

AI in the Classroom: Mini-Lesson Template

Proposed student level/discipline

Objective: The student will be able to...

Hook

Teach/Model

Practice

Debrief & Link

Follow-up: how will you know they have learned?

AI in the Classroom: Mini-Lesson Template

Proposed student level/discipline *freshmen & up, core education courses*

Objective: The student will be able to... *explain in one or two sentences how a large language model generates its responses.*

Hook

Ask: *“When you type a question into Gemini or another chatbot, what do you think it is actually doing behind the scenes?”*

30-60 seconds: students write or draw an analogy

30-60 seconds: students share with a partner and/or report out analogies.

Teach/Model

Ask students to complete the sentence: *‘In college, many students use AI to...’*

State: *“A large language model is a type of AI that has been trained on massive amounts of text to predict the next word in a sequence. You just did what an LLM does—based on everything you’ve seen in language before, you guessed likely continuations.”*

Use an illustration to show that text is split into tokens; each token is turned into a number; based on training data and the question context, the neural network assigns probabilities to what might come next; a token is selected and added to the text; this process is repeated over and over until the next logical step is to stop.

Emphasize that the LLM is not looking up answers in a database and it is not thinking, reasoning, or understanding.

Practice

Students should revisit their analogies.

Ask: *‘Which analogy do you think is the best fit? What would you change to make it more accurate?’*

Have students refine their analogies and share out

Debrief & Link

Ask: *“Given that LLMs are just predicting likely next words, what might that mean for their strengths & weaknesses? What might it mean for using it on {upcoming assignment}?”*

Follow-up: how will you know they have learned? Students will express more understanding of LLM outputs in their discussions and reduce the number of times they personify or assign human attributes to the LLMs.

AI in the Classroom: Mini-Lesson Template

Proposed student level/discipline Any level, any subject matter

Objective: The student will be able to...

Classify AI use cases as *ethical*, *questionable*, or *unethical* and justify their classification.

Hook

Present an extremely unethical use of AI for your subject area. Give students 60 seconds to think and then share out their reasoning for what makes it unethical.

Teach/Model

Introduce a three-tier framework:

Ethical—AI is used transparently, in a way the instructor or institution would sanction, and it does not misrepresent the student's own work or harm others.

Questionable—The use is ambiguous; context, disclosure, or intent would change the verdict. Reasonable people could disagree.

Unethical—The use involves deception, violates course policy, undermines learning goals, or causes harm.

Practice

Give student pairs or small groups one scenario each and ask them to classify the scenario and justify their conclusions. For questionable scenarios, prompt groups to identify what additional context would move it into either the ethical or unethical column.

Groups report out. Record the classifications where everyone can see them. Highlight cases where groups disagreed and draw out the reasoning behind each position.

Debrief & Link

Identify 2 or 3 key principles that emerges, such as transparency, intent, or impact. Link explicitly to your AI policy on an upcoming assignment and ask students to articulate what unethical AI use on that assignment might look like.

Follow-up: how will you know they have learned?

Students apply the framework to their own work and articulate their rationale; students ask more nuanced questions about AI policy and disclosure on future assignments.

Be the Bot Critical Thinking Activity

This activity is from Matt Miller, author of AI Literacy in Any Class

This activity works for any course at any level; the objective is to have students evaluate and justify their position.

- 1) Tell students you are about to ask a LLM a question about the course content, and you want them to predict how it will respond.
- 2) Ask students a question about your course content; the question should be somewhat subjective, relying on judgment or opinion. *For example, 'Who were the three most pivotal people in the Franco-Prussian War?'*
- 3) Have students work in small groups to brainstorm answers to the question and then narrow down what they think the answer is. Ask them to justify their responses with evidence.
- 4) Type the question into an LLM, in exactly the same wording. Allow students to see the answer being generated.
- 5) As a class, critique the AI response. Suggested prompts: what was the format of the response? Are the responses any good (define good!)? Is there anything missing or inaccurate? Did the LLM respond the way we predicted? What information do we think it used to respond?