

Focus Group 3 (April 24, 2025)

00:00

Interviewer: Okay, yeah, so this one's recording, and I'll record on my computer just in case. Perfect. Okay, so let's get started. So as you know, we're talking about ISP 100 and generative AI, and basically how that's affecting writing at UTM and Sociology, Criminology, Law, and Society. And you know, before we get into specifically those questions, we want to understand what writing was like for you in university. So, yeah, maybe you can tell me a bit about before you came to university, what was your experience like, writing process? Anybody can start.

00:44

Riley: I guess for me, when I wrote essays, it was more like... hamburger style, like very simple, you don't really, you don't really play with, like, other people's opinions. It's just your opinions, you're going straight at it, and yeah, just basically that.

01:11

Dylan: I found that writing prior to university was quite formulaic, and it was sort of this one size fits all model where the teacher, like, like, my high school teachers, they told us, oh, like, you know, like, write however you want, just like, hit these specific goals. But then there was a standard, pre-established that they expected. And, like, sometimes it was just unspoken, but, like, the way they graded it, it was very like they expected a certain thing of you. And sorry, I don't know if you want me to elaborate on how it is in university,

01:48

Interviewer: You can speak, basically go wherever you like.

01:52

Dylan: Okay, yeah. And then the difference that I found in university is that it's very straightforward, but then you do have this personal liberty of writing the way you want. And also, sorry I forgot your name, [crosstalk: Riley]. Riley, like Riley said that there was not much like engaging with the source material. And I find that in university writing, you can you have these different sources, and you don't just have to state your opinion. You also have to, like, put them in conversation with each other. Yeah,

Interviewer: Alina, anything to add?

02:26

Alina: Personally, I feel similarly in the sense that, like it was kind of formulaic. Before universe University, we had kind of like this, you know, point proof, like, you know, kind of format to follow an example. However, now I feel like the biggest difference that I notice is in high school, we used to have these, like hooks, these introductory sentences that were supposed to like, hook you in. And in the case of university, most of the times, our professors are like, we just need one sentence for a thesis. So you don't even need an introduction paragraph. You could just jump right in, like, I'm going to be talking about this in my paper, and that's how you start. So the tonality is quite different.

You kind of were like telling a story in high school, whereas in university, you're kind of more like informing,

03:22

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you. And then how did you find writing in high school? Did you enjoy it? And if you did, what did you enjoy about it?

03:30

Riley: Writing in high school was, like, very flexible. It was kind of like anything that you really want to write. It was more like storytelling, playing more with your imagination, and just putting it all down on a piece of paper basically.

03:49

Dylan: Yeah, I quite enjoy writing like, just like English as a whole, but like writing, yeah, it was, it was very fun, because English is not my first language, it's more interesting to me. So I could, like every time I have, like, these different ways of forming a sentence, you know, with all the knowledge I have, which, like, I enjoy the creative process.

04:18

Alina: I feel like in high school, it was a little bit easy and convenient to kind of just write, because you didn't really have to study for it. You didn't have to put too much thought into it. But that also kind of became a building block, because when you came to university, you seriously had to step up. So in a way, I felt a little bit disappointed, because, like, a couple years of writing in high school was pretty much the same. Like, there was not too much growth from like, say, eighth grade to like 12th grade, other than the addition of like, you know, trying to understand rhetoric, the writing still stayed pretty much the same.

04:55

Interviewer: Yeah. And then thinking about the transition to university, I. When you were in high school, did you have any sort of expectations of what writing in university would be like,

05:08

Alina: To be honest, no, like, I don't think I like, I just knew, like, okay, there's university and et cetera, but I didn't know what to expect. And I also didn't know how much writing can differ in different you know, settings simply because, like, say, as someone who has taken courses in sociology, psychology, philosophy and also political science, the tonality of my writing in each and every course is different. Like, for sociology, I'm more so like, you know, kind of doing this, like, say, like broad observational analysis, but in the case of political science, it's more so comparative and analytical. And in the case of philosophy, it's a lot more free and opinionated, but a lot more stricter on the actual vocabulary they use, because you can't just freely use "and" and also use "or" because what you imply is, like, you know, one or the other. But those are things that I didn't really have to consider before writing in high school, simply because writing was the same, no matter what subject you were in.

06:17

Dylan: Yeah, I had a similar experience where, like, I found that every course, like differs in their expectations, like with the writing style and like the even like citations. You know, it's like APA, ASA, like switching between those two. But I honestly thought in high school that University writing would be harder, because I guess, like, the nature of my major, everybody in this major is kind of a good writer, so it's like all the good writers in one class. So I thought it would be competitive, but I feel like it's fine, yeah.

06:59

Interviewer: Anything to add, Riley?

07:00

Riley: Yeah. Just to piggyback after what Dylan and Alina said [short pause] yeah. writing in high school, it was really kind of like more of a one size fits all. So when I came to university, I did expect it to be a little bit harder, but I wasn't expecting like, this huge gap between, like, writing in high school versus university, because I feel like when I was in high school I got away with a lot more than when I came to university, like it really showed within like your grade and how, like, much it dropped. Feel like grades in high school was pretty much inflated. And when you get to first year, your professors, your TAs, they really give it to you, like, Okay, well, this happened, but then you're in high school, it's like, okay, well, I thought I did good. This is how I usually write. This is what was acceptable. So, yeah.

07:59

Interviewer: Right. Sounds like the higher standard? Yeah, yeah, okay. And then when you were in high school, do you remember kind of the process you had when you were writing assignments, sort of the research process?

08:15

Alina: It was very much kind of like following, like an outline, maybe drafting out like a thesis sentence, like a hook, kind of like following a little chart of like, this can be my first point. This is going to be like the proof for it, the example and etc. So I feel like, in a way, that process may have carried on to university, but in a different format, where, essentially the first step of writing for universities, I have to go and read all of the readings. And like, you know, try to bring as many quotations that I think would be relevant in. Then I have to kind of draft my thinking around it and see whether all those quotations fit in and which ones don't make it. So in a way, like, I feel like we're kind of following a different step. So instead of like, you know, kind of drafting out my topic and then my proof, I feel like I have to gather the proof first and then draft out my topic in what shape it's going to be.

Dylan 09:18

[Short pause] I feel like my writing process hasn't really changed much. So I have this process, and it's not the one, the one that was recommended to me by my high school teachers. They recommended the one that Alina said, like making an outline, but mine is more like.. so I'll be given

a topic, and then I'll just, like word vomit on like a blank piece of paper, like everything that I know about it and everything that I want to say. And then I'll go back and do the readings and, like, make my arguments like points, however many points I need. And then find specific evidence, and then, like, also do a word vomit of all the reasoning, and then I'll just, like, go on Docs and just start writing a rough draft. So I don't know, I feel like that works for me. If I do a formal outline, like, it's never gonna get done, because then I would also have to think about the outline. Yeah.

Riley 10:23

Well, I feel like, for me, it kind of is catered to how the professor wants things. Because I feel like every professor or TA, they have like, their own outline, so I kind of like switch it up to how they like it and see, like, how I just add my own twist to it, basically.

10:41

Interviewer: So, yeah, thank you. Okay, so I think we can move on to questions about ISP100. Do you remember what term you took the course in?

10:56

Alina: I took the course in, I believe last summer.

11:02

Interviewer: Oh, okay, yeah, so not in the fall, not in the winter, but last summer?

11:05

Alina: I did take it before in the fall, but at that time, I was very sick, so I had to drop out of it. I couldn't continue with my studies at that time, so I could only maintain, like a lower course load. So I ended up dropping out of it. I took it in the summer, but I didn't have such a great experience with it actually. I was kind of disappointed by the course.

11:28

Interviewer: Yeah, we'll definitely get into that. Do you remember what term you took it in?

11:33

Dylan: I took it fall semester, first year. So, yeah, the first term.

11:39

Riley: I took it first year, winter semester.

11:44

Interviewer: Yeah. So we have a diversity.

11:47

Alina: I think we also may have entered in different years, because when I entered university, ISP was not a mandated course. So it was actually, I think, in my second year, when I found out, like,

okay, this is going to be a course that I have to take now. So hence, I completed it like, you know, end of my second year.

12:06

Interviewer: Okay got it. Well, you took it, that's what matters. Okay. Now we also want to know if the timing was right. So I know kind of it was taken at different times, but what did you think about the timing of when you took it? Was that the right time do you think?

12:22

Riley: Well, for me, I felt like it was the right time, because first year, it was kind of iffy for me, especially workload, but second semester, I kind of got the gist of it. It was very late, that's what I remember. But like, I think I had a good professor, and then, because I did a lot of English writing course, so when I went to ISP, I kind of knew what he was talking about, because a lot of tips and advices that he was giving me kind of reflected in my writing skills. So yeah.

12:59

Dylan: It was kind of the same for me, but I think it was better to take it fall semester first year, so it's like, right as you enter university. So yeah, and I think a lot of the skills that I was taught, like, I personally enjoyed that course, like I had a great prof, and um, the skills were, I did learn new skills. Like there were a lot of a lot of the skills were helpful, but I also feel like a lot of them I already had. So it was kind of easier to breeze by just in the first semester.

13:36

Alina: Conversely, since I entered into 2022, at that time, ISP was not really required for my major, so I never took it in my first year. It was only my second year, 2023, when they kind of started becoming like, okay, we do have to actually take this course to graduate from my major. That's when I took it. And because of that, I did not think the timing was right, simply because it would make a lot more sense to have like a university writing course in my first year, but because it was only mandated, like, you know, in my second year, it was kind of like completing something off a checklist, like it wasn't necessarily something I enjoyed. And also, in regards to like, because the course format was a lot of like rhetoric and readings of that kind, at that point, I had already become accustomed to like university readings, university writing. So I was not able to actually write that freely. I had forgotten how to like, you know, be creative with writing again *[laughter]*.

14:33

Interviewer: University beat it out of you *[laughter]*. Yeah, so now I invite you to talk about what you thought of the course, just generally.

14:44

Alina: Okay, so I'm just going to start off I was disappointed, like I do think I really appreciate the idea of having a university course and a writing course, and it is amazing as a gateway into like kind of writing for your principles. However, I did not think it really resonated with my principle whatsoever. Like, because I am in social sciences, you would imagine that there is actually a lot of writing, but yet it did not really resonate in the sense that it was a lot of rhetoric. And I like the

creative like, you know, assignments of like, okay, DCA discussion, etc. But none of the rhetoric is actually really present in any of my writing for university, like, none of my professors either ask for it as well. So I feel like what I would have appreciated was if ISP was catered more towards like, specific major. So like, ISP could have had like, it could have been like, maybe ISP, like P, like for political science, or it could have been like, ISPH for like, humanities, but in the sense that it would have writing a bit more catered towards, like, kind of the actual study that you want to do. So for me, it would have been a bit more analytical, a bit more like “They Say, I say” kind of thing and kind of also how to, when you are asked to, it's not that often, but maybe it happens in our third years. But when you are asked to, like, kind of state your opinion, instead of just like, kind of restate someone else's, how do you make a strong point? Those kind of things like those kind of analysis would have been a lot more helpful than just kind of, like, you know, going into, like, a whole DCA discussion or, like, in, I don't, like, although I did do that course, I did do all the rhetoric. I don't think I ever really took away that much from that course.

16:40

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you for sharing. [pause] Take your time. Riley, do you want to share?

16:53

Riley: Yeah, sure. Alina, she did say some really great points in it, like how it should be more specific to the course [*unclear*], like, political science, humanity, sociology, because know what, now, just thinking back on it, like learning about these things were good, but, like, I don't really see myself talking about much about discourse analysis within my SOC writings, so, but I know they did touch on, I guess, like words in their actual meeting because a lot of people, when they write, they just put down any words, they put like ‘and’, ‘or’ ‘whether’ ‘either’ and, like a lot of us, like, they all have their different meanings at the end of the day.

17:41

Dylan: Sorry, could you repeat the question?

17:43

Interviewer: Yeah, what did you think of the course? Like, generally?

17:48

Dylan: I feel like my opinion might be a little bit convoluted, just because I enjoyed the class. Like, course itself, you know, the prof and lectures, like, I don't know if I necessarily liked the content, like I do like Alina's point that like the things about, like rhetoric, and then there was another, like the threshold concepts or something like, I don't think I ever revisited them in my other writings. And also, like, as much- as fun as it was to have all these different sort of writing directions, like with the discourse analysis and, like, general analysis and stuff, I feel like it wasn't really targeted. And if I was somebody who had weak writing skills prior to that, I feel like I wouldn't really learn how to actually write academically. It was more so just like brushing up on skills and like, you know, like learning these new concepts, and at that point, I feel like, at one point, I felt like it was [*laughs*] no different than high school, like, where it started feeling very formulaic. Because I feel like at that time, I also had these other courses that also required writing, and it was just so different from ISP

that I felt like it was just another course that I was taking, just another writing course. So yeah, I think it just added onto the workload at one point, which was a little bit frustrating. But I just wish the concepts were a little bit more relevant, especially to our major I feel like, we're all in Crim, right, so, but like, everybody's minoring in different things, and like, it was, again, kind of establishing that one size fits all model, which I just, I really did not enjoy. But other than that, I think there were some valuable skills, like, especially the things about AI. I think my prof talked about AI a lot, and it was, I guess, fun to talk about that, because he offered, like, different perspectives for it. And, yeah, he would just, he would just tell us, like, you know, I think when you're starting out, it's very intimidating having, like, a blank piece of paper so just, like, write whatever you want, you know, just so you can at least get out of the writing block, which, I mean, I already did, but, but it was nice, yeah.

20:23

Interviewer: Thank you. Did anybody take any other writing courses? I know some people have taken ENG1XX. Did anybody take anything else? [Riley: I took ENG1XX] What did you think about that course, especially in comparison with ISP100?

20:39

Riley: I think I feel like more English course, well, from the ENG1XX it did get into, like university academic writing. It talked about passive writing, active writing, and as well as a structure for essay writing, I think so, yeah, it's been quite a while.

21:05

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. But what was your impression overall? Do you- did you like it better, the same, worse than ISP?

21:11

Riley: Umm it was very- well, I'm not really someone who really likes to do a lot of writing, but it was very eye opening because it, again, it's very different from the high school writing. And it did show you where a lot of areas where I was actually could use a lot of improvement. And so it was like, I guess a course there to help you really improve in your writing. So that's how I took it.

21:38

Dylan: I didn't take ENG1XX I took ENG1XX it's like, downtown, I think it was called *[name of course]* but it was like, very different writing than ISP, because I feel like ISP was still kind of straightforward, whereas ENG1XX was like about literature. So it was engaging with the books that we had to read. And it was, it was that was closer to high school writing since high school English was a lot like, you know, talking about Shakespeare and like all of that. So, yeah, I feel like I enjoyed English 1XX more than ISP.

22:20

Alina: And although I did not take any literature or ENG courses, I did take a seminar course the UTM courses, and I took a course based on indigenous people in films. And I feel like that course actually taught me a lot about writing in sociology, simply because we kind of had, like, you know, materials, especially video, materials to kind of like interact with and also reference in our writing,

and the professor kind of like, you know, kind of made it actually really easy to kind of follow, like a whole, “They Say, I Say” analysis. But in certain of our assignments, we were specifically asked to interact with our own opinions more and kind of like back them up with the sources, which is actually kind of like what ended up being my writing experience with the rest of my university as well.

23:15

Interviewer: Okay, okay, so do you think the course—referring to ISP100—helped change your writing the year that you took it, or, I think in your case, maybe the next year since you took it in the summer?

23:33

Alina: No, like it simply did not, because it wasn't what I was writing about at all. It didn't concern any thing. And I couldn't have possibly used that rhetoric in my writing for sociology or political science courses. It just didn't make sense for me to follow the format, especially the whole like, you know, kind of the concept of like genres, sub genres and etc., they didn't really relate that much. And rather talking about the topics as like, specifically, as I did in the DC analysis for and the genre analysis for ISP, it didn't correlate. Because if I were to talk about communities and their sub genres as like, you know, as extensively in my paper, I would be called out for not actually thinking critically about them so it never really carried on after the course.

24:29

Interviewer: Thank you.

24:32

Dylan: I would say yes, I remember my prof telling us about this one thing that was like at the beginning of your paragraph, and the end of your paragraph should be your words, because that's the most impact that you can put on the reader. And nothing is stronger than your own words, you know. And then the middle, you can talk about other people's writing or bring in quotations, whatever, right? But the beginning and the end should be your words. And I feel like I've adapted that into every single piece of writing that I've produced like so far in university. So I would say it was helpful in some regard.

25:16

Riley: I'd say just a little. I mean, there's some things that really stuck to me where I felt like, okay, maybe I can apply here or there. But I think really, what really helped for me is like when they had the librarians come in during class and they do a breakdown on how, what not to do, how to avoid the hamburger essay and how to, like, use counter arguments and how to engage with them, because they had these slides that, like, kind of provide a format, and it broke it like, it really broke it down for all of us new to university writing, where, like, I would use that format, I would try to fill in the words within it, see, like, how I can play with it, or how I'm like, kind of have the same structure as they would write it. So, yeah.

26:12

Dylan: I would like to add that there was this wonderful philosophy course that I took. It was called “Critical Reasoning,” and it was basically kind of teaching you, like, how to make your arguments stronger and like, weaker. And I feel like that helped me a lot too. This is like unrelated, but I do wish that something like that could be implemented into ISP to actually teach us valuable skills about how to create your arguments on like, the fallacies that you can, like, commit and like how it makes-breaks your arguments. So, yeah, I feel like if, if something like that was being taught like, I would probably take away more than I did.

26:53

Alina: If I could add on to that. I also took two philosophy courses, and they actually helped me a lot with, like, you know, making my arguments stronger too. One of them was PHL113, and the other was PHL244, which is human nature. It was a different kind of study, but the PHL113, specifically helped me with my arguments, in the sense they kind of taught you to actually like how to be concise in papers. But also have, like, a strong paper, have like your voice be heard, and also had to, like, you know, be able to write about multiple different essays and at the same time, but still have the essence and what words, words matter, what words shouldn't be used in writing. So, for example, the whole fallacy of like ‘and or either’ kind of like, you know, where to place your sentences for them to have the most impact, and also how to reference philosophers without it being to, kind of like, you know, just like, I'm just quoting them to kind of like, even if you were to paraphrase, how do you paraphrase creatively? How do you add on to the idea that those philosophers had? So that course actually taught me a lot, and I did take away a lot of the writing material, and like everything that I learned from it to my other courses.

28:12

Dylan: There's also a big thing that they prioritize in those philosophy courses that I feel like would be so helpful in ISP, it's teaching people how you don't have to, like, use all this jargon just to, like, get your point across. Like, it's very straightforward, just, you know, like, straightforward, while still being concise and to the point and engaging. And, yeah, and it's also, I guess, they also taught this in ISP, which I should have mentioned, which was, imagine your audience prior to your writing and starting your writing process, because that helps a lot. Like you're not just like I, I mean, I guess it like, personally, I feel like sometimes it defeats the purpose, because I just write for my prof, for the TA, because I feel like they're the ones who are grading it. So it's like, pointless who I'm writing for, but, um, but that does help. Yeah, that helps sometimes.

29:07

Riley: I would like to say the same thing for SOC2XX. Like one thing the professor told me- this was a fundamental class to teach you, kind of like, how to write. And that's one thing that they did. They broke down, like, how not to sound, so, I guess, deterministic, or how not to be, like, don't like, exaggerate or say things that are not there, because sometimes people can write their feelings and it's not really factual within their writing. So yeah, they broke that down. And as well as, like, just writing, talking about, like, how to do a comparative analysis, or just doing like, or just analyzing one theory, so it's like a lot of compare, contrast, that type of stuff.

29:58

Alina: Personally, I also would like to add that. Sorry, just a second. I just forgot what I was gonna say, yeah, but it was about the- imagine your audience. Yes, that was something that we had briefly discussed in my ISP course as well. And I feel like in a way, it because of, just like, you know, having taken it like, a bit later, I did already have to do that, but it did kind of like, also teach me, in the sense that all of my assignments, even if they're in different courses, one thing I always have to consult with the TAs is, like, how much in depth do you want me to go with this topic? Like, do you want me to explain the topic as if you're a new reader or if you're already informed about the topic? So in the sense that the tone kind of changes, like, because I do consider, like, an academic, formal tone, like, even if it's just my prof and TA reading it, that it needs to kind of like, you know, address, like, the same type of issues. However, one thing that does change is, like, based on the perception of the TAs is whether or not how broad, like, you know, just how knowledgeable I want to consider my audience to be. So in the sense that some TAs have actually told me that what matters more is my analysis than, like my retelling of the reading material. So they don't, like some professor's value, kind of like, you know how well you know your material. So in those cases, you, they want you to restate and, in a way, paraphrase. But in some in some courses, they want your critical opinion a lot more than they want your knowledge of the material. So they want you to build upon that knowledge. So in a way, they don't want you going in and retelling them like, oh, this is the concept of this is that they just want you to get into it right then, assuming that the audience already knows what I'm talking about. So that is something that I feel like I've made a habit of asking every time before any of my assignments. And I feel like it would also be helpful if it was a bit more known.

32:10

Interviewer: You mean in general, like in terms of perhaps even being in the instructions or...?

32:15

Alina: Kind of, yeah, like, what kind of voice to assume? Like, do I want to assume that my audience already is knowledgeable about this subject? Or do I want to assume that I'm telling my audience for the first time? For example, in one of my courses, those instructions were very easily handed to me in the sense that some assignments, or, like, say, even questions on the exam would be like, how would you explain this concept to your grandma? How would you explain this concept to like, a five year old? So it kind of assumes that the knowledge of the audience is not that knowledgeable. But in the other hands, for some courses, I've kind of had to ask, because it's been like a shorter paper, like, like, do you want me retelling? Do you want me to do the critical analysis? Because we don't have space for both.

33:02

Dylan: I would like to add like so in ISP, we had this thing where the profs would provide us with templates as instructions as well, or like really detailed instructions. And I quite enjoyed that. And it was actually surprising to find that in some other courses, the instructions were so vague that I was just like, what am I supposed to write, you know, and like, I think that just having some like deep, not so much, but like, detailed instructions, and even like sometimes templates was so helpful in making it clear what the profs or the TAs want from us. And also, like, even if templates are not available, just making the instructions more detailed. Like, I don't know if it's university policy or like, if the profs have, you know profs have the freedom to do whatever, but like, I think instructions

should be more detailed for like every assignment, and because I feel like that just improves, improved my writing so much. Yeah.

34:10

Interviewer: I'm wondering, because this came up in other focus groups so far, what about the length of lectures themselves?

34:26

Alina: [Short pause] I feel like I've been in lectures that are often, like, two hours plus, and I've had some experiences with them, but oftentimes I would appreciate if lectures were a bit more like, you know, two hours, or like, a bit less simply, because I do not think that, and most people have the attention span for like, three hours, there is a point of time where you just kind of like, start zoning out, especially towards the end of the class. So, or maybe separate the portions of like, okay, this is lecture time, and this, like activity time and etc. So kind of like, switching things up and switching up the pace would be helpful. But I'm not necessarily, like, I don't necessarily mind the three hours, but it's just like, if it's just you sitting in the class and listening and listening, there's a point that I will zone out. So maybe incorporating more exercises, or, like, you know, a discussion portion that would also be helpful. I did have that in my classes, so in the sense that we would study, and then we would discuss for a specific period of time, and then we'd also have like free time to kind of work on our assignments. So that did help to kind of break down the speed of how we are actually processing things. It didn't just feel like we're flying away through the course.

35:43

Dylan: Yeah, my prof implemented us a similar format, but still, like, I feel like the three hours, like my attention span is not even that short, but it's just like, like, I think it's because I had a psych lecture just before that was also three hours. So just sitting for six hours, it was like, I felt like I was gonna develop, like the joint pain or something. I don't know, but it was just like, even with breaks, like I was wishing it was, like separated into two days or something, but, but I don't know, I I feel like it maybe it was just my situation, having to sit for six hours, but it wasn't necessarily bad, yeah? But, um, yeah, I do wish it was. It was kept to like, at least two and a half hours, but, but it was fine, yeah?

36:36

Riley: Well, just to summarize what was been said, I feel like what's been happening is just a lot of passive learning, like we come there, we sit down, and most of it's just readings, and then the professor goes on the board and talks, write things down, and it just, it feels like it's dragging out, like what I did notice- and what they're saying it's more like interactive, like active activities or discussions, just like more hands on activities, I feel like during it, when we're also like getting up. I know from one of my SOC2XX course, my professors, she wouldn't just let us sit down there in the class and just read and read while she's just talking. She will also make time for like, how are we applying this? Like, you know, she would give us, like a worksheet, and then we'll get into like groups and stuff. And we're kind of learning. We're trying to apply what she said to like, how we can, like, use it to something else. And I feel like, when we're doing that, that's when we are, like, understanding the most. Because I feel like, if we're just sitting on there, taking it in, you know,

[laughs] sometimes go in one ear, come out the other, and then, like, sometimes people forget. But like, we're doing it in the moments and just like, using, like, kind of, like, trying to understand it.

38:04

Interviewer: Thank you. That's very helpful. Okay, so now I want to move on to writing supports that you've used. That could be, you know, first year, second year, I think third year- you're in third year? [Aline: yeah] Yeah. So it could be also third year. So writing supports in general that you've used. So the writing centre, the Robert Gillespie Academic Writing- Academic Skills Center. Have you, either of you, all of you used it?

38:31

Alina: Um, yeah, I think I've made a couple appointments, not too many, though.

38:36

Dylan: I've never visited.

38:39

Riley: I've used it once in first year. I did once when I tried to book on my own. I didn't really had too much of a good experience, because I felt like I didn't learn anything. But there was this one that they did have, like a drop-in. It was with a class, like, booked it. I did went into that one, and I felt like it was more helpful because it was catered to like the people who are helping already knew about the course content, what the students were doing, what the professor or the TAs wanted. So it was like a drop-incater to us and with people who help you, who already know what exactly is going on in the class, how the professors and TA want you to write it in ways that you will like do good in the course.

39:34

Interviewer: And Alina, you used it, you mentioned, a couple of times?

39:38

Alina: So basically, I also made an appointment in my first year, but I also had a drop in session in my appointment. Similarly, I did not really feel like I was actually helped that much, or I received that much advisor feedback, but when I dropped in with my seminar class, it did feel like because of the instructors kind of knew what we're coming in, what the course was about. They were able to help us a lot more and like, provide constructive feedback is in terms of, like, what helps our assignment, what doesn't help our assignment. And I feel like that is something that, like the RGC, could have been implemented with, and it also maybe is difficult for them to be on, like, caught up with, like, course concepts and etc., if it is done like, you know, there's like, a tiny center for, like, so many students. So even when you want to book an appointment, it's actually very hard.

Interviewer 40:36

And Dylan, since you haven't used it, I'm wondering if there's a specific reason why you didn't?

Dylan 40:44

It was just, I think, just time management. I would just have so many assignments together that I would all be working on them, like, at the same time. Like, I do remember this one time I did try to book it, but then it was just the timing difference, like I couldn't make it, like all the timings available was when I had class, so I couldn't fit it into my schedule. And yeah, I just, I kind of just got through the years of the writing, just myself. And yeah, like I went to one office hours with Prof, and I feel like I'm pretty good at just self-regulating I guess, but, but I do believe it was my fault, mostly because of time management. But I would be open to go try it out in the future, though.

41:39

Interviewer: And does anybody rely on peer editing. So maybe you send a peer a draft and get some comments from them.

41:47

Alina: I used to in high school, but not in university, simply because it is, like a big thing about academic integrity and like, you know, not necessarily sharing our homework and etc. I feel like, if I were to peer edit, I just do it myself. I don't rely on other people. And also, because there's so many assignments, no one really has the time.

42:08

Dylan: Yeah, yeah. I used to in high school as well. I think it was, like, made into the criteria to peer edit, but, but not really anymore. And it's also like, personally, my friends also are in like, different majors, and a lot of them don't know how to write either *[laughs]*. So I don't even know. But also, I mean, like, I'm a tutor, and I feel like I just, I know how to look for my own mistakes at this point, so I just kind of just go by with it, yeah.

42:44

Riley: I guess it's like, how comfortable you are with other people looking at your work. I rarely do peer edit my work. The only time I do that is when, like, in class or in tutorials, they say, "Okay, guys, now we're going to do some peer editing, have people look over your work." Sometimes they will have it done. Most cases, they're a little bit behind, they won't have it done. So it's kind of like iffy iffy *[laughs]*.

43:17

Interviewer: And what about Grammarly? I know it's pretty popular for getting some editing. Do you use Grammarly?

43:23

Alina: I tried it out in high school. I did really find it helpful. Because while I do understand, like, you know, kind of the use of it, etc., it sometimes wasn't helpful, simply because I was able to regulate that much on my own, just going through my own work twice. However, also the fact that, like, it, soon after, became paid for most of the suggestions that I would want to maybe to, like, avoid passive voice and etc., because sometimes when I'm writing, I don't necessarily recognize when I'm using passive voice, but things like that, like, I- it used to be free in high school, but like, it became paid and I didn't need it in high school. And maybe when I do want to regulate my work now or run it

twice, when I don't have the time, then it's just not available. So I just kind of rely on myself, or I just submit that assignment as it is.

44:17

Dylan: No, I used to use it in high school, but, like, I think it was like for a month, but, but I really hate it, because it just like, at some point it it, it suggests so much that it just changes your writing completely, which I really hate. And also sometimes it just it tweaks out, like it starts, but like, it starts red underlining things that aren't even wrong. It just like it makes it so frustrating. Yeah.

44:47

Riley: Same. I didn't try it out in high school. I tried it out actually in uni, but I felt like what you guys were saying, it kind of like when you take a few words out of it, kind of like changes, like your whole idea, the message that you're trying to come across, it just became, it was very annoying after [laughs].

Dylan 45:12

It also like really pushes you to ensure conciseness, and then it just makes it so, like robotic sounding, and it just, it's like a two year old writing like, just for the sake of conciseness, it just, it's terrible. Nobody should use it.

45:31

Interviewer: Thank you. Okay, and then we can talk about, if you remember the last writing assignment that you wrote. I'm just curious to learn about your process, so maybe you can walk me through like, you know, you look at the instructions and then, how does your writing process work?

45:47

Alina: My last assignment was actually kind of final paper. It was for an international law course, and basically all we had to do was we were given a list of topics, like 45 possible topics we could have done. And the topic that I chose was to kind of consider the proceedings and like, you know, explain the like, you know, all the different like peacemaking and international law, especially concerning like the UN Security Council, the whole intervention law and peacemaking in like pending cases at the ICJ- so the International Court of Justice- and the specific countries that I looked at was Gambia and Myanmar for genocide prevention. And because of that, most of the assignment actually just was me, like, kind of figuring out how to read the case itself, because it was a lot of legal proceedings, so kind of having to put it like, you know, a lot of like, okay, Googling, what is this? What does this mean? What does that mean? Like, explain the context of this, and etc. And then kind of like, you know, also going back and looking at all of my courses, course readings, to see which one applies which one doesn't. And it was a lot more of that than actually writing. And when I came to writing, I felt like there was just so much to explain that I ended up going over the word limit. So the word limit was approximately like 350 words a page for like 12 pages, that's like around 4200 words. My final edit was 5200 words. I just could not possibly have in everything that I wanted to if I had to shorten anymore, and I felt like perhaps it is possibly because of the nature of the professor and their course, they made the assignments to be a lot more engaging and kind of like a project that you take away. And that was also the case with this. I have taken this prof in

another course, another international law related course, like last semester, and it was a very similar project, a policy brief. I've never done a policy brief before, so kind of like, you know, being the one to be like, "Hey, your government needs to do this, and this is how you're going to implement it." But because of that, I feel like it was okay, because it was with that prof, that I could kind of like, you know, go over and, like, explain the ideas. And he did kind of value, like, our voice, but he also definitely valued, like, how much we interacted with the course. So in that sense, like I felt like it was okay for me to do like, you know, a lot more of like, the textual stuff first and then go in and just like, kind of add sentences to transition.

48:40

Dylan: The last assignment I wrote was about over-consumption and these sweatshops in Third World Countries like the global South, and relating the Communist Manifesto to it. Like ideas from the Communist Manifesto and my process for it, I think it was like, like any research paper. When I'm writing a research paper, I love just identifying a pattern and then finding parallels in all of my sources and making like an overarching theme and then breaking it down into smaller points and how they all come back to one that parallel, or the single point, and like how they all connect together. And so I just, like started, so there were some documentaries and readings. I took out, put arguments and evidence, basically whatever supported my big argument. And then I took evidence, and then just did a paragraph by paragraph, talking about each source of documentary, and then, like, having one paragraph at the end, because that's how my prof wanted it. He was like, because he gives, like, specific instructions for that too. And then I- my second last paragraph was engaging all of them together. And that's just, yeah, that's just how I wrote it.

50:04

Riley: Yeah. So my last writing piece, it was actually a policy brief. What- how I kind of went about it was- luckily, my professor, she kind of gave us like resources on what to use, like she provided us with the resources. And not only that, she did case studies in class, so we had a few topics to choose from, whether it was international students, parental leave and as well as, not sure what the last one was. One or the other. So we kind of like- she talked about in class. We learned about it, and then she provided us the resources that she wanted us to use. She also went in class how to do the policy brief. She provided templates. Again, the librarian came in and he talked about it. So I was very, like, familiar with what I was doing. I knew how to go about it. The only thing I had to do was just my part, do the work, write it in and kind of format it the way that they intended it to be. So I guess, like, just overall, because we were familiar with it, we talked about this a lot in class, when I did it, I wasn't too unsure, it wasn't really new to me, so which kind of gave me the ease of going into it.

51:37

Interviewer: Great. I think we can move on to talking about generative AI. So you're probably familiar with some of the programs that are considered generative AI, so I guess the most popular would be ChatGPT. There's also Microsoft copilot, many, many more. And so yeah, I just want to reiterate the point is to learn from you. There's a lot of things that I don't know. So yeah, hopefully you feel comfortable talking about this, and everything is confidential. So to start off, let's talk

about your peers, and if you can tell me, to what extent do you think your peers in your classes are using generative AI in their coursework.

52:25

Riley: Okay, I'll just go. From what I know, I think maybe it's 50/50, or 70%. I feel like a lot of students do use it and it's for more like to assist them, to help them. Because, again, like time management, you got some things to do. You have a lot of readings to do, so they use AI as a way to help them, not a way to do the work for them, but just to help in a way. So yeah.

52:58

Alina: I feel like I would also say similarly, like, big percent of them use it, but not everyone. So in the sense that, like, you know, I feel like my peers, similarly, like, 50\50, some use it, and some are absolutely against it, but in the sense that, like, the ones who do use it, they just, like, similarly, have a lot of like work they needed to, like, you know help with the process of their assignments. I don't think I know that many people who use it to just actually complete the assignment themselves, but rather help them through the process of it.

53:33

Dylan: Honestly, I would probably say the same. Like, I find that in my second year course, like my grade my year people are more open and comfortable with using it, like when I took third year courses, like they're a little bit more discreet about it, because I don't know maybe the risk or the stakes are higher or something, but I feel like in my second year class, like, we had tutorials, and a lot of them was like, were like, "Yeah, I just made, you know, ChatGPT write my intro" and like, stuff like that. So I don't know how I would categorize it, like, maybe it's like working through the process, or maybe it's writing for them, but, but I do think it was like, because of the workload, like a lot of people, you know, took assistance from it, which, I mean, that's just what I witnessed. But I don't think many people were, like, actively making AI, like, write their entire essay.

54:36

Interviewer: You used the word discrete. I'm just wondering if you can elaborate a bit about, like, you know, you noticing people being more discreet.

54:43

Dylan: Yeah, so in one of my third year courses, this girl was like, these two girls, this is like, just me eavesdropping, but, this one girl was, like, talking to her friend, and she was like, "Yeah, like, like, I don't know. I was just like asking it to, like, reword it." And then, I guess the "it" was like, AI, and then they were like, the other friend was like, "Yeah, like, I don't know, like, I was just so confused. Like, I just gave it, like a rough outline, and then just told it to write, like, a 2000 word essay, right?" And I was like, "Oh my gosh." Like, you know, it was very like, kind of open, but also, like, not actually talking about it. But, yeah, but like, if you see what anybody else- I don't know- I found that it was more like kind of gatekeeping. Like their process, they would be like, like, you know, somebody would be like, "Oh, like, are you working on it? They're like, "Yeah, like, I haven't even started yet," and there's just like, it's like, halfway done. So I don't know it's just like that, I guess.

55:46

Interviewer: What do you mean by gatekeeping?

55:49

Dylan: Gatekeeping is, is like, just withholding information, just to, I don't know it's like, such a, such a Gen Z term, I don't know. It's like-

56:02

Alina: [Unclear] A way to kind of, just be like, a little bit hush hush about what they do for the assignments, not really like, you know, it's not something you're as openly or as proudly admitting to, but like, you're just discussing it with a person to maybe, like, get some help. But that's about it. Like, gatekeeping in the sense that kind of just like, hush hush, but also like withholding the information, like, how you're actually, like, you know, flying through those assignments and the readings.

56:28

Dylan: Yeah, like second year, I noticed that people would be like, if you're if you're sharing them, "Oh my gosh. Like, I'm so behind on these deadlines, right? Like, I don't even know how to do this tutorial assignment." They would be like, "Just use ChatGPT," right? But in third year, they would not say that. They would never say that. So they're very, like, quiet about it and, like, careful about it, I guess.

56:46

Interviewer: Right. Thanks. Thanks for explaining the term [unclear] old person- that's helpful [laughter]. Thank you. Yeah, Riley, do you have anything to add?

Riley: Umm [pause] no.

Interviewer: Okay, and so we talked a little bit about this, but if there's anything else to add in terms of what are the different ways that you think students are using AI in their assignments?

57:16

Alina: So one thing I would like to point out is I believe the one program that I've been using ever since high school, it could now be considered AI in the sense of, like, I used to use QuillBot, and that was simply because one of the things that I like, since I was in an AP program, we kind of like had this little like, unsaid rule, you don't want to use too many repetitive words in your essay, like, you don't want it to just sound like you're referencing the same [unclear]. You can reference it with, like, paraphrasing. Can kind of reference it with synonyms. So in a way, sometimes it would just be helpful to kind of like, you know, run my writing through the program to find synonyms for, like, you know, some words, and then I would like, you know, check whether I like it, and I would go back and, like, you know, add anything that I liked, and if I didn't like it, I would just not add it, simply because prior to that, I would be, like, with each and every word, I'd be just Googling, okay, this synonym, this synonym, to see, like, which one I'd like better, and it would make the flow better. So I feel like that program did make it easier. But ever since, like, the whole rise of AI, they came out with

their own versions of, like, you know, AI models, which is like, think there was an academic model, there was a humanized model, there was like a generative model. And ever since then, I have been afraid to use it, simply because I knew the way I was using it first it was kind of just like a word generator. But now I'm afraid of, like, you know, using it simply because I don't want my text to not sound like me. And although it still has like, those original modes, I feel like, ever since they've like, expanded their database, the kind of like tweaks and also the suggestions that they give now are a lot more AI-ish, if that makes sense, like in the sense they don't necessarily fit the context for which you're trying to find a synonym. But that is something that I have used AI in in a way, but also sometimes to kind of generate, like, you know, as like, a little marker. So once I'm, like, done with my assignments, I'll be like, "Okay, so like, here's my assignment. This is, like, you know, the inside assignment instructions, etc. Do you think it's good? What do you think like, you know, do you think like, my analysis kind of, like, you know, flawed? Do you think I'm kind of being very flat with my like, surface level with my analysis? Are there certain topics that I need to dwell in more?" And sometimes also, kind of, like putting it in as, like, okay, so this, like, most of the times I did, kind of like, you know, go through the readings and do everything, but sometimes, like, even if after studying, etc., I didn't really have the time to go back and, like, pull out questions for myself to practice with ever since first year. But with the use of AI, I have been able to study for exams or, like, tests or even tutorials. But being like, "Okay, this is the reading and pull out questions," and I would use those questions to kind of like, you know, practice, whether or not I actually know the content. But those are a couple of ways that I've personally used AI.

1:00:22

Dylan: I would like to clarify that, like when I was saying the second year students were being more open about it, like it wasn't in my STEM classes. So I think that's like the difference that I noticed, like my third year classes were, like, for Crim, Crim and SOC majors, but yeah, I think in my STEM-based classes, they're very much more open. It's more like, you know, like, unashamed about it, technically even, like, I feel like some of the profs, like, they don't have that strict restrictions for it. Like, yeah, I don't know so, but yeah, in my SOC or Crim majors like, they're, they're not that open about AI.

1:01:04

Alina: If you don't mind me, like, you know, adding on, I've also noticed the same, like, I have a friend who studies like, you know, STEM like, CS specifically, and they go to the St. George campus, and in their specific field it's very common to be just open about it, simply because even the professor's, instructor's, point of view on it is, like, generative AI is not really going anywhere, like they just need to adapt to it. So it doesn't make sense for them to expect their students not to do it, especially when it's so commonplace and it's only going to keep growing now. So because of that, like, it's actually not that big of a taboo to use AI in their assignments. It's simply being able to understand the process and coming up with it yourself. But also, the use of AI for STEM and non-STEM is completely different in the sense that for STEM, like many people get help with, like, say, their coding and etc., or their formulas. But end of the day, if you don't understand it yourself, it's not like you can replicate it or actually make the program. But in the case of like, non-STEM, I feel like it's completely different in the sense of, like, you're asking it to cut, you're kind of giving it information and asking it to come up with, like, you know, the words to it, etc. And in both ways, like,

while it can be said that you don't really learn anything if you're kind of coming up with an AI output in STEM, unfortunately, you would have to supplement it with your own thinking and your own like actual practices to make those codes work. So in a way, if you're using AI in non-STEM, I feel like it could possibly, like, you might be learning a little bit less compared to the CS folks.

1:02:47

Dylan: I mean, in my stats course, and that was like, for Crim as well, the prof actually told us to use Copilot. And he was like, “Guys, if you don't understand how to run this code, just put into Copilot, like, or put your code, put your error message into Copilot, it'll tell you, like, what's wrong with it and stuff,” and like, even our TA, like, I think he was confused for most of the tutorial, so he would just open AI in front of us. He was like, “Okay, guys, I'm doing this for you guys.” And then he would send us a two hour long videos at 3 am and it was like, “Guys, so I didn't really understand this, but then I put into Copilot. You guys should do the same,” so *[laughter]*.

1:03:34

Riley: You know what, I had a similar experience, like my SOC2XX Stats, the professor, he's like, “You know what, you can have ChatGPT to help you formulate some answers, some questions.” Even my TA, he will upload these two hour videos and how to go over it, how to do these things. I don't know, it's just-

1:03:53

Alina: That is one time I did actually properly use AI for, like, help with course assignments, like, actually helped me bring up the answer because I don't understand it. And the problem: GPT also didn't understand it. The professor was doing something really funky. They were just changing the traditional formulas to their own specific formula. And no one, like, I literally got help, like I was trying to get help from a Stats major, like they've got, like, they've done their degree in statistics, and they're like, “I can't help you. Only God can.”

1:04:27

Dylan: It was like the code, it was so complicated. And it's like, I've never coded before. And like, thank the universe my sister is a software engineer, so she just like, did all of it for me, but that I will admit to I used AI. That was like, the first time I was like, please give me the answer *[laughter]*.

Alina: *[laughter throughout]* I passed that course. I didn't know how, but I did not know any R language to this day-

Dylan: But then, but then, the joke was on me, because the final exam, he put the images in code, so *[laughs]* I did not understand anything. But, yeah, *[unclear]*.

Alina: I'm an atheist, but I prayed to the Lord that day *[laughter]*.

Dylan: I think I, like, I was identifying with three religions *[laughter]*.

1:05:09

Alina: No, definitely. Because, like I, I genuinely felt so helpless during SOC2XX because it was like a professor who has never encountered Sociology students before *[laughter]* *[crosstalk: Really?]*

No, like, they explain things in such a way like, oh my God. Like, one of the questions a person in our class had was, “What is the meaning of ‘mean’?” [laughter] Like, they did not know the difference between average and mean. And I'm like, okay, to be fair, most of the Sociology students probably have not taken math in the last two years. Like, you cannot just go in and expect them to understand. And the way the course, like, it just felt like you need an actual like, even if it's a statistics professor, they need to know sociology students, like, they just didn't relate that well. So that is one time, like, you know, I was just putting in questions. I was putting in those weekly assignments too, and just hoping, praying to God, that GPT comes up with an answer. And I don't even know whether the answer was right, I was just putting it in.

1:06:15

Dylan: It was horrible. But, um, yeah. Like, yeah. Like, that was probably the only time I've, like, depended on- yeah, heavily. But, umm, like, I do remember my ISP prof [name of professor], he's, he was giving us this analogy where he was like, “Guys, AI is your best friend, you know, like, you don't ask your best friend to do all of your work for you. Or, like, you know, ask it to, like, ‘write my essay now,’ you know, you ask your friend for editing suggestions, you know, maybe ideas and stuff.” And I think that's just how I you personally use AI, like, like, I also generate questions, like, exam questions, you know, give me exams questions, quiz me. Or like, be like, “Oh, brutally, brutally honest rate this. Like, what's wrong with this writing? Like, am I hitting the goals?” Like, I'll just plug in the rubric and ask it to give me feedback. And I feel like that's how AI should be used. Maybe it was, like, the intended purpose for that, yeah. But, um, yeah. And also, for some of my profs, like, they do allow summarizing your text with Copilot. Especially, they don't - nobody recommends ChatGPT, but—except for the Stats prof—but, but yeah, for one of my- it was SOC3XX I think the prof was like, “It's okay to summarize your readings with Copilot. Just please read them, you know, read the summary.” So, yeah, I think that was that was probably really helpful.

1:07:46

Interviewer: Thank you. Riley, is there anything you wanted to add?

1:07:51

Riley: Okay, I did have a thought. Um, yeah. So basically, ChatGPT, it's like a lot of people use it because it's quick, it's easy, especially if you don't really have much time. You can't really, like, access the resources here on campus. Like, you get quick information from like ChatGPT, like, if you need help with your writing, “Oh, like, what's the grammar or punctuation? Is this too passive/active?” But then again, you just have to read the course syllabus, because professors, they have their own like ways how we can use AI. So as long as it aligns with that, then you're not really like breaking any rules, so yeah.

1:08:38

Interviewer: So on that point, what do you remember profs saying about their expectations around generative AI use?

1:08:52

Dylan: I've had profs who, like, strictly forbade it, and I've also had profs who are more lenient towards it, like I said, like, one of the profs, I think she said that summarizing your readings with the Copilot is fine as long as you do skim the readings and also, like, read the summary. You know, um, but I think for the majority of my profs, they they're just, like, very strict on the writing aspect of it. Like, I think, in my third year course, some people were talking about how, like, the prof accuses them of AI a lot, and it's like, with no basis. Like- so it's just, that really scared me, because I feel like, because of that threat, I stopped, I changed my writing a bit like, I don't use em dashes anymore, because I feel like, that's like, everybody was like, *[unclear]* everybody's gonna accuse you of AI because of that. And I love em dashes. Like, you know, rest in peace.

1:09:51

Alina: Em dashes and the Oxford coma.

1:09:54

Dylan: Stop, the Oxford coma?

Alina: Apparently, too.

Dylan: No. Like, not. Okay, sorry, I'm taking the penalty. I can't. It was also like, if your writing is not like- if every sentence of yours is not different and like, with a new word, then it's also AI. It's just-

1:10:11

Alina: If you're not writing in personal pronouns, it's not AI. *[Crosstalk: Dylan: Oh my gosh, yeah.]* Yeah, I feel like, I feel targeted with the whole like, you know, like AI detection softwares and etc., simply because academic writing, even if it's 100% human, every AI detector is gonna mark it differently. And like, I remember one of, like my assignments I did with a group, and basically we finished the assignment, and one of our, like peers, just tried to run it through, like, AI detection. And they're like, "Hey guys, is our paper AI?" And I'm like, "You saw us all do the work, the version history is on the Google Doc *[laughter throughout]* What do you mean?" Right? And they're like, "No. But some of us are like, you know, we did some of our, like, brainstorming, etc. independent." I'm like, "I can show that brainstorming to you." And then we all ran it—like a different parts of our like, you know, paper—we all ran it through different softwares. And some of us ran through, like, you know, the full paper and etc. It was different results each time. And specifically, I just got really confused. I was like, "You know what, I want to find out what is it that, like, you know, is flagging AI." So I even paid for Copyleaks to, like, you know, they had this detection software that's like, "Oh, these are phrases that AI uses 10 times more than humans." And I'm like, "Okay, like, let's find out. What are they?" And the phrases were, 'to summarize', the phrases were 'offshoring' and 'externalizing'. That was my topic *[laughter]* What do you mean? You find the topic of the paper. The phrases were like, 'for instance', and I'm like, "Are we safe from anything now?" Also, especially like, the format of like, oh, like, you know, I hate just saying 'they said', I prefer saying like, 'this illustrated', or like, you know, 'this author elucidated' all of those words, 'illustrated', 'elucidated' each and every one of them. And I was just so tired and I was fearful of my life. I'm like, "Am I supposed to change of my writing so I don't get flagged for AI" because I've heard of a story from my peer, which is why they ran it through the AI was because one of their friends at St. George campus, they submitted their assignment even though it was completely them, the professor flagged it for AI,

and they didn't really get a chance at, like, you know, a meeting or to explain themselves and etc. And the only time they were able to explain themselves was if they had to, like, recreate the paper all by hand. And I'm like, "Wow, that is scary. Like, am I just supposed to change the way I write now?" And in a way, I feel like the whole AI detection, it affects, like, non STEM students a lot more specifically in academic writing, because people just believe now that you can't write academically, like you can't write formally, and even, like, the whole humanized versions of those texts and etc., they ask you to be very informal or very like, you know, personal pronoun-ish, and I'm like, I don't want that to happen. So, yeah.

1:13:15

Dylan: I feel like I've- there's been a lot of times where I've had to dumb down my writing or, like, intentionally make grammatical errors, just to kind of rid myself of that fear. Like I've, I've- I was like, umm, playing around with the ZeroGPT, like this AI- [*Crosstalk: AI detector*] yeah, detectors and, like, I put in a paper from of mine from high school where, like, I didn't even know AI existed, and it's like, "100%" and it's like, guys, AI didn't even exist back then.

1:13:45

Alina: I put in, like, one of my supplemental applications in it, and it was like, "Oh, 100% AI." I didn't even know what AI was.

1:13:54

Dylan: I put my doctor's note in there or something. It was like, "Yeah." Like, I think one time, like a prof, I think this was in first year, it was so long ago. So I strictly use Docs just because of those timestamps. But he was just asking me, like, "What- what's like"—because we had to submit a rough outline, like it was optional, so I didn't submit it, right?—and then he was like, "You didn't submit it, like it seems like you're there, you've used some type of resource." He said, "resource." Like, he was being so shady, and then he said, "You've used some type of resource in your writing." And then I sent him, I think, attached with the email, like, 40 pages of my handwritten notes and mind wraps and like, and everything. He was like, "Okay, thank you."

1:14:36

Alina: No, definitely, because I feel like, with the whole outline, I'm sorry, in university I no longer do outlines. Like my first draft—it is what has the brain storm, it is what has like the final draft, like I don't have the time to do separate- So oftentimes, if you're asking me for an outline, best believe I'm making the outline after I finish the assignment, like it's not going to happen first. But also, because of this whole like you know, like, AI detector thing and etc. I feel like, personally, I don't know, maybe, like, you know, call it like, supremacy or whatnot, but in a way, I just feel like, with AI, I don't really like, feel like I actually learned that much, especially if I were to use AI to, like, supplement my reading a little bit too much, or complete my assignments. And I hate the feeling of not knowing what I'm talking about. Like, I hate the feeling of just being dumb. So, like, even if someone's asking me about my day, I want to be able to tell them exactly what I did and kind of, like, maybe brag about it. And I just hate the feeling of not actually knowing the concept. Like, you know, super down, like that. And that is kind of why, like, I feel like I only use it to maybe supplement my learning, but I don't use it to, kind of like, you know, actually provide the process for my learning.

1:15:55

Riley: Okay, well, I've never had those experiences [laughter], but from what you guys were saying about how your TAs, your professors, will get kind of, like skeptical, usually, I remember, I took one religion course in Judaism, so we would have, like, our own essay writing. And then what would happen is we'll kind of go through this like little interview where the TA, she will question, will access questions about our essay, just to see that, you know, it came from us, came from our brain. Because, yeah, you're not going to really have much rough draft or brainstorming notes. But she just wanted to see if we're familiar with the content and that it's just not like all AI, ChatGPT, all types of stuff. So, yeah.

1:16:41

Dylan: There's also, um, I think some of my profs- like, okay, so, so we had an exam, right, where it was four essays in four hours, and it was just, like, constant. It was just, it was kind of hellish. And I think the prof was like, yeah, so I finished grading your exams. Guys, like, it seems like a lot of your your writing has shifted, you know, like, like, basically saying that our writing doesn't match with, like, our assignments. But it's like, if you're still under pressure, it's like, it's an exam, you're on a time crunch, and it's like, you have no time to make an outline or, like, figure out, kind of regurgitating all the readings that if you remember, and I just feel like it's just, it was just so unfair, like that should not be an expectations that you have the same writing in your assignments, that in your exams, like, I don't know, it was just like I felt that I was it was a little bit unfair. And that's that shouldn't really be kind of indicative if you're using AI or not.

1:17:41

Alina: Yeah, definitely. I feel the same way. Like, I feel like the standard for assignments and the exam should be different simply because of the time crunch, especially if you're not allowed to bring in an aid sheet. You're simply relying on memory alone. Like, if I had the time to actually, like, cross reference, like, you know, open book, like, do all my assignments, that is a lot different than preparation that I'm doing for an exam, especially if it's a cumulative exam for the entire course. Like, I have a lot of information that I've cramped in and best believe I don't remember the name of the authors unless it like, you know, other than maybe one or three in the course. So, like, I will mostly be just, like, referencing ideas. So that is unfair. And like, once when talking to my friends, I even had the whole thing of, like, if people are really scared for like, you know, the whole like, you know, AI detection, etc, I personally wouldn't even mind having like, proctored assignments, or, like, you know, having like written assignments, etc., but then the expectation should be lower, because I'm coming in with no information. I'm doing this all in front of you, so it's completely based on memory.

1:18:46

Dylan: I also feel like, and this is, like, a little bit biased, but like, obviously, we're held to, like, different expectations, like, especially in my STEM courses compared to my Crim courses. And I feel like, AI, not that it's more needed in the Crim courses. It's just that, like, it makes more sense if you know, people are relying on it for, like, even, like a little bit of assistance, like, just like proofreading and stuff like that, then I feel like maybe the limitations, or, like, the the restrictions on it should be a

little bit lower. Like, I don't- I feel like profs shouldn't be, like, allowed to just, like, flag it as AI, if just, I don't know, just by like, I guess, intuition or something. I'm not sure what process they use. I think somebody told me that, um, they detect AI with AI. So I don't know. I mean, like, I feel like you could see how that that may be flawed, but yeah, I feel like I don't know. It just it feels weird to hold both STEM majors and like Crim majors to the same standard when it comes to writing and AI and stuff.

1:19:56

Alina: Yeah and I feel like I'm especially scared for like what kind of AI detectors and etc. they're using simply because I feel like it's proven that no AI detectors are actually effective at proving AI so if you're using any, I have a problem with it, because you're using them in like, specifically academic courses, and most of my friends' experience with like AI, in the sense of, like, actually detecting AI and etc., it does systemically target like academic writing. So it's just like an unfair standard to hold like, because, do you expect us to sound dumber? Because what?

1:20:34

Dylan:

Yeah, and it's also like, in terms of just like responses, like, I think, in one of the third year courses, actually, the prof was talking about how, like, he senses that people are using AI because a lot of the answers were like, repetitive or the same, but then it's like, it's one prompt. You know, I think the prompt was like, which groups of people is the Canadian legal system like, treats unfairly, and it was like a prison system, right? And it's like, obviously people are going to talk about, like, the over-incarceration of Indigenous people. Like, that's just, I feel like that's just the nature of the issue *[Crosstalk, Alina: That's the only answer.]* I know.

1:21:12

Riley: I feel like a lot of professors are just scared of AI, and they're not really, like, they don't really know how AI can be of help and of useful, especially, I think maybe in SOC-Crim courses, because, again, a lot of things are going to be similar, like you guys were saying, a lot of things are going to be repetitive. And even when it becomes to our exams or our tests, everything is just pushed in like an hour, versus when you do an assignment, you have like a week, you have *[unclear]*, you have help, you have time to get to revise, to go back, versus just doing it on the same day in the very minute, especially writing four different essays. So, yeah.

1:21:59

Dylan: I think they've also started tracking AI on quizzes and tests and stuff, but it's online, like those lockdown browsers and stuff. I think they're tracked for AI there too.

1:22:12

Alina:

I have a little like, a little bit of experience with the like, doctored kind of like, you know, exams simply because of like AP in high school, so I don't specifically mind it, but it's like you're just gonna

be recording us having a breakdown over the test, like you're not actually gonna find anything that helpful.

Dylan: Yeah, like, I don't know, just, whatever.

1:22:33

Riley:

I guess they, when they try to prevent AI in the long run, they kind of, like, they kind of hurting themselves and the students at the end of the day, how I feel like, with my experiences.

1:22:46

Dylan:

I also liked how Riley said that a lot of the profs are scared of AI because they don't have that much knowledge of it. I feel like it would be useful to educate a lot of them. Like, about like, AI is not like, you know, that scary, or like the I don't know, like the way, not the ways around it, sorry that that sounds bad, but like the way it functions, and like how it, how it could possibly aid students. Like, yeah, I feel like it's just more targeted approach.

1:23:17

Alina: I even had a course where the professor would ask us, like, I believe it was in my second year, and AI was just kind of like starting out then, but basically, one of my courses, even, like, you know, the professor had asked us to use the same prompt for GPT, and then, like, you know, actually kind of point out what is wrong and what is right with the GPT response? And I felt like I really enjoyed, like, I didn't enjoy the course as much, but I really- I just didn't enjoy the course as much simply because of, like, I don't think it was just like a topic that I found interesting, but that assignment I found very interesting. And I feel like if more professors were scared of AI, that is a good way to, kind of like, you know, really see how your students are engaging with the course. If they're able to point out the flaws of AI and like, you know, see where the analysis is flawed. Because now you're basically asking your students to act like teachers, in a way to kind of like, be like, "Okay, does AI understand the assignment? Does AI actually, like, you know, is it engaging with the course materials and etc.?" And retroactively, it proves how much your students actually understand about the materials. And I wish more professors did that actually, because with the professors, like how Riley mentioned, with the professors being scared of AI, actually, kind of find it a good thing if, like, professors were to openly talk about AI in the course, and kind of even, like, you know, show good examples of AI use in class, simply so people know what, like, you know, what is considered good, what is considered bad, and also the whole use of like, you know, like "Give this prompt to AI and correct it." I feel like it would, in a way, make it act like—for tutorials, even—make it an interactive discussion about, like, what we actually understand about the course readings. So what the professors might need now is to kind of grow and adapt with AI, because I don't think it's gonna go anywhere anytime soon, and just using AI detectors, or prohibiting the use of AI is not really going to help, simply because there are a lot of things that may be considered AI now, even if they weren't so in the past, like even Grammarly has an AI model. Even Quillbot has an AI model. And like, you know, simply using like, some of the aids that were available so like grammar aids, or just like

vocabulary aids and etc., they will have, like, you know, certain links to AI because of the growing databases. So it would just be a losing battle in the end, if you were to just be like, “Okay, no AI forever,” like, let's discuss good examples and bad examples.

1:26:04

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you. Well, we're almost at an hour and a half, and I am mindful of your time. You've covered a lot of what I wanted to ask, like sort of structured questions, so I think it was a really good discussion. Maybe one thing that we didn't really talk about, I'm curious, that came up in other focus groups, is learning how to use AI. So you've touched on that a little bit Alina, where you talked about how you know to be able to use AI, you need to understand whether what you're seeing is correct. So one thing that I've heard in other conversations was learning how to use AI prompts effectively, and sounded to me like there's a bit of a learning curve in terms of, like, how do I use AI in a way that that is helpful, where I'm getting good output, and sort of where you even learn that information of how to use the correct prompts. So does anybody have any thoughts on that?

1:26:58

Alina: I feel like most of the prompts and etc., they kind of are intrinsic as kind of like, you know, they are a bit more structured to as to like, what you specifically believe to be good, like, you know, output. So, for example, if I want AI to maybe, like, give me certain questions and etc., I would ask it to assume the tone of like, okay, say, like, you're a professor, kind of like, you know, administrating exam. And the exam is cumulative, like, I would give it such details as if, like, you know, to actually act in place of my professor, to give me those questions that would actually be derived from course materials, and also above and beyond. So in that sense, I feel like it's, instead of being taught to use the prompts and etc., it was more so just using them myself. But it would actually be a good idea if professors were to teach this themselves, kind of like, you know, how do you want to ask those questions? What kind of tone you want to assume, and how do you practice with AI to kind of supplement reading. So I feel like it could even be something like similar to, like, the whole talk that we have with Jonathan Davis, I believe from the RGC center. He's the one who all, like, I've had him in multiple of my courses, but he's the one who always comes in for, like, research and academic writing. And I feel like, if we're having his lecture one day, we could have, like, you know, the whole lecture on AI the same day, like, kind of like as a little like a debrief session. It could be, like, summarized into the whole like, you know, how do you write in this course going forward, and how do we learn in this course? So I feel like, although I personally don't recommend writing with AI. I do recommend learning with AI, especially for people with accessibility needs. So for example, although it's not necessarily AI, I do use a software to read my readings out loud to me, simply because, as I'm reading them, there comes a point where I just get visually tired, or I just get like, you know, bored, or I just start zoning out where I have to read the same sentence over, like, three times to actually understand it. So, like, you know, having aids just to kind of, like, you know, speak the reading to me and etc. I have recently found out I've never interacted with this, but I think I've seen some videos of it online. But people can now talk to their readings in a way that, like, now their software so you can actually put in, like, it's like a mix of the the voice recognition, audio recognition softwares, but, like, also audio processing, and AI basically where they put in their readings, and now they're conversing with someone who's actually like, say, like say, like the reading themselves. So like, asking them questions, like, “Oh, like, you know, if I were to understand this about the the

reading, what do you mean by that?" And they kind of presume is the role of the reading, like, "What I in this, like, you know, as this author, what I mean is, like, this and this," and I feel like that's actually a really good way to supplement reading, because you're likely to remember it as a conversation. So even if you don't remember the text, maybe, when you go into the exam, you're going to remember the conversation. So those are some really creative ways, as I feel like AI could be like, you know, creating opportunities for people who have accessibility needs, and even if not accessibility needs, there are a lot of people like, in Canada, at least, I feel like would benefit from, like, learning strategies, and I don't think it's that accessible, like, it's just simply not accessible. And also, like, I know I'm kind of running on but one last point would be, one thing that I noticed kind of helped me with my education back in high school, or back when I used to live in *[name of country]*, was having like, shorter periods of learning and the subjects, which is like, say, like every half hour or every hour. But when we're in university, we're in the same lecture hall for like, two hours, three hours sometimes, and it like, you know, you just don't absorb as much material, even if you're going to more subjects in a day, more different courses. I feel like I would absorb more material if it was shorter amounts of time, simply because I have, like, a new topic to focus on in every class. So, like, those are strategies that my learning strategist like, kind of like, you know, told me, like, you might want to implement that. And like, well, I've never noticed that I did actually learn better at those times, but I never actually thought about it, because I just became, like, adjusted to this system. And so like, now learning like, instead of it being like a constant source of learning throughout the day, it becomes like these structured like, you know, like, three hours in a day, five hours. Like, if I want to sit and do an assignment, it's going to be five hours a day instead of actually being able to do like, do a small chunk of it every day. So in a way, AI would also be able to, like, kind of help with those strategies. But yeah.

Dylan: I don't know, I use the text to speech too, as well, and I guess that's also AI in a way? I mean, no that is-

Alina: I guess that might be like word processing audio recognition-

Dylan: Yeah, because I just like, sometimes when you're, you know, you kind of just like, sit, sit in your chair for a long time, and the- it hits the 4 am mark, and it's just like, eyes are tired, like don't even have energy to speak. So it's like, it's very helpful to have your papers, like, read out to you so you can, like, kind of—I was gonna say, visualize, but visualize with your ears—like how it sounds to your readers. So I think that's helpful. I think there's also the text to speech function in ChatGPT, so that that also helps.

1:32:48

Riley: Yeah, yeah. Like, Alina and Dylan just said, like, overall AI, it does cater to, like, just for people to be more accessible, because I know that university, as of right now, we're kind of moving towards like more of a universal design. That's something that we're pushing for. But AI right now is kind of like helping people who might not, who might be like visual learners, audio learners, just providing like a platform for them, but they can learn in their own place where they can learn like.. because I know ChatGPT, you put in your information, they can create charts for you, diagrams. And I know that there are apps out there where you.. well, unless the professor allows it, where you can record and have it them take notes down for you. So I guess that, you know, students are going to find ways to help cater to their needs. So, yeah.

1:33:53

Dylan: I also feel like we should, while we're educating people about AI more, it's also good to recognize how bad it is for the environment. So people are not just, like, misusing it. Like, I remember, I think these people were talking about how they just, like ask AI, "Oh, like, my yogurt is [unclear] expire. Should I eat it?" But it's just like, spreading millions of like, greenhouse gasses. It's so bad for the environment. So, like, if you must, I don't know, maybe narrow it down to like the important parts, or just for school, like it's just. I think that part is very important to teach people about how bad it is for the environment. And also, I feel like it could, like as much as I support, you know, using AI for good, I also don't- I'm not completely, you know, behind, like the whole using AI, like implementing it heavily into, I think, academics, because I feel like at some point, like, you know, it should be based on your own merit and your own skills. Because I personally, I feel like that's what, you know, higher education is for, developing your skills, and also it gets into this like slippery slope where people might be misusing it anyway, and, you know, if they're given the, I guess, more lenient restrictions that like, again, it's, I don't know, human nature, like somebody might just like, misuse it like, and make it like, unethical. So I don't know, there should be a good balance I feel like.

1:35:30

Alina: I, I feel like, definitely, especially the whole study of, like, sustainability in AI, that could even be something like we might have to study, and it'd be, like, very interesting to study, because, like, even now, like, if I, I don't use AI that often. But even if I were to say, like, go on Google and ask a question and, like, sometimes I just have dumb questions. Why is like, you know, AI just like the first output for Gemini, like, I can read like you know that I don't need you to give me an answer for everything, especially the dumb questions, like, I don't need your answer for it. Like, I did have a question, like, I bought, like, you know, some Greek yogurt, and I didn't realize it expired. So soon I needed to ask, like, "It's unopened, can I eat it?" But it's like, I don't need AI to answer that for me. So, like, you know, also, kind of like, as AI is growing, it would be an interesting study like sustainability in AI use, and not just the AI use, but also like AI as a function, like, how do we actually, like, you know, create, like, an ethical and sustainable future for it, but with the whole like, you know, thing of like, I feel like, I definitely resonate with the sentiments of like AI work is not necessarily achieved on merit, and in that sense, I like, definitely look down upon like AI in the use of like, you know, actually for assignments, for like, you know, course stuff and etc. Like, I feel like AI should be used as, like, a supplemental learning tool, not necessarily to learn in place for you. So, like, we're not trying to, like, you know, we're not the trainers for AI. We're not trying to provide them more, like, you know, material to train off of, and then, like, learn themselves. We are trying to learn ourselves. So in that sense, like, I do think it should be recommended for both professors and students to kind of learn AI, but in a way, like, you know, kind of with the examples of like, what good AI is like.

1:37:28

Dylan: Also, I mean, this is like, so not related. But I also feel like this, this should just be limited down to, like, university and college students and like, not like high school and like, even younger grades, because that's just, like, that's just impeding on their actual developing skills. Like, yeah, I tutor this fifth grader, and we were learning how to write introductory sentences, and she's like,

“Let's just use ChatGPT” [laughs] Like- [Crosstalk, Alina: “Oh my gosh.”] Like, oh my gosh. And it just, I feel like that just made me so like, anti-AI for the longest time, because I feel like it's just, you know, times were- even the times were hard when there was no AI, you know, you just, you just had to sit down and write everything but, I feel like that those skills are so helpful, and especially for academics. So it's like-

Alina: And I thought, like the Canadian school system was already behind of other countries, it's only going to be more and more behind them.

Dylan: Yeah, like, like, I was in the school system in [name of country] back home, and that's, like, really rigorous. But, I mean, maybe it's because of the age, but I think AI was, like, unheard of, and any of those aids are also unheard of, and it's like the students are very, like, trained to like, be skillful, and trained to just, like, do everything on their own. And I feel like, in a way, that maybe haven't, haven't matter, I don't know, but yeah, I just, I don't know.

1:38:58

Alina: In a way like, although I don't think I would encourage the like learning methods or like, you know, the rigorous environment back when I used to study in [name of country], the education on the other hand, like, statistically, we barely ever had students achieve below than 70% in class. Like, if you're believing- below, like, achieving below 70% maybe you need to be bumped down a grade, or, like, you need to reassess, like learning disabilities, because most of the class would be functioning at like, you know, above 80% and it was a lot of learning, and I feel like maybe part of it was also, we did not incorporate any devices into learning, like smart board was first introduced, like, when I was what, in my seventh grade. So it wasn't like, you know, necessarily, like we was just like, no phones allowed nothing. It was just like, pen and paper for the rest of the day. You weren't even really allowed to use any other aids than, like, your books, necessarily. So like, in a way, I don't think I ever actually like, ever since I moved here, I ever felt that like, academically inclined, as when I used to be like, you know, back then.

1:40:12

Riley: I guess overall, AI shouldn't do the learning for you. That is something that you have to do on your own, because, again, you're building the skills. And when you're faced with challenge, that's when you learn the most. Obviously, that's when your brain is doing the learning. But I do feel that AI, again, it's just there to be assistance. It's not there to do the work for you. It's just there to help aid when it can basically, yeah.

1:40:39

Dylan: And just like, teach people about how bad it is for the environment, because I feel like, like, a lot of people don't know that, and it's like, like, it's, I keep saying it's so bad, but it's like, the servers, like, like, for one prompt, servers get so hot that they have to keep, like, adding like, millions of gallons of water just to, like, cool it down. And it's just, like, also with global warming, I don't know, just-

1:41:08

Alina: But it's like, I feel like, as much as I also discourage, like, you know, just unnecessary AI use, it's also like, really hard to kind of just opt out. *[Crosstalk, Dylan: "Yeah, it's like, everywhere."]* It's everywhere. And it's like, you know, even if I'm just trying to Google something simple, it's going to be there. I don't need it. *[Crosstalk, Dylan: "Yeah, I hate that Google added that."]* Yeah, and it's like, although I also encourage sustainable use of AI, it's kind of even wondering, like, where the sustainability lies, and what like we- there have been, they have been using water as, like, a coolant in these kind of, like, you know, computed regions, for like, such a long time now, even, like, ever since, kind of the whole computer age started. So it's kind of also really backward that we haven't found a replacement just yet.

1:41:54

Interviewer: Well, basically, I think we did cover everything that I wanted to cover, and you did it without me asking, which is great. Yeah, I am mindful of the time. Took us a while, but it was a fascinating conversation. I'll just stop the recording now, unless, I will invite you, you know, and if you need to leave for your exam, feel free. But yeah, is there anything else that we haven't talked about in relation to ISP100 or AI that you'd like to add on.

1:42:26

Alina: No, I think that should be it from my side.

1:42:28

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Thank you. I'll stop the recording.