

Ethical dilemmas in the context of using AI

Collaboration not substitution (no cognitive offloading)

1. The History Student's Dilemma

A history major is writing a literature review for her senior capstone research paper. She has read dozens of articles and even a book! But, she is struggling to synthesize the findings. She considers turning to NotebookLM to help reorganize her notes and to draft connecting passages between the seminal studies she knows must appear in her lit review. Her advisor has declared that "all work must be your own," but he failed to specifically address or even mention AI. The student wonders: Is using AI to help structure thoughts they've already formed an ethical use of AI? Where is the line between a helpful writing tool and outsourcing intellectual work? What does ethical AI collaboration look like with this particular task? Use the ethical process provided by the instructor to come to a decision, and be ready to justify or defend that decision.

2. The Journalist's Deadline

A local reporter needs to write three articles by end-of-day about the Rome city council meeting last night, including any decisions the council reached (anything they voted on). The meetings are public record, so there is a transcript, but it is dense and, because of the nature of council meetings, a bit chaotic. She considers turning to ChatGPT to summarize the transcript and to draft initial versions of summaries that she will then corroborate, verify, and rewrite. Her editor hasn't specifically forbidden this, but he's an older guy; he likely isn't even aware of what genAI can do. She wonders: Does using AI for initial drafts compromise journalistic integrity, even if she checks everything, including any and all direct quotes? Her byline will appear on the story. What does authorship mean here? What does that byline connote? And is this sort of use of genAI permissible under this definition and with these connotations? Use the ethical process provided by the instructor to come to a decision, and be ready to justify or defend that decision.

(Note: Because the transcript is public record, she doesn't have to concern herself with the issue of feeding into ChatGPT material that is copyright-protected.)

3. The Crisis Response

A local PR firm's client, Atrium Healthcare, faces a data breach affecting patient records. The firm needs to draft a public statement within the hour. The junior PR associate uses AI to generate an initial crisis response based on the facts provided by the hospital's legal team. The PR firm's senior team edits it for tone and accuracy. Before sending it over to Atrium executives, the account representative asks the team whether they disclose to Atrium that AI generated the first draft, or that the firm collaborated with Claude for that draft? The account representative reminds the team that Atrium hired the firm for its reputation for "expert human judgment and experience." If they present the AI-assisted statement without being transparent about their AI use, are they misrepresenting their work, hours for which they will be billing Atrium? What will be their defense if something in that statement later proves problematic? Use the ethical process provided by the instructor to come to a decision, and be ready to justify or defend that decision.

4. The Thought Leadership Campaign

Berry hires a PR agency to establish the new Berry president, Sandeep Mazumder, as a thought leader in higher education. The contract includes writing quarterly articles under the Mazumder's byline for higher ed publications such as The Chronicle of Higher Education. The president provides brief voice memos with ideas. In the past, the agency takes these memos and turns them into polished articles. Your scenario: A team member suggests using Claude to draft the articles from Mazumder's notes, articles that a senior writer will further polish and fact-check. The team member emphasizes that Claude is especially good at learning an individual's writerly voice, patterns, and preferences. An experiment with Claude produces an article clearly superior to those the firm had previously developed on behalf of Steve Briggs, Mazumder's predecessor. But, the team wonders: Do the publications deserve to know AI was involved? Does Mazumder and Berry College, given how this sort of writing project was handled in the past? In other words, is there a meaningful difference between a human ghostwriter and an AI one? What if Claude occasionally introduces an insight the president didn't actually express or come up with himself? Is that adding value, or is it unethically putting words in his mouth? If the team goes forward with the collaboration with Claude, should there be an adjustment in how Berry is billed for the agency's work? Use the ethical process provided by the instructor to come to a decision, and be ready to justify or defend that decision.