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Preparing Students for the Marketplace and Connections to the AI Revolution

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I am exploring a lesson about Artificial Intelligence that is relevant to mass communication. In this short teaching article, I will comment on an issue affecting the professoriate in and out of the classroom. Many organizations are encouraging humans to think with AI and lean into efficiencies that Artificial Intelligence brings. A recent article published by Forbes cited a memo sent to Microsoft employees, and using AI is no longer optional in the company. The company noted GitHub and Copilot are embedded into daily workflows. Microsoft wants employees to use AI to boost productivity, generate ideas, and problem-solve at speed. Most notably "Microsoft wants its people to treat AI not as a future concept or a tech curiosity but as an everyday co-worker" (Marr, 2025).

As an instructor in the classroom, I struggle with strategies for students to create original work and still consult with AI as a tool to make their work better. To confront this challenge, I created an assignment that is intended for students to first learn about how AI tools are creating efficiencies in organizations then explore AI tools. My goal is to highlight the human creative inputs that design AI applications.

I lecture about both the positives of AI and challenges of AI including ethical implications, environmental implications, hallucinations (Van Wynsberghe, 2021). AI powered systems can hallucinate and provide inaccurate, misleading, or nonsense output (Tilili and Burgos, 2025). Understanding AI hallucinations focuses in on the need for humans to think critically when working with AI tools. Lastly, and most important, the assignment asks students to suggest and creatively think about AI applications for existing organizations. More specifically, I ask students how do they envision working with AI once they graduate and enter the workplace?

My lecture begins with exploring the downfall of the Kodak company. Senior leaders at the Kodak company decided against investing in the digital photography revolution (Prenatt et al., 2015). The inability to adapt to innovation and technological changes are often cited for the main reason the company filed for bankruptcy (Gershon, 2013). This serves as a call to understand new technological innovations and adapt business processes to remain relevant and efficient in the marketplace.

Adapting to the Artificial Intelligence revolution is providing competitive advantages for many companies (Ahmed & Ahmed 2024). Many organizations are learning the importance of leaning into the AI revolution to transform workflows and create new ways of working in the modern world. My lecture then highlights three main case studies: Deep Brew at Starbucks, Mattel's latest AI project, and AI usage at Netflix.

Deep Brew is the AI application that transformed Starbucks. The Deep Brew AI application has provided competitive advantages for Starbucks. Deep Brew leveraged Starbucks' data and allowed employees to focus on customers and positive interactions, all while Deep Brew can schedule employees and maintain inventories (Ullagaddi, 2024). Yang (2024) notes how this application leverages big data and machine learning. The AI program is handling tasks that traditionally took in-store employees away from customers. The Deep Brew AI program is freeing up time for

employees to interact with customers more to provide a much-needed personal interaction with customers (Kotorcheviki 2021).

Mattel is fighting to stay relevant as toy sales are decreasing (Cerullo, 2025). Mattel recently announced a partnership with OpenAI whereby the experience with the brand will be transformed by the infusion of AI into products. In a recent press release about the partnership stated, "The agreement unites Mattel's and OpenAI's respective expertise to design, develop, and launch groundbreaking experiences for fans worldwide. By using OpenAI's technology, Mattel will bring the magic of AI to age-appropriate play experiences with an emphasis on innovation, privacy, and safety" (Mattel, 2025). The Mattel AI usage could entail generative AI whereby toys could potentially communicate with humans, and the AI application would generate the conversation (Pavliv, 2024). The company has been manufacturing toys for more than 80 years and the company highlights its willingness to adopt new technologies.

Netflix is a streaming company that focuses on prioritizing the customer experience. Netflix leveraged AI as an early adopter to understand and cater to customer preferences and offer relevant content to users (Abishek and Judi, 2025). Netflix leverages AI to create marketing materials and to identify people by geographic location who would be best suited to the content (Sevaslidou, Prassa, and Papaioannou, 2024). These examples highlight how companies are using the AI powered applications to improve processes.

In class after the lecture, I will ask students to begin to envision ways other companies can embed AI into their processes. I will ask students to form groups of three students and research three AI models: Gemini, Claude, and ChatGPT. I will ask students to compare their performance, limitations, and the quality of free options. In comparing the models, students will prompt the AI model with the same question in all three applications. Do you get the same response or do the models disagree? Do the AI models "hallucinate" when asked for specific references? Or do the models "hallucinate" when prompted to connect to the scholarly literature?

Lastly, and most important, I will ask students to discuss potential applications for each model in real-world scenarios, such as marketing, branding, content creation, etc. My intention is generating discussions in the classroom about the benefits and concerns Artificial Intelligence brings to the modern business environment. In conclusion, Artificial Intelligence is affecting the professoriate and changing the marketplace at a rapid pace. As an instructor in the collegiate classroom working with a variety of AI tools will begin to prepare students to succeed in the marketplace.

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