

Writing Spaces

Assignments & Activities Archive

From Connection to Critique: Evaluating an AI-Generated Essay

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From Connection to Critique: Evaluating an AI-Generated Essay

Abigail Michelini

Overview

This assignment brings generative AI into the writing classroom with the goals of learning about what it can and cannot do well, enhancing students' ability to critique it, and engaging it responsibly without compromising critical thinking. The best place for this assignment is in the second half of the semester, after students have read and engaged with a variety of texts.

In this assignment, students first identify a text (e.g. short story or poem) they connected with from the course and write about why they liked or selected it. They then ask generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT) to write a research paper with secondary sources that makes an argument about or interprets their selected text. They work with the generative AI platform, reading its responses and altering their prompts to try to produce the best possible research paper it can write on the text. Because students have established a personal, unique, and human connection to the text first, they are well-suited to critique and help shape the text written by generative AI.

Once students are satisfied with the generative AI written paper, or they do not think it can produce a better paper, they examine the generative AI paper on four points: critique, praise, viewpoints, and source evaluation. Ultimately, they write their own paper, summarizing their analysis of the generative AI paper and then returning to their own specific connection with the text. Additionally, they must include two or more secondary sources in their own paper to support either their own points or a solid point that generative AI made, but it did not have legitimate sources for.

Time Commitment

3-4 weeks

Materials

Necessary materials include texts for students to choose from (e.g. short prose or poetry), a digital device for each student, internet access, access to generative AI, and an online word processor such as Google Docs or Word online.

Assignment or Activity Process

- First, students select a text from the course that impacted them or that they connected with in some way. They write a short response, without generative AI, considering the following: *Why did you enjoy this text? What do you have to say about it? What is your connection to it? Be as specific as possible.*
- Then, they ask a generative AI model to write a research paper based on the text that they selected. They are not permitted to copy and paste their selected texts into the model, as that may violate copyright, but must work with the generative AI to produce 5+ iterations of the research paper that reflect what they want it to produce. They may feed it specific quotes from their selected text and must ask it to include secondary sources.
- After they have a satisfactory generative AI paper, they copy and paste or download it into a Google doc or an online Word document. This allows students to share the document as a link and to interact directly with it through the comment feature.
- Next, students annotate the generative AI paper on four

points: Critique: *where did generative AI go wrong? Where did it hallucinate? What is inaccurate or off base?* Praise: *What did it do well? Did anything it produced add to your learning or thinking about your selected text?* Viewpoints: *Whose perspectives are missing? Is your perspective or connection to this text present? Are your peers' perspectives (from class discussions about the text) present?* Source Evaluation: *Are its sources valid? Are its sources reliable? Are they cited correctly?*

- As students annotate the generative AI text, they make notes on questions above through the comments feature of the online Word or Google document. In this way, they are able to directly reference their points of critique, praise, viewpoints, and source evaluation as they are commenting on each one where it occurs in the generative AI text.
- Next, students share their link to the Google or online Word document with a peer so that the peer can review their comments. Peers are asked to examine: *Did your peer miss any opportunities for praise or critique? Is your viewpoint or perspective on this text present?* This ultimately helps add to the points students can make, particularly regarding viewpoints, about their generative AI paper.
- Then, students conduct their own research to find reliable sources to back up either their own connection or points they want to make about their selected text OR, since generative AI is inconsistent in generating reliable sources that contain the information cited, students can choose to find reliable sources to back up generative AI's claims about the text.
- Finally, students write a 3-5 page paper of their own, without using generative AI, including: their own connection to the selected text, a summary of their critique, praise, and analysis of the generative AI paper, reliable sources to back up their

or generative AI's points, and a reflection on learning. Reflection questions include: *What was this process like? What did you learn about generative AI? What did you learn about your selected text? What will you take with you?*

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity/assignment will:

- Revise and design effective prompts for generative AI
- Practice responsible generative AI use
- Evaluate outputs from generative AI to recognize what generative AI does well
- Evaluate outputs from generative AI to critique gaps in knowledge, insufficient or incorrect sources, and incomplete information from generative AI
- Annotate a text to enhance engagement and encourage specificity
- Articulate and add their own unique perspective
- Synthesize various types of sources to support their main point or argument
- Reflect on their learning

Learning Accommodations

Material may be presented in multiple formats to include in-person instruction and asynchronous, digital delivery.