EVENT TITLE: Artificial Intelligence & Real Creativity: AI in the CW Classroom

EVENT CATEGORY: Pedagogy

Event DESCRIPTION: This panel will explore the possibilities of working with AI technology in creative writing classes, rather than fighting against its growth in popularity, by teaching students how to use AI as a tool for inspiration instead of a replacement for original human thought. While it’s necessary to consider the ramifications of problems like AI-supported plagiarism, this panel takes a different approach, asking instead how student writers can use AI as one more tool in their creative toolboxes. New approaches are necessary to teach students how to use AI in ways that enhance their own creative thinking rather than allowing AI to replace their uniquely human creative endeavors. Writers at the level of assistant and full professor, teaching across all genres at both liberal arts and STEM-focused institutions, will discuss research-based and practical approaches to using AI in their CW classes.

EVENT ORGANIZER & MODERATOR:

Rebecca Pelky

Rebecca Pelky is an Assistant Professor at Clarkson University and a member of the Brothertown Indian Nation. Her awards include a 2023 creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Perugia Press Prize for her second collection of poetry, Through a Red Place (2021).

EVENT PARTICIPANTS:

Allison Adair

Allison Adair is author of The Clearing, winner of the Max Ritvo Poetry Prize. Her work appears in Best American Poetry, Best New Poets, American Poetry Review, Boston Review, Kenyon Review, and Threepenny. She has received a Pushcart Prize, the Orlando Prize, and the Florida Review Editors’ Award.

Jordi Alonso

Jordi Alonso holds an AB in English from Kenyon College, an MA in Classical Studies from Columbia University and a Ph.D in Victorian Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Missouri. He is the author of the poetry collections Honeyvoiced and The Lovers’ Phrasebook. He is working on a project involving the early-modern Jesuit Latin poet Ubertino Carrara and writing a book on Renaissance reception of Late-Antique Greek mystical poetry; he is currently an Instructor at Louisiana State University.

Kate McIntyre

Kate McIntyre is the author of the story collection Mad Prairie, winner of the Flannery O’Connor Award. Two stories from the collection received Special Mention for the Pushcart Prize. She is an assistant professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, where she edits the journal hex literary.

Christopher Salerno

Christopher Salerno is a Professor of English at William Paterson University and Associate Editor at Tupelo Quarterly. He is the author of five full-length poetry collections, including The Man Grave, Sun & Urn, Minimum Heroic, Whirligig, and ATM. He is a New Jersey Council for the Arts Fellow.
OPENING REMARKS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Welcome everyone, and thank you for joining us to talk about the hot button topic that is Artificial Intelligence in academia. The title of our panel today is: Artificial Intelligence & Real Creativity: AI in the CW Classroom. Before we get started, just a few reminders:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, myself, know, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
- Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
- Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
- Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone's use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

Now I’m going to introduce each speaker and their topic. Then, each speaker will present for about eight minutes, after which there should be plenty of time for discussion and questions from the audience. If the audience doesn’t have questions, though I doubt that will be an issue with this topic, I’ll have some prepared questions to ask the panel.

[EACH PERSON FILL IN HOW YOU WANT ME TO INTRODUCE YOU AND YOUR PRESENTATION. Note that these should probably be 45 seconds or less.]

Rebecca Pelky is a member of the Brothertown Indian Nation of Wisconsin. She was recently awarded a 2023 creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Through a Red Place, her second poetry collection and winner of the Perugia Press Prize, was released in 2021. Her first book, Horizon of the Dog Woman, was published by Saint Julian Press in 2020. A translation of Matilde Ladron de Guevara’s poetry collection Desnuda, co-translated with Jake Young, was published by RedHawk Publications in 2022.

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PARTICIPANT READINGS:

[Each person fill in what you’re going to say. Here is how the sample outline states it:]
• These can be in a paragraph, a bulleted list of items the speakers would like to cover during the event, or a copy of whatever he, she, or they plan to read.
• If you are concerned about distributing copyrighted material at an in-person event, please make sure to gather the reading material back at the end of the event and let those using an outline know that you will need the materials back at the end of your event. You might also consider printing separate copies to attach to this overall event outline so you may just collect that portion back from the attendee using the outline.

Kate McIntyre
—(1 min.) how I came to engage with AI—from fear and despair to recognition that generative AI will shape our lives, from our jobs to art-making to recreation. I want to have a role in the conversation, and I think all writers should be prepared to speak up. We can’t allow technologists to make decisions about AI without our input.
—(2 min.) brief exploration of my thoughts on the question: Can generative AI be used ethically, to produce art, and in general?
—(2 min.) teaching at a STEM school that is committed to exploration of AI—students want to be guided in ethical use and to have conversations about how AI should or should not be used. How can we educate ourselves so we are prepared to engage students in these conversations?
—(3 min.) sharing two exercises I feel comfortable using with my students—focusing on AI as a spur for thinking rather than as a producer of text or ideas

Jordi Alonso
1 min: engaging with AI: It does not serve the purposes I need it to yet beyond basic things such as creating rubrics for assignments and suggesting ways to de-escalate matters when entitled students raise a fuss about their grades.
6 min: why I hesitate to use AI in the classroom: A Socratic Situation
1 Closing remarks: how I’m open to change.

Rebecca Pelky
—Experiences of having students work on AI-assisted prompts a nature writing workshop
—Results both positive and negative
—Ideas for modifications/improvements for future attempts and uses in other genres

MODERATOR QUESTIONS:

1. What do you see as one of the biggest challenges to using AI effectively in the creative writing classroom? Can you tell us about something that didn’t work?
2. Are there resources out there yet that you’ve used that can guide teachers and writers on best practices for incorporating AI either into their own work or as a classroom tool?

RESPONSES TO MODERATOR QUESTIONS:

Here’s how the sample outline suggests responding to this one:
We understand this portion of the event may be more spontaneous than what can be planned for in a written document. That’s okay—it’s the nature of a live event. Each presenter should still be able to provide a brief written response or bulleted list of thoughts in response to planned questions.

If the conversation veers off in an interesting, on-topic, and productive way, that’s okay, too! The point of creating this document isn’t to hamstring you into delivering a completely rehearsed discussion or reading but to provide as much information as possible to those wanting or needing to follow along to a written text.

1. Kate—I have a complicated relationship with the ethics of generative AI, especially the environmental toll of the massive amount of fresh water that must be used to cool the supercomputers that train ChatGPT and answer user prompts. I think it’s important for students to see this complication, so, in writing exercises that make use of AI, I include a discussion of this topic and offer students an alternate exercise that doesn’t use AI.

2. Kate—I recently discovered the MLA has updated its citation guidelines to include generative AI. There’s a helpful webpage with information and examples.

Jordi

1 What do you see as one of the biggest challenges to using AI effectively in the creative writing classroom? Can you tell us about something that didn’t work?

Beyond the environmental impact, as Kate mentioned, my biggest issue with using AI in the classroom is that, presumably, each of our home institutions, wherever in the world they may be hired us to use our expertise in our respective fields to not only further the cause of knowledge for its own sake but defines our path in life as academics, but to instruct undergraduate and graduate students in the same. I am happy to meet with any student to talk about whatever they feel is holding them back from completing their assignments. However, using AI as my students have this past semester to misrepresent work as their own is not only counterproductive to their academic journey, but runs against the fundamental values of academia where we, I need not remind everyone here, value original thoughts and contributions. Why would I spend valuable time ‘commenting’ on a paper written by ChatGPT, Bard, or whichever bot-du-jour the duplicitous student decides to use, when I am not doing anything to help their own writing since they in fact did not write the assignment?

2 Are there resources out there yet that you’ve used that can guide teachers and writers on best practices for incorporating AI either into their own work or as a classroom tool?

Not quite yet; however, unlike the example I used above where crotchety old philosophers (such as ourselves) rail against the invention of writing and turn out to be wrong, I do not see the day that a new translation of a never-before seen text in the target language will emerge purely from a robotic pen. To use an example from a conference paper I gave this January at the Society for Classical Studies: I am translating into blank verse for the first time ever a Latin poem written by
Ubertino Carrara. To prepare for the AWP, I decided to ask ChatGPT to translate the first ten lines (which any second-year Latin student should be able to do without much consternation) into different forms of poetry; when I asked for free-verse, it rhymed. Its vaguely iambic feet had spondaic substitutions in places where the Latin meter was very regular. Carrara in his poem is consciously riffing off of Vergil in his opening lines. The AI-created translation did not bring this across. When I told it to retranslate the opening into blank verse (and explained what blank verse is) its metrical feet were all over the place. When I asked it point-blank why it had made the choices it made, it gave me a vague answer about how “metrics and sound are subjective and up to the reader to interpret” which sounds like the filler someone who did not study would jot down as an answer on a quiz. I take no pleasure in being a dissenting voice on this panel, but I can’t yet (try as I might) get on board with AI in creative writing: perhaps I best learn to think like a machine to know how to write better prompts.