Nishant Balepur

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Research Interests

I am a Ph.D. student in computer science at the University of Maryland, College Park, advised by Professors Jordan Boyd-Graber and Rachel Rudinger. I conduct research with the goal of better aligning and evaluating LLMs, with a focus on **factuality** in text generation, guiding models toward **true user needs**, and evaluating the **weaknesses** and **capabilities** of models. I am extremely grateful to be funded by the NSF GRFP and a Cohere for AI Research Grant.

Education

- **University of Maryland, College Park (UMD)** — College Park, MD
  Ph.D. Computer Science; GPA: 4.00/4.00 — Aug 2023 - Present
  Advisors: Jordan Boyd-Graber, Rachel Rudinger
- **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)** — Urbana, IL
  B.S. Computer Science; B.S. Statistics (Dual Degree); GPA: 4.00/4.00 — Aug 2019 - May 2023
  Collaborators: Kevin Chen-Chuan Chang, Jiawei Han, Hari Sundaram, Diyi Yang

Selected Works

- A Smart Mnemonic Sounds like Glue Tonic: Mixing LLMs with Student Feedback to Make Mnemonic Learning Stick
  Preprint
  Nishant Balepur, Matthew Shu, Alexander Hoyle, ..., Shi Feng, Seraphina Goldfarb-Tarrant, Jordan Boyd-Graber
  TL;DR: We use LLM fine-tuning and DPO to generate mnemonics aligned with what users prefer and aid learning
- Artifacts or Abduction: How Do LLMs Answer Multiple-Choice Questions Without the Question?
  ACL 2024
  Nishant Balepur, Abhilasha Ravichander, Rachel Rudinger
  Best Paper Award (4%) and Oral Presentation (7%) at MASC-SSL 2024
  TL;DR: We discover that LLMs can obtain high accuracy without the question in MCQA, and analyze how
- Expository Text Generation: Imitate, Retrieve, Paraphrase
  EMNLP 2023
  Nishant Balepur, Jie Huang, Kevin Chen-Chuan Chang
  TL;DR: We design a task and model with iterative planning and retrieval to generate factual texts

All Publications and Written Work

- MoDS: Moderating a Mixture of Document Speakers to Summarize Debatable Queries in Document Collections
  Under Review
  Nishant Balepur, Alexa Siu, Nedim Lipka, Franck Dernoncourt, Tong Sun, Jordan Boyd-Graber, Puneet Mathur
- A Smart Mnemonic Sounds like Glue Tonic: Mixing LLMs with Student Feedback to Make Mnemonic Learning Stick
  EMNLP 2024
  Nishant Balepur, Matthew Shu, Alexander Hoyle, ..., Shi Feng, Seraphina Goldfarb-Tarrant, Jordan Boyd-Graber
- KARL: Knowledge-Aware Retrieval and Representations aid Retention and Learning in Students
  EMNLP 2024
  Matthew Shu*, **Nishant Balepur***, Shi Feng*, Jordan Boyd-Graber
- Plausibly Problematic Questions in Multiple-Choice Benchmarks for Commonsense Reasoning
  EMNLP 2024 (Findings)
  Shramay Palta, **Nishant Balepur**, Peter Rankel, Sarah Wiegreffe, Marine Carpuat, Rachel Rudinger
- The Prompt Report: A Systematic Survey of Prompting Techniques
  Preprint
  Sander Schulhoff*, Michael Ilie*, **Nishant Balepur**, ..., Shyamal Anadkat, Alexander Hoyle, Phillip Resnik
- Artifacts or Abduction: How Do LLMs Answer Multiple-Choice Questions Without the Question?
  ACL 2024
  Nishant Balepur, Abhilasha Ravichander, Rachel Rudinger
  Best Paper Award (4%) and Oral Presentation (7%) at MASC-SSL 2024
- It's Not Easy Being Wrong: Large Language Models Struggle with Process of Elimination Reasoning
  ACL 2024 (Findings)
  Nishant Balepur, Shramay Palta, Rachel Rudinger
- Is Your Large Language Model Knowledgeable or a Choices-Only Cheater?
  ACL 2024 (KnowledgeLM Workshop)
  Nishant Balepur, Rachel Rudinger

- Expository Text Generation: Imitate, Retrieve, Paraphrase
  EMNLP 2023
  Nishant Balepur, Jie Huang, Kevin Chen-Chuan Chang
- Text Fact Transfer
  EMNLP 2023
  Nishant Balepur, Jie Huang, Kevin Chen-Chuan Chang
- Mastering the ABCDs of Complex Questions: Answer-Based Claim Decomposition for Self-Evaluating LLMs
  Preprint
  Nishant Balepur, Jie Huang, Samraj Moorjani, Kevin Chen-Chuan Chang, Hari Sundaram
- DynaMiTE: Discovering Explosive Topic Evolutions with User Guidance
  ACL 2023 (Findings)
  Nishant Balepur*, Shivam Agarwal*, Karthik Ramanan, Susik Yoon, Diyi Yang, Jiawei Han

Industry Experience

- **Adobe** — San Jose, CA
  Research Scientist Intern: LLM Agents, Summarization (Paper Under Review) — May 2024 - Aug 2024
- **Meta** — Menlo Park, CA
  Software Engineering Intern — May 2022 - Aug 2022
- **HiMarley** — Remote
  Data Science Intern — May 2021 - Aug 2021
- **State Farm** — Champaign, IL
  Actuarial and Modeling Intern — Aug 2020 - Dec 2020
- **John Deere** — Remote
  Software Engineering Intern — Jun 2020 - Aug 2020

Students Mentored

- **Matthew Shu** (B.S. Yale), 2023-Present, LLMs in Education
  First-authored and second-authored at EMNLP 2024
- **Atrey Desai** (B.S. UMD), 2024-Present, Dataset Artifacts
- **Jerry He** (HS Student), 2024-Present, Crossword Generation with LLMs

Professional Service

- **Conference Reviewer** — UMD
  Reviewer for: ACL/ARR 2023-Present, COLING 2024, IEEE TASLP 2024 — 2022-Present
  Program Committee: TrustNLP 2024
- **Visiting Student Day Volunteer** — UMD
  Volunteer and ambassador for UMD's visiting student day — Mar 2024
- **Winter Storm LLM Workshop** — UMD
  Led a 5-day workshop on LLMs for non-CS graduate students — Jan 2023
- **Computer Science and Statistics Student Ambassador** — UIUC
  Mentor of new students and volunteer for computer science and statistics events — Aug 2022 - May 2023
- **SIGNLL** — UIUC
  President of Special Interest Group for Natural Language Learning — Aug 2020 - May 2021
- **Co-founder of Project: Code** — UIUC
  Co-founder of student organization to help students build computer science projects — Aug 2019 - May 2021

Honors and Awards

- **NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)** — April 2023 - April 2028
  Provided $159,000 for 3 Years of Fully-Funded Ph.D. Support
- **MASC-SSL 2024 Best Paper Award** — April 2024
  Selected for one of three (4%) best paper awards for "Artifacts or Abduction"
- **Cohere for AI Research Grant Program** — April 2024
  Provided $1,000 from Cohere for AI to support the KARL research project
- **Dean's Fellowship** — April 2023 - April 2025
  Awarded the Dean's Fellowship from UMD for outstanding academic achievement

- **UIUC Computer Science Graduation with Highest Honors** May 2023
  Recommended by the UIUC computer science department to graduate with highest honors
- **C.W. Gear Outstanding Undergraduate Student** May 2022
  Awarded to two seniors that have demonstrated excellence in research and service
- **James N. Snyder Memorial Award** May 2021
  Awarded to three juniors based on academic merit