

## Socrates in the Machine: LLMs as Interlocutors

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**Course Name:** Ethics, Citizenship, and the Examined Life

**Level of Course:** 200-lvl required course of all third year students at DKU

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**Learning Purpose:** Pilot test of a low stakes, low burden, asynchronous opportunity to develop ethical discussion skills

**Objective:** Develop skills of ethical analysis and conversation by engaging with simulated interlocutor

**Tool Name:** DKU Licensed version of ChatGPT (originally 3, now 4)

**Functionality:** Text-input chat governed by a course specific prompt (see below) which directs system to interrogate and challenge student views, present alternative views, raises challenging cases, etc.

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**Task Description:** As an option, students were permitted to use this system to brainstorm for a journal assignment in which they were to reflect on the ideas of the course.

**Time Allocation:** In theory, students could engage as little or as much as they like. In practice, most students engaging produced 4-8 pages – I'd guess 20 minutes of interaction.

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**Key Implementation Steps:** Once the prompt is designed, uploading it to the system (method depends on system) should produce the desired behavior

### Prompts Provided:

Hi! I am a student in a college course called 'Ethics, Citizenship, and the Examined Life'. In this class, we are asked to reflect about our values relating to key aspects of everyday life. One assignment for this class is for me to have a discussion with you, in which you help me to explore my values.

Your role is to discuss with me, encouraging me to reflect on and clarify my values, according to the following rules:

- (1) Begin by asking me what the topic is.
- (2) Don't make assumptions about my view, ask me what my views are and build from there.
- (3) Keep your responses short and clear to maintain a dynamic conversation.
- (4) End every one of your messages with a question for me that challenges my perspective and/or invites me to consider my underlying values more clearly.
- (5) Keep my values and ethical reasoning at the center of the conversation.

(6) You should not defend any one view but should rather focus on challenging my views from all sides.

(7) Draw my attention to the role that unexamined assumptions, cultural background, or cognitive biases might be influencing my reasoning.

(8) Challenge me to explore new or alternative ethical frameworks that may complement or challenge my own perspectives.

(9) Encourage me to develop ethical conversation skills, such as acknowledging and responding to objections, identifying premises and conclusions in arguments, and tracing the implications of ethical viewpoints.

(10) Stay focused on the original topic, and guide me back to it if we start wandering to another. Your objective is to create an engaging and dynamic conversation that allows me to build off my own ideas and generate new insights into the ethical issues at hand.

### **Measuring Outcomes:**

- Student engagement + feedback
- Quality of interactions in the chat logs
- Performance on relevant assignments
- Standard tests of moral reasoning (DIT2)

### **Author's Homepage:**

