Writing Spaces

Assignments & Activities Archive

Collaborative Building of a Course AI Policy

Benjamin Goodwin

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Collaborative Building of a Course AI Use Policy

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Overview

This activity, designed for the first day or week of a first-year composition course, aims to address several key beginning-of-the-term concerns: breaking the ice and building community, giving students a sense of agency and ownership of the learning space, and addressing the complex issues and impacts of Large Language Models (LLM) or "AI" on higher education.

The basic idea is to first open an honest conversation between student groups about their history and experience with LLMs used for coursework, as well as their opinions about its impact on them and students in general. The "controversial" nature of the topic and the space to talk openly about it engages students and harnesses the unique energy of the first class-day—building relationships by having students get to know each other through critical discussion, thinking, and analysis. The instructor, by creating a safe space for discussion and a non-judgmental environment, hopes to begin the creation of a positive and comfortable class culture. Asking the students to collaboratively build a policy for the syllabus serves to give them a voice and an investment in the course itself. Introducing concern about LLM use in this way is educational and practical without being authoritative, an unusual icebreaker that attempts to tackle the tricky task of setting the right tone for the instructor and the class at the beginning of the term .

The theoretical foundation of this activity comes first from the American Association of Colleges and Universities High Impact Practices (HIP) which are "based on evidence of significant

educational benefits for students who participate in them—including and especially those from demographic groups historically underserved by higher education." Specifically, this activity seeks to practice collaborative learning, utilizing a first-year seminars approach to build intellectual and practical competencies by involving students in cutting edge questions and issues, and the building of a learning community ("Higher-Impact Practices"). Secondly, the activity utilizes scholarship such as Catherine Bovill's "Co-creation in learning and teaching," which concludes that involving the whole class in co-creation has the potential to be an inclusive way to build positive relationships and communities as well as build more effective learning environments (Bovill 1034).

Time Commitment

This activity can take a variable amount of time depending on the size of the class, how deep the instructor wants to go with discussion and analysis, as well as the other goals they need to accomplish with their first day/week of the term. In a first-year composition course of 24 students, this activity usually took 30 minutes out of a 110-minute class and then roughly 10 minutes for the instructor to edit/format the list and add it as a policy to the syllabus.

Materials

This activity benefits from using a collaborative writing space, like a shared Google Doc, for class groups to write out their thoughts and conclusions where the class and instructor can engage with them.

Activity Process

- First, the instructor will introduce the topic of LLMs or "AI" use in college courses and make clear that the following discussion will remain private to the class without any judgment or consequences for what is discussed.

- Next the instructor has the students form groups with neighboring peers and introduce themselves to each other within the group and have a casual conversation about how college is going so far.

- Then, the instructor asks them to engage in an honest conversation about their understanding, use, and perspectives on LLM use for college coursework.

- That discussion is taken to the class level, where the instructor guides an open and non-judgmental review of what students shared.

- Afterwards, the course's Learning Outcomes from the syllabus are presented and explained in clear language by the instructor.

- Then, the instructor makes a connection between LLM use and these Learning Outcomes, guiding students to start another group discussion where they critically consider LLM use in the light of these goals, specifically analyzing and debating which types of LLM use "enable" or "disable" them.

- The group discussion concludes with the goal of each group developing two lists of specific types of LLM use, those that they feel enable the Learning Outcomes and should be "Acceptable Uses" and those they feel disable them and should be "Unacceptable Uses."

- Wrapping up, each group presents and explains their lists and the instructor adds their contributions to a class list, synthesizing them as similar or connected "Uses" are added.

- Between this and the next class meeting, the instructor edits and formats this list and adds it to the syllabus as the "Course

AI Use Policy" which they will then present and review with the class at their next meeting.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity/assignment will:

- Begin to build relationships with their classmates

- Experience an open, honest, and safe classroom environment supported by their instructor

- Gain perspective by reviewing their own LLM use in comparison to that of their classmates

- Increase their information literacy regarding LLMs through critical consideration and analysis of the ethics of LLM use

- Understand the course's Learning Outcomes

- Deepen their understanding of the course's learning outcomes by connecting them to specific uses of LLMs

- Gain a sense of agency and ownership by having a voice in the collaborative creation of a course policy

Learning Accommodations

- Students can choose from a few different roles—notetaker, speaker, or just a group member—in order to maximize engagement and accommodate different learning styles, personalities, and skillsets.

- Using a collaborative Google Doc as a writing space for the activity allows students to engage with the information during instruction on their devices and makes it available digitally for review or absent/online students.

- ▪ Group discussions, as opposed to individual discussion and questioning by the instructor, creates a sense of privacy and collaboration, and allows students who are not comfortable with speaking to the whole class or being put on the spot and those that maybe confused or unsure about the activity to seek guidance from their group members

Works Cited

"High-Impact Practices." *AAC&U*, [www.aacu.org/trending-topics/high-impact](). Accessed June 6 2024.

Bovill, Catherine. "Co-Creation in Learning and Teaching: The Case for a Whole-Class Approach in Higher Education." *Higher Education*, vol. 79, no. 6, 2 Dec. 2020, pp. 1023–1037, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00453-w.

Further Reading

George D. Kuh's book *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* and his many other publications on the subject via [www.accu.org]().

The UDH Module created by Andrew Horne, "CO-CREATING COURSE SYLLABI: Personalizing learning through the co-creation of a course syllabus," found at: [https://ofe.ecu.edu/udlmodules/modules/co-creating-course-syllabi-personalizing-learning-through-the-co-creation-of-a-course-syllabus/]().