Connecticut Debate Association
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CDA Novice Scrimmage

This House, as a teacher, would permit the use of Chat GPT and other generative AI for class assignments.

Despite Cheating Fears, Schools Repeal ChatGPT Bans

By Natasha Singer, The New York Times, August 24, 2023

Some districts that once raced to block A.I. chatbots are now trying to embrace them.

Natasha Singer traveled to Walla Walla, Wash., for this article.

For decades, Walla Walla High School in the wheat basket of Washington State has maintained an old red wooden barn on campus where students learn a venerable farming skill: how to raise pigs and sheep.

Now, as the new academic year starts, some teachers at the school are preparing to help students learn the latest digital skill: how to navigate A.I. chatbots like ChatGPT.

This month, Walla Walla Public Schools, which serves some 5,500 students, held a daylong workshop on the A.I. chatbots, which can generate homework essays, fictional stories and other texts. About 100 local educators showed up at the high school for the event.

Dozens of local educators recently gathered at Walla Walla High School for a workshop on how to use A.I. chatbots for lesson planning and student learning.Credit...Ricardo Nagaoka for The New York Times

It was a remarkable turnaround for a district that had blocked student access to ChatGPT on school devices only in February.

"I do want students to learn to use it," said Yazmin Bahena, a dual-language middle school social studies teacher. "They are going to grow up in a world where this is the norm."

The media furor over chatbots last winter upended school districts and universities across the United States. The tools, which are trained on vast databases of digital texts, use artificial intelligence to manufacture written responses to user prompts. The bots also liberally make stuff up.

Tech giants and billionaires promised that the A.I. tools would revolutionize learning. Critics warned that the bots would be more likely to undermine education, inundating students with misinformation and facilitating widespread cheating.

A New Generation of Chatbots (insert)

A brave new world. A new crop of chatbots powered by artificial intelligence has ignited a scramble to determine whether the technology could upend the economics of the internet, turning today's powerhouses into has-beens and creating the industry's next giants. Here are the bots to know:

ChatGPT. ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence language model from a research lab, OpenAI, has been making headlines since November for its ability to respond to complex questions, write poetry, generate code, plan vacations and translate languages. GPT-4, the latest version introduced in mid-March, can even respond to images (and ace the Uniform Bar Exam).

Bing. Two months after ChatGPT's debut, Microsoft, OpenAI's primary investor and partner, added a similar chatbot, capable of having open-ended text conversations on virtually any topic, to its Bing internet search engine. But it was the bot's occasionally inaccurate, misleading and weird responses that drew much of the attention after its release.

Bard. Google's chatbot, called Bard, was released in March to a limited number of users in the United States and Britain. Originally conceived as a creative tool designed to draft emails and poems, it can generate ideas, write blog posts and answer questions with facts or opinions.

Ernie. The search giant Baidu unveiled China's first major rival to ChatGPT in March. The debut of Ernie, short for Enhanced Representation through Knowledge Integration, turned out to be a flop after a promised "live" demonstration of the bot was revealed to have been recorded.

Amid the forecasts of imminent marvels and doom, some public schools tried to hit the pause button to give administrators time to catch up. In December, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second-largest school system, blocked ChatGPT on school Wi-Fi and district-owned student devices. Other districts soon followed, including New York City, the largest U.S. school system.

But administrators quickly realized the bot bans were ineffective. For one thing, wealthier students who owned smartphones or laptops could simply use ChatGPT, a chatbot developed by OpenAI of San Francisco, or similar bots like Google's Bard at home.

"Children who have devices and unfiltered, unfettered connectivity at home are already benefiting from access to

these tools," Alberto M. Carvalho, the superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District, said in an interview this week. "Students who depend on district devices and connectivity are restricted."

In May, New York City schools issued a public mea culpa, saying the district had acted too hastily and would unblock ChatGPT. This week, Mr. Carvalho said Los Angeles schools were also working on a more permissive policy.

As schools reopen for fall, educators and district leaders are wrestling with complex questions posed by the A.I. tools: What should writing assignments look like in an era when students can simply employ chatbots to generate prose for them? How can schools, teachers and students use the bots effectively and creatively? Does it still count as cheating if a student asks a bot to fabricate a rough draft that they then rewrite themselves?

Some large districts, including Milwaukee, still have ChatGPT blocks in place. Some districts like Newark Public Schools are trying out specialized chatbots specifically designed for student tutoring.

Other districts are embracing tools like ChatGPT as lesson-planning aids for teachers — and as opportunities for students to learn how bots can concoct misinformation and replicate human biases. Administrators say they are simply taking a pragmatic view: Students will need to learn how to prompt chatbots to answer their questions, just as they learn to query search engines like Google.

"The world our kids are inheriting is going to be full of A.I., and we need to make sure they are well equipped for it, both the benefits and the drawbacks," Wade Smith, the superintendent of Walla Walla Public Schools, said in a recent interview. "Putting our heads behind the curtain or under the sheets and hoping it goes away is simply not reality."

Walla Walla offers a portrait of one district's remarkable learning curve on A.I. this year. School administrators sought to take advantage of the chatbots' potential benefits while working to tackle thorny issues like cheating, misinformation and potential risks to student privacy.

In January, Keith Ross, the school district's director of technology and information services, began hearing about ChatGPT. District teachers were starting to notice a few students submitting chatbot-produced homework as their own. One obvious tip-off: The chatbots fabricated quotes that were not in the novels assigned in class.

The district was also concerned about student privacy. ChatGPT and Bard require new users to provide personal data such as their email address and mobile number. But administrators did not know how the A.I. companies might use students' account details or their text interactions with the chatbots.

"We just didn't know enough about the technology," said Mr. Ross, who blocked students' access to ChatGPT in February. "We blocked it to buy us some time to get up to speed on what it is and how we were going to support teachers, and potentially students, using it."

The district set up an A.I. advisory committee with 15 administrators and teachers. The committee studied the potential advantages and challenges of enabling student access to A.I. chatbots and plans to provide more training on the tools for teachers.

"There's two main categories: using it to be more efficient and save time as a teacher," said Carrie LaRoy, the district's technology integration specialist, who helps oversee the committee, "but then also how to teach our students to use it responsibly and with fidelity."

At 8 a.m. on a recent Thursday, about 100 local teachers and principals trooped into a glass-walled meeting hall at Wa-Hi, as the high school is known. They were giving up a late-summer vacation day to try out A.I. tools for lesson planning and student learning.

The workshop was led by Molly Brinkley, a regional technology trainer who works with 23 local school districts. Most of them blocked ChatGPT last spring, she said.

Some workshop attendees described themselves as chatbot novices. Others said they had come to pick up more advanced skills.

One of them was Beth Clearman, a veteran honors English teacher at a local middle school who wanted to devise some literary games for the first day of class. So she asked ChatGPT to produce six-word "memoirs" of well-known literary characters.

The A.I. chatbot promptly manufactured descriptions like: "lavish parties, unrequited love, green light" and "arrow's aim, rebellion's face, Mockingjay's fire." Ms. Clearman said she planned to ask students to match the names of protagonists with their chatbot bios. (Spoiler alert: Jay Gatsby, Katniss Everdeen.)

Originally leery of A.I. chatbots, Ms. Clearman said she now planned to use ChatGPT "so much!" with her writing students.

"I've flipped my whole way of thinking," she said.

Ms. Bahena, the dual-language social studies teacher, found another potentially useful feature: lesson translation. "I wanted to see how well it worked in Spanish," Ms. Bahena said. So she asked ChatGPT to create a quiz on the Civil War in English and Spanish for her eighth-grade students. "It did pretty well."

But even enthusiastic Walla Walla teachers said they were concerned that students might have difficulty being sufficiently critical of the materials manufactured by chatbots.

"I'm worried that they might come to take it at face value," said Shauna Millett, an English teacher at the high school.
For now, the district is encouraging teachers to embrace the chatbots, including schooling students on their apparent flaws. Students 13 or older may also create ChatGPT accounts if they wish.
As the workshop wound down, Ms. Brinkley, the regional technology trainer, glanced around the room, pleased to see that dozens of local educators were now comfortable conversing — if not fluent — with A.I. chatbots.
"I do recommend that schools reconsider their bans," she said, "if teachers receive training, families

Professors have a summer assignment: Prevent ChatGPT chaos in the fall

By Pranshu Verma, The Washington Post, August 13, 2023

AI chatbots have triggered a panic among educators, who are flooding listservs, webinars and professional conferences to figure out how to deal with the technology

Soon after ChatGPT was released in November, Darren Keast noticed students in his college English composition class turning in essays that read as if they'd been written by machine. Many contained fabricated quotes and cited sources that didn't exist — telltale signs they were created by the artificial intelligence chatbot. He's dreading a repeat of that confusion this fall, so he scrambled over summer break to adapt.

While hiking in Costa Rica, Keast consumed AI podcasts talking about the software's existential risk to humanity. At home in Mill Valley, Calif., he's spent hours online in fiery group discussions about whether AI chatbots should be used in the classroom. In the car, Keast queried his kids for their thoughts on the software until they begged him to stop.

"They're like: 'You got to get a life, this is getting crazy,'" he said. "But [AI] totally transformed my whole professional experience."

Keast isn't alone. The rise of AI chatbots has sowed confusion and panic among educators who worry they are ill-equipped to incorporate the technology into their classes and fear a stark rise in plagiarism and reduced learning. Absent guidance from university administrators on how to deal with the software, many teachers are taking matters into their own hands, turning to listservs, webinars and professional conferences to fill in gaps in their knowledge — many shelling out their own money to attend conference sessions that are packed to the brim.

Even with this ad hoc education, there is little consensus among educators: for every professor who touts the tool's wonders there's another that says it will bring about doom.

The lack of consistency worries them. When students come back to campus this fall, some teachers will allow AI, but others will ban it. Some universities will have modified their dishonesty policies to take AI into account, but others avoid the subject. Teachers may rely on inadequate AI-writing detection tools and risk wrongly accusing students, or opt for student surveillance software, to ensure original work.

For Keast, who teaches at the City College of San Francisco, there's only one word to describe the next semester.

"Chaotic," he said.

After ChatGPT became public on Nov. 30, it created a stir. The AI chatbot could spit out lifelike responses to any question — crafting essays, finishing computer code or writing poems.

Educators knew immediately they were facing a generational shift for the classroom. Many professors worried that students would use it for homework and tests. Others compared the technology to the calculator, arguing teachers would have to provide assignments that could be completed with AI.

Institutions such as Sciences Po, a university in Paris, and RV University in Bangalore, India, banned ChatGPT, concerned it would undermine learning and encourage cheating. Professors at colleges such as the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and Ithaca College in New York allowed it, arguing that students should be proficient in it.

Tools to detect AI-written content have added to the turmoil. They are notoriously unreliable and have resulted in what students say are false accusations of cheating and failing grades. OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, unveiled an AI-detection tool in January, but quietly scrapped it on July 20 due to its "low rate of accuracy." One of the most prominent tools to detect AI-written text, created by plagiarism detection company Turnitin.com, frequently flagged human writing as AI-generated, according to a Washington Post examination.

Representatives from OpenAI pointed to an online post stating they "are currently researching more

effective provenance techniques for text." Turnitin.com did not respond to a request for comment.
We tested a new ChatGPT-detector for teachers. It flagged an innocent student.
Students are adjusting their behavior to avoid getting impacted by the uncertainty.
Jessica Zimny, a student at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Tex., said she was wrongly accused of using AI to cheat this summer. A 302-word post she wrote for a political science class assignment was flagged as 67 percent AI-written, according to Turnitin.com's detection tool — resulting in her professor giving her a zero.
Zimny, 20, said she plead her case to her professor, the head of the school's political science department and a university dean, to no avail.
Now, she screen-records herself doing assignments — capturing ironclad proof she did the work in case she ever is ever accused again, she said.
"I don't like the idea that people are thinking that my work is copied, or that I don't do my own things originally," Zimny, a fine arts student, said. "It just makes me mad and upset and I just don't want that to happen again."
On Turnitin.com, one of Jessica Zimny's assignment for her summer political science class was incorrectly flagged as being 67% written by AI. (Washington Post illustration; Jessica Zimny/TWP)
All of this has left professors hungry for guidance, knowing their students will be using ChatGPT when the fall rolls around, said Anna Mills, a writing teacher at the College of Marin who sits on a joint AI task force with the Modern Language Association (MLA) and College Conference on Composition and Communication (CCCC).
Because universities aren't providing much help, professors are flocking to informal online discussion groups, professional development webinars and conferences for information.
Teachers are on alert for inevitable cheating after release of ChatGPT
When Mills talked on a webinar hosted by the MLA and CCCC for AI in writing in late-July, a time when many teachers might be in the throes of summer break, more than 3,000 people signed up and ultimately more than 1,700 people tuned in — unusual numbers for the groups' trainings.
"It speaks to the sense of anxiety," Mills said. In fact, a survey of 456 college educators in March and April conducted by the task force revealed the largest worries professors have about AI are its role in fostering plagiarism, the inability to detect AI-written text and that the technology would prevent students from learning how to write, learn and develop critical thinking skills.
Mills and her task force colleagues are trying to clear up misconceptions. They explain that it's not easy to recognize AI-generated text and caution the use of software to crack down on student plagiarism. Mills said AI is not only a tool used for cheating, but can be harnessed to spur critical thinking and learning.
"People are overwhelmed and recognizing that this new situation demands a lot of time and careful attention, and it's very complex," she added. "There are not easy answers to it."
Marc Watkins, an academic innovation fellow and writing lecturer at the University of Mississippi, said teachers are keenly aware that if they don't learn more about AI, they may rob their students of a tool that could aid learning. That's why they're seeking professional development on their own, even if they have to pay for it or take time away from families.
Watkins, who helped create an AI-focused professional development course at his university, recalled a lecture he gave on how to use AI in the classroom at a conference in Nashville this summer. The interest was so intense, he said, that more than 200 registered educators clamored for roughly 70 seats, forcing conference officials to shut the door early to prevent over crowding.
Cheating-detection companies made millions during the pandemic. Now students are fighting back.
Watkins advises professors to follow a few steps. They should rid themselves of the notion that banning ChatGPT will do much, since the tool is publicly available. Rather, they should set limitations on how it can be used in class and have a conversation with students early in the semester about the ways chatbots could foster nuanced thinking on an assignment.
For example, Watkins said, ChatGPT can help students brainstorm questions they go onto investigate, or create counterarguments to strengthen their essays.
But several professors added that getting educators to think on the same page is a daunting task, that is unlikely for the fall semester. Professional development modules must be developed to explain how teachers talk to students about AI, how to incorporate it into learning, and what to do when students are

flagged as writing an entire post by a chatbot.
Watkins said if colleges don't figure out how to deal with AI quickly, there is a possibility colleges rely on surveillance tools, such as they did during the pandemic, to track student keystrokes, eye movements and screen activity, to ensure students are doing the work.
"It sounds like hell to me," he said.

Here's my AI policy for students: I don't have one

By Jonathan Zimmerman, The Washington Post, August 29, 2023

Jonathan Zimmerman teaches education and history at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of "The Amateur Hour: A History of College Teaching in America."
With the new semester upon us, I recently received an email from my university encouraging me to come up with a "policy" about the use of artificial intelligence in my courses. The university suggested that on the first day of class, instructors should inform students whether and how they can employ AI bots such as ChatGPT.
So here's my AI policy: I don't have one.
Here's what I'm going to tell my students instead.
Of course, you'll have to notify me if you draw upon AI to write a paper, just as you are required to cite any other source. But whether to use AI or not is up to you.
Though, I hope you won't.
I'm not saying that because AI can make up phony "facts" (although it can) or because it can generate racist and hateful text (ditto). I say this because AI does your thinking for you. There's a reason it's called "intelligence," after all.
And I want you to be intelligent. I want you to stare at a blank page or screen for hours, trying to decide how to start. I want to you to write draft after draft and develop a stronger version of your own ideas. I want you to be proud of what you accomplished, not ashamed that you cut corners.
Most of all, I want you to decide what is real. One of my mentors, Neil Postman, a professor and social critic, famously declared that education should equip us with an effective "crap detector." And Postman wrote that years before we all got access to the internet, which has made BS detection even more difficult — and even more crucial.
Sometimes BS is just lies — what today we call "disinformation." More commonly, though, it is an indifference to truth rather than a deliberate flouting of it. Liars believe in truth; they couldn't lie unless they did. People who peddle BS don't care either way. In that sense, as Princeton University philosopher Harry Frankfurt wrote, BS is "a greater enemy of the truth than lies are."
So here's my question: Do you want to live your life this way? If so, AI bots are definitely for you. Let them write your essays, do your problem sets, draw your artwork, compose your poetry. As they get better, outpacing the systems designed to detect them, you're less and less likely to get caught. And you might even ace your classes.
But you will never know what you really believe. You will become the kind of person who is adept at spouting memes and clichés. Like ChatGPT, you will sound as if you know what you're talking about even when you don't.
I will readily (and unhappily) admit that many college classes don't help you figure out what you really believe in. They reward students who spit back what the book or the professor says. You might as well be a robot. So I don't blame you if you draw on an actual robot to do the work for you.
But some courses really do ask you to think. And if you ask an AI bot to do it instead, you are cheating yourself. You are missing out on the chance to decide what kind of life is worth living and how you are going to live it.
Some of my colleagues are making students complete writing assignments in class to ensure that the work they submit is really theirs. I won't do that, because I think it's patronizing. You are grown-ups. You can vote in elections, and you can die in wars. This AI thing is your call, and it's your life. I can't live it for you.
But remember: The bots can't, either.
Maybe, as the futurists insist, AI will eventually take over everything we do. It will drive our cars, design our buildings, cure our illnesses. It will make beautiful art and music. It will end world hunger and poverty.
Yet there's one thing it will never do: make you into a fully autonomous human being, with your own ideas, feelings and goals. I want that to be your ambition.
And if that's what you want, too, then avoid the bots.

Fake News? ChatGPT Has a Knack for Making Up Phony Anonymous Sources

By Chris Glorioso, NBC New York • Published February 23, 2023

Worries about the potential use of artificial intelligence to disseminate fake news and misinformation are just one area of concern surrounding ChatGPT — educators fear students might primarily use it to plagiarize or cheat on certain assignments
It appears ChatGPT needs a refresher on the lessons of Journalism 101.

In a recent test, the I-Team asked the artificially intelligent chatbot to write a "news" article describing Michael Bloomberg's activities since finishing his third term as mayor of New York City.
The first text output from ChatGPT reads like a convincing summary of Bloomberg's post-electoral philanthropic activities – complete with a quote from Bloomberg, himself. But the I-Team could find no record of the former mayor ever uttering those words.
When the chatbot was reminded to include commentary from Bloomberg's critics, ChatGPT seemed to make up entirely fabricated quotes from phony anonymous sources. And those fake sources appear to skewer the former mayor for using his wealth to influence public policy.
In one passage written by ChatGPT, the bot writes:
"'It's not about giving back, it's about buying influence,' says a political commentator who asked not to be named. 'Bloomberg is using his wealth to advance his own agenda and promote himself as a leader on the national stage. It's a classic case of wealth talking, and the rest of us being ignored.'"
Open AI, the company behind ChatGPT, declined to answer questions from the I-Team, but a spokesperson for the firm sent a fact sheet that included a list of the AI technology's limitations, including occasionally providing inaccurate responses, sometimes producing harmful or biased content, and having limited knowledge after 2021.
A disclaimer on the Open AI website under the heading "Truthfulness," also cautions ChatGPT text output "may fabricate source names, direct quotations, citations and other details."
"It's really extraordinary what it can do but if you spend any time with it you realize that it has severe shortcomings," said Tara George, Associate Professor of Journalism at Montclair State University. "It's getting harder and harder to tell the good stuff from the bad stuff, the fake news from the well reported journalism, and I think that AI is going to make that worse."
Worries about the potential use of artificial intelligence to disseminate fake news and misinformation are just one area of concern surrounding ChatGPT. New York City's Department of Education recently restricted the chatbot from most school classrooms and devices for fear students might primarily use it to plagiarize or cheat on writing and math assignments.
But several education experts at Teachers College Columbia University told the I-Team blocking ChatGPT may miss an opportunity to shift academic emphasis from rote, formulaic thinking to more conceptual understanding – in much the same way the advent of calculators prompted teachers to delve deeper into mathematical theory.
"Just like the calculator has reduced mathematics down to – punch it in, you still need to understand something about when you want to punch something in," said Jin Kuwata, who coordinates the Teachers College Computing in Education Program. "Chat GPT might be the same thing in terms of shifting how teachers think of their roles in mediating this relationship between people and technology."
Lalitha Vasudevan, Vice Dean for Digital Innovation at Teachers College, acknowledged there are real risks that AI platforms could encourage "intellectual laziness," but she said that should prompt academia to become more innovative in the use of AI tools – rather than focusing so heavily on their risks.
"If we're only concerned with the fact that students are using this to generate text, we are perhaps missing one possibility which is it might open up new ways for them to think about ideas," Vasudevan said. "Schools should have ChatGPT hack-a-thons that say who can come up with the best prompt to deliver the best version of this essay. I think it's just trying to turn the heat down from 'Oh my gosh, this is going to make people cheat!' and instead turn up the volume on — now that it's in the water — how do we make sure this is an ethical, moral, and a responsible tool?"
Charles Lang, Director of the Teachers College Digital Futures Institute, suggested ChatGPT's problems with accuracy, phony quotes or anonymous sources are likely to be addressed by additional technological innovations — developed to keep AI-text generators honest.
"If the internet gets flooded with machine-generated text and that thing gets fed back into the machines, that's a problem for Open AI. So they are probably motivated to figure out a detection system," Lang said. "There's also a premium on truth and that makes a market for someone to come in and invent something and make money off of having verified information."
Some verification and transparency tools are already available to help highlight machine-generated content.
Edward Tian, a computer science and journalism student at Princeton University, recently designed an app called "GPTZero." The tool, which Tian wants to keep free for anyone to use, analyzes variable characteristics of sentences and paragraphs to estimate the likelihood that text came from ChatGPT.
"Generative AI technologies are not coming out with anything original," said Tian. "If there are wrong facts in its training data, these facts will still be wrong in its output. If there are biases in training data, these biases will still remain in its output and we have to understand these limitations."
GPTZero correctly predicted that the article about Michael Bloomberg was written by a machine.
Open AI has also developed a tool to detect AI-generated text. In January, the company said the tool, called the "Open AI Text Classifier" had a success rate of about 26 percent in labeling machine-written content.

Open AI's tool was unable to figure out that the article on Bloomberg had been written by ChatGPT.
When the I-Team ran the article about Michael Bloomberg through the Open AI Text Classifier, the tool falsely predicted the text was written by a human. Open AI did not say why its classification tool was unable to correctly identify text that ChatGPT wrote.
The I-Team reached out to a representatives for Michael Bloomberg for reaction to the ChatGPT article containing fake quotes but did not immediately hear back.

Can Oxford and Cambridge Save Harvard From ChatGPT?

By Adrian Wooldridge, Bloomberg News, August 23, 2023
Their time-tested tutorial system offers top US universities a way to blunt AI cheating and revive real learning.
Artificial intelligence (AI) is capable not just of disrupting higher education but of blowing it apart. The march of the smart machines is already well advanced. AI can easily pass standardized tests such as the GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) and the GRE (Graduate Record Examination) required by graduate schools. AI received a 3.34 GPA (grade point average) in a Harvard freshman course and a B grade on the final exam of a typical core Wharton Business School MBA course.
What can be done to avoid a future in which AI institutionalizes cheating and robs education of any real content? This question is stirring an anxious debate in the university world, not least in the United States, a country that has long been a pacemaker in higher education and technology, but one that is losing confidence in its ability to combine equity with excellence. With the return to campus nigh, the Washington Post warns of an autumn of "chaos" and "turmoil." This debate should also be coupled with another equally pressing one: What does the ease with which machines can perform many of the functions of higher education as well as humans tell us about the deficiencies of the current educational model?
One solution to the problem is to ban students from using AI outright. Sciences Po in Paris and RV University in Bangalore are taking this draconian approach. But is trying to ban a technology that is rapidly becoming ubiquitous realistic? And is it a good preparation for life after university to prevent students from using a tool that they will later rely on in work? The banners risk making the same mistake as Socrates who, in Plato's Phaedrus, opposed writing things down on the grounds that it would weaken the memory and promote the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom.
A more realistic solution is to let students use AI but only if they do so responsibly. Use it to collect information or organize your notes or check your spelling and facts. Refrain from getting it to write your essays or ace your tests. But this raises practical questions of how you draw the line. How do you tell if students have merely employed it to organize their notes (or check their facts) rather than write their essays? And are you really doing research if you get a bot to do all the work and then merely fluff the material into an essay?
The "use it responsibly" argument opens the possibility of an academic future that is a cross between an arms race and a cat-and-mouse game. The arms race will consist of tech companies developing ever more sophisticated cheating apps and other tech companies developing even more sophisticated apps to conceal the cheating. The cat-and-mouse game will consist of professors trying to spot the illicit use of AI and students trying to outwit them. Neither approach seems to work, particularly for spotting cheating, let alone eliminating it. Open AI, the maker of ChatGPT, unveiled an app that was supposed to expose AI-generated content this January only to scrap it quietly because of its "low rate of accuracy." Another company, Turnitin.com, has discovered that bots frequently flag human writing as being AI generated. A professor at Texas A&M, Jared Mumm, used ChatGPT to check whether his students might have been using the system to write their assignments. The bot claimed authorship and the professor held up his students' diplomas until they provided Google Docs timestamps showing that they had actually done the writing. It turns out that ChatGPT is over enthusiastic in its claims of authorship.
So, what can be done to prevent educational Armageddon? The best answer lies not in fine-tuning machines — the solution to the problems of technology seldom lies in more technology but in adopting a teaching method that goes back to Plato and Socrates and has been perfected in Oxford and Cambridge over the past 150 years: the tutorial method. Call it the Oxbridge solution.
In Oxbridge students meet once a week individually or in a group of two (or on rare occasions three) with their tutors. The tutor sets them an essay question and provides them with a reading list. The students do the necessary reading on their own, write their essays, and then either submit them to their tutors (the preferred method in the days of email) or else read them aloud (the method in my day). The tutors then probe the essays for weaknesses. What did you mean when you said that? What about X, or Y, or Z? Why didn't you take Professor Snodgrass's views into consideration? (Or alternatively, if the student relied too heavily on Snodgrass, why didn't you recognize that Snodgrass, though a dear colleague, is a blithering idiot?) The tutorial partner is also obliged to join in with the discussion in the same spirit of testing hypotheses, looking for alternative explanations or generally playing with ideas.
The spirit of the tutorial is both gladiatorial and egalitarian. Knowledge is contested. Debate is of the essence. Authorities are there to be dethroned. Tutors happily concede arguments to their pupils if the pupils get the better of

them. “A good tutorial should be a sparring match” not a “substitute for a lecture” pronounced Dacre Balsdon, a fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, from 1927 to 1969.

The students’ grade is determined by high-stakes exams that involve writing essays at speed and under exam conditions; these are then marked by an alien caucus of examiners appointed by the university (perhaps Snodgrass will be among them). The tutors compete to get the best results for their pupils, and the colleges compete to get the best collective performance. There have recently been moves to lighten the burden of examinations — letting pupils type rather than write, and introducing theses as well as examinations. But AI may have the paradoxical effect of strengthening the role of old-fashioned hand-written exams. Sometimes the best way forward is backwards.

It would be hard to think of a system that is better designed to expose the over-reliance on AI. A pupil who had the chatbot compose the essay verbatim — or who had the bot do the reading and simply fluffed up the essay — would immediately be exposed under cross-examination as a fraud. The point of the essay is not merely to answer the question and get a mark. It is to start a discussion in which your understanding of the reading is examined. Fail to do the reading and you are destined to spend an uncomfortable hour being pulverized by a skillful sparring partner.

Tutorials don’t just expose cheating. They expose the illusion that AI can do the work of real education. Real education is not just about the assembling of facts into plausible patterns. Nor is it about the accumulation of marks and the awarding of certificates. It is about the open-ended exploration of ideas and, as a reward, admission into the world of learning and argument.

The great Oxford historian-cum-philosopher-cum archeologist, R. G. Collingwood, captured the difference between real learning and AI-generated pseudo learning in his 1939 Autobiography, in the context of historical writing. He denounced “scissors-and-paste” history that consisted of the rearrangements of the statements of various authorities as pointless. The real historian doesn’t engage in such futility. Instead, he concentrates on finding “something that has got the answer hidden in it” and concentrates on getting “the answer out by fair means or foul.” The aim of tutorials is to get beyond “scissors and paste” — the world of AI — and get the answer out by interrogating the literature and debating with fellow scholars.

The (admittedly self-satisfied) history of the University of Oxford (published in eight volumes by Oxford University Press) describes tutorials as “the hyphen which joined, the buckle which fastened senior to junior members.” By fastening senior to junior members, tutorials also add a moral element to education. This moral element is a safeguard against cheating: There is all the difference in the world between trying to fool an impersonal educational bureaucracy and trying to fool a tutor whom you meet personally in both educational and social contexts. But the tutorial is much more than that — “a gymnasium for the personality,” as the theater critic Kenneth Tynan put it, or perhaps even “a cure for souls” as the don Kenneth Leys ventured.

The best tutors can serve as both role models and moral guardians. They might also act as life-long mentors, opening doors to jobs, acting as sounding boards, offering advice and getting their proteges out of various pickles.

The opening of doors and unpickling of pickles underlines the ability of the tutorial system to prepare students for later life as well as adorn universities. It teaches people three of the most important skills that they need in most high-profile professions: how to present arguments under pressure, illustrating big points with vivid facts; how to absorb mountains of information in short order; and how to make fine judgments about the plausibility of various explanations. It also teaches people something that is just as useful outside your career as within it: the ability to learn and think independently — to act, as it were, as your own teacher.

The AI revolution may thus have a salutary impact on US education, where the “scissors and paste” approach has conquered even the most elite institutions. American universities emphasize the “sage on the stage” pronouncing from on high (you must wait until graduate school to establish anything like a close relationship with these demi-gods). The transmission of knowledge is tested by routine exams that are usually marked by graduate students, or by multiple-choice questions that can be marked by machines.

Every stage of this process is open to disruption by AI. The lectures can be replaced by better lectures available on the internet. The essays can be churned out by AI. The tests can be taken by machines as well as marked by them. The progressive mechanization of the system by elite professors trying to devote as much of their time as possible to research may finally have reached its Waterloo in the form of AI. The only way forward is to increase the human element in education.

The obvious objection to introducing tutorials into US education is that they are expensive — tutors must devote 12 or more hours a week to teaching and class-student ratios are reduced to 2-to-1. But Ivy League universities make Oxford and Cambridge look like paupers. They can also afford to lavish money on athletic facilities and vast administrative cadres, both of which have nothing to do with education and one of which arguably impedes it.

State universities may have a better case about money — particularly the local universities below the state flagships which specialize in providing a meat-and-potatoes education to less gifted students. But even here AI will demand an increase in the human touch. Flagship universities could introduce tutorials as a reward for the most talented students. Local universities will have to insist that their professors adapt their teaching to the AI age — shifting from lectures to seminars and setting more demanding essays.

American universities became world-beating institutions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries because they combined the best of the two available university systems: Oxford and Cambridge with their residential colleges and tutorial system, and German universities with their obsession with research. Harvard and Yale introduced houses that functioned like Oxbridge colleges and experimented with the tutorial system. Johns Hopkins and the University of Chicago increased the emphasis on research.

The Germanic model eventually won out over the Oxbridge model. Professors were subjected to a regime of publish or perish and thus spent most of their time learning more and more about less and less. Universities became more hierarchical and more bureaucratic: The aim of the ambitious academic was to become a big-name professor who was too busy flying to conferences and cultivating disciples to meet any undergraduates. Many Oxbridge academics looked at these pampered creatures with envy — Max Beloff complained that "we keep our best historians tied to the routine tasks of giving individual tuition to those unworthy of it." But the price of such pampering was that the pastoral side of universities — mentoring students and shaping their moral lives — was either ignored or left to bureaucrats.

This system not only short-changed the undergraduates who ended up paying more and more for less and less contact with the tenured faculty. It also ended up producing a lot of useless research. Research might be the gold standard of the hard sciences, which end up not only pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge but also producing practical knowledge. But what about literary studies where the primary goal is surely to educate people's sensibilities rather than produce yet another article for an obscure academic journal? And what about the proliferation of various "studies" whose aim is to promote an ideological agenda rather than either advance knowledge or solve practical problems?

The supposed threat from AI should be treated as an opportunity to recalibrate US higher education away from the research-centered Teutonic model and back to the human-centered Oxbridge model — and away from producing research and back toward training in thinking. The British prime minister Harold Macmillan recounted the educational philosophy of his ancient philosophy tutor at Balliol, J. A. Smith, before the First World War. Smith said that "a few — I hope a very few — will become teachers and dons." For the rest, what they would learn at Balliol would be pointless except for one thing — "you should be able to detect when a man is talking rot, and that, in my view, is the main, if not the sole, purpose of education." There is no better technique for teaching us to recognize the talking of rot than the tutorial system. And there is no time in history, given the proliferation of charlatan politicians, shady intellectuals and dubious management gurus, all empowered by AI bots, when the ability to spot "rot" has been more important.