ARTS ISIT WELCOME BACK CONFERENCE

GenAI Teaching and Learning Projects in Arts

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Arts Instructional Support & Information Technology
Faculty of Arts

Presenters

Dr. Laurie McNeill, Associate Dean, Students and Professor of Teaching, English

Dr. Andrew Owen, Associate Dean, Academic and Associate Professor of Teaching, Political Science

Dr. Siobhán Wittig McPhee, Associate Professor of Teaching, Geography

Jennifer Moss, Lecturer, Creative Writing

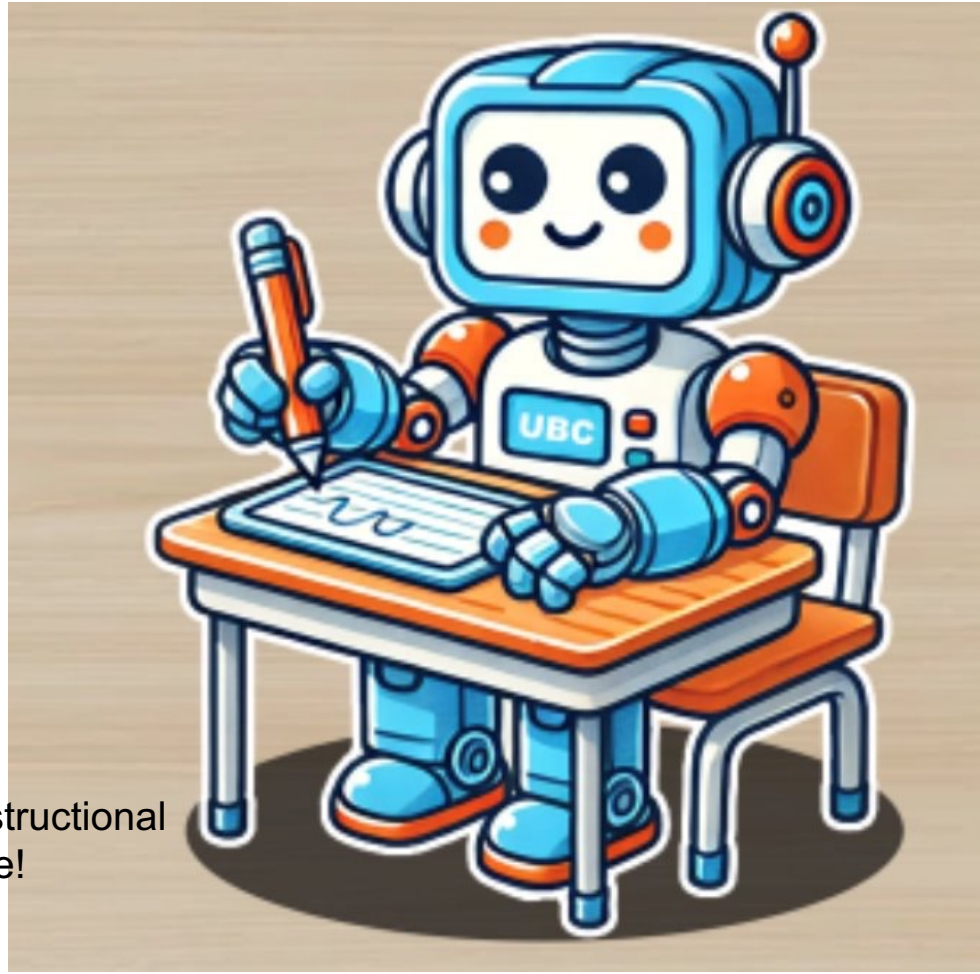
Dr. Jonathan Graves, Associate Professor of Teaching, Economics

Project Overviews and Lightning Provocations

We’re Only Human: Generative AI, Student Writing, and Academic Integrity

What We’ve Learned & What We’re (Still) Figuring Out

Resources including instructional materials on our website!



Status check on AI

A variety of accessible and effective AI tools exist, with new capabilities, e.g.,

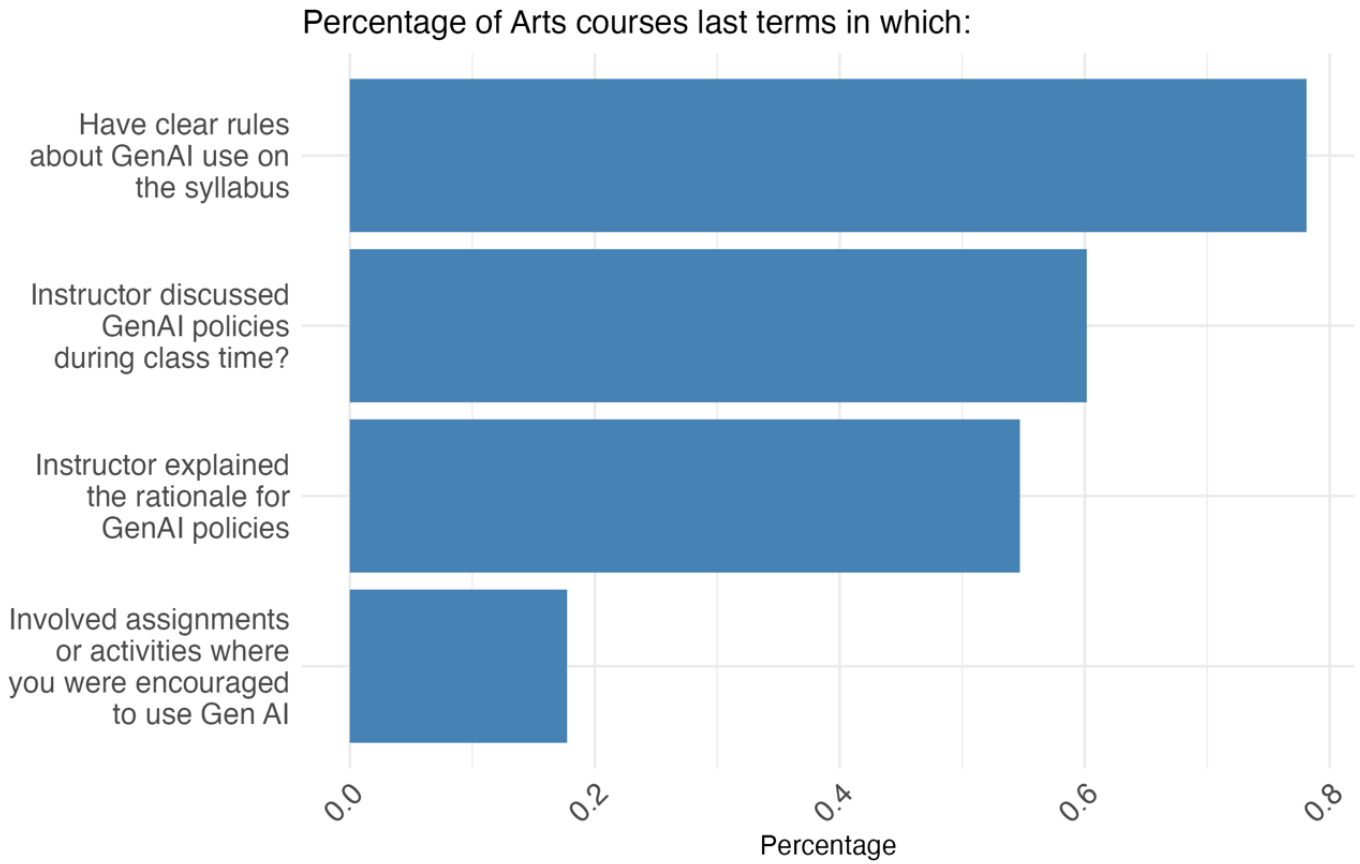
- "Chat" directly with sources (output much less general than previously)
- Modify AI-output to 'humanize' the text
- Locate and summarize sources; create citation maps;
- Spend 10 or so minutes doing web-based research and write a research report with real sources.

Tools are increasingly embedded in student workflow:

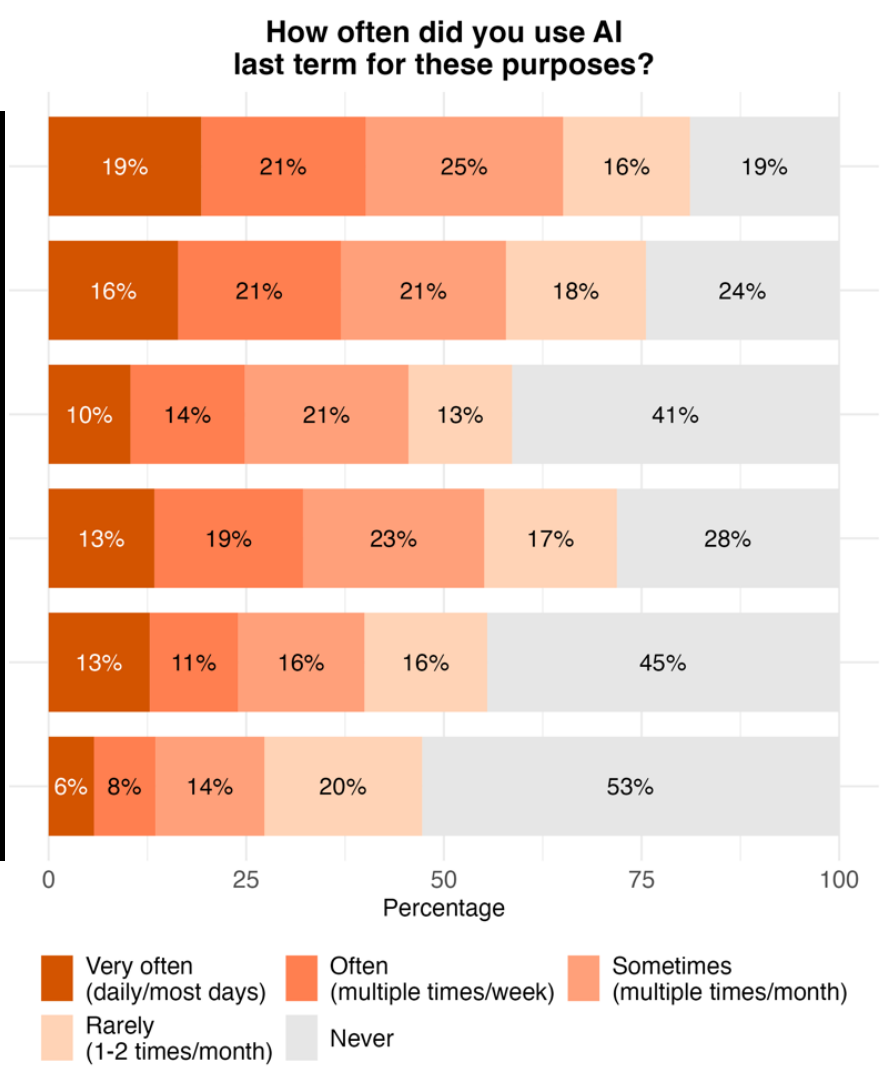
- Suggestions while writing (Grammarly, Google Docs)
- "AI Overviews" in Google
- Journal websites let you 'chat with article'

Status check on students

Insights from WOH student surveys conducted 2024/25


Percentage of Arts courses last terms in which:
Have clear rules about GenAI use on the syllabus
Instructor discussed GenAI policies during class time?
Instructor explained the rationale for GenAI policies
Involved assignments or activities where you were encouraged to use Gen AI
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
Percentage

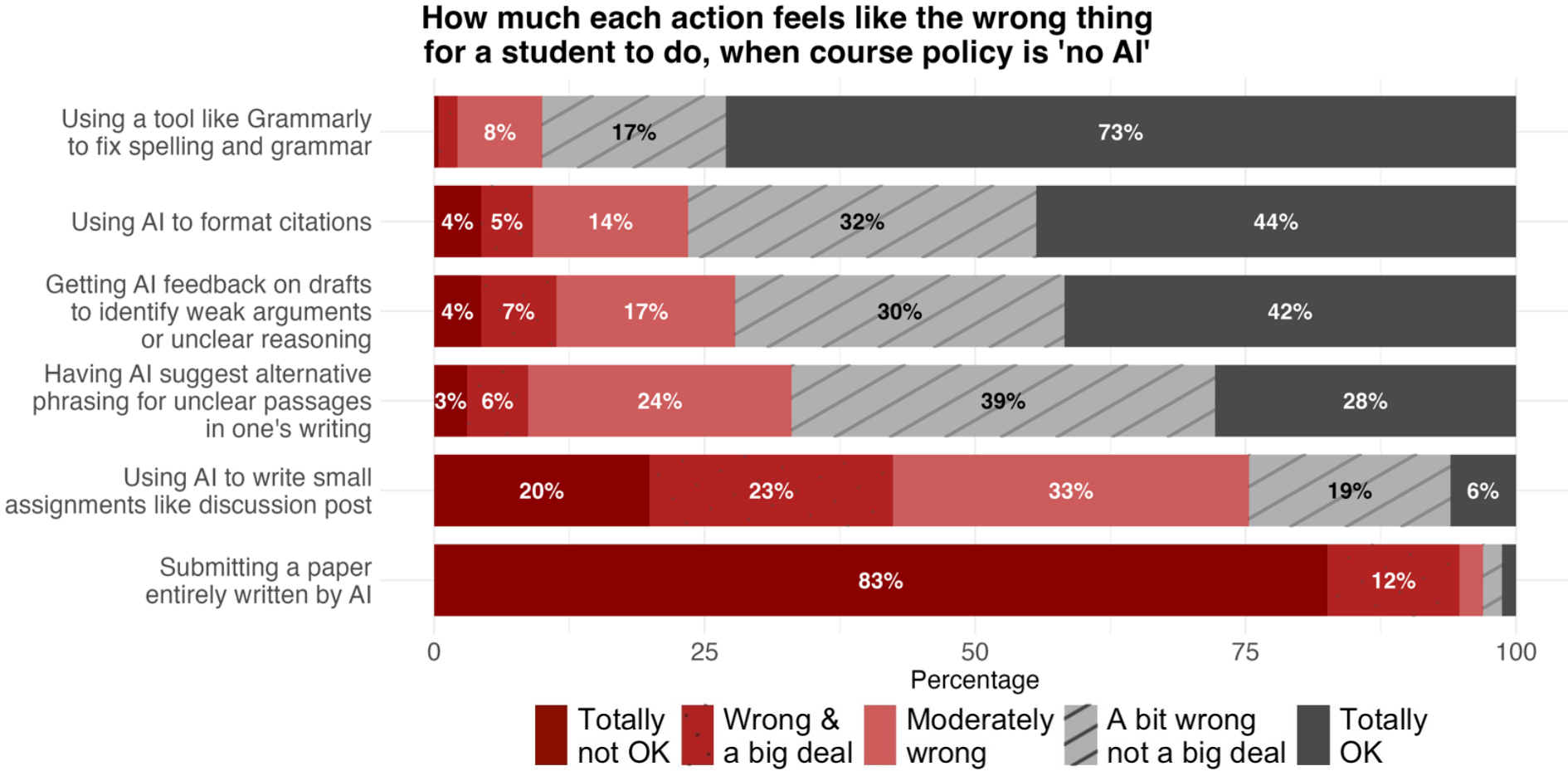
- Better understand course concept
- Learn more about a course topic
- Generate study materials
- Summarize course readings
- Summarize course lectures
- Write short homework assignments



"In a typical class, what percentage of students do you think use Generative AI in ways that violate course policies?"

- Dec 2024: Average was 41%
- Apr 2025: Average was 55%

Using a separate "unobtrusive" measure we find 30% of students admit to using AI in ways that violate course policies.


How much each action feels like the wrong thing for a student to do, when course policy is 'no AI'
Using a tool like Grammarly to fix spelling and grammar
8%
17%
73%
Using AI to format citations
4%
5%
14%
32%
44%
Getting AI feedback on drafts to identify weak arguments or unclear reasoning
4%
7%
17%
30%
42%
Having AI suggest alternative phrasing for unclear passages in one's writing
3%
6%
24%
39%
28%
Using AI to write small assignments like discussion post
20%
23%
33%
19%
6%
Submitting a paper entirely written by AI
83%
12%
0
25
50
75
100
Percentage
Totally not OK
Wrong & a big deal
Moderately wrong
A bit wrong not a big deal
Totally OK

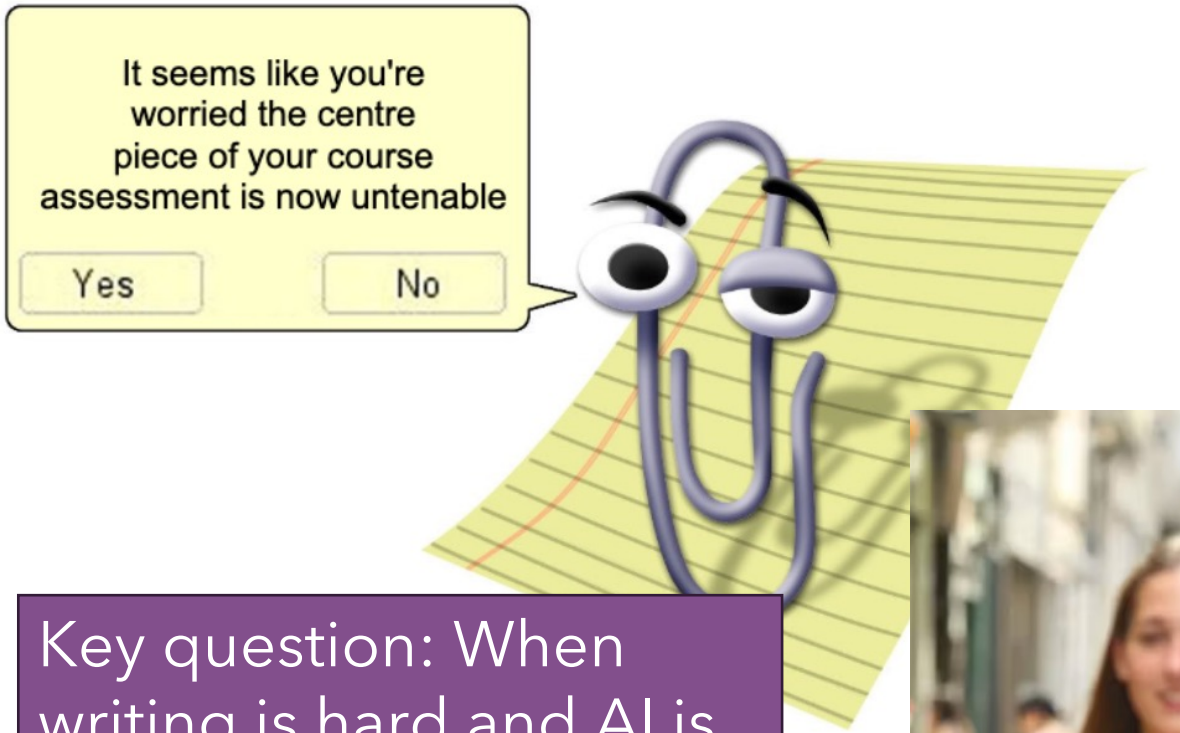
Take-aways

AI tools are ubiquitous, effective, widely used among their peers, and using tools can improve grades for many.

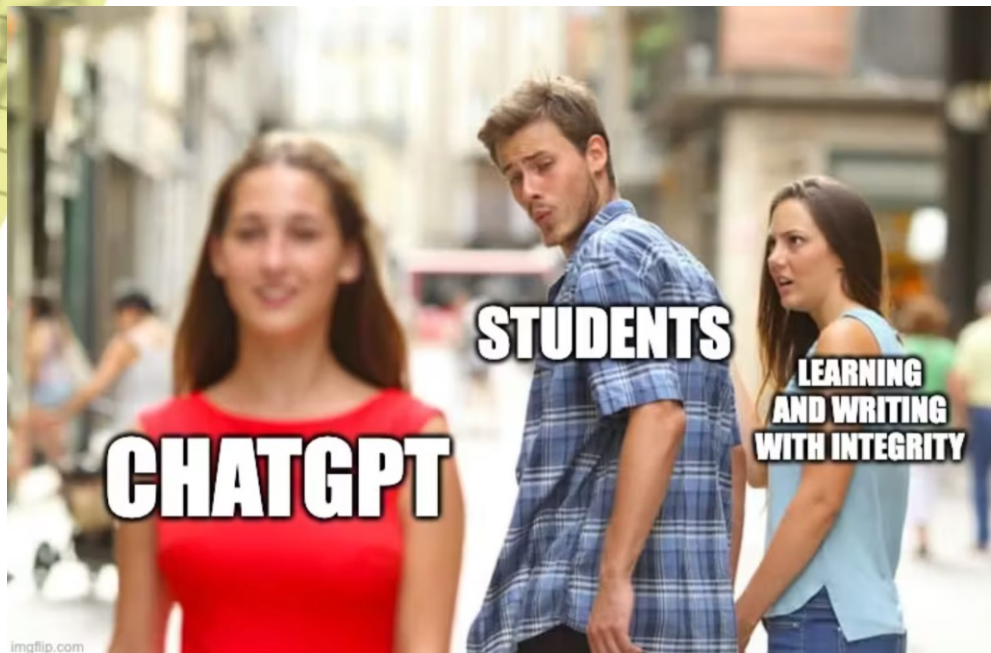
Some students curtail AI use that might promote learning out of fear of misconduct allegations

Some assessments seem like “busy work” since we’ve trained them to focus on grades (not learning).

Status Check – Teaching Writing



Key question: When writing is hard and AI is easy, what will motivate students to do the hard work themselves?



“Tried & True” Strategies Still Work (with updates)

Course policies that are precise, realistic, actively-discussed, tied to assessment

→ be specific about uses vs tools, what aspects of work can use AI

Provide a rationale for AI-policies tied to course-specific expertise

→ have students engage rationales so they generate these conclusions & connect to intrinsic motivation (why they should put in the hard work)

Talk together in class about AI & its risks/benefits for this course, for humanity

→ questions about the value of learning, what expertise in your field looks like, what pleasures come from developing such expertise / learning

Updates in writing assessments: creating friction, connections, intentional balance

Continue: assessment features such as scaffolding, team-based / collaborative projects, accountability partners, extending take-home work with in-class components (e.g., oral defense, presentations)

Continue / update: “real-world” connections: what does writing look like in relevant professions / in this discipline?

Update: do low-stakes work (reflections, peer-review, quizzes) in-class only – and pare back (which pieces are essential for the learning?)

Don’t fret (or, fret and) – check our website!

Coming (really) soon at woh.arts.ubc.ca:

- New UBC materials for students & instructors
- New WOH-produced resources including videos, readings, & project findings

Thank you!

Online Course Enhanced Learning Intelligent Assistant (OCELIA) - scaffolding academic reading and course material

Team members:

Siobhán Wittig McPhee, Associate Professor of Teaching, Geography

Jonathan Graves, Associate Professor of Teaching, Economics

Tiffany Potter, Professor of Teaching, English Language and Literatures

Ricardo Serrano, Director, Arts Instructional Support and Information Technology (ArtsISIT)

Bronwen Sprout, Head, Digital Programs and Services, UBC Library

Doug Brigham, Head, Koerner Library, UBC Library

Place

T. Cresswell, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, UK

What Is Place?

Place lies at the center of geography's interests. In a commonsense way geography is about places. But the commonsense uses of the word place belie its conceptual complexity. While the word 'place' has been used as long as geography has been written, it is only since the 1970s that it has been conceptualized as a particular location that has acquired a set of meanings and attachments. Place is a meaningful site that combines location, locale, and sense of place. Location refers to an absolute point in space with a specific set of coordinates and measurable distances from other locations. Location refers to the 'where' of place. Locale refers to the material setting for

In any given place we encounter a combination of materiality, meaning, and practice. Most obviously, perhaps, places have a material structure. New York has its skyscrapers, Paris its boulevards, Los Angeles its freeways, and Sao Paulo its shanties. Places are often recognized in terms of their material structures which come to stand for place. Think of the Eiffel Tower. Think of the Sydney Opera House. On a more everyday level, towns and city neighborhoods across the world have their material form – libraries, shops, places of worship, streets, and sidewalks. In addition, places have all the material things that pass through them – commodities, vehicles, waste, and people. Even a totally imaginary place has an imaginary form in order to make it place-like. The sense of place evoked by fantasy novels, for instance, is usually

Link to the full paper

Procedural Poetry Funhouse

Creative Writing Team members:

- Annabel Lyon, Professor / Director, Creative Writing, Faculty of Arts
- Jennifer Moss, Lecturer, New Media and Podcasting, Creative Writing, Faculty of Arts
- Austen Osworth, Lecturer, Fiction, New Media and Interactive Storytelling, Creative Writing, Faculty of Arts
- Bronwen Tate, Associate Professor of Teaching / Undergraduate Chair, Creative Writing / Poetry Consultant, Faculty of Arts

EML Team Members

- Saeed Dyanatkar, Executive Producer / Sr. Manager, UBC Studios and Emerging Media Lab
- Frederik Svendsen, Sr. Software Developer, UBC Studios and Emerging Media Lab
- Maryanne Kempthorne, Supervisor (EML)
- Jaqlyn Ai, Designer (EML)
- Amy Yiqin Li, Designer (EML)
- Daniel Lima, Developer (EML)
- Phoebe Titus, 3D Generalist (EML)
- Julien Roy, Developer & Team Lead (EML)

Poetry Funhouse -- Guiding Questions

1. How do we encourage students to embrace the process of writing poetry – without getting intimidated?
2. What does it mean to “co-author” with a machine, and how do we teach students to resist, remix, or reject AI-generated language *creatively,* rather than passively accept it?
3. What is the role of process in creative writing?

PS --- Will AI take all the writing jobs?

Inspirations

•Procedural Poetry
Rule- or algorithm-based poetry; process drives form more than emotion.

•Oulipo
French “workshop of potential literature”; writers + mathematicians using constraints to create new forms.

•TISH (Vancouver, 1960s)
UBC-based newsletter and movement; experimental, place-driven poetics shaped Canadian verse.

•Judith Copithorne
Vancouver poet/artist (outside TISH); known for concrete “poem-drawings” blending text + image.

Welcome to the Poetic World of the Funhouse

- Choose to train an Open AI model or opt for a sand-boxed experience
- Visitors step inside a space where countercultural history meets playful, immersive storytelling
- Roam through a hand-drawn 2D sketchy aesthetic depicting an immersive funhouse
- The **funhouse** is designed after the legendary *Arbutus Grocery,* once a hub for Vancouver's **procedural and concrete poets** in the 1960s/70s
- Be guided by a cranky cat through a translation device

Video demonstration

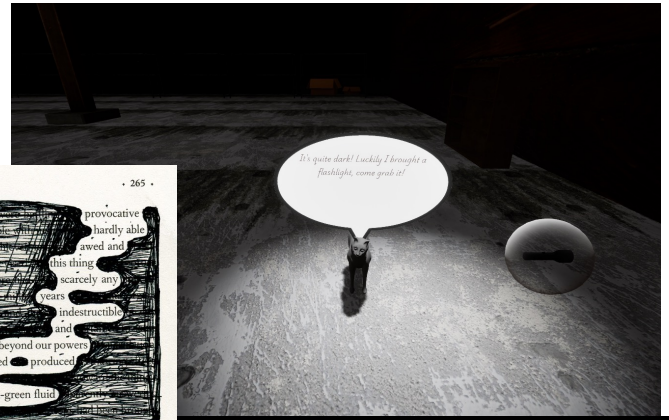
Grab the words you want

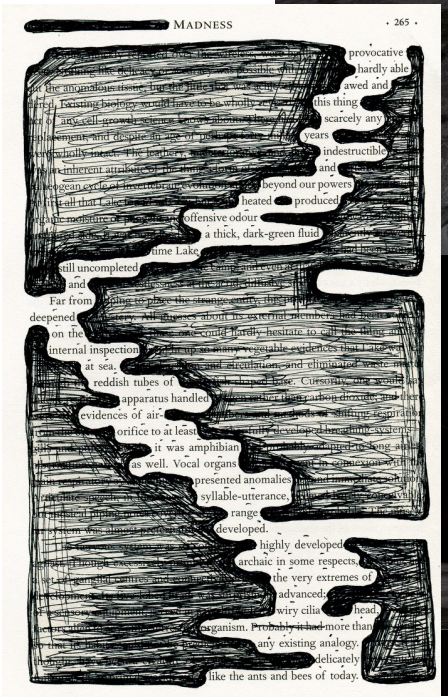
- Interactive entryway: **learn to play with words as objects**
- Grab them, toss them, drop them in your basket
- Rearrange them into your own strange poems
- Random words flicker into the room, attaching themselves to everyday objects
- Your cat friend is there if you need help
- Atmosphere alive with the sketches and poetic works of **Judith Copithorne**
- Her concrete & visual poetry displayed on walls and dangling from the ceiling
- A tribute to one of Vancouver's earliest experimental poets (1960s–70s)

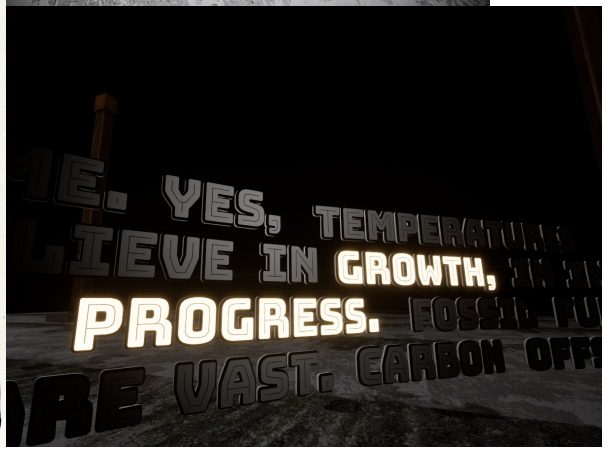
Judith Copithorne

Reject the words you don't want

- **AI as Provocateur:** A voice-to-text engine listens as you name *“something you hate.”*
- **Ominous Output:** The AI instantly generates a **wall of glowing praise-text** about that very thing — absurd, overblown, unsettling.
- **Your Tools to Fight Back:**
- **Flashlight** → shine light on words you want to keep
- **Gestures** → sweep away unwanted AI words until they disappear
- **Conceptual Inversion:** Instead of blacking out text, you reclaim meaning by **lighting it up**.







The Reverse Blackout Room

9/2/25

Core Ideas of the Poetry Funhouse

Push back against machine-generated narratives

Explore the tension between imposed AI language and human agency

Experience the history of Vancouver experimental poetics inside an imagined VR reality

Have fun reshaping negativity into unexpected poetry

“Phases,” by Judith Copithorne

Unpacking the Black Box

Critical AI Literacies for Arts Education

Team members:

Laura Nelson, Associate Professor / Director, Centre for Computational Social Science, Sociology

Jonathan Graves, Associate Professor of Teaching / Director, Undergraduate Studies (Curriculum and Students), Economics

Ekatarina Grguric, Digital Scholarship Librarian, UBC Library Research Commons

Guiding questions

Our project seeks to:

1. Demonstrate how we can use AI to create new knowledge *in our disciplines* in new and useful ways.
2. Demystify AI, giving students a grounded understanding of these tools and their applications – no more black boxes.
3. Show why a critical understanding of these tools is critical to using them well.

We do this through course-specific learning “modules”.

Our workflow

Scoping

- Identify discipline
- Partner with faculty member
- Determine timelines

Planning

- Select course
- Identify learning objectives
- Select tools or uses

Development

- Build interactive notebooks
- Develop lesson plan
- Create supplemental materials

Testing

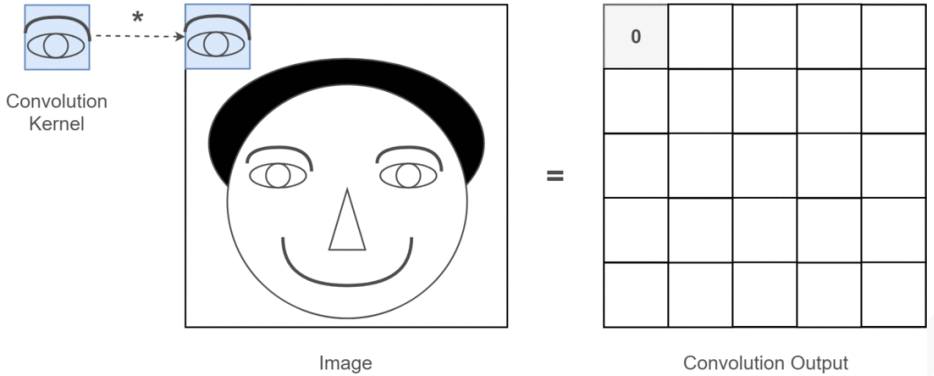
- Test AI tools and hardware
- Build web page
- Determine tools needed

Deployment

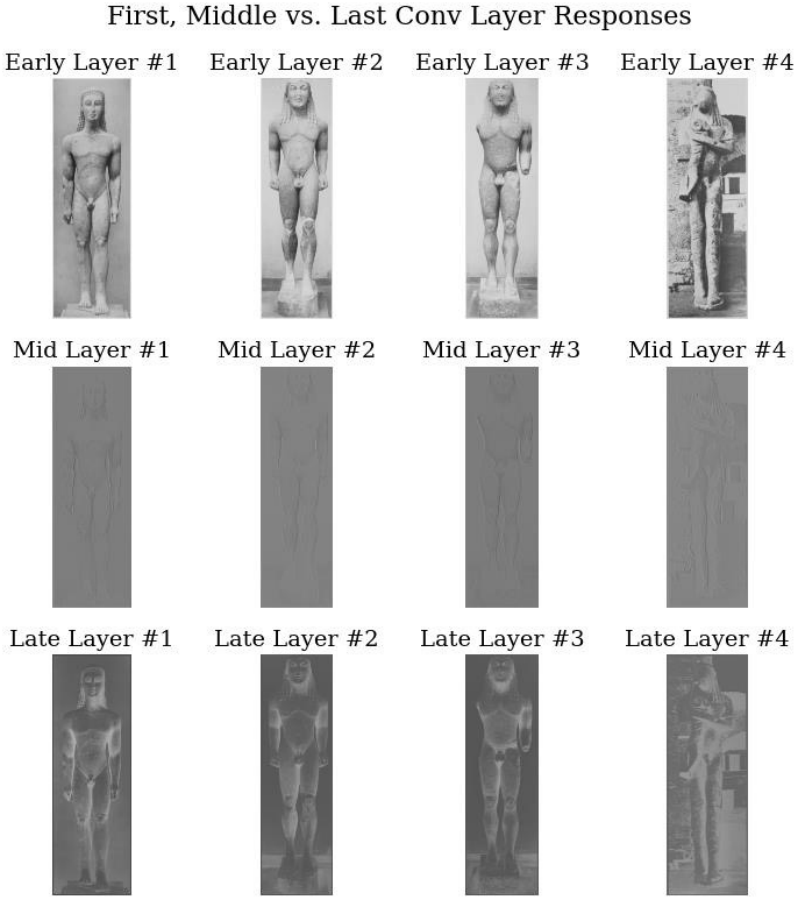
- Support classroom instruction
- Gather feedback
- Refine materials

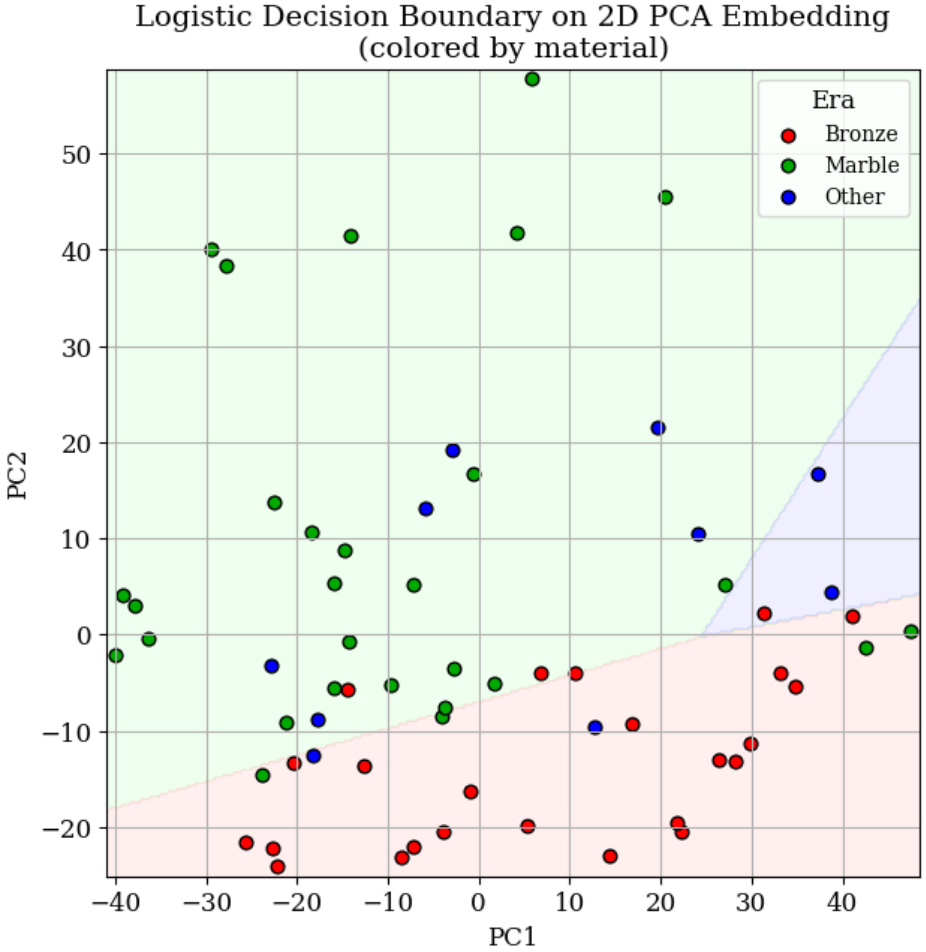
Example: AMNE 376 Greek Art and Architecture

- In our notebook we show how AI vision models can help us learn about *kouroi*, a type of early Greek sculpture
- We explain how vision models work, and why they are useful counterparts to human vision
- We then apply this to a sample of image to see how human and computer interpretations compare



For example, when you use a photo editing app to apply a filter to your picture, the app is using convolution. When you use a search engine to search do image searches, the search engine is using convolution to extract features from the images and match them with your search query. Let's say, the thing you are trying to find is eyes, the gif below shows how a convolution kernel detects "eyes" in an image:


First, Middle vs. Last Conv Layer Responses
Early Layer #1
Early Layer #2
Early Layer #3
Early Layer #4
Mid Layer #1
Mid Layer #2
Mid Layer #3
Mid Layer #4
Late Layer #1
Late Layer #2
Late Layer #3
Late Layer #4


Logistic Decision Boundary on 2D PCA Embedding
(colored by material)
Era
Bronze
Marble
Other
PC1
PC2
50
40
30
20
10
0
−10
−20
−40
−30
−20
−10
0
10
20
30
40

Big idea: how does AI help us build knowledge?

- Knowledge is constructed through a dialogue between the researcher, their material, and other researchers.
- Generically, you can think of AI tools as creating “synthetic” material which is distinct from your own and others interpretation of the material.
  - Better still: this synthetic material can be tuned and controlled.
- However, it is critical that we understand *how* that synthetic material is created so we can appreciate where it fits into our dialogue.
  - In the same way we need to understand where other researchers are coming from in order to intelligently incorporate their work.

Current + future projects

- Economics: sentiment determination and forecasting
- History: OCR, text analysis, and close-reading
- Sociology: network analysis and family structures
- Sociology: text analysis, word embeddings, and classification
- Library: human-centred AI and programming

If you have a project or idea, let us know!

Questions & Discussion

Sharing and Conclusion

Questions?

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