation

What is ChatGPT? What Other AI Tools Exist?

- ChatGPT = Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer
  - Launched November 2022
  - Natural language processing tool that is capable of generating "human-like" text as a response to users' input
- Other Hot Tools (particularly for college writing)
  - Notion
  - Jenni.ai
  - Textero.ai
  - Grammarly

(Current) Writing Capabilities and Limitations

Capabilities

- unique written content, such as short discussion posts and essays (see limitations)
- essay outlines
- advice on research designs
- survey and interview questions for primary research
- keywords for research
- poetry (it's not great)
- short stories (also not great)
- feedback on writing
- feedback on assignments/prompts

Limitations

- It doesn't know current events and is not connected to the internet (last knowledge update was September 2021)
- It can't write huge amounts of content all at once, though it can be prompted to develop paragraphs.
- Citations it generates are sometimes fake. Usually any links it references are fake/inaccurate.
- It doesn't help much with the research process.
- ChatGPT is often unavailable due to high demand. Upgrades now require a paid subscription.
- ChatGPT can write in first person, but it doesn't have a "voice." It can be told to write in specific styles, but it can't mimic a student's unique writing style.
- It sometimes generates outputs that are incorrect or don't logically make sense.
- It sometimes generates biased or discriminatory content (though OpenAI continues its attempts to improve this).***

Approaches to Teaching and Assessment

"Contemporary compositionists have much to learn from our field's previous electronic moment—much to learn from the mostly forgotten ways that writing teachers sought to transform their pedagogical practices and materials to account for the seemingly 'new media' of film, television, and Xerox machines" (Palmeri 88).

Designing Specific Writing Prompts (& make changes)	Scaffolded Writing Assignments	Reflection and Revision
• Consider AI's limitations • Applying concepts, specific texts, recent information • Input your prompt into AI • Reevaluate yearly *"teachers must explore how their strengths transfer to different tools and emerging genres. Doing so requires that we rethink… the rhetorical situations that we ask students to write within, the audiences we ask them to write for, the products that they produce, and the purposes of their writing" (DeVoss et al. 14)*	• Helps students navigate the assignment • Breaks down large ideas/tasks into smaller steps that build on each other • Offers opportunities to check in/"show your work" *Design "assignments that deter students from plagiarizing by encouraging original ideas, a focus on process, and multiple drafts" (DeVoss and Rosati 151).*	• Collect multiple drafts and add revision/improvement between drafts as an assessment • Have students write reflections on their research/writing process post final draft *If we don't incorporate revision, we may actually reinforce "the inexperienced writer's emphasis on words rather than the whole text" (DeVoss and Rosati 328).*

Using AI Technologies in the Classroom

- Critical Thinking Activities
- Brainstorming
- Analysis
- Editing/Revising
- Integration of sources

Bonus: Using AI as a tool for YOU!

- Initial planning tool
- LOR templates
- Feedback on your assignment descriptions

Closing Thoughts…

- Understanding the abilities and limitations of AI can help you use it as a valuable tool in the classroom rather than a foe.
- Carefully considering assignments and being actively involved in your students' writing process limits the ability to plagiarize
- It is not a fool proof system that produces perfect and accurate work for our students.
- When we ask students to write, we should consider that as asking them to practice something. Writing isn't a transparent window on thinking. It's a social activity that has benefits for learning.
- While our current technological moment is unique, we have decades of research to support us.

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