ENGL 5375-001 and -002
AI and Digital Writing Syllabus
Taming the stochastic parrot.

Summer 2023, July 3-August 3 - Livestream Zoom and F2F (hybrid) - MTWR 1-3:05 - Ferguson 292

ENGL 5375 invites graduate students who want to explore how artificial intelligence tools, particularly generative AI like ChatGPT, are likely to change how we currently write in digital formats. We will discuss how AI and digital writing can be used in education and other professional arenas, and we will analyze the ethical, social, and practical implications of using these technologies.

Throughout the course, we will engage with different theories that will influence our thinking about AI and digital writing and explore how new writing tools impact knowledge-making and innovation. By the end of the course, you will have a better understanding of the evolving landscape of digital writing and be equipped to navigate it in the future.

Short summer courses are intense. However, this course will provide in-class time for reading and completing practice assignments with peer support. As well, we will designate “discussion leaders” who will become experts and lead discussions on only a few of the readings. These techniques help manage the workload.

ENGL 5375 requires students to access a variety of software and online applications. Some of these applications may be paid for by course fees or university license. However, some applications may not. Specific applications used in the course will vary based on availability.

ENGL 5375 – Digital Writing (3 credits) typically meets synchronously via livestream once every week for 150 minutes or twice each week in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final reflection essay. (See above for this summer’s schedule.) Students are expected to complete weekly reading assignments about digital writing. Completion and comprehension of the readings is assessed regularly through seminar style discussions, informal presentations, discussion board participation, and a series of applied projects. Students are required to revise and compile these applied projects into a final portfolio of 16-18 pages or
comparable digital work. Students are also required to complete a seminar-style paper of 10-15 pages. Formal written work over the course of the semester ranges from 30-35 pages. These activities average at minimum 10-12 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

**Required texts**

Coursepack (online coursepack via Brightspace) – will be primarily comprised of recent articles in academic digital writing studies, documentation, and commentary about AI tools, as well as foundational theoretical texts. All will be available via Brightspace and/or the SFA library.

**Student learning outcomes**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:
1. Develop digital writing tool familiarity and skills, including the use of AI-based tools, through hands-on experience in digital writing assignments.
2. Conduct and present research to investigate AI use in digital writing contexts.
3. Evaluate the potential of AI and digital writing technologies to revolutionize communication, collaboration, and creation.
4. Assess the ethical, social, and practical implications of integrating AI and digital writing tools in various settings.
5. Analyze, critique, and reflect on best practices for digital writing through the creation of a paper or project that showcases an ability to question various digital writing tools and/or produce digital content.
6. Develop the necessary skills to navigate the evolving landscape of digital writing and apply these insights to research, projects, or professional practice through the creation of a personal digital writing plan or self-reflection paper.

**Assignments and Grades**

**Reading Discussions – 40%**

Discussion participation includes discussion board participation AND synchronous class discussion. Synchronous discussions will be assigned a discussion leader who will present ideas initiated from the discussion board and be responsible for asking questions that clarify and continue the discussion. Discussion leadership responsibilities will vary depending on the number of students in the course.

- Discussion board participation - 50% of category
- In-class discussion participation - 10% of category (determined by live, active attendance)
- Discussion leader duty – 40% of category
Digital Writing Paper or Project – 40%

Students may complete a traditional seminar-style academic paper that explores an empirical or theoretical question concerning the interplay between AI/digital writing and an aspect of culture. However, students may also take the opportunity to complete a creative or professional project instead. The details of the project may be negotiated with Dr. Parks directly.

Regardless of paper or project, students must complete:

- Paper or Project Proposal – 10% of category
- Narrow Annotated Bibliography of at least ten scholarly sources – 10% of category
- 5-8 page Literature Review – 20% of category
- Final Paper or Project – 60% of category

Applied Assignments – 20%

Applied assignments will allow students to practice digital writing, including AI tools, in a project environment. Since tool availability is rapidly shifting, applied assignments are subject to change and will only be listed on the Brightspace.

Applied assignments will be weighted evenly across the grade category and will mostly be completed in class.

Accommodation Statement

Stephen F. Austin provides students reasonable accessibility accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities or services. Students requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify Dr. Parks and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided.

The full policy is available at:
http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/

SFASU values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
SFASU Counseling Services
www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices
3rd Floor Rusk Building
936-468-2401
Crisis Resources:
Burke 24-hour crisis line 1(800) 392-8343
Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1(800) 273-TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

SFA uses Brightspace by D2L as its virtual course management system. You can locate our course website at MySFA.

This course combines both sections (Zoom section and F2F section) into one Brightspace. Check with Dr. Parks for the course section designation.

Class handouts, assignment sheets, and important documents such as this syllabus will be posted on Brightspace in the content tab.

We will use the discussion board, and other Brightspace features. Assignments will be submitted and you will receive feedback electronically. Look in the assessments tab for submission folders.

Locate the site’s gradebook. You are in charge of checking the gradebook for errors throughout the semester. Please contact Dr. Parks if you see anything that doesn’t look right!

English 5375 is a discussion-intensive class. If you miss class meetings you will miss important information, group work, and practice tasks.

Missed in-class assignments and discussions generally cannot be made up on your own. Therefore, avoid scheduling conflicts if at all possible.

Except for extraordinary circumstances (email your professor) late work is not accepted. This is because the course is scaffolded: you will often need to have completed earlier assignments before being successful in later assignments. This course is also short. If you get behind, your priority should be to catch up ASAP.
Please contact your professor in advance or as soon as possible after you have an extraordinary circumstance occur that affects your performance in this class.

There are no extra penalties for missing class beyond the natural consequences of missing instruction, discussion, and submitting in-class assignments.

**Online meetings**

This course uses Zoom Cloud Meetings for our weekly synchronous class. You can download the Zoom application from zoom.us/meetings. The application is free for your use as a meeting participant.

The Zoom class meeting link will be posted in the Brightspace announcements page and emailed to you.

Students are expected to attend via the modality they requested in registration.

**Academic Honesty**

Work for any course should be newly generated by you for each assignment. Plagiarism involves using another’s work, words, or ideas without correctly giving credit to the author. It is just as serious to plagiarize the work of another student as it is to plagiarize the work of a published author.

Use a standard documentation style to credit your source. If you have questions about correct documentation, please ask!

**General Policy**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp
As of Summer 2023, SFA does not have an AI policy. Obviously, in this course we will be working with generative AI and possibly some other AI tools. Part of the course will center discussing and norming when and how we should and shouldn’t be using AI tools in academics and professionally. If in doubt, ask Dr. Parks and document your process!

**Withheld Grades**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average. Warning: our department chair does not allow withheld grades except in extreme circumstances.

**Schedule - This is all on the Brightspace too – and updated there!**

We have 2 goals: understanding and discussion. Our goal is not to perfectly read every text. In a graduate course, we read **enough** to make connections and mark the ideas and readings to which we want to return. Don’t be overwhelmed. Read **enough** to trace the main ideas and participate in discussion. Mark the readings you will return to for your own goals. Discussions over weeks are recursive – we will return to nearly every topic multiple times with slightly different frames. Making those connections is the point of graduate-level learning!

*Homework is numbered and shaded.* In class planned activities are not numbered. Some days we may not complete all the planned activities in class. Please see the Brightspace schedule for updated class activities and homework tasks.

**Week 1: Introductions (July 3-6)**

Movie suggestion for the week: SUPERINTELLIGENCE (2020) starring Melissa McCarthy

**Monday – to the course**

Review syllabus and Brightspace.
Discuss hybrid grad courses, inclusion, and civility.
Introductions in small groups and whole class.
Create sub-communities/discussion boards based on interest areas.
Review discussion leader assignment and sign up.
Write and submit personal course goal setting. (P/F grade)
Metacognitive pre-writing on AI tools, your existing knowledge, current ethics, interests, etc.
Homework: This is 1 of only 3 days of our class where you will have 0 outside reading for homework! We usually will not have 3 discussion boards. I've set the due time for midnight to start getting us into the habit of being done by midnight... but since we have 3 discussion boards and no class tomorrow, I've set them due for midnight TUESDAY night.

1. Participate in “Introductions” discussion board by midnight.
2. Participate in “Succeeding in a hybrid graduate class” discussion board by midnight.
3. Participate in “Pre-writing on AI tools” discussion board – may copy/paste directly from your in-class writing, which gives you the opportunity to edit it a bit before posting – by midnight.

Tuesday – No class for 4th of July

Wednesday – to digital writing
Dr. Parks will model discussion leader duty: review any concerns or interesting tidbits from the discussion boards.
Discuss content marketing vs. academic text.
https://go.exlibris.link/jrqjFMP!
Discuss the difference and intersection between digital literacy and digital writing.
https://go.exlibris.link/dWXzQP2t
Discuss this article idea by idea.
Freewrite and share – what is digital writing and the concerns in your field of practice?

Homework: Our goal for homework is to understand how current AI works. These readings/videos may not be enough. Dig down into recent explanations of LLMs and generative AI until you think you understand. Then participate in the discussion board.

1. Read the SFA AI models handbook, written by Dr. Parks, Dr. McIntosh, and Dr. Henty.
2. Read Glossary.
5. Read “Generative AI Models Explained.” Altexsoft, 13 Oct. 2022,
   https://www.altexsoft.com/blog/generative-ai/
8. Watch “How ChatGPT Works Technically” ByteByteGo, April 24, 2023. (8 minutes with a good speaker and analogy) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSvTVREwSNw
9. If you need more explanation allow the YouTube algorithm to guide you to more videos, feed questions into an internet search engine, browse social media for other people’s experiences, or ask a generative AI questions directly… but remember not to trust it completely. Remember to keep a list of what you’ve read/watched! Don’t rely on your memory.
10. Participate in “Wait, how does this AI work?” discussion board by midnight

Discussion leader 1 – Prepare to summarize and draw on “Pre-writing on AI tools” and “Wait, how does this AI work?” discussion boards to help lead into and guide discussion on the homework.

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**Thursday – to AI tools and combinations**

Discussion leader 1: Summarize discussion boards and lead discussion on homework. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.

Introduction to Paper or Project.

Read & discuss the OpenAI company about page: https://openai.com/about


Watch & discuss Fridman, Lex. “Stephen Wolfram: ChatGPT and the Nature of Truth, Reality & Computation.” Podcast #376. May 9, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdE-wa5x-d8 (Note: this may be replaced with a more current video for class. Also, this is a 4 hour (!) very dense podcast. The first 20 minutes is what we’ll watch if we watch this.)

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**Homework:** Prioritize finishing your proposal – Due Monday.

1. Participate in the “AI tools in your field” discussion board. This can be an ongoing catch-all for any new tool you find.

5. Participate in “Connections between linguistics, structuralism, and AI” discussion board by midnight. Discussion leader 2 – prepare.

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**Week 2: Innovations and revolutions (July 10-13)**

Movie suggestion for the week: FREE GUY (2021) starring Ryan Reynolds

**Monday – to how humanists think**

Discussion leader 2: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on linguistics, structuralism, and AI. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.

Class guided discussion and analysis of terms of service and user agreements for AI tools.


Time to play with AI tools and/or draft project proposal with in-classroom support. (Using AI tools is optional in this class – there is space for you to decide that you are ethically opposed. You can learn/practice/critique without using them yourself.)

Reminders about paper or project proposal – which should be submitted by class time but we may need a grace period.

**Homework:**


7. Watch this YouTube summary video on the threats of black boxed AI and autonomously updating systems. (25 minute video) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyVH4FbSwFo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyVH4FbSwFo) (Note that the added captions are often poor, but the summary covers a lot of ground — and all the papers discussed are linked in the description.)


**Tuesday – AI as a threat**
Discussion leader 3: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on AI as a threat. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.
Discussion of the threats LLMs, AI, and machine learning pose.
Introduction to annotated bibliography assignment (due next Monday).

**Homework:**


2. Read “Introduction,” and “Writing restructures consciousness” (Ch. 4) Ong, W. (1982) *Orality and Literacy*. Read “The orality of language” (Ch. 1) and “Print Space and Closure” (Ch. 5) if you are intrigued. [https://monoskop.org/images/d/db/Ong_Walter_J_Orality_and_Literacy_2nd_ed.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/d/db/Ong_Walter_J_Orality_and_Literacy_2nd_ed.pdf)


**Wednesday – orality and literacy**
Discussion leader 4: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on orality and literacy.
Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.
Look at Perplexity.ai’s profile feature.

Remind/Troubleshoot annotated bib assignment.
**Homework:** As you read today’s homework, think about what these authors were right about, were wrong about, and how the writing technology resulted in unintended consequences.

1. Read from Plato’s *Phaedrus* on Writing. (ctrl+f “writing” to skip to the parts we will reference – note the introduction is about as long as the text of the Phaedrus!)  
   [https://debaron.web.illinois.edu/essays/pencils.htm](https://debaron.web.illinois.edu/essays/pencils.htm)
4. Watch “Diffusion of Innovation Theory” *Rare.*  
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QnfWhtujPA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QnfWhtujPA) (4 minutes)
5. Read from Rogers, E. (1962) *Diffusion of Innovations* Unintended consequences excerpt PDF.

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**Thursday – diffusion of innovations**

Discussion leader 5: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on diffusion of innovations. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.

[https://doi.org/10.1177/00472816211041951](https://doi.org/10.1177/00472816211041951)


Write our own speculative page based off this text and what we've learned so far.

**Homework:** This homework list works us backwards through time!

2. Watch these two, 5-minute videos from ~20 years ago.  
   Wesch, M. “Information R/evolution.”  
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4CV05HyAbM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4CV05HyAbM)
   Wesch, M. “The Machine is Us/ing Us.”  
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLILGopyXT_g&t=18s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLILGopyXT_g&t=18s)
   [https://www.nngroup.com/articles/hypertext-future/](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/hypertext-future/)
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt0OoxluC8g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt0OoxluC8g) (25 minute video)
5. Participate in “olden days” discussion board. Discussion leader 6 – prepare.
6. Annotated bibliography for the paper or project due Monday.
Week 3: Digital humanities – guest scholar Ericka Hoagland TBD (July 17-20)
Movie suggestion for the week: HER (2013) starring Joaquin Phoenix.

Monday - scholarship from the olden days – hypertext, word processing, and web 2.0
Discussion leader 6: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on older tech scholarship. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder. Watch and discuss 1975’s “What is Word Processing?” Computer History Archives (8 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqTTxLPPE30

Homework: Note there are 2 discussion boards.
5. Watch Stern, J. (2023) I challenged my AI clone to replace me for 24 hours. Wall Street Journal. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t52Bi-ZUZjA
6. Participate in creative writing and AI discussion board. Discussion leader 7 – prepare.
7. Participate in video and deepfakes discussion board. Discussion leader 8 – prepare.

Tuesday – creative writing, video, deepfakes, and AI
Discussion leader 7: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on creative writing and AI. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder. Review 5-8 page literature review instructions.
Discussion leader 8: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on video, deepfakes, and AI. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder. Deep dive on a music or video bot and group open summary for the class.

Homework:


**Wednesday – digital art bots**
Discussion leader 9: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on digital art bots. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.
Show photoshop AI and discuss.
Deep dive on a digital art bots and group open summary for the class.

**Homework:**

1. Read Streitz, N.A. (2007) From human-computer interaction to human-environment interaction: Ambient intelligence and the disappearing computer. *Universal Access in Ambient Intelligence Environments* Conference Paper. [https://go.exlibris.link/hNkWqpTg](https://go.exlibris.link/hNkWqpTg) (Note: this is available through Steen Library. You may need to log in if you are off campus.)


3. Read Cook, Jodie. (15 June 2023) “Train ChatGPT to write like you in 5 easy steps.” [https://www.forbes.com/sites/jodiecook/2023/06/15/train-chatgpt-to-write-like-you-in-5-easy-steps/amp/?fbclid=IwAR1WpXsEDEkXFBZGGxJWMNxyaqU8mDs1zpWl3TtwLbwW1h875ZDLAPI7x_0](https://www.forbes.com/sites/jodiecook/2023/06/15/train-chatgpt-to-write-like-you-in-5-easy-steps/amp/?fbclid=IwAR1WpXsEDEkXFBZGGxJWMNxyaqU8mDs1zpWl3TtwLbwW1h875ZDLAPI7x_0)


**Thursday – human/computer interaction scholarship**
Discussion leader 10: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on human/computer interaction. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.
Built in time that may be moved around for Dr. Hoagland’s presentation.

**Homework:**
1. Literature review 5-8 pages due Monday. Prioritize this! Readings #2&3 and #5&6 directly speak to each other. Read them as pairs! Reading #4 responds to the whole problem.


   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykOtK2sKkyO

   https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1544111


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**Week 4: Pedagogy week** – guest scholar Jason McIntosh TBD (July 24-27)

Movie suggestion for the week: 2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY

**Monday – writing panics**

Discussion leader 11: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on writing panics.

Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.

Demonstration and discussion over the Elicit academic AI tool.

Class guided discussion over the following 4 short articles about ChatGPT and science writing:


  https://www.arthroscopyjournal.org/article/S0749-8063(23)00032-4/fulltext

- Editorial. (24 Jan, 2023) “Tools such as ChatGPT threaten transparent science; here are our ground rules for their use.” *Nature*. https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00191-1

Homework:


2. Built in time to potentially move the readings from class to homework in order to make room for Dr. McIntosh’s visit.

3. Participate in AI writing and plagiarism detection discussion board. Discussion leader 12 – prepare.

Tuesday – AI writing and plagiarism detection
Discussion leader 12: Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on AI writing and plagiarism detection. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder.

Homework:

1. My favorite assignment discussion board.

2. Work on your final paper/project.

Wednesday – AI as a pedagogical opportunity
My favorite assignment show & tell. Dr. Parks will lead discussion.
Practice and test prompt engineering strategies in class.

Homework:


3. Read the White House “Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights” https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/ai-bill-of-rights/

4. Participate in policy futures discussion board.

Thursday – Policy futures
Discussion leader emergency – saved for a person who backs out of discussion leadership earlier in the course. Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on policy futures. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder. If not needed, Dr. Parks will lead discussion.
Draft pedagogy policy and/or workplace policy idea drafts in teams.

**Homework:** finish first/incomplete draft of final paper/project over the weekend. Read ahead if you have time.

**Week 5: Finishing out the course (July 31-Aug 3)**

Movie suggestion for the week: I, ROBOT (2004) starring Will Smith

**Monday – workshop**
In-process workshop/peer review of final paper or project – substantial revision/rethinking expected.

**Homework:**

https://arxiv.org/abs/2305.17493

https://arxiv.org/abs/2306.07899
   Read the authors’ twitter thread for a summary:  
https://twitter.com/manoelribeiro/status/1668986074801098754?s=20


6. Participate in “ruining the tech” discussion board.

7. If you have a lot to revise on your final paper/project, work on that. Otherwise, give yourself a 24 hour period away from it!

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**Tuesday – ruining the tech**
Discussion leader emergency – saved for a person who backs out of discussion leadership earlier in the course. Summarize discussion board and lead discussion on ruining the tech. Specific instructions are in the “discussion leadership” assignment folder. If not needed, Dr. Parks will lead discussion.

**Homework:**
Work on paper or project.
Wednesday – work day
May have “proofreading” workshop based on need.

**Homework:**
Paper or project due Thursday.

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**Thursday – reflection/personal digital writing plan**
Write and submit reflection/personal digital writing plan in class.

Done!

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**Extra resources:**
Dr. Marsden and Dr. McIntosh on the *Axe and Answered* podcast, “Taming the AI beast (or at least buy it a drink): ChatGPT and Faculty.” June 28, 2023. (53 minutes) [https://open.spotify.com/episode/5j5HJm1U41vhH3WM95pxNW](https://open.spotify.com/episode/5j5HJm1U41vhH3WM95pxNW)

Dr. Guidry and Dr. Tasker-Davis on the *Axe and Answered* podcast, “How in the world do we grade this? ChatGPT in the college classroom.” May 23, 2023. (37 minutes) [https://open.spotify.com/episode/3QUQBuXEDTXhMQuzbsMNsB](https://open.spotify.com/episode/3QUQBuXEDTXhMQuzbsMNsB)

Dr. Spradley, Dr. Wagnon, and Justin Hughes on the *Axe and Answered* podcast, “Did a robot write this or am I just that damned smart?: What is ChatGPT and should we be afraid of it?” Parts 1 and 2. Feb 15 and 23, 2023. (51 and 44 minutes) [https://open.spotify.com/show/5MtlRqq2RiSFxFxMvCvfAPRu?fbclid=IwAR2ykqMkhsS5MFykJfJnUVZJYuCuPQXXkHCOzktVAgJ2ndBwIpbdol1qs4U](https://open.spotify.com/show/5MtlRqq2RiSFxFxMvCvfAPRu?fbclid=IwAR2ykqMkhsS5MFykJfJnUVZJYuCuPQXXkHCOzktVAgJ2ndBwIpbdol1qs4U)