Cultivating AI Literacy in First-Year Writing
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An essential skill for writers today is to be able to use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) technologies ethically and effectively, especially those that produce text and images. In First-Year Writing (FYW) courses, MSU students are actively developing the skills to approach AI critically and to engage new tools in ways that situate them for learning and working in contexts transformed by AI.

AI literacy is integrated into how we teach writing. FYW faculty are conducting research on AI and writing, learning from experts in our discipline and beyond, trying out writing and research techniques related to GenAI outputs, and sharing new teaching practices. FYW faculty are asking the writers in their classrooms to use GenAI tools and to reflect on the opportunities and challenges that GenAI brings.

Some of the specific AI literacy work the FYW team in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and Cultures has taken on over the past year includes the following:

1. **Surveying about student use and perception of GenAI tools:** In spring 2024, we conducted a survey of FYW students and asked questions about how and why students used GenAI tools for writing at MSU. Findings suggest:
    a. students use tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT most commonly,
    b. students are excited about the possibilities of AI for writing, and
    c. students are at times unsure as to which uses of GenAI are acceptable.

2. **Building FYW resources on AI and writing:** In summer 2024, FYW faculty researchers created a D2L resources site for teachers that includes an annotated bibliography and links to resources about AI and writing, materials for teaching about GenAI, sample assignments and syllabus language, and links to MSU guidance and opportunities related to AI literacy. The resources site is shared with all FYW faculty and a range of practices have been integrated across fall 2024 courses.

3. **Launching a fall 2024 AI challenge:** We challenged FYW faculty to set a learning goal for students to work toward AI literacy and to pilot a small instructional lesson or task involving GenAI tools during the first few weeks of the fall 2024 semester. WRAC is hosting a department meeting later in fall to provide faculty space to share their work and student responses.

4. **Learning from Dr. Annette Vee, scholar of AI and writing:** FYW hosted Dr. Annette Vee (Associate Professor of English and Director of the Composition Program at the University of Pittsburgh) on September 27, 2024. Dr. Vee presented on her scholarship related to the history of automated writing tools and practices and led FYW faculty in a hands-on workshop using various GenAI tools.

Overall, MSU students in First-Year Writing courses are learning about, using, discussing, and evaluating GenAI tools. Our goal is for *all* Spartans to become *AI literate Spartans*.