

Drafting a generative AI-use policy for your course

Whether you incorporate generative AI use into your pedagogy or not, it's important that you include a clear AI-use policy in your syllabus. If you don't, your students won't know what is expected, what is allowed, and what is prohibited. Students desire clarity from you on the ethical and allowable uses of generative AI tools in your courses (Flaherty, 2025).

We recommend that you design an generative AI policy that aligns with the specific ethics and practices of your discipline, your department, and your course. In addition to providing [sample language](#) below, we offer a formula for designing your own policy. If you do choose to incorporate the sample language, edit it in accordance with your expectations for your course.

Recommended Components

- A discipline-specific explanation of how you understand the role of generative AI in learning and practice.
- When and how generative AI resources may and may not be used in your course.
- When and how generative AI resources should (if you allow their use in certain circumstances) be cited or acknowledged.
- How you will handle cases of suspected or confirmed generative AI use that contravenes your policy: What can students expect when they meet with you if you suspect them of misuse of generative AI, and what academic consequences might they face?
- An invitation for students to reach out to you early in the quarter if they have any questions about your policy.

Details to Consider

Types of use of generative AI that will or won't be permissible under your policy

For instance, will any of the following uses be permitted: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, significant editing/writing feedback, copy-editing, thinking, researching, finding sources, summarizing course readings/other content, writing code, editing code, solving equations, generating images, generating music/sound, generating visual effects, or tutoring?

List of specific generative AI software or types of software that are allowed or disallowed

Claude, Gemini, Co-Pilot, Chat GPT, Dall-e, Grammarly Premium, StudyBuddy or other AI plug-ins, Math.AI, Google Chrome's Homework Help, predictive/suggestive text, translation software (e.g., Google Translate), and so on.

Putting It All Together

- Use welcoming and inclusive language and write in the first person (and address your students directly as “you”).
- Frame your policy as a commitment to helping students grow their capacities and use technology in appropriate ways rather than a list of prohibitions and punitive measures.
- Your message to students about the use of generative AI (and academic integrity in general) should reflect your teaching philosophy, the priorities of your department, and the conventions of your field.
- Note that use of AI detection software at UC Santa Cruz is limited. You may only use an AI detector if the detection software is hosted locally and data is protected from external access; it is contracted through campus purchasing; or, if you obtain prior approval in writing from all of your students.

Regardless of the approach you take, some of your students will push the boundaries you’ve established. AI software will also change. **Revisit and revise your policy each time you teach the course.**

Sample Policies

Sample #1: A highly restrictive generative AI-use policy

When are you permitted to use AI?

You may use generative AI sources as a tutor, although you do so at your own risk, and you may not use it to summarize or digest assigned readings. You should exercise critical thinking and care, as AI can be overly simple or outright wrong. AI sources may also propagate bias. If you use AI as a tutor, you must limit that use to reading/consuming information, and doing so with a rigorously skeptical eye.

When are you *not* permitted to use AI?

Short version: Unless you are specifically instructed to use generative AI in an assignment prompt, or using it in the permitted way described above, using generative AI for ANY original thinking or writing task related to this course constitutes a violation of my academic integrity policy.

Full version: Original work is important in Sociology. The high-stakes knowledge our discipline produces requires critical thinking and skillful writing, both of which can only be developed through concerted effort over time. I want to read ONLY the beautifully human writing that comes from your unique human brain – so you’ll need to hone and cherish your writing voice as you would any art form.

The easiest way to ensure that your writing does not come under suspicion for AI use is to not use AI. Here is the comprehensive policy for my classes:

- You may not use ChatGPT or any other generative AI platform or technology, including (but not limited to) Claude, Gemini, Dall-E, Co-Pilot, Grammarly Premium, StudyBuddy, predictive/suggestive text, Google Chrome's Homework Help, etc.
- Unless *explicitly* instructed to do so for a specific assignment, or for tutoring (as described above), you may not use AI for any reason related to thinking, writing, brainstorming, researching, outlining, editing, or literally any other purpose on the planet that you could conceive of. **Please note:** the AI search results that now pop up at the top of the screen in any Google search does not count as using AI for the purposes of this policy if you are googling something for clarification/research purposes, but you should consult the original source to assess its validity.
- Translation software (including, but not limited to, Google Translate) counts as an AI platform, and its use is strictly prohibited. Even if English is not your first language, you must write your papers directly in English rather than writing them in your native language and translating them. You may look up individual words in an English/Your-Native-Language online dictionary, but you may not use an online translator to translate phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or papers.
- I expect you to be able to easily define any word or concept you use in your writing; please be sure to learn and memorize the definitions of any new words you have gotten from an online dictionary.
- For spell-check and grammar-check functions, you are limited to the basic spell-check and grammar-check features that come pre-loaded with word processing software such as MS Word or Google Docs. You may not use any other editing software (including Grammarly Premium), nor should you use the suggestive/predictive text that such software proposes. Your writing errors are not a big deal to me, whereas AI use definitely is.

If you have any questions about this policy, please ask me so I can provide clarification.

(Example courtesy of Continuing Lecturer Megan McNamara)

Sample #2: A policy allowing for limited generative AI use with attribution

Our discipline allows for generative AI use under certain circumstances, but always with clear and open attribution. Where readers have a reasonable expectation that work with your name on it was written by you, your ethical use of AI is imperative. Please read this policy carefully if you plan to make use of AI resources.

Authorized uses of AI tools

- Brainstorming paper topic choices
- Finding sources
- Personalized tutoring; asking about concepts you'd like to see explained in a different way
- Editing for grammar, writing mechanics, and punctuation

- Seeking writing feedback on a paper for which you wrote the original draft

Unauthorized uses of AI tools

- Asking AI to draft an outline for you
- Asking AI to draft a paper for you
- Using AI to make edits to your writing in ways that substantively change the voice of your work (in other words, using AI to write in ways that you cannot write on your own)
- Using AI to answer quiz, exam, or homework questions
- Using AI to write discussion posts or annotations
- Using AI to hide plagiarism or to mislead readers about the provenance of your submitted work

Citing AI use

If you use AI resources in any authorized way as described above, you must note that in your submitted paper. You can do that by explaining exactly how you used it in a paragraph at the end of your assignment.

(Example courtesy of the TLC team)

Sample 3: A policy allowing for limited use with attribution

Generative AI Policy

In this course, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools is encouraged to support learning and foster creativity. GenAI tools—such as those that generate text, images, code, and other content—have become increasingly accessible. Common examples include ChatGPT for text generation, Copilot for coding, and DALL•E for images. This policy applies to all GenAI tools, including new ones introduced during this class.

To maintain academic integrity and enhance learning outcomes, please follow these guidelines:

Permitted Uses:

Idea Generation: You may use GenAI tools to brainstorm project ideas, generate initial code snippets, and explore different problem-solving approaches.

Learning Aid: GenAI tools can assist in understanding course concepts, debugging code, and clarifying questions related to Python programming.

Documentation: AI-generated text may be used for code comments, explanations, and other documentation, as long as it is properly cited.

Prohibited Uses:

Direct Code Submission: Submitting AI-generated code as your own work is strictly prohibited. All submitted code must be written and fully understood by you. Submitting AI-generated code without meaningful modifications or a clear understanding of how it works will be considered a violation.

Assignment Completion: Using AI tools to complete entire assignments, projects, or assessments without substantial personal effort and understanding is not allowed.

Attribution Requirements:

When using GenAI tools in this course, you must document and credit the tools appropriately. Failure to properly cite the use of AI-generated content or presenting it as your own work will be considered plagiarism and subject to academic penalties.

Citation Example:

"This code snippet was generated using ChatGPT [version] on [date], and modified by [Your Name]."

Always provide a brief description of how the tool was used (e.g., for generating code or documentation).

(Example courtesy of Associate Teaching Professor Hao Yue)

Sample 4: A policy allowing for substantial AI use with attribution

Large Language Models (LLMs) like chatGPT are de-facto tools in industry. The idea in this class is to develop skills in using them, as though you are working in an industry setting. Hence, I expect you to use AI tools for most labs. However, there are some constraints:

1. You may not share google/GPT/AI search method;
2. You may use google/GPT/AI results as long as:
 - a. You include the queries/searches used in the report.pdf; and,
 - b. You include the answer from the query in the report.pdf

(Example courtesy of Professor Jose Renau)

What If I Suspect Unauthorized AI Use?

Please see the following TLC guides for information on how to respond to potential AI misuse:

- [I Think a Student May Have Misused Generative AI —Now What?](#)
- [Academic Misconduct: Self-Care for Instructors](#)

Proactive approaches to minimizing unauthorized AI use

There is no way to prevent AI use in your classroom, but you have more influence than you might realize on students' thinking and decision-making. The following is a non-exhaustive list of strategies you might consider incorporating:

- Promote the values of academic integrity: Doing one's own work, acknowledging and citing sources of ideas and information, improving with practice and learning from mistakes, honesty and openness.
- Discuss limitations and biases of generative AI with your students.
- Discuss the professional and personal implications of failing to acquire the skills and knowledge that your assessments are meant to confer.
- Ask students to sign an academic integrity pledge at the beginning of the quarter and/or as they submit each assignment (note that this doesn't guarantee integrity, but it reminds them of expectations).
- Write a thoughtful general academic integrity policy that clearly conveys to students the value that you and your discipline place on professional trust and ethics.
- Inoculate against cheating by appealing to students' sense of personal honor and desire to attain mastery.
- Explain that academic growth only comes through mental effort. Normalize struggle as part of intellectual growth.
- Explain the consequences of breaking interpersonal trust and the difficulties in repairing it; make clear that you want to be able to experience reciprocal trust in your students.
- Design assignments that encourage students to leverage their creativity and personal experiences (but be aware that AI can fabricate this kind of writing).
- Build an in-person peer-review process into major assignments, and require that students incorporate and address their peers' feedback in subsequent drafts.
- Break larger assignments into smaller, scaffolded assignments to decrease the anxiety surrounding high-stakes assessments and to give you and your teaching team the opportunity to make early interventions if you suspect AI use.
- Ask students to reflect, as part of an assignment, on their writing process.
- Use generative AI in your own work so that you know what it is capable of and can better detect its output.
- Build in flexibility with guardrails to prevent students feeling "backed into a corner" by deadlines.

References

Flaherty, C. (2025, August 29). *How AI is changing—not “killing”—college*. Inside Higher Ed.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/students/academics/2025/08/29/survey-college-students-views-ai>