Large language models are effective for summarizing student feedback



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Introduction

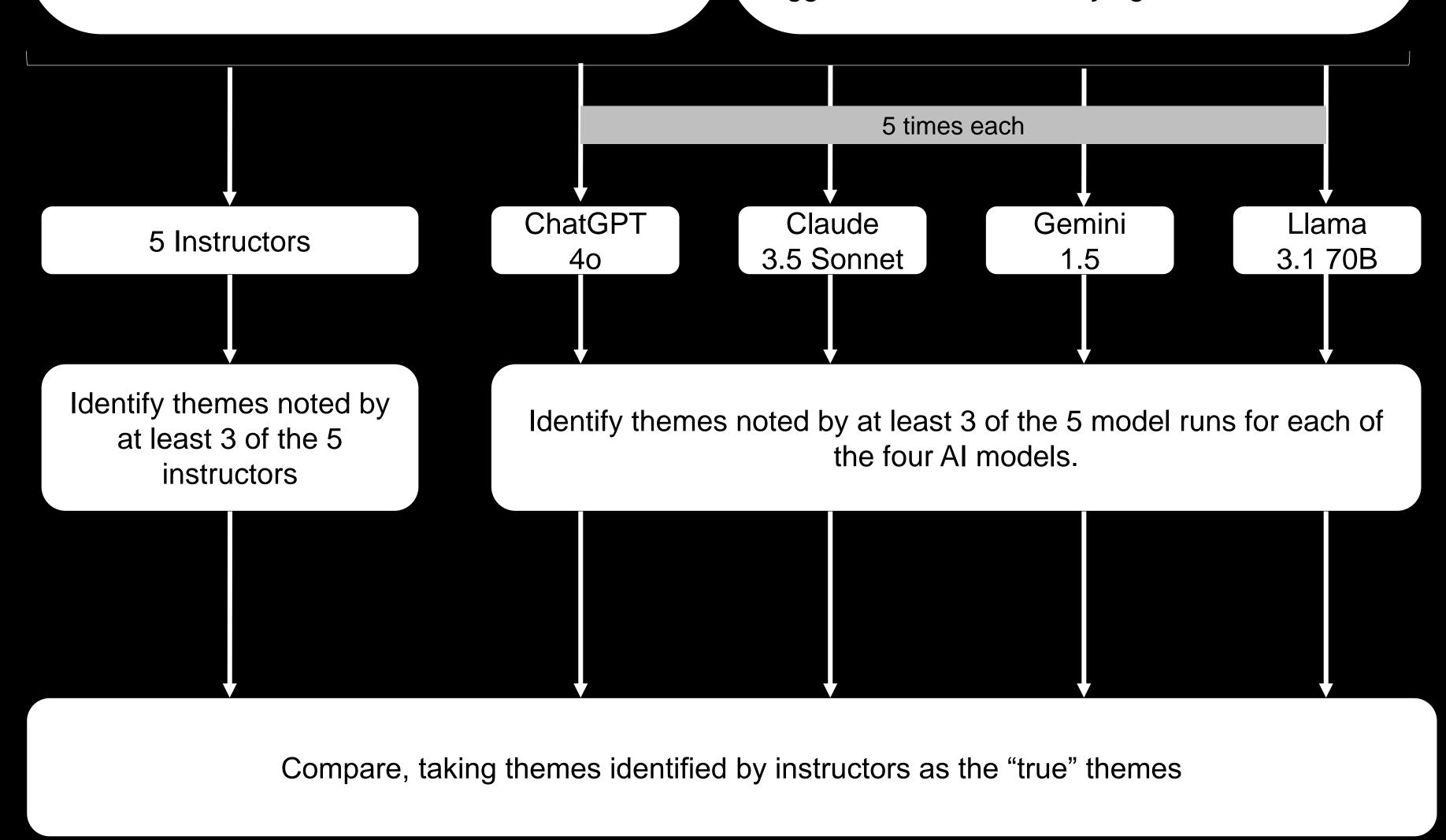
- Collecting and acting on student feedback is an important method for instructors to adapt their teaching to student needs [1].
- Analyzing feedback from students in large-enrollment introductory courses, such as introductory physics at large universities, can be time-consuming for instructors.
- Generative AI tools are effective at producing summaries of text [2, 3] and therefore offer a potential solution for instructors to quickly extract key points from student feedback.
- Here, we compare generative Al's ability to extract key themes and trends from student feedback compared university instructors.

Methods

Data: Anonymized student responses to two open-response questions on the end-of-course evaluation-of-teaching survey from 9 introductory physics courses taught by 3 unique instructors.

- 1. What do you feel are your instructor's strengths and weaknesses?
- 2. What do you feel are the strong and weak aspects of the course?

Prompt [4]: "For responses to open-ended questions, the goal is to focus on the useful information and identify trends or themes that appear. Note the frequency of themes, areas of agreement and disagreement among students, and suggestions students have for changes you might make. Please ignore the comments that are nonspecific. For the remaining comments, please sort them into three categories: positive, actionable suggestions, and nonactionable suggestions before identifying trends or themes"

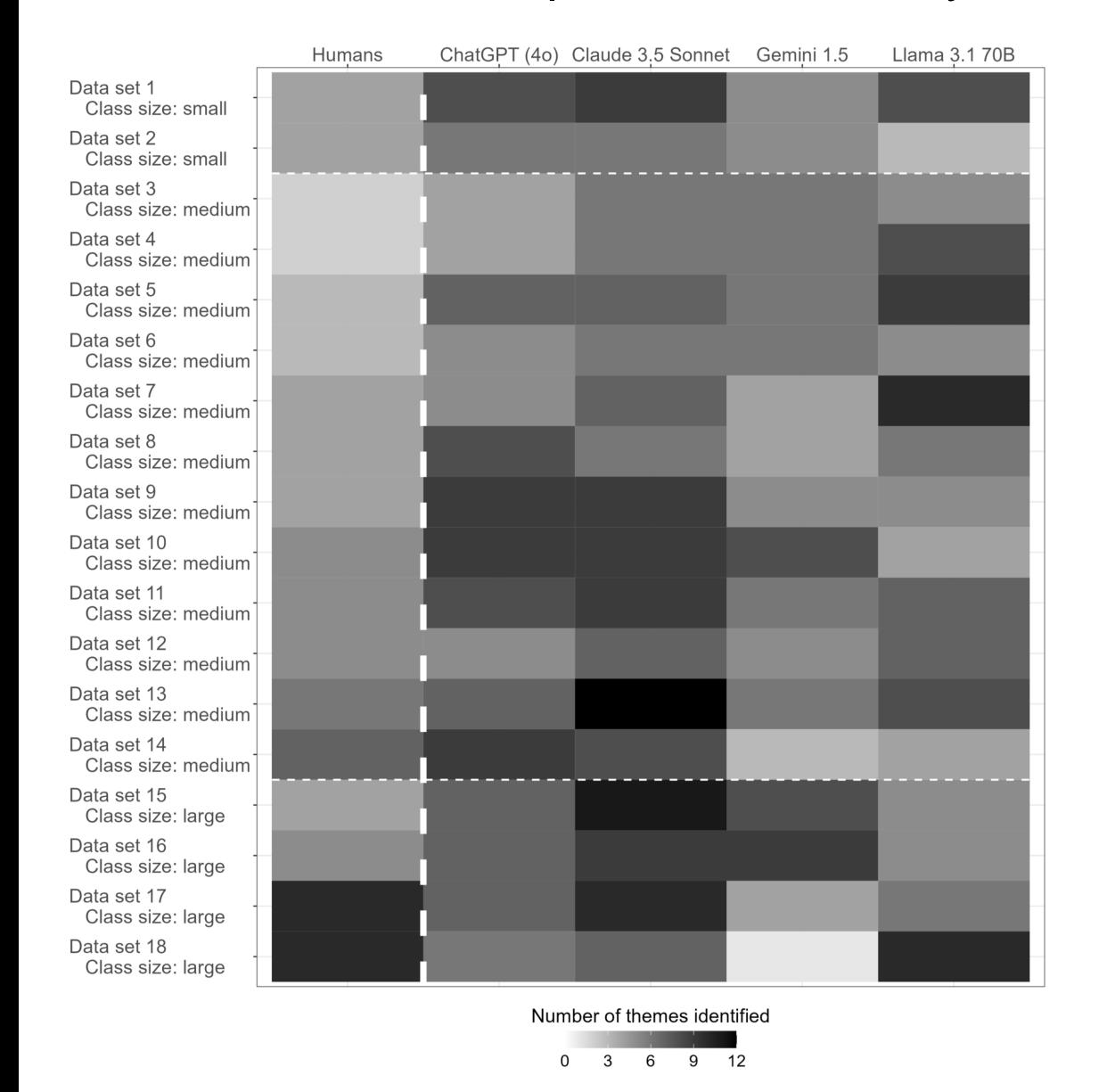






Preliminary result: Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can extract themes from student feedback about as effectively as instructors.

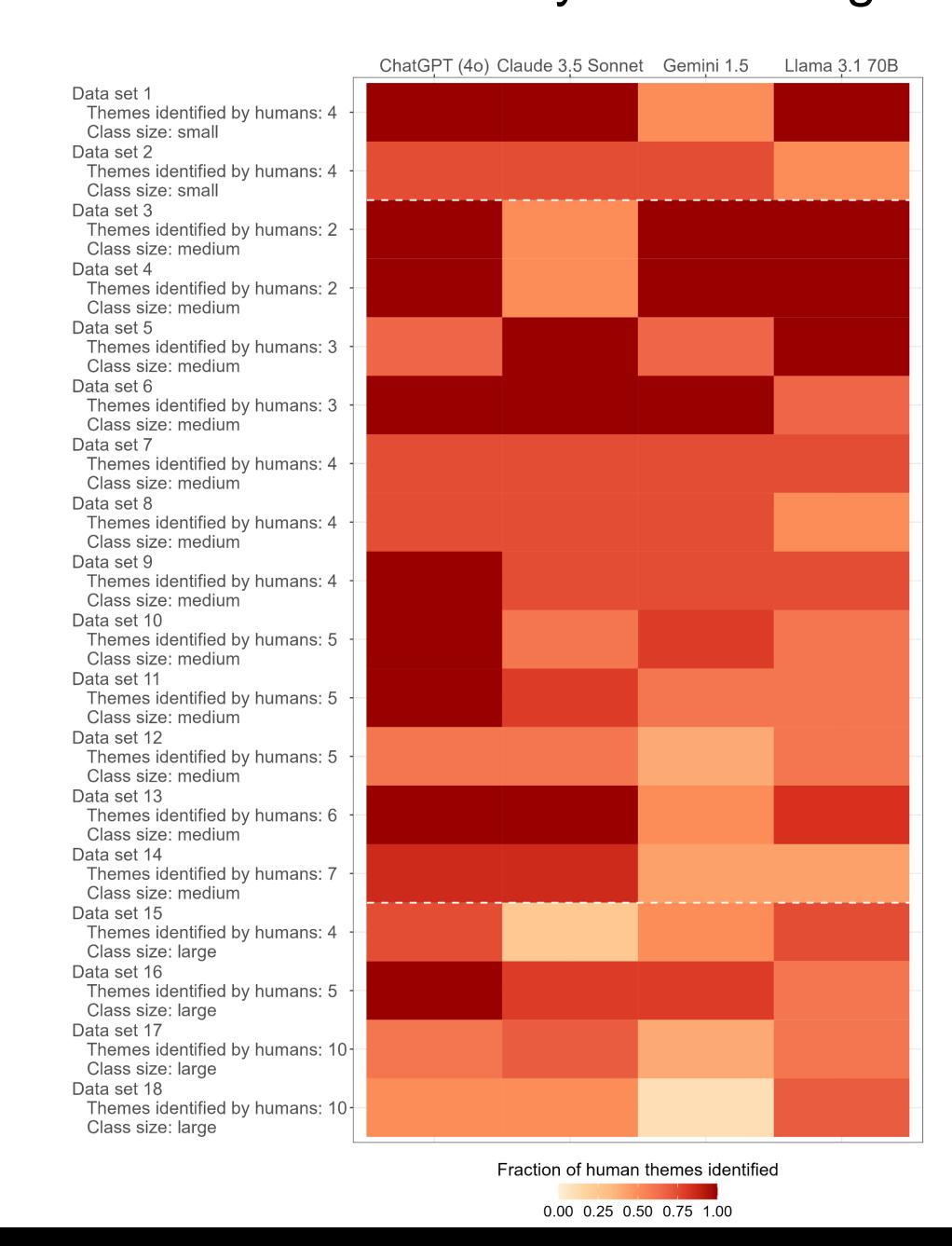
How do models compare in their ability to find themes in the student feedback?



ChatGPT and Claude tended to find more themes in the course feedback than instructors did.

Gemini and Llama tended to have mixed results.

Did the themes identified by AI tools align with what instructors identified?



For ChatGPT and Claude, yes. For Gemini and Llama, less so.

In many cases, ChatGPT identified all of the themes the instructors identified while this rarely happened for Gemini or Llama.

ChatGPT was the best or tied for best performing model on 15 of the 18 data sets

Performance of all models was generally best for data sets with fewer human-identified themes

References

[1] Spooren, P., Brockx, B., & Mortelmans, D. (2013). Review of Educational Research, 83(4), 598-642.

[2] Pu, X., Gao, M., & Wan, X. (2023). arXiv preprint arXiv:2309.09558.

[3] Parker, M. J., Anderson, C., Stone, C., & Oh, Y. (2024). *International journal of artificial intelligence in education*, 1-38.

[4] Based on https://ctl.uga.edu/teaching-resources/feedback-and-evaluation-of-teaching/interpreting-responding-to-student-evaluations-of-teaching/