Use of Artificial Intelligence in POLS 207

GENERAL

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been in use in science, industry, and business for some time. However the AI-based large-language models such as ChatGPT have recently taken the world by storm because of their capabilities and their accessibility to regular consumers. These models are amazing and useful in many different ways. In some college courses you may be permitted, even required, to use AI in specific ways. Away from school, AI can be a bonus when you are brainstorming new characters for your upcoming Dungeons & Dragons game or new campaign approaches for the next student body election. You will very likely use multiple forms of AI in your future profession in ways that you can't yet even anticipate.

However, AI-generated ideas and text is not work created by you. Using AI generation in your assignments can violate the university and course rules whenever you are required to submit your own work. ***Cheating*** is defined by Student Rule 20 as the use of any materials or resources on an assignment that have not been specifically authorized in advance by the instructor. Thus, any use of ***AI should be considered prohibited*** in a course unless the instructor has authorized it, and then only in the ways specified by the instructor. This makes sense because it should be each student's own knowledge and skills that should be what is being graded in the course, not those of an AI bot. Furthermore, misusing AI can easily short-circuit your learning objectives by providing you with a ready-made product that requires little or no **curiosity, inquiry, research, comparison, analysis, distillation of conclusions,** or **composition decisions** by you. Each of those bold-lettered activities are vitally important in your college education if you are to prepare yourself for the challenges to come before and after graduation.

FOCUS: THREE TYPES OF AI

While AI takes many forms, this resource addresses three specific types of AI: 1) **Chat AI** based on long-language models (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing, etc.), 2) **Writing-Assistance AI** that writes or rewrites significant portions of whatever text you are composing (e.g., GrammarlyGO, QuillBot, etc.), and 3) **Answer-Lookup AI** that scans screens and documents for questions, then searches for available correct answers.

Chat AI

CHAT AI should always be used with a clear understanding of the following caveats associated with every response it produces:

1. **The information it provides can be wrong**: sometimes slightly, but other times far off the mark.
2. **Users aren't often informed about the sources of the information** used in generating the response. Some websites are much more credible than others. Some sites are even written to appear factual, but are actually satirical. Some sites don't care at all about verifying the salacious information that they publish as facts. Chat AI is often trained on the entire World Wide Web--the good, the bad, and the ugly.

3. **The responses are eloquently phrased, so telling garbage from gold can be difficult** unless you already know a lot about the subject area. Additional research is often needed to validate an AI response. Chat AI bots are also **known to plagiarize ideas** from websites by simply rewriting sentences it finds on the page by substituting synonyms for most substantive words. Such thinly-veiled changes are not valid paraphrases, so if used instead of a student's own words, can bring charges of *plagiarism* in addition to *cheating*.

4. **A well-done internet search using a traditional search engine** instead of AI can easily and quickly circumvent the first 3 caveats. To combat incorrect or incomplete information, different sources and sites should be carefully compared. In the course of searching the web, you are viewing the information directly on a web page and sources are much more obvious. As a result, you will be in complete control of the information you include and exclude, as well as how you present what you have found.

A Clarifying Question When Considering Chat AI Use: When determining whether to use Chat AI in this course, **substitute *"my friend"* into the question**. For example, the question "*Should I use **Chat AI** to generate my Packback post, even the first draft?*", would then become "*Should I ask **my friend** to generate my Packback post or even the first draft?*" This technique helps us realize that what might have initially sounded morally ambiguous suddenly becomes clearly identifiable as *cheating*. The result of getting your friend to do your work might also result in a bad grade if your friend doesn't know what they are talking about, even if they write well. (Remember those *four CAVEATS* listed above.)

Writing-Assistance AI

Writing-Assistance AI is my term for AI that does the writing or rewriting of sentences or portions of sentences for you. I do not use this term to refer to spelling or grammar-checking functions common in word processors such as MS Word. Writing AI can be very helpful when you are looking to improve your writing, but should only be used when an instructor has specifically given approval. It is also important to learn why and how the bot suggested the wording that it did. To skip that step is to miss the opportunity to become a better communicator. Note that Packback Questions offers AI-generated recommendations focused on content rather than composition of your posts, with the intent of helping you improve your structural composition skills (e.g., examples, references, etc.).

Answer-Lookup AI

Answer-Lookup AI is just a faster form of cheating than using traditional answer-lookup websites such as Chegg, Study Blue, etc. This form of AI should never be used for a graded assignment and if so, will *always* constitute an Honor Violation. I am already certain that new tools of this type will continue to debut throughout this school year. Just because it may be new doesn't make it authorized.

GUIDANCE: AI USE IN THIS COURSE

Below are clear guidelines for how you may and may not use AI in this course.

1. **Answer-Lookup AI is ***never** permitted in this course.***

2. **Practice Problems** - These are not submitted for a grade, so a violation of Cheating is not a concern. However, my course exams are taken from my course material, so the best answers to these problems come directly from slides, notes, Reality Checks, and textbook readings. I am also available if questions or answers are unclear or difficult.
   a. YOU MAY use **Chat AI** to help you understand concepts that are difficult for you, Because of the *four caveats* listed above and the nature of this activity, I *do not recommend* use of AI for these activities.
   b. YOU MAY use **Writing AI** because these are ungraded activities.

3. **Packback Questions & Responses** - These paragraph-long posts **must be your own work** from generating ideas to composing and writing out your submission. That said, I'm very willing and ready to help you discover a posting process that works well for you every week.
   a. YOU MAY NOT use **Chat AI** when accomplishing any part of a Packback assignment, including the initial generation of topic ideas. If you are having trouble with any step of the curiosity and creativity process, let's talk!
   b. YOU MAY use **Writing AI** because the Packback website already uses AI to offer recommendations about how to improve the structural aspects of your post and to thus raise your Packback Curiosity Score.

4. **Reality Checks & Extra Credit Activities -** The multiple-choice answers come directly from the assigned readings and/or videos. I expect you to determine the correct answers by carefully reading the text or watching the video. Your answers must be your own work, but I am always willing to help you when you're stuck.
   a. YOU MAY NOT use **Chat AI** when accomplishing any part of these assignments.
   b. YOU MAY use **Chat AI** to learn more about a topic AFTER SUBMITTING your assignment, BUT BEWARE of the *four caveats* listed above.

5. **Core Assessments** - These are "open-book," short-essay responses to prompts drawn from course material. Your submission must be your own work from start to finish. I am always willing to discuss questions you may have or problems you encounter.
   a. YOU MAY NOT use **Chat AI** when accomplishing any part of these assignments.
   b. YOU MAY NOT use **Writing AI** because the university will assess your submission, in part, based on how well you express yourself.

6. **Self Tutoring After Activity Submission** - As long as it is not associated with completion of any graded assignment, you may use AI to help you learn more about a topic related to the course. BEWARE of the *four caveats* listed above.

7. **Other Uses -** I'm certain that students will have possible uses for AI in this course that I have not listed or even envisioned. However, I require that ***all uses of AI not listed here be approved by me in advance***.

AI GUIDANCE TABLE FOR POLS 207 (Roblyer)

	Chat AI	Writing-Assistance AI	Answer-Lookup AI
Practice Problems	yes*	yes	NO
Packback	NO	yes	NO
Reality Checks	NO	n/a**	NO
Core Assessments	NO	NO	NO
Extra Credit	NO	n/a**	NO
Self-Tutoring After Activity Submission	yes*	n/a**	NO
Other Uses	(See me)	(See me)	NO
	KEY: * Beware of the four caveats		
	** These activities do not involve writing		