

Best Practices in Teaching AI in Action: Best Practices for Enhancing Learning, Engagement, and Ethical Inquiry

AI



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Sponsored by the
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BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING

AI in Action: Best Practices for Enhancing
Learning, Engagement, and Ethical Inquiry
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BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING

AI in Action: Best Practices for Enhancing Learning, Engagement, and Ethical Inquiry

First Place: *Your AI Podcast Study Buddy*
Jason Porter, University of South Carolina

Second Place: *Empowering Students to Critically Engage with AI in Political Messaging*
Adam Peruta and **Milton Santiago**, Syracuse University

Third Place: *Journalistic Gains Through GenAI: Journalism Watchdogs Webtool Leads to Improvements in Hawaiian Language Integration in Local News and Prompts University Policy Commitments*
Brett Oppegaard, University of Hawai'i

Honorable Mention: *Elevating Diversity Writing Instruction in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*
George L. Daniels, University of Alabama

Honorable Mention: *The Future is Now: Emerging Tech Emerges in Public Relations Curriculum and Career Preparedness*
Stephanie Swindle Thomas, The Pennsylvania State University

[View all entries from the 2025 competition](#)

FIRST PLACE

Your AI Podcast Study Buddy

Jason Porter
University of South Carolina

Abstract: While AI is often discussed as a tool for efficiency, this project leverages AI to enhance student engagement and study habits by developing an AI-generated study podcast. Rather than providing a traditional study guide, the Podcast Study Buddy allows students to reinforce key concepts in an accessible, mobile-friendly format. Student feedback and test performance data suggest that this approach positively impacts comprehension and retention. This method can be applied to any lecture-based course, offering educators a scalable, cost-effective, AI-driven way to support student learning beyond the classroom.

Introduction: The idea for an AI-generated study podcast is not about efficiency—it is about meeting students where they are. My students have historically struggled with tests, and their course evaluations made two things clear: they feel the exams are harder than expected for a 200-level course, and they want structured study materials. A traditional study guide may seem like the obvious solution, but many students treat them as a checklist rather than truly engaging with the material. Instead, this study method provides a tool that feels natural, accessible, and useful without promoting rote memorization.

Since I have recorded video lectures for an online section of the course, I have a wealth of material to pull from. I transcribed the lectures using NoteGPT and supplemented them with PDFs of my slides, ensuring that my original wording and emphasis was preserved. I uploaded the materials into NotebookLM and used its *Deep Dive Conversation* tool to generate a study podcast. I need to mention that NotebookLM is a multi-modal LLM; something I realized after creating the first podcast. I have since streamlined the process by simply uploading mp4 videos of my lectures instead of a combination of transcripts and lecture slides.

The first attempt was not promising. The AI hosts talked about the material, but it felt disorganized—like two people vaguely familiar with the content, discussing it without any structure. It covered topics unevenly, sometimes diving into one area while barely mentioning another.

Clearly, I needed more control over how the AI engaged with my source material.

Through trial and error, I refined my prompt to frame the conversation to:

- Evenly covered all four main topics on Test 1.
- Discuss concepts conversationally, making review more engaging.
- Promote contextual listening, allowing students to reinforce ideas while commuting or multitasking (fig. 1)

To enhance engagement, I used Adobe Audition to add intro/outro music for a polished feel, lighthearted historical ads (e.g., an old Oscar Mayer jingle) to make the experience more enjoyable, and an informational commercial break to provide reminders about the upcoming test date and homework deadline. For accessibility, I uploaded the final podcast to SoundCloud.com, posting a link to Blackboard rather than uploading it directly to the LMS. Student use SoundCloud to stream music and can easily stream the podcast on their phones this way.

Podcast Link: <https://tinyurl.com/AI-PodcastStudyBuddy>

Learning Outcomes: To evaluate the effectiveness of the podcast, I analyzed both student performance data and qualitative feedback from a questionnaire given after Test 1. The results show that integrating AI-generated study materials led to measurable improvements in student comprehension and engagement (fig. 2). The direct alignment between podcast content and test questions reinforces how the AI-generated study tool supports student learning (fig. 3). Qualitative feedback from students suggests that the podcast is a valuable addition to their study routines. Students find the structured conversational format helpful, making the material feel more engaging and reinforcing key course themes (fig. 4). By the morning of Test 1, the podcast had 55 plays (43 the morning of) for a class of 37 students, with some students listening multiple times (fig. 5). This suggests that students found the resource useful, even if they engaged with it at varying levels.

While some students still prefer traditional study methods, feedback indicates that the podcast is a useful supplement to their notes (fig. 6). However, some students recommend additional improvements, such as additional guided questions to help them focus on key takeaways (fig. 7).

Although the primary innovation is the AI-generated podcast, student performance data also suggests a positive impact. Students in Spring 2025 scored 6.7 percentage points higher than those in 2024. While multiple factors may contribute to this, the introduction of the Podcast Study Buddy provides a structured, accessible study resource that was not available in previous semesters.

Beyond the test score improvements, the success of the Podcast Study Buddy highlights AI's potential to enhance student engagement beyond efficiency-based tools. The podcast meets students where they are—on their phones, in transit, or studying in short bursts. It encourages contextual reinforcement of key concepts, complementing traditional study habits without replacing them. Lastly, it introduces a novel way to integrate AI into teaching, focusing on student experience rather than just assessment design.

Key Takeaways: This project aligns with ACEJMC's emphasis on media literacy and critical thinking by equipping students with AI-driven study tools that enhance comprehension beyond traditional methods. This podcast showcases AI as a tool for enhancing student engagement and comprehension, extending its role beyond automation. It highlights AI's potential to reinforce concepts, expand learning beyond class, and offer accessible study resources. The success of this project suggests that AI-generated audio tools can meaningfully support modern pedagogy.

Conclusion: By integrating AI-driven tools into student learning, the AI Podcast Study Buddy enhances engagement by offering a flexible, structured study resource that improves test performance and received positive feedback. Rather than replacing traditional learning, it shows how AI can help educators make material more accessible, interactive, and aligned with modern study habits.

Supplemental Materials

Tools used: NotebookLM.google.com, NoteGPT.io, Adobe Audition, SoundCloud.com

Fig 1. Prompt used to frame the *Deep Dive Conversation* in Notebook LLM
This a study podcast for Principles of Visual Communication evenly covering the following key topics from the sources: visual literacy,

classic, modern, and digital ages of visual communication. The tone should be engaging and conversational, reinforcing key concepts while connecting them to real-world applications. Provide examples, ask rhetorical questions, and ensure the podcast feels like a guided study session rather than a lecture. Please add one break for a commercial.

Fig. 2. Test Scores for Test 1 over a three-year period

Year	Test Format	Average Raw Score	Percentage Score
2025	AI-Podcast Supplemented Test	30.29 / 40	75.74%
2024	Instructor-Written, No AI Support	13.81 / 20	69.04%
2023	Instructor-Written, No AI Support	14.21 / 20	71.06%

Fig. 3. Example of Podcast Supporting a Test Question:
How does the evolution of cell phone design demonstrate the relationship between design and technology?

- a) Advancements in technology limit the creativity of designers.
- b) Technological advancements drive design innovation while design influences future technological development.
(correct answer)
- c) Technological progress has minimal impact on design principles.

Podcast Excerpt (3:52-4:33):

Technology and design, they're like, you know, constantly pushing each other forward. Think about how cell phones have changed. Oh, yeah. From those brick phones to the sleek ones we have now. Right. Those early ones, they were limited by what technology could do back then. But as technology got better, phones got smaller, screens got bigger, and people wanted them to do more and more. So it's not just about the look of the phone. It's about what it can do, how we interact with it. Exactly. Every step in that evolution from those clicky keyboards to touch screens to voice assistants, design has to adapt to those new possibilities. So it's like a dance between design and technology. Always moving, always changing. Exactly.

Fig. 4. Responses from Study Materials Questionnaire

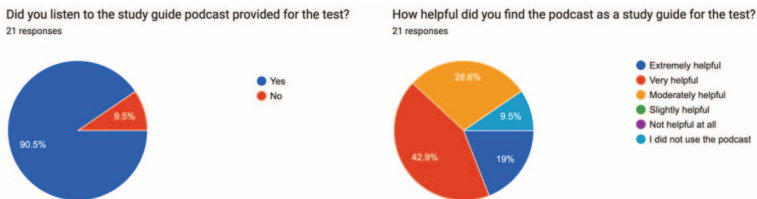
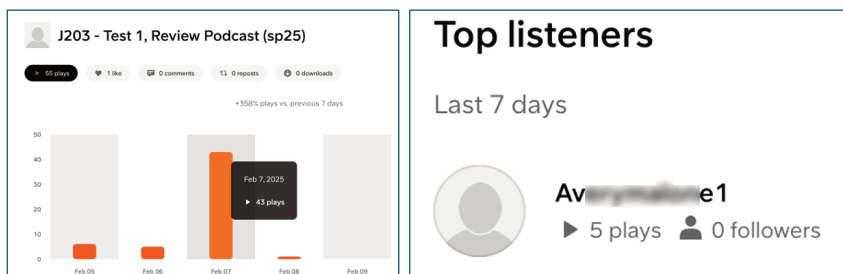


Fig 5. Soundcloud statistics



Note: Av*****e1 is a student in JOUR203.001-SPRING2025

Fig. 6 Response from Study Materials Questionnaire about additional study materials

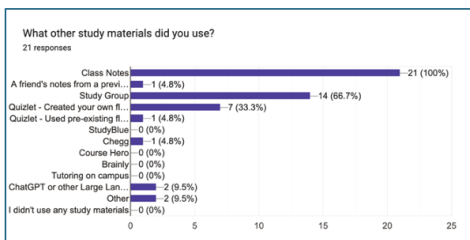


Fig. 7 Response Suggestions from Study Materials Questionnaire

Is there anything specific that you would like to see added or changed in the study materials to enhance your learning experience?
9 responses

Nope! I felt prepared.

Letting us know if there's something we need to write down that's not on the notes

I guess specific questions to think about while studying would help guide me when it comes to studying.

I would say a study guide, but you tell us what we need to know for the test so it's no big deal.

No but I definitely recommend the podcast. I really enjoyed listening!

No

Note: No, or a variation of No was given for 4 responses.

SECOND PLACE

Empowering Students to Critically Engage with AI in Political Messaging

Adam Peruta and Milton Santiago
Syracuse University

Abstract: This assignment guides students through the creation of a 30-second political advertisement using generative AI tools. Working in pairs, students develop an original or fictional political candidate, design an ad strategy, and generate every element — from visuals to narration — via AI platforms. This cross-disciplinary, hands-on approach cultivates AI literacy, ethical reasoning, and critical examination of AI's role in shaping political discourse. Through iterative feedback, reflective writing, and production work, students gain both technical proficiency in AI-based media creation and a deeper understanding of how emerging technologies such as AI can be leveraged to produce media at a speed and scale that was previously not possible.

Explanation of the Teaching Practice or Activity: In a new course exploring generative AI in media, students complete a multi-phase assignment to create a political ad entirely with AI tools. They begin by using Large Language Models (LLMs) to brainstorm a fictional political candidate's background, persona, and platform. Using what was generated on the candidate's background, the teams create a custom GPT which takes on the candidate's persona. Anyone can then engage with the custom chatbot to ask about the candidate platform, agenda, and values. With the help of image-generation diffusion models such as MidJourney, the students create a visual identity for the faux candidate, including headshots, thematic imagery, and campaign logos. Next, they conceptualize an ad strategy and write a script using an LLM for idea generation and refinement. Students then use AI image-to-video tools to animate their previously generated images. After that, they use tools such as Suno and Eleven Labs to create background music and give their candidate a voice. Lastly, they compile the AI-generated images, video clips, music, and voice-overs into a cohesive 30-second spot. Upon completion of the media portion of the assignment, they finalize the assignment with a 300-500 word written

reflection on the ethical and strategic considerations of AI-driven political messaging. Overall, students gain a deep understanding of both AI's capabilities and limitations in political communication.

Rationale: Generative AI is transforming traditional media creation, raising vital questions about authenticity, bias, and ethics. As AI tools become more sophisticated, understanding their ethical application in political communication is essential. By immersing students in an assignment that mirrors real-world political campaign strategies, this assignment fosters a practical understanding of strengths and weaknesses of AI-driven media production while encouraging critical examination of its potential pitfalls and ethical dilemmas. Students must confront issues such as the ethical boundaries of deep fakes, misrepresentation, and the broader societal impact of automated persuasion. The requirement to generate all content via AI forces students to explore ethical questions about authenticity, transparency, and the future of political messaging.

Learning Outcomes, Including Supporting Evidence: AI Literacy and Technical Proficiency: To test students' AI literacy and technical proficiency, we sent anonymous pre- and post-assignment surveys to measure the student confidence levels using AI platforms. See the Supporting Materials Section for the self-reported numbers and examples of qualitative comments.

Overall, students demonstrated a notable increase in competence with AI generation tools. In addition to the self-reported numbers, this was also evident in the assignment grades as the grades on technical execution components reflected mastery of key software skills with an average of 93.

Critical Thinking and Ethical Analysis: Throughout this assignment, students identified potential ethical pitfalls in AI-generated media and AI-driven political communication, such as manipulation or misinformation. The reflection paper portion of the assignment and class discussions highlighted student engagement with concepts of bias, authenticity, and legal/ethical guidelines. Qualitative feedback in our course evaluations revealed an increase in students' ability to articulate AI-related ethical concerns and understanding of the challenges inherent to producing AI-generated media.

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration and Peer Learning: Working in pairs, and often with a peer in a different major, students managed a workflow that involved idea generation, media generation, production scheduling, and iterative feedback loops. While we did not utilize peer evaluations for this assignment, anecdotal evidence demonstrated successful communication and division of labor.

ACEJMC's Professional Values and Competencies: This assignment engages students in a hands-on exploration of political messaging and AI media production, thereby addressing multiple ACEJMC core values and competencies:

Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.

Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.

Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information.

Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions.

Supporting Materials: Below are links to three of the 30-second ads produced. Links are anonymized.

Clay Bronson: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1054838439?>

Emily Navarro: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1054838454?h=7e4f411007>

Eli Brooks: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1054838447?>

Below are the averages from the pre- and post-assignment self-assessments:

Average Scores Before and After of AI Tool Use

Skill	Before Avg Score (1–5)	After Avg Score (1–5)
Use of an LLM	2.63	4.9
Generating Images	1.36	4.54
Generative Video	1	4.36
Generating Graphics	1.45	4.27
Generating Audio	1	4.63

Note. Scores are based on a 1-to-5 scale, where higher values indicate greater confidence/proficiency. Additionally, the post-assignment

survey included an open-ended question for additional comments/learnings. These quotes illustrate the capability of AI tools and how AI-driven workflows can give students who do not consider themselves creatives the ability to produce multimedia:

"From the Political Ad assignment, I created a finished product I was proud of — one I never could have foreseen myself doing before. I was amazed at what I could do with AI tools, something I had greatly underestimated before. After the project, I realized how useful these tools can be in your work if you use them the right way."

"The approach to this assignment (practical usage and research/written) ushered in was essential to me finding a middle ground on the efficiency of the tools and being wary of the ethical considerations in a critical way."

Below is a student reflection:

To construct Alessandra Cortez Walker's persona, we combined figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Olivia Pope with factors that we found important, such as our (my and my partner's) cultural backgrounds and political beliefs. We asked ChatGPT to create a political biography and character persona, adding the details we listed previously. We also asked for her politics, slogan, and campaign method to be influenced by her upbringing, to create a more realistic feel.

To specify the video message, I asked ChatGPT to also create audience personas for Walker. For the script, I wanted to emphasize Walker's working class background, have her personality embody more of Olivia Pope, and emphasize her studies in both Howard University and Harvard University. I also wanted to compare her with Emily Harrington, her opponent. We had to shorten the script and get rid of a few things as it went for too long.

Midjourney was the hardest, but most creative part. I used a lot of pictures of Kamala Harris and AOC for reference to create pictures of our candidate. At first, I could only visualize shots where she was in the frame. However, after watching more videos, I realized the best way to tell the story is through items and objects. I tried doing this but I did not know how to line it up with the audio. I generated a cool image of her in

a newspaper as I wanted it to be a frame of Walker talking to inmates as a way to show her dedication to prison reform, but this was a hard task. It eventually just created a newspaper and a picture of her smiling.

Like my last project, I had difficulty creating pictures without the models looking overly clean or perfect. Even the pictures in which I wanted her to show raw, fierce emotion came too airbrushed and flawless. I used Eleven Labs for the voice and put every single line individually. I had to redo the lines and use more credits each time as I emphasized or put breaks to make it sound more realistic. For the narrator, I wanted a strong voice that listeners would enjoy. For Walker's voice herself, we originally wanted to use Olivia Pope's voice. However, we used a voice similar to hers — strong and confident.

For the animations, we used Runway. I enjoyed using Runway as it had so many animation styles and everything tied in together as soon as we employed different camera angles to tell a story. For example, when we talked about Harrington, I researched what angles in film typically conveyed evil or suspicion. I asked Runway to use a low angle and specified evil and it animated it in such a way I was not able to describe but I visualized in my head. While I believe these tools are still not able to create a fully fledged campaign ad that could be played on television or on the Internet, it is able to help with ideas and creatively visualize and brainstorm for drafts.

THIRD PLACE

Journalistic Gains Through GenAI: Journalism Watchdogs Webtool Leads to Improvements in Hawaiian Language Integration in Local News and Prompts University Policy Commitments

Brett Oppegaard
University of Hawai'i

ABSTRACT: Native Hawaiian students had been lobbying our public university for years to better support integration of Hawaiian diacritics into local news coverage. Journalism students and faculty members supported the idea but encountered practical obstacles preventing classroom implementation, including a lack of programmatic-wide expertise, laborious editing processes, and competing pedagogical priorities. There also were no role models, such as professional media organizations consistently using the language's markings. But faculty development of a novel GenAI tool, called Journalism Watchdogs, radically mitigated or eliminated previously insurmountable workload concerns and allowed journalism students to assert university-wide and statewide leadership in this ethical area.

EXPLANATION OF THE TEACHING PRACTICE OR ACTIVITY: Our public university has been designated as a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning and operates in a state that theoretically has two co-equal official languages, English and Hawaiian. At the abstract level, the university supports both languages, but at a practical level, that support is not equal, creating a discriminatory ethical concern throughout the organization about the unbalanced use and development of one official language in our classrooms over the other. As a faculty member recruited from another state — with no experience using, let alone teaching, the Hawaiian language — I have been sympathetic to this concern by my students throughout my decade at the university but also unable to imagine a suitable way to address it, considering not only my lack of expertise with the language but also that of most of my colleagues, combined with the extensive amount of time I have found it takes to institute human-level quality controls for diacritics, when considering the massive overflow of other important journalistic lessons simultaneously competing for time and space in my classes. In those assessment experiments I did with diacritics as the focus, depending on the quantity in any given

story, I learned that it took me roughly five to 10 minutes to read a piece, identify the Hawaiian words or names, check their markings, and then provide clear feedback, without any attention spent on the journalistic aspects of the work. With 40 students over two writing classes, that equated to an additional 3 to 6 hours of grading per assignment, per week, added on to the time spent checking stories for grammar, punctuation, AP Style, math, and other technical concerns, after addressing the many complex journalistic aspects that need the primary attention, including development of the story angle, news values, sourcing, choosing a medium, the logic, structure, and aesthetic style. Pragmatically, it was just a straw on the workload pile heavy enough to break the teacher's back, which is why no professional journalist in town or teacher would commit to it. But my research into GenAI led to the creation of a prototype webtool that changed the game. This Journalism Watchdogs webtool, www.journalismwatchdogs.org, inspired by the industry metaphor, created alignment with the practice of a publication's local style, which captures the energy and voice of its community. In short, the tool created an opportunity. It is easy to use and has an approachable aesthetic, using portraits of dogs to represent journalistic characters, and it works so well that even Hawaiian Studies professors on campus have adopted it to use in their classes.

RATIONALE: Before Journalism Watchdogs was created, a human-led process to ensure proper diacritical marks on all stories published by students in our journalism program — across teachers, classes, and publications — was considered impossible at a practical level. Then, we developed this GenAI webtool that could speed up exponentially the assessment and feedback steps to the point where any teacher, and regardless of expertise in the Hawaiian language, could quickly get a text checked for diacritics and prepared for return to a student in just a few seconds. Or, even more proactively, students also can clean up their drafts before submission by using the tool, making that writing-and-editing process even faster, smoother, and more automated, with multiple points of robust feedback. The webtool does this type of work better than the best human-led process we have had before, regardless of speed, because it has been programmed to meticulously extract all Hawaiian words or names from the original text, check the words for diacritics, provide definitions for them, assess if those were used correctly or not, provide feedback on each case, and then prepare a full report to the student that shares all of this information in a straightforward summary that is easy to use and digest.

LEARNING OUTCOMES, INCLUDING SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: This webtool was created in a particular journalism class (Jour 481 Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Spring 2024) with the advocacy and support of two Native Hawaiian journalism students, in particular, but with the interest, engagement, and excitement of all of the students in the class, who unanimously supported its adoption as well as the classroom policy to use it, which led to adoption later of a similar policy at both the programmatic and School levels. The use of diacritics in that class increased from spotty-at-best to fully integrated and 100-percent expected in every published piece virtually overnight about halfway through the semester, after the Beta release of the webtool followed by about two weeks of UX/UI and usability testing to add polish to the experience. The 20 students in this class generated about 200 journalistic stories during the semester, or about 10 per student, with nearly all of those stories including at least a few Hawaiian words or names in them. Before the policy to use it programmatic-wide and School-wide was brought to those bodies for a vote, the tool also was Beta tested in multiple Hawaiian Studies classes by multiple professors and given hearty support in that external School of key stakeholders as well. When we received such overwhelmingly positive feedback, we realized that we had an opportunity to make this tool open-access and easily accessible to anyone, including faculty, staff, and students throughout the university. We therefore knew we also could support a push for use of the diacritical marks community wide, including in professional media organizations, and sure enough, one of those organizations, which is considered the preeminent journalism organization in our state, after decades of resistance to the idea, decided to follow our lead a few months after the release of Journalism Watchdogs and finally uses the diacritical marks in its stories, too.

ACEJMC's PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES ALIGNMENT:

Journalism Watchdogs aligns with — and are inspired by — the Value and Competency to: “demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.”

SUPPORTING MATERIALS — POLICY ADOPTION (MAY 2024)

The core diacritical marks in the Hawaiian language are the 'okina, which looks like a backward and flipped apostrophe (' vs. ') and indicates a

glottal stop, and the kahakō, which looks like a long line over a vowel and indicates a long-vowel pronunciation. These marks are not punctuation. They are the representation of the intended character and sound, and leaving them out, technically, indicates a misspelling or misuse.

In the Spring semester of 2024, at a public university in the United States, the GenAI tool Journalism Watchdogs, www.journalismwatchdogs.org, was developed and released by a faculty member to support better use of diacritical markings in local journalism. This professor had been researching Generative AI across multiple Large Language Models (LLMs) and transformers, experimenting with these emerging technologies and considering their potential as automated writing coaches who could deepen and increase the quality of feedback to journalism students while simultaneously lessening the workload and assessment burdens on journalism teachers. In other words, the ultimate objective in this experiment was to use GenAI to create more and better feedback to students on any draft, at any time, virtually instantaneously, while removing the most-tedious, time-consuming, and menial tasks from any journalism professor's assessment duties, freeing the professor and the student up to instead pursue more complicated and sophisticated conversations about the craft. The professor did not anticipate this use extending beyond the classroom, let alone adoption and use throughout the entire School.

But the power and efficacy of this tool led students in this professor's class to vigorously discuss and to fully adopt it mid-semester, voting amongst themselves to collectively require use of the tool and to add the requirement of proper use of Hawaiian diacritical markings on all of their ensuing stories, with the risk of deflating their grades by not meeting that high standard but the reward potential of being a part of the leadership in the state to institute an ethical use of diacritics in local journalism. Confident of the tool's support, they chose the more-challenging path, and they did it through a unanimous student vote, with no faculty intervention, March 1.

At the end of the semester, in May 2024, the tool and the results from the class were shared with the university's journalism program faculty at-large, and after testing the tool and discussing this advancement and potential, they decided to craft a policy to formalize and adopt this approach for the entire program. That idea passed unanimously. Then,

the tool, policy, and discussion were elevated to the School level a few weeks later. Once again, the tool passed the tests, gained widespread support, and the policy passed unanimously again, positioning the School, program, and class as the leaders of this effort to improve the ethics of the university, based on the emerging power of GenAI, as a force for good.

This (anonymized university's anonymized school / journalism program) policy now requires the proper use of the Hawaiian language's diacritical marks in all public-facing communication, including all published journalistic, marketing, and public relations content shared with the broader community.

EXAMPLE TEXT: This is one of the first student stories that was used to test the efficacy of Journalism Watchdogs, with Hawaiian words / names highlighted, as a way to show the quantity of concerns as well as the complexity of the assessment for instructors, with some words not using diacritics, some using them, and some uses in debate, even among the community:

When it comes to **kalo**, **Ka Papa Lo'i 'o Kānewai** isn't cultivating plants for store-bought **poi**.

This cultural garden at the (**anonymized university name that includes diacritics**) has a greater purpose, providing cultural lessons as a part of (**anonymized school name that includes diacritics**), the only college of indigenous knowledge in a Research I institution in the United States.

"It's powerful to be this entity," said **Makahiapo** Cashman, the garden's director, who opens the facilities to the public at least once a month, on the first Saturday.

One of the main attractions of this garden is the **kalo** patch, and about 100 people showed up earlier this month to tend it, a workshop traditionally known as **koele**, during which people learn how to **hehihehi** (stomp on), **ho'pu'upu'u** (crush) and **ho'omaemae** (clean) the plants.

"We have about 68 of the 74 of the different native Hawaiian varieties" of **kalo**, staff member **Elenakila Akau** said. "People get the opportunity to see the different **kalo** we have here that you don't get to see every day. Most of the **poi** you see in stores is all one (non-Hawaiian) **kalo** or mixed **kalo**."

For **Ka Papa Lo‘i ‘o Kānewai**, there is an ongoing struggle to get funds to support these sorts of educational efforts and to keep the **kalo** repository sustained, Cashman said. First Saturday work days are supported right now by a Student Activity and Program Fee Board grant through (**anonymized university name that includes diacritics**), but that’s not a guaranteed funding source.

“When we think of **Hāloa** as an older sibling, it symbolizes the connection of **‘āina** to people, emphasizing familial relationships and the responsibility we have to nurture the environment as we would our own family,” said **kalo** farmer **Ikaikaloha** Vares-Young, who regularly attends the workshops at **Ka Papa Lo‘i ‘o Kānewai**. “And, in return, our older sibling will make sure we never go hungry, just like an older sibling would.”

Vares-Young, from **Waihe‘e** on **O‘ahu**, grows **‘ele‘ele mākoko**, **piko kea** and **kāī kalo**, which he brought from **Kaua‘i**. Those are all varieties of **kalo** native to these islands.

“I don’t believe that GMO-ing our native varieties of **kalo** is a good thing to do,” Vares-Young said. “Native varieties have been cultivated over multiple generations and have adapted to specific environments. GMOs could threaten the genetic diversity as well as integrity of these varieties. This monopoly raised concerns about biodiversity loss, farmer dependency, and environmental impacts due to increased use of roundup.”

Researchers at (**anonymized university name and school that includes diacritics**), for example, have experimented with **Kalo Hawai‘i**, a **Lehua** variety found on **Maui**. The college released a report on these experiments in 2009 documenting how the study of the **kalo (taro)** genome in (**the state**) had not always been a magnet for criticism and also documenting ways in which **kalo** has historical resistance to blight.

“I think the stories, **kuleana** and names are important,” garden director Cashman said. “This (**kalo**) was used for medicine. This one was used for ceremonies. So when you start manipulating it, then you take away that opportunity for us to use it ceremonially and use it as it was supposed to be, it’s what we lose.”

HONORABLE MENTION

Elevating Diversity Writing Instruction in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

George L. Daniels
University of Alabama

Abstract: Artificial Intelligence is now a central part of a 400-level course on communication and diversity. In producing four two-page assignments, students are incentivized to employ artificial intelligence tools such as Chat GPT, Microsoft Copilot and Gemini. Twenty “extra credit” points are added for those who explain which AI tools were used and how they enhanced their writing on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. While 65% of those surveyed on the first day of Spring 2025 class considered themselves to be “a good writer who doesn’t need assistance of AI,” all but two students used AI assistance on the first assignment.

THE TEACHING PRACTICE: After more than a decade of teaching a writing-intensive upper level elective course in Communication and Diversity, this instructor opted in Spring 2025 to innovate the course by encouraging the use of artificial intelligence. A total of four 2-page (double-spaced) assignments required students to engage with diversity concepts introduced in the course textbook while developing a personal connection to topics such as rural poverty, food insecurity, and global communication. The assignments were assessed with a rubric that included two additional criteria: artificial intelligence disclosure and artificial intelligence explanatory statement (See RUBRIC in Appendix A).

RATIONALE: Since ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence chatbot developed by OpenAI was released in 2022, Google’s Gemini (formerly Bard) and Microsoft CoPilot (formerly Bing Chat) both in 2023, educators have been scrambling to figure out how to respond. Little intentional instruction was being offered on the right (and wrong) way to use artificial intelligence in constructing narratives. Do you let the AI do it for you? Or, how do you know if what the AI tool generates is good or bad?

In the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in journalism and

mass communication (JMC), there is ample evidence of the importance of incorporating AI in various spaces across JMC curricular offerings. One of the first articles published on the topic of AI and journalism and mass communication included a call for scholars and practitioners to conduct research on how students understand information powered by AI and delivered in digital platforms.¹ Elsewhere, Yang has argued public relations students should acquire fundamental expertise to work with AI in prompt engineering, which involves crafting precise and well-formulated instructions to get desired responses.²

LEARNING OUTCOMES: While encouraging the use of AI as an assistant, the basic writing learning outcomes don't change. As a "W" designated course, this class requires students to demonstrate proficiency in writing "coherent, logical, and carefully edited prose." Students will be expected to draw on material from the instructor's presentations and assigned readings, and their own research using artificial intelligence to complete four short writing assignments. Relative to the use of AI, three core learning outcomes of this component of the course were: 1) Reframing the use of artificial intelligence in school work products from "cheating" to working efficiently 2) Demonstrating the ways in which artificial intelligence can aid in the brainstorming/drafting and the editing stages of professional writing 3) Developing "best practices" for ethical use of AI through not only disclosure but critical thinking that ultimately improves the work product.

ALIGNMENT WITH ACEJMC VALUES AND COMPETENCIES: The AI-Assisted Writing Assignments help students demonstrate proficiency in three of the 10 values and competencies outlined in Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications' (ACEJMC) Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction:

- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally across communication and media contexts

EVIDENCE OF ELEVATING DIVERSITY WRITING INSTRUCTION: At the time of this writing, the Spring 2025 semester is still in progress. However, three (3) forms of assessment have been completed. Together they enable the instructor to see evidence that the diversity writing instruction has gone to a different level in Spring 2025 (AKA “elevation.”) On the first day of class, an 11-question Artificial Intelligence Survey was administered. A total of 21 students completed the survey with 85% wanting to learn more about artificial intelligence. On the other hand, 65% of the students considered themselves to be “a good writer who doesn’t need assistance of AI.” 15 of the 21 students disagreed with the statement “I regularly use artificial intelligence tools to complete course assignments.” The second form of assessment was a baseline writing assignment. Administered on the second day of class, the assignment required students to write by hand a response to the question “Tell us everything you can think of about your hometown. Explain what makes your hometown great, give at least two (2) examples of fond memories you have and what’s the biggest challenge facing your hometown today?” Only about one-fourth of the class demonstrated issues with sentence structure, punctuation and spelling. Finally, the third form of assessment as of this writing on February 14, 2025 is the first of the four writing assignments, which were completed by 20 of the 25 students registered for the class. Separate from the grading of the assignment, the instructor ranked the two-page assignment as either LEVEL 3- **Well-written** with little or no errors, LEVEL 2- **Average** with one or two grammar or punctuation errors or LEVEL 1- **multiple challenges** with grammar, sentence structure and clarity and conciseness in writing. Eight of 20 students were performing at Level 1. Only two of those eight students used no artificial intelligence in their work. The majority of students were average or above average in their writing. Except for the two who declined to use any AI tools, the students offered thorough discussions of the use of AI in their Essay that focused on “Fault lines Framework” and “Privilege.” (See Examples-Appendix B)

APPENDIX A- Revised Rubric for Writing Assignments with AI Assistance

The overall learning objective

Students will be able to independently use their learning to make media products while embracing the power of artificial intelligence in the process

The specific learning outcomes for the writing assignments:

- Demonstrate understanding of diversity-related concepts (30 points)
- Apply diversity concepts to communication and media subject areas (10 points)
- Present arguments in clear, cogent arguments with both depth and logic (40 points)
- Reflect good grammar, spelling and punctuation in writing (20 points)

****** If AI is used, disclose in a specific fashion not only what artificial intelligence tool was used, but also exactly how it aided in the production of a superior written product. (+20 points)**

UPDATES TO WRITING ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC (Spring 2025 Semester)

Goal: Incentivize use of AI with 20 extra credit points 5 for disclosure, 15 for how well you explain what you did

AI disclosure

Seriously Deficient (0 point) – No AI statement included

Needs Improvement (1 point)– Acknowledgement that No AI not used

Meets Expectations (2-3 points)– Acknowledgement plus stated clearly exactly which platform was used and for what purpose.

Exceptional (4-5 points) Acknowledgement not only gives name of platform(s) and why it/they were chosen, but why they helped in writing

AI Explanatory statement

Seriously Deficient (0 point) – No AI statement included or not used

Needs Improvement (1-5 points)– Brief mention made of prompt used without limited discussion about what was generated or why it helped improvement the writing product

Meets Expectations (6-10 points)– Mention made of prompts used, but little information on what made information useful or not useful, citations were included to sources for information AI tool generated (Regardless of citation style, title, author, date of source is included)

Exceptional (11-15 points) In addition to the prompts used and citations of information, statement provided evidence of critical thinking about the content AI tool generated and how it was integrated with personal writing to complete the assignment

APPENDIX B– Excerpts from Student Descriptions of Artificial Intelligence in Assign #1

"ChatGPT helped me break down fault lines and privilege into more understandable terms by providing me with definitions and applied them to real life instances."

"I found it difficult to use AI for this particular assignment since the majority of its content was reflecting on my personal diversity story."

"I also used ChatGPT to help me figure out what to cut from my original paper as I went from 4 pages to 2. I ran the program over the writing and told it to cut down by 50 words. Each time I had the AI remove words, I re-read the writing to ensure nothing pivotal was removed, then continued until I reached a length I felt comfortable with"

"AI was most helpful in my final paragraph as I aimed to find the right words for describing the stigma around diversity."

"I asked ChatGPT to give me its own definition of diversity, and it gave me the statement that diversity is not only the understanding of differences but also embracing those differences and providing support and understanding for those of minority groups, as mentioned in paragraph one."

"I used AI as a way to check my work and what I wrote. I wanted to write the story from my own mind and what I believed and my own thoughts. I then used Grammarly's AI to help with clarity and issues."

Brainstorming and Organization:

- I used ChatGPT to help me outline my response, ensuring I stayed on track with the specific requirements for each paragraph. For example, it guided me in structuring my diversity story in a clear and chronological way.

Improving Sentence Flow:

- In the paragraph about privilege, ChatGPT helped me clarify how privilege relates to fault lines and articulate my experience with "pretty privilege" in a concise yet meaningful way.

Grammar and Clarity:

- Grammarly was used to check for grammatical errors and refine sentence structure throughout the assignment. It helped me catch small mistakes, like typos and punctuation issues, and suggested ways to improve readability.

Limitations:

- While both tools were helpful, I found that ChatGPT sometimes made suggestions that felt too formal or less personal. I adjusted these parts to make my writing feel more authentic and reflect my voice better.

¹ Luttrell, R., Wallace, A., McCullough, C. & Lee, J. (2020). *The Digital Divide: Addressing Artificial Intelligence in Communication Education*. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* 75 (4), 470-482.

² Yang, A. (2024). *Preparing Public Relations' Practitioners for the AI Era: Advancing Pedagogical Principles in Public Relations' Artificial Intelligence Education*. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695824127768>

HONORABLE MENTION

The Future is Now: Emerging Tech Emerges in Public Relations Curriculum and Career Preparedness

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Abstract: In partnership with the university libraries' educational technology group, a 400-level Public Relations Writing course served as a pilot course in an emerging technology classroom to collaborate and explore the implications of Artificial Intelligence and emerging technology on the curriculum and field of communications. Students gained access to emerging technology equipment and expertise in a flexible space, which aligned with the nimbleness of the pedagogical approach of the design thinking methodology. Student engaged in brainstorming and empathy-based activities involving writing and technology communications to prepare for industry expectations and career opportunities.

Explanation of the teaching practice or activity: With support from the university's educational technology group, students engaged with Artificial Intelligence in writing activities, grammar exercises, brainstorming sessions, and a version of The Turing test to understand how to navigate and ethically engage with AI on assignments. Students also experienced a Virtual Reality workshop with Meta Quest 3 headsets to gain technological familiarity through virtual product demonstrations for a publicity writing assignment.

Rationale: In the 2024 Cision State of the Media (SOTM) report, Artificial Intelligence was cited by 26% of journalists as one of the biggest challenges in the industry (although not cited in the response in the 2023 report). If one assumes that the 42% of the respondents who cited fake news as a concern were also possibly referring to AI-generated news, this number becomes a majority concern (Cision, SOTM). Artificial Intelligence will advance and develop, but it will remain relevant throughout their careers. Students will be expected to successfully implement aspects of emerging technology into their work and display versatility in their methodologies to thrive. To prepare students for industry, educators must teach industry standards. With a field as revolutionary and

unpredictable as emerging technology, the goal becomes to embrace the ethos of change and resiliency through the design thinking methodology of innovation.

Learning Outcomes: Students began the semester having never visited the emerging technology space on campus. Only around 20% had used a Virtual Reality headset (and only recreationally). 50% of the class admitted to using AI on assignments but also expressed concern about ethical use and uncertainty about university and classroom policies. 100% of students had a negative opinion of AI and believed it would replace them in the workforce and ruin their entry-level career prospects.

By the end of the semester, students were writing better and being more creative with the help of AI. The entire class was confident in their ability to use AI and VR for coursework as well as other multimedia technologies and software. Many teams incorporated emerging technology into their final project recommendations. One student even joined the university's IT student technology advisory board.

Another positive outcome of applying AI to coursework was that student assignment scores improved, particularly related to grammar test scores. As a component of course feedback and learning, students were encouraged to run their writing assignments through AI for grammar, spelling and style checks with the requirement that AI show suggested changes and explain or cite the reasoning for such recommendations. Students' scores on grammar quizzes improved from a 75% class average on the pre-test to a 91% class average on the final comprehensive test, as their understanding of grammar rules increased throughout this learning process.

100% of students in the course evaluations agreed that "the overall structure of the course (content and materials, assignments, activities) promoted a meaningful learning experience," citing the VR and AI modules in a PR setting as "most beneficial to our future careers." One student wrote, "I learned how to use new technology, and this was my first time actually immersing myself in things I will be doing." Another added, "We learned how to use AI as a tool which many professors stray away from. AI is the future, so I think it is extremely important to know how to use it." Students have already obtained internships and full-time job offers upon completion of the course.

How the assignment aligns with at least one of ACEJMC's Professional Values and Competencies:

Primarily, the course ethos and assignments align directly with the ACEJMC's competency of **applying tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work**. Students engaged with AI and emerging technology in professional scenario-based exercises. In addition to that competency, students integrated what they learned into how they **write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve**. This competency is of equal emphasis, as the course is the Public Relations writing capstone course. Above all, students learned to **apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work** and demonstrated their confidence in combining all three for a successful semester.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

Assignment Prompt: After experiencing the Virtual Reality hands-on workshop, use what you learned to develop a public relations campaign launching a VR app that allows users to explore your client and engage with the arts community.

Deliverables:

1. Write a proposal to your arts organization director about your VR experience and why you think your client should create/offer one.
2. Write a guide for how VR users will interact with your app, using the skills you learned in class (technical/product writing/FAQ/fact sheet).

Student Work Example:

Part 1: Pitch

To: XXXXX

Subject: Revolutionizing *Hamilton*: A Virtual Reality Experience Proposal

Hi XXXXXX

VR is a modern and exciting way to introduce new people to your organization and put them in an immersive experience that allows them to feel what it is like to be on the *Hamilton* stage. Working with Oculus via Meta, we could create a fun musical adventure. Oculus boasts a

number of well revered games like Beat Saber and Job Simulator, that incorporate popular songs or put people in an interactive game experience, respectively.

By taking advantage of immersive technology, we could increase brand awareness on an international level because users would be able to experience *Hamilton* without being physically at The Public Theater. Additionally, gamification could incentivize users to share on social media because they could unlock new characters and songs.

I'd love to provide you with more details. If you are interested, I can also send over high-resolution images or additional resources.

Thank you for considering this idea. I look forward to your thoughts.

Best regards,
XXXXXXX

Part 2: VR Guide

Welcome to the "*Hamilton: Your Place in the Revolution*" app! This guide will help you navigate the app and make the most of your virtual experience. Below, you'll find instructions on how to interact with the app, along with frequently asked questions (FAQs) and technical requirements.

Downloading the App

The "*Hamilton: Your Place in the Revolution*" app is available for free on the Meta Quest Store. Search for the app and click "Download" to install it on your headset.

1. Setting Up Your VR Space

- Make sure you have a safe, open area for movement while using the app.
- Use the Meta Quest 3's guardian system to set up your play area, ensuring you have enough room to engage fully in the experience.

Interacting with the App

1. Navigation

- Menu Access: Use your Meta Quest controllers to point at the menu icon and press the select button to open the main menu.
- Movement: Navigate the virtual environment using the joystick on the controller.

Engaging with the Experience:

- Character Interaction: Approach iconic characters from *Hamilton* and press the interaction button to start conversations or join them in musical numbers.
- Learning Choreography: Follow on-screen prompts to learn choreography from key songs. Use your controllers to mimic the movements shown in the tutorials.
- Audience Interaction: Experience the excitement of the crowd by participating in ensemble performances and responding to audience cues throughout the show.

FAQs

What if I encounter issues with the app?

If you experience crashes or bugs, restart the app or your Meta Quest 3 headset. Ensure that the app is updated to the latest version in the Meta Quest Store.

Can I use the app on other VR headsets?

The “*Hamilton: The VR Journey*” app is optimized for the Meta Quest 3. While it may run on other VR platforms, we recommend the Meta Quest 3 for best results.

Is the app suitable for all ages?

Yes, the app is designed for users of all ages. However, parental guidance is recommended for younger users to assist with navigation.

How do I provide feedback about my experience?

We value your input! After your session, you can access the feedback option in the main menu to share your thoughts or report any issues.

Is there a community feature in the app?

Yes! Users can connect through our online forums or social media channels to share experiences, tips, and participate in discussions about *Hamilton* and the app.



Standing Committee on TEACHING

AEJMC Award for Excellence in *Teaching*

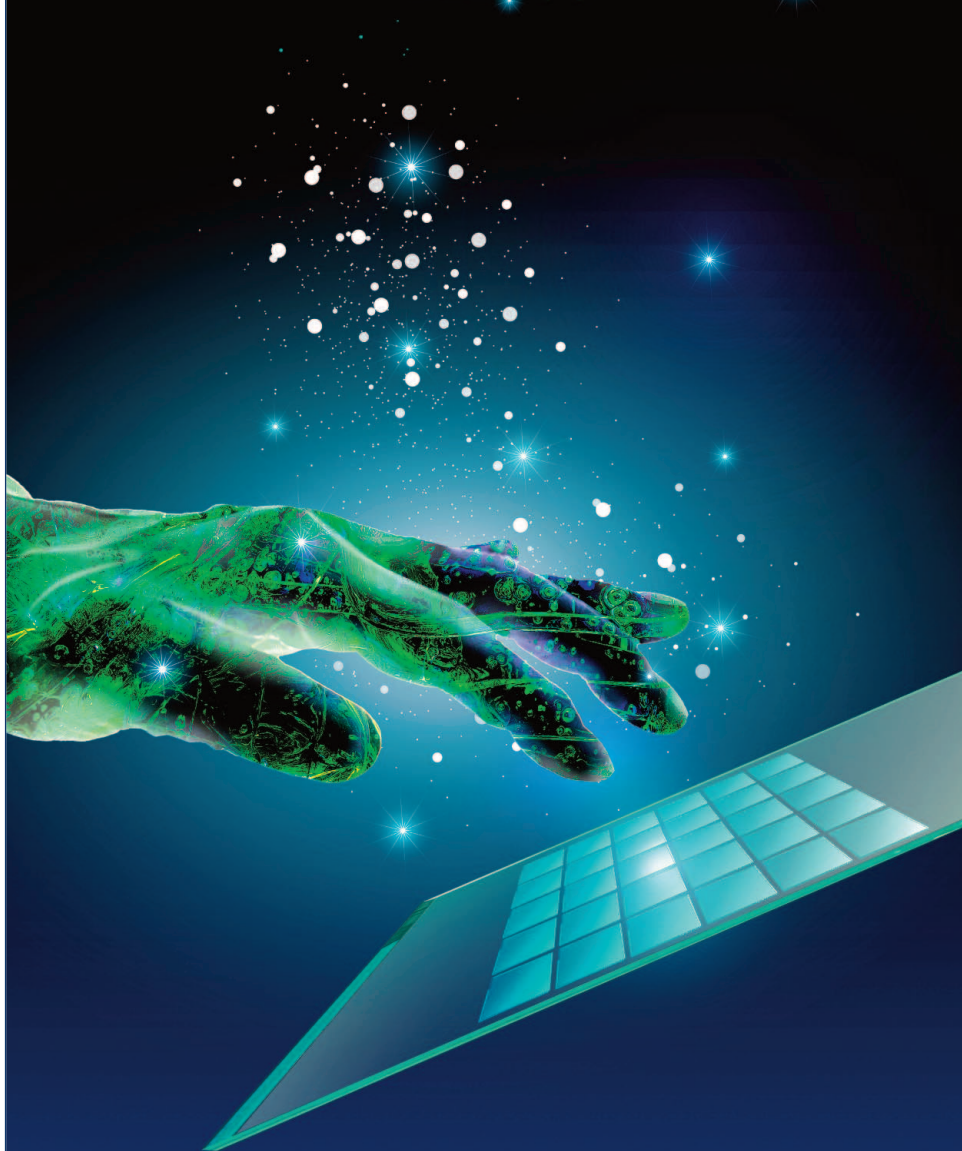
This new award, sponsored by the AEJMC Standing Committee on Teaching, recognizes excellence in teaching in mass communication, journalism, communication, and related fields. The award honors a commitment to teaching that has been transformative and impactful for students, programs, and/or institutions. Educators with a minimum of 10 years of full-time teaching experience at the college or university level are invited to apply. A cash award of \$1,000 and a plaque are included.

Scan for the Full Call



Questions? Contact SCT Teaching Award Co-Chair
Masudul Biswas at masudul.biswas@gmail.com.

Best Practices in Teaching
AI in Action: Best Practices for Enhancing Learning, Engagement,
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