

Ethics and Writing with AI

INSTRUCTOR

Kaitlyn Smith

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OFFICE LOCATION

Building A #102

OFFICE HOURS

Tues & Wed 3-5pm

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will explore the practical and ethical use of AI for professional writers. Our shared goal will be to develop a set of best practices that can evolve alongside AI technology and ethical values that can serve as guideposts for AI decisions.

REQUIRED TEXT

Oxford Handbook of Ethics of AI (Dubber, Pasquale, and Das 2021) ISBN: 0197601448
Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard by the beginning of each unit.

GRADING AND POLICIES

Minor assignments – 35%

Major assignments – 50%

Monograph presentation – 15%

At the graduate level, participation and attendance are assumed. Please communicate with me early and often if circumstances cause you to miss more than two class periods. If speaking in class causes you discomfort, please contact me for alternative strategies.

UNIT 1: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF AI

This unit will consider how the humanities and technology became connected. Starting with Father Busa's Index Thomisticus project in the 1940s, we will explore what computing has to offer our discipline. This short unit will produce only minor assignments unless you choose to complete the monograph presentation during this unit.

Minor Assignments

Two reading responses. One response must be an analysis of something that does not exist primarily in the written mode—blueprints, designs, advertisements, and objects themselves are suitable for this assignment. 500-1000 words.

UNIT 2: ETHICAL CONCERNs

This unit will contain a survey of major ethical concerns related to the use of artificial intelligence. Salient topics will include AI's relationship to race, gender, national identity, ability, and authorship.

Minor assignments

One reading response

Major assignment

Position paper (2500-4000 words) on an ethical question related to AI.

UNIT 3: APPLICATIONS OF AI IN PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WRITING

The final unit will contain only major assignments. In this unit, we will collaboratively prepare a set of ethical guidelines for the use of AI in the professional and technical writing program. Individually, your major assignment for this unit will be a more detailed guide on how to appropriately address and/or mitigate the ethical issue you explored in unit 2. The collaborative assignment will exist as a framework, and your individual assignment will be one contribution to fill in that framework.

Major assignment

Collaborate ethics guidelines (parameters for acceptable participation will be determined as a class)

Individual entry with instructions for producing technical writing with AI that avoids the ethical issue you explored in unit 2 (word limit somewhat dependent on your choice of genre, likely 2000 words)

MONOGRAPH PRESENTATION PROJECT

To maximize our working knowledge of the field, each graduate student will be responsible for reading and leading a 45min-1hr discussion of a relevant monograph or scholarly collection about Artificial Intelligence. Presentations will happen throughout the course of the semester on a class period of each student's choice. The following texts are our current options.

Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism (Noble 2018)

Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code (Benjamin 2019)

The Artist in the Machine: The World of AI Powered Creativity (Miller 2019)

AI Ethics (Coeckelbergh 2020)

Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Cost of Artificial Intelligence (Crawford 2022)

Ethical Machines (Blackman 2022)

Unmasking AI: My Mission to Protect What Is Human in a World of Machines (Buolamwini 2023)

The Promises and Perils of AI in Education: Ethics and Equity Have Entered the Chat (Shelton and Lanier 2024)

AI Snake Oil: What Artificial Intelligence Can Do, What It Can't, and How to Tell the Difference

(Narayanan and Kapoor 2024)

Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning (Bowen and Watson 2024)

Generative AI in Writing Education: Policy and Pedagogical Implications (Medina 2024)

More Than Words: How to Think About Writing in the Age of AI (Warner 2025)

If you would like to offer another text to the class, please contact me. I will consider any text published by a scholarly press in the last ten years if you can make a case for its contribution to your classmates' research and our learning outcomes.