The Response to ChatGPT by the Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies

AI Writing Tools

The introduction of new communication technologies often generates and increases anxiety. When composing on computers was introduced, people continued to worry about the new tools of writing. Spell check, Grammarly, email, and computers in the classroom, for example, were criticized for taking away people's ability to spell, remember grammar lessons, or focus in class. Now we consider not just writing, but all of these tools to be helpful if not necessary ways of interacting with language and each other. When people learn to use writing and its tools effectively, writing becomes a powerful instrument for composition and for learning. Consistently focusing on invention strategies, drafting, and revision will complicate students' interactions with such tools as ChatGPT and help them learn how and when to use them. We understand the campus community's concerns about the misuse and abuse of AI tools, and we pledge to work with our colleagues to address them. However, we recognize the opportunity that these new tools offer in terms of teaching and learning.

Goals and Values

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies reaffirms that teaching writing in all its modalities means engaging students in the writing process by helping them see writing as invention, as intervention, as transformation—in a word, as learning. We teach students not just how to write, but when to write, for what audience, with what purpose, and yes, with which tools. We teach students to consider genre, audience, and purpose and to respect the social and linguistic diversity embedded and circulated in our own department and across the curriculum. We see writing as an integral part of student success in all university contexts and classes that teach and require written texts. Learning to write requires the development of critical tools that help students problematize the structures and the force of writing itself. We teach students how to critically engage with the tools of writing, such as ChatGPT, and their social and pragmatic implications. The Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies at the University of Utah creates a space for students to gain facility with writing technologies while they learn to understand the implications, promise, power, and responsibility of using such tools.