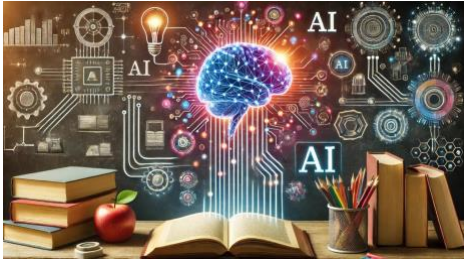




The State-of-the-Discussion on A.I. and Teaching at Villanova



This past Spring semester, VITAL convened a [Faculty Forum on A.I. and Teaching](#). The forum was an opportunity for faculty who are well-versed in A.I. capabilities and are actively incorporating A.I. into their curriculum, grappling with its integration, or choosing not to allow student use of A.I. to learn from colleagues and contribute to a campus-wide discussion.

Following the forum, several faculty reported having used the program to explore the integration of A.I. into their courses. Others indicated that they were inspired to experiment with A.I. in their assignments and expose students to its limitations. Many reported they found value in the peer learning experience, gaining insights into how A.I. was being used in different disciplines. Some participants reported that their views on the deleterious effects of A.I. usage in teaching and learning had not shifted significantly.

The forum, a series of table discussions, was facilitated by six faculty colleagues who served as table hosts. They shared how they are navigating A.I. in the context of their course, department, and discipline and, guided by big questions about A.I., invited attendees into the conversation.

The faculty engaged in robust discussions about A.I. and its implications for teaching and learning at Villanova. The purpose of this Vitality is to take stock of the state-of-the-discussion of A.I. and teaching on campus as it emerged from the forum by hearing directly from the table hosts.

What are our responsibilities as educators to guide students' use of A.I. in our disciplines?

Christopher Brown, Assistant Teaching Professor, Physics

We discussed in depth the importance of setting an example for students of using generative A.I. in ways that elevate learning rather than just creating short-cuts. We explored different ideas on how we can incorporate it into our curricula, while recognizing its limits in foundational coursework. A fantastic takeaway was to promote experiential and process-based learning for assignments that might aim to be more A.I. resistant, and that highlighting the weaknesses of generative A.I. can be a learning activity as well. In the end, we all agreed that transparent, open, and honest communication with our students will help us all navigate these new tools and challenges together.

How do I start or deepen the conversation about A.I. in teaching and learning in my department?

Veronika Ryjik, Chairperson and Professor, Spanish

Colleagues expressed apprehension about getting individuals in their departments involved in the conversation given their perception that some faculty colleagues may seem resistant. The main idea that emerged from the discussions was that regardless of

individual faculty viewpoints, A.I. literacy seems important at least for department chairs to consider and bring up for faculty discussion.

To allow or not allow A.I.? That is the question!

Mary Beth Simmons, Senior Director, Villanova Writing Center

What stood out about our table conversation was that everyone offered their experiences with A.I., including the limitations of the technology, and the rich possibilities. There was no handwringing, rather, a genuine engagement with what A.I. offers, regardless of the participants' disciplines. By the end of our time together, it was evident the conversation was going to continue in order to follow the expected changes and challenges that A.I. is going to present to all of us.

How do I develop students' A.I. skills in the STEM disciplines?

Stephen McGill, Assistant Teaching Professor, Mechanical Engineering

Our table came to the understanding that those who strategically use A.I. will fare better than those who do not. In the classroom, faculty members can encourage using Generative A.I. as a tutor, but with a critical perspective of Generative A.I.'s ever-changing capabilities. Instructors can provide concrete examples of how Generative A.I. can succeed (e.g. explaining dynamics equations) and fail (e.g., calculating wrong medicine dosages), while showcasing conversational prompts (e.g., exploring design choices for capstone projects) to guide the A.I. This process of interacting, with trained judgment of its output, can deepen the outcomes for students who will go into research and industry prepared for good usage.

What is an author? Individuals? Collectives? Machines?

Lauren Shohet, Professor, English

Faculty from different fields were interested to hear how differently authorship is understood in disciplines that have several decades dwelt on examining the origins of thought and expression. The extant conversation about authorship in literary, philosophical, and historical contexts already thinks of agency as dispersed (across persons, technologies, traditions, and the like). Adding A.I. as one node in a productive network is less radical a change, for these scholars, than it might be for common-sense understandings of "author". The pedagogical implications of the change nonetheless remain equally challenging, exciting, and unpredictable across fields.

How do I develop my course curriculum to tend to students' moral formation around A.I.?

Emma Kennedy, Assistant Professor, Theology and Religious Studies

Our discussions around moral formation were wide-ranging and generative. In exchanges across departments and disciplines, we arrived at new questions regarding A.I. and moral formation, including: At what level or levels (individual professor, department, college, university) might policies regarding A.I. usage in courses be best formulated? On what grounds (moral, practical, consequential) ought we to appeal to students to abide by A.I. usage policies, and how might the type of course (introductory vs. advanced, core requirement vs. elective) change how we frame these policies?

The roundtable discussions underscored the significance of collective reflection and collaboration as we navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of A.I. and its implications for teaching and learning at Villanova. The forum made clear that the integration of A.I. into

teaching and learning is unique to each discipline, professor, and course. Whether you have embraced A.I., are cautiously exploring its potential, or have chosen to keep it out of your courses, your contributions to this ongoing conversation are invaluable. The diversity of perspectives enriches our collective understanding and strengthens our ability to navigate complex questions as we continue to support one another in ensuring that our decisions best serve our students.

How have you engaged with students around A.I.? What instructional opportunities or challenges has it presented you with? Share a practice/learning activity/assignment by [emailing VITAL](#) so we can continue this relevant conversation in future issues.

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