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Dec 19, 2022 · 7 min read · Listen



# Update Your Course Syllabus for chatGPT

Ready or not, chatGPT (the newest version of OpenAI's impressive AI technologies) is now in your classroom. It can write papers, essays, and poems. It can create art and write computer code in many languages. This is not however the time to panic; it is the time to focus on the value you offer students as their instructor.

Below are some easy to implement suggestions that will help you prepare for the upcoming semester.

## Before Editing Your Syllabus

**1. Clarify your objectives.**

Before updating anything, be clear on what learners should know and be able to do at the end of the course, and why you want them to know and be able to do those things. This will guide you in determining exactly what knowledge and skills (i.e., *value*) students will gain from the class, and how you can assess their learning.

**2. Expand your options.**

It is time to expand your repertoire of instructional strategies. **Atsusi Hirumi** offers a handy guide to research-grounded strategies for any classroom. These are not, however, "a la carte" menus; you must use all of the steps of any strategy to gain the evidence-based benefits.

**3. Reflect on your value.**

As **Tyler Cowen** pointed out, there will be those who gain and those that lose with the emergence of chatGPT. This is as true for students as it is for faculty and instructors. Be ready to openly discuss the ethical implications of chatGPT with your students, along with the value of what you are teaching and why learning these are important to their futures.

**4. Consider time.**

As discussed during **Bryan Alexander**'s webinar, chatGPT offers a short-cut to those who are short on time. Examine your course schedule to determine if you are unknowingly pushing students to take short-cuts. Most of us try to cram too much into our courses already.

**5. Remember, chatGPT is not human.**

Be careful not to anthropomorphize chatGPT. ChatGPT is a language model and if we anthropomorphize these technologies then it will be much harder to understand their promise and perils. **Murray Shanahan** suggests that we avoid statements such as, "chatGPT knows…", or "ChatGPT thinks…"; instead, use "According to chatGPT…" or "ChatGPT's output…".

## Update Your Syllabus

**1. Include time for ethics.**

Add time into your course to discuss the ethical implications of chatGPT and forthcoming AI systems. Talk with students about the ethics of using chatGPT in

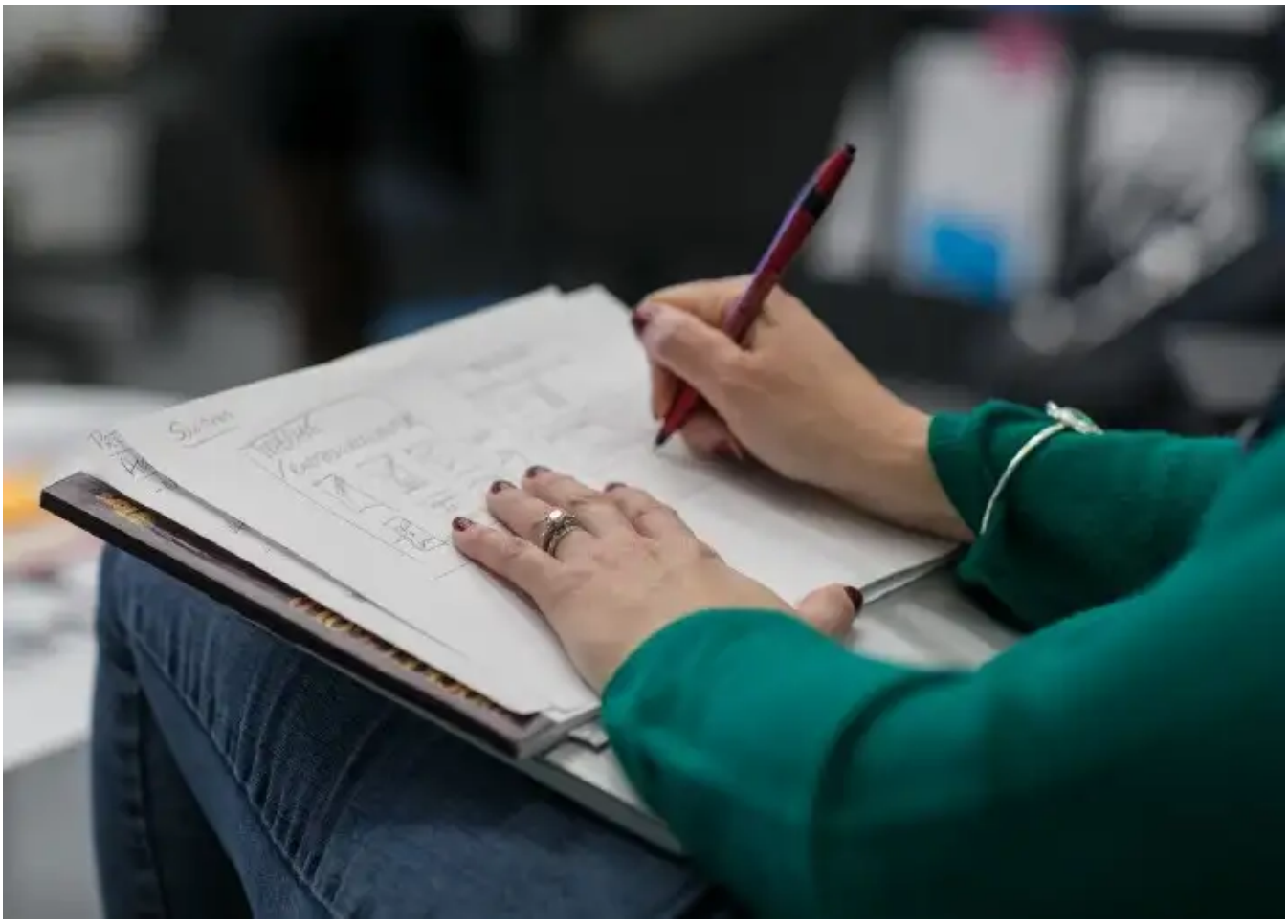
your course, at your university, and within your discipline or profession. Don't be afraid to discuss the gray areas where we do not yet have clear guidance or answers.

**2. Update your honor code.**

If you include honor code pledges or statements in your syllabus, you should update those to include chatGPT and other AI systems.

**3. Set clear expectations.**

Be clear in your syllabus about your policies for using chatGPT, and how to appropriately acknowledge (e.g., cite, reference) when they do use chatGPT.



## Get Creative With Your Assignments

Here are 10 ideas for creative assignments adapted for a classroom with chatGPT. Don't stop with these — get creative. You can mitigate the risk of students using chatGPT to cheat, and at the same time improve their knowledge and skills for appropriately using new AI technologies inside and outside the classroom.

**1. Prompt Competition**

a. Identify a major question or challenge in your field or discipline that chatGPT could write about. Preferably a question with no clear single right answer.

b. Have students collaborate (in pairs or small teams) on developing 5 to 10 criteria for assessing chatGPT responses to the major question. For example, chatGPT's output references more than one theoretical perspective.

c. Ask students to individually write a prompt for chatGPT to answer the major question.

d. Have students use their criteria to judge the responses of other students (in the pair or small team), and rate the chatGPT prompts/responses from best to worst.

**2. Reflect and Improve**

a. Ask students to individually identify a major question or challenge in your field or discipline that chatGPT could write about.

b. Have students use chatGPT to write a response to their question or challenge.

c. Ask students to reflect on chatGPT's output (e.g., what is correct, incorrect, what they don't know if it is correct or incorrect, what should they look up elsewhere to verify, what should they ask chatGPT next).

d. Using *Track Changes* in MS Word or *Suggesting* in Google Docs, have students improve the output of chatGPT (e.g., correcting errors or misinformation, expanding on shallow content).

e. Have students submit their prompt and the improved chatGPT response with their added content highlighted.

**3. Re-vision**

a. Ask students to individually identify a major question or challenge in your field or discipline that chatGPT could write about.

b. Have students use chatGPT to write a response to their question or challenge.

c. George Heard is attributed with saying "The true meaning of the word revision is this: to see again." Have students revise (write again) chatGPT's output from a different angel. For instance, take a different perspective, apply a critical lens,

expand on a particular concept, or correct aspects of the output that could cause their peers to misunderstand or misinterpret.

**4. Dual Assignments**

a. Give students a choice between two versions of the same assignment. One version for those that want to use chatGPT and one for those who don't.

b. For those who choose to use chatGPT, they have to submit their prompt(s) and the chatGPT output. Using *Track Changes* in MS Word or *Suggesting* in Google Docs, have students add depth, clarify misinformation, offer alternative perspectives, and make other improvements to the chatGPT output.

c. For those who choose to complete the assignment without chatGPT, they should complete the assignment and sign a statement that chatGPT was not used.

d. Grade both assignments on how well students illustrate their depth of knowledge through either (a) their changes to chatGPT's output, or (b) their original writing.

**5. Mind Maps**

a. Since chatGPT can't natively make visual representations of content (see note below), have students create mind maps (aka, associative maps, spider map, process maps) to illustrate the connections between ideas, concepts, approaches, or theories in your field or discipline.

b. The more details or levels that students add to their mind minds, the easier it will be for them to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

**6. Debates**

a. Have students debate a major question or challenge in your field or discipline. Even short debates can deepen learning and get students to look at topics from varied perspectives.

b. You can choose if students are allowed to use chatGPT in their preparation for the debate's opening statements.

c. Debates can be done in different **formats**, and the length of times for speeches can vary depending on how much time and how many students are in your course.

**7. Videos or Podcasts**

a. Rather than written essays, have students make videos or audio recordings as the medium for sharing their knowledge.

b. Using a video-based tool (such as VoiceThread, FlipGrid, or Zoom) can make the process easier for students.

c. Students can also record audio podcasts on their phone or computer if visuals are not required for the content of the assignment.

#### 8. Explain Your Thinking

a. Give the assignment as usual, but in addition require that students use Using *Track Changes* in MS Word or *Suggesting* in Google Docs to explain at least 8 to 10 steps of their thinking as comments added to the text.

b. Students can describe, for instance, the steps in their logic, their problem solving or writing process, or the development of their theoretical path.

c. Students could also document their thinking with audio recordings or videos.

#### 9. 2×2 Matrix

a. Have students create a 2x2 matrix relating two concepts covered in the course. For instance, what are shared and different defining characteristics of concepts or processes.

b. A simpler version of this assignment is to have students develop Venn Diagrams for comparing important concepts or processes.

#### 10. Next Time

a. Ask students to use chatGPT to answer an essay question about a major question or challenge in your field or discipline.

b. Have students reflect on their learning about the topic based on using chatGPT, and to write down 5 things they learned about the topic from chatGPT.

c. Have students design a new assignment that doesn't allow for the use of chatGPT but that would allow them (or other students) to demonstrate their learning. For example, they might suggest a group project, or mind map assignment.

## Get Ready for Next Time

At the end of the semester you will want to spend time making adjustments to your syllabus for the next time you teach.

**1. Review.**

Start with your objectives and look back to consider what worked and what didn't work. Focus on student learning and how well your course achieved those objectives.

**2. Scan.**

ChatGPT is just the most recent AI system to be released, there are many more in development and they will have varied implications to your teaching in the future. Scan the Internet, talk with colleagues, and chat with students about the newest technologies.

**3. Reflect.**

Assignments are meant to support student learning and provide you with opportunities to observe and make judgments about their performance. Reflect on each assignment from your course; how well did it support these goals.

**4. Improve.**

Take time now to improve your syllabus for the next time you teach.

Hopefully these suggestions will help you feel better prepared to teach in a classroom where chatGPT is widely available on your students' phones and computers.

Note: ChatGPT can output information in the Mermaid format, which can then be used to create mind maps, flow charts, and other graphical diagrams in other systems (e.g., Mermaid.live).

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