Artificial Intelligence Policy for Student Academic Use[1]

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science focused on technologies that mimic human decision-making and problem-solving using robust datasets.[2] Though not capable of "thinking," AI tools perform mathematical calculations that allow them to learn patterns in data and produce outputs that imitate creativity and reasoning.[3] Thus, users can apply them to accomplish tasks that have historically required human intelligence.[4] As AI tools expand their capabilities and availability, educational institutions must define parameters for responsible AI usage to maximize the benefits of this technology to scholarship and learning while minimizing the risks inherent in its design.

The Seminary takes seriously its responsibility for the intellectual and spiritual formation of students in its mission "to educate and nurture faithful, imaginative, and effective leaders for the sake of the Church and the world."[5] Such intellectual and spiritual formation requires a strong grounding in ethical principles, intellectual agency, scholarly integrity, practices of accountability, and the cultivation of curiosity. These expressions of the Seminary's commitment to its core values of excellence, mutual respect, innovation, and inclusive community[6] undergird the Seminary's approach to artificial intelligence.

This policy, therefore, reflects a commitment to broader values more so than to specific practical prescriptions. Given that AI technology is emergent, ever-changing, and ubiquitous, a grounded and principled approach empowers the Seminary community to apply this policy across circumstances, processes, and contexts to best support the ongoing intellectual and spiritual formation of students.

Definitions

Artificial Intelligence Terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a rapidly evolving technology that augments human processes. AI technologies fall into one of two categories:

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[1] Last updated 3/26/24; approved by faculty 4/12/2024.
[2] "What Is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?," IBM, accessed February 15, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/artificial-intelligence.
[3] Nicole Hennig, "Introduction to AI Literacy with ChatGPT," (webinar, American Library Association, Chicago, IL, January 30, 2024), https://elearning.ala.org/local/catalog/view/product.php?productid=1066.
[4] Zouhaier Slimi, "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Higher Education: An Empirical Study," *European Journal of Educational Sciences* 10, no. 1 (March 2023): 17.
[5] "About Us," Columbia Theological Seminary, accessed February 15, 2024, https://www.ctsnet.edu/about-us/.
[6] Columbia Theological Seminary, *Abundance & Grace: A Blueprint for Flourishing in Faith and Hope* (Decatur, GA: Columbia Theological Seminary, 2023), 6-8.

- **Generative AI:** any AI functionality that creates original content from user inputs (*Examples: ChatGPT, DALL-E, Grammarly Go)*.
- **Assistive AI:** any AI functionality that aids the user in producing their own original content or refining the user's original content without generating any substantive content itself (*Examples: Grammarly, Microsoft Editor*).

Both have appropriate uses within the academic context; however, generative AI's ability to generate entire pieces of complete content from user prompts poses more risks to academic integrity and therefore should be used with intentionality and caution.

Additional Academic Terms

- **Students:** all student types enrolled in any course at Columbia Theological Seminary, including participants in Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL) programming, special students, and auditors as well as all enrolled degree-seeking students.
- **Faculty:** all instructors at Columbia Theological Seminary, including tenured, tenure-track, visiting, and adjunct faculty, as well as instructors for Center for Lifelong Learning programs.
- **Academic Tasks:** intellectually engaged tasks required for the successful completion of academic work such as coursework, scholarly communications (*Examples: publishing an article, presenting at a conference*), and academic applications (*Examples: scholarship, degree, or grant applications*). Academic tasks include research, writing, pre-writing, critical reading, public speaking, and exam review and are not limited to the list above.

Assistive AI

Any use of assistive AI technology is considered permissible and does not need to be cited.

Students should be aware that some assistive AI tools have now begun to incorporate elements of generative AI technology as well. Therefore, students are responsible for distinguishing between these two AI functions, even within the same AI tool, and using them in accordance with Seminary policy.

Generative AI

Coursework

Faculty Rights

Faculty reserve the right to allow, restrict, or prohibit use of generative AI for their courses as best befits their content and planned learning outcomes. Faculty will communicate such policies clearly in their syllabi. Students should defer to any course-specific guidelines provided by the instructor. It is the instructor's responsibility to clearly communicate the guidelines and the student's responsibility to familiarize themselves with and adhere to these guidelines.

Responsible and Ethical Use

Generative AI tools have been developed to provide different types of augmented assistance to users, such as content production, composition feedback, and creative assistance. Certain academic tasks stand to benefit from the use of generative AI tools; thus, Columbia Theological Seminary supports responsible experimentation with and use of generative AI tools.

Context, however, is critical to determining when and how AI can responsibly contribute. When being used to help promote understanding or support one's own learning and/or thought process or to accomplish tasks that are technical and not content-driven, generative AI is an appropriate, ethical, and responsible tool. These uses are permitted under Seminary policy unless explicitly prohibited by the course instructor. For examples, see Appendix A.

It is the student's responsibility to know the policies and guidelines pertaining to their course(s).

Irresponsible and Unethical Use of AI Tools

AI output can be wrongfully used to substitute for a student's own mental and spiritual engagement with sacred texts and scholarly works; when use of AI tools circumvents effortful learning, students will not develop the skills in critical analysis, theological reflection, and clear communication that are essential to supporting the mission of the church.

Inappropriate or irresponsible use of generative AI technology is comprised of using AI to accomplish academic tasks that, for purposes of integrity and/or successful achievement of learning outcomes, must be completed by the student. The most egregious of such uses is the use of generative AI tools to complete one's work (including the creation of content and generation of ideas) and then submitting that work under one's own name without attribution. Using AI-generated content without proper acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism (See Seminary's Statement on Plagiarism). Columbia Theological Seminary does not allow these uses of AI. For examples, see Appendix B.

When in doubt about the integrity of AI use in a specific instance, the student should err on the side of *not* using the tool.

Citing AI-Generated Content in Academic Work

Content generated by AI should be treated as work created by and retrieved from an outside source and should be cited as such. Content generated by generative AI tools should be cited as personal communication. According to Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (9th edition), this means that AI-generated content is cited in the text of the project (if author-date style) or a footnote (if notes-bibliography style) but *not* in the bibliography or reference list.

Author-Date

(Correspondent's Full Name, medium if relevant, Month Day, Year)
EXAMPLE: (Open AI's ChatGPT, response to prompt from author, October 9, 2023)

Notes-Bibliography

Originator of the communication, medium, day month, year.
E.g., OpenAI's ChatGPT AI language model, response to prompt from author, October 9, 2023.
Shortened: ChatGPT, response to prompt from author.

Acknowledgement of other substantive uses of AI that do not produce specifically citable content, such as assistance with brainstorming, outlining, or revision, can be made in the form of a statement in a footnote at the beginning of an assignment.

Other Forms of Publication

Students, like faculty, may seek publication of their scholarship outside of the Seminary. Outside publishing venues may have their own policies for AI use. When such policies are more rigorous than that of the Seminary, students must abide by the venue's policy. When such policies are less rigorous than that of the Seminary, or if no explicit policy exists, students are expected to adhere to the Seminary's standards for AI use unless the venue specifically requires or encourages the use of AI in distinctive, purposeful ways.

Cautions for All Users

Artificial Intelligence is a powerful tool, but it does have limitations that should be considered before use. The following represent *known* risks of current AI tools at the time this policy was written; since this technology is still young and evolving, additional risks may be identified over time.

Fabricated Information (Generative AI)

AI can (and often does) fabricate information, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as "hallucinating." It can also contain unacknowledged copyrighted material. AI should not, therefore, be trusted as a source of facts and information, including any references to sources, which can also be fabricated. The student is solely responsible for reviewing any AI-generated information they include in an assignment for accuracy.

Information Security and Data Privacy (Generative AI)

Students should not provide private or confidential information to publicly available generative AI tools (including any non-public research data). Doing so will put that information at risk of exposure to unauthorized parties. The student is responsible for any breach of confidentiality or privacy precipitated by careless use of AI tools.

Bias (Generative AI)

Generative AI is trained using selected sets of data, and some tools continue to learn and generate results using data that is publicly provided to it. Therefore, AI tools can perpetuate the biases of the humans that develop and use them. Students should be aware of this risk and carefully review any content produced by AI for bias. The student is solely responsible for any AI-generated content they use, including any biases reflected therein.

Lack of Dialogue (Assistive AI)

Recommendations from assistive AI tools may not authentically express the student's intent and/or voice and therefore should not be understood as infallibly "correct." Students are responsible for critically reviewing all assistive AI recommendations and making their own informed decisions about which to implement. Students are also strongly encouraged to make an appointment with the Center for Academic Literacy for a more dialogical approach to feedback and improvement.

Sources

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Appendix A

Examples of Responsible and Ethical Use of Generative AI Tools

Use	Responsible and Appropriate Context
Providing summaries of texts	when selecting sources to read closely for research or when unable to complete entire course readings
Creating an initial outline of a project	to assist with structure, when coupled with a plan to refine and customize according to one's own thought development
Formatting citations according to bibliographic style standards	anytime (NOTE: The user must supply all the informational components of the citation to ensure that citations are complete and accurate.)
Providing a demonstration of generative AI capabilities	anytime
Translation	when translating one's original work, composed in another language, into an initial translated draft in English (NOTE: The user is strongly encouraged to review, edit, and revise the translation to ensure that it is an accurate expression of their ideas.)
Asking the tool to provide the user with constructive feedback on a portion of text (i.e., querying it with a phrase such as "Act as an expert essay writer and tell me how I can improve this paragraph.")	when working with one's own original text and when feedback is critically assessed before application

Appendix B

Examples of Irresponsible and Unethical Use of Generative AI Tools

Use	Why Inappropriate and/or Irresponsible
Composing portions or entirety of written assignments and claiming that content as one's own work	Claiming anyone else's words and ideas as one's own, even if machine-generated, is considered plagiarism.
Creating an outline of a project and using it completely unchanged	The structure of a project reflects the thinking and argumentation of the author; to use a supplied outline without changing it to fit one's own thoughts is claiming another's argument and thought process as one's own.
Providing summaries of texts as one's sole mode of engaging with texts	When used in place of one's own close reading practices, AI undercuts the development of critical reading skills and deprives the user of greater detail and context, as well as the opportunity to reach their own conclusions.
Researching a real individual, current or historical, by asking the tool to act as an authentic representation of that person (i.e., querying it with a phrase such as "Act as the role of the historical figure X" and questioning it)	Generative AI provides probabilistic outputs based on patterns in data; it cannot authentically represent a whole person. Such representations will be misleading and are therefore an irresponsible and unethical research method.