

Interview 5 (April 25, 2025)

00:00

Interviewer: -place it down because it, it tends to flash throughout and it's- I find it very distracting. I'm sure it's distracting for-

00:08

Laurie: Yeah, my phone makes a big beep noise because I have an Apple.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Laurie: So it always spooks me.

00:13

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, so let's get started. So as you know, we're here to talk about- oh, and maybe we can get the door as well. Thank you so much. So we're here to talk about ISP100 and AI in relation to writing, and it helps us to get a sense of what writing was like for you in high school. So maybe you can tell me, how did you find writing assignments in high school?

00:41

Laurie: In general I would say writing assignments in high school, because for context I would like also like to add that my high school was a very academically oriented high school that put academic success into all aspects of it including culture and that translated over into class of learning. As such we were dealing with a lot of university-level material, and... not a lot of explanation on how to do it because we were still high schoolers and we were still being taught within a general high school curriculum so I would say I struggled... somewhat... in high school, especially in English classes, because of the structure and the format.

01:26

Interviewer: Uh, huh. Yeah, and what in particular did you find challenging and, about writing in high school?

01:34

Laurie: That's a good question. I- Well, there was the structure, of course, which we were all familiar with, but the expectations that came with the structure, we were never taught this, all the specifics on how to do, say, MLA formatting, some professors would ask one thing of you, and others would, yes, teachers would ask another thing of you. You know it's very hard to get a specific standardized view on what you're supposed to write at that level.

02:07

Interviewer: Right, and so you said you find, found it challenging, was there anything about writing that you enjoyed in high school?

02:13

Laurie: Definitely, we had a lot of creative projects in high school, as well, we had opportunities to write skits, write short stories, I found that very rewarding, if challenging as well, because, again, the structure.

02:27

Interviewer: Yeah, and then, did you have any expectations of what writing assignments would be like in university?

02:34

Laurie: Definitely, I think high school really laid the groundwork for that, as in, I expected them to be simply a more advanced version of what I was facing in high school... in terms of like structure and not so much detailed writing because that was something that was already laid for us, they always told us we were going to be dealing with university-level stuff here in high school and I expected to be prepared coming to the university for that.

03:04

Interviewer: And so, how did you find that then, the transition, did it kind of match your expectations?

03:08

Laurie: Well, that's a good question, because I was one of the students who came into the university during 2021, the latter half of the pandemic, but when everything was still online. And so I found that kind of disconnect because it was the same as my last year of high school, more or less, everything was online, you didn't have that much interaction, and yet you were trying to adjust to this new world. I was lucky then that like ISP100 was one of the first classes I really took in person.

03:37

Interviewer: Yeah, okay, well, that's a great transition to talk about ISP100. Maybe before we get into that, did you take any other writing courses? I know students have told me ENG1XX, or any other sort of ENG courses?

03:54

Laurie: Oh, yeah, I did take ENG1XX, I mean, I am an English specialist as well, so that was all part of the process. And in choosing to take those courses in person rather than online and like, and having such an early experience with them in university, I learned that there was a lot more to

university writing than just a higher standard in the high, different, more complicated style of writing to do. They required critical thinking skills and discussion that... and, most importantly, personal insight that high school just didn't tell me was required at the university level.

04:34

Interviewer: Right. Yeah, I'm wondering how ENG1XX compared for you to ISP100?

04:42

Laurie: I would say ENG1XX related more to the technical side, because a lot of the first content for my year was based on a book, "They Say, I Say" I believe, and that is a book that talks deeply about the rhetorical details of writing. And ISP100 is more about refining your language, refining your own voice, and how to draw out opinions in your own language, rather than the technical structuring and logic of your writing.

05:14

Interviewer: Right. Okay, great. And so, you said that ISP100 was one of the first, first in-person courses you took. Was that in the fall term when you took it?

05:26

Laurie: Oh, no, I take summer courses as well. So- and I wasn't sure what to expect from ISP100 which is why I put it in the second semester of... the second sub semester.

05:39

Interviewer: Okay, so then was that- I'm trying to figure out, like the order, because you started university in 2021?

05:48

Laurie: Yeah, 2021, so that would be summer of 2021 to 2022 school year. Yeah.

05:54

Interviewer: Okay. And then so when did ISP happen? And yeah, in your academic journey?

05:59

Laurie: Yeah, around the summer of 2022.

Interviewer: Okay.

Laurie: July to August. It was a time where campus was very quiet. I remember my class being quite small.

06:11

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. So a lot of students take ISP100 in the fall or in the winter and you took it in the summer. We've had another student who also took it in the summer. Given that you'd already taken a bunch of classes, granted online, how did you find the timing of ISP in the summer? Did it feel like the right timing, or did it feel like too late?

06:31

Laurie: Could you elaborate on what you mean by the right timing?

06:36

Interviewer: Yeah, so I mean, how- do you feel like having- if you'd taken it, maybe in the fall or winter, it would have been more helpful to you, or summer was just fine?

06:45

Laurie: I think summer or fall would have been more helpful. But for me personally, in terms of like how I learn, I think it would have been better best if I took it online during the summer, because with writing courses, I find I often need a lot of time to think about what I want to write and really process and reflect on the learning process and the content. So having most of the summer to do that would be ideal for a course like ISP100.

07:14

Interviewer: Okay, got it. Great. And so how did you find the course? Maybe you can tell me a bit more about your impressions of it.

07:19

Laurie: I'll be honest, it really took me by surprise. I saw it, and it was like, the description, and I expected a technical course, which like ENG1XX and then I remember the first day we came to class, we started. We put our desks into a circle, and we started talking to each other with the facilitation of our professor and I found we began with a really nonacademic discussion about writing. What did you struggle with? What draws you to writing? And much of the course revolved around discussions and like... exercises, active exercises, in which you would exchange papers and share them with peers at a low stakes level. I found that to really take me off guard, the whole discussion-based aspect of the course.

08:12

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm amazed how much you remember from it, given it's been a little while, *[laughter]* and I know like in our conversations with students, they're like, "What term did I take it? What do we do in that course?"

08:22

Laurie: I mean, this was the course that made me decide to do English as a major and later on, specialist. So I would say this is a pretty important course to me.

08:30

Interviewer: Oh, that's great. So maybe you can tell me a bit more about why that course made you decide that you know, English is one of the routes you want to take.

08:37

Laurie: Yeah. Funny story. I enjoy writing, I am- I write creatively my free time. I've started taking up writing essays just to express myself better, because of ISP100, but in high school *[sigh]* we were graded quite vigorously and because during that time period I had a lot of teachers who didn't teach properly, yet expected much from us... and so that resulted in quite poor English grades and on one instance... a conversation, a very harsh conversation with most of the class about our writing skills and our competence levels and after that... I recall hating English for a while I- being scared of ever taking it up because all I could associate with that in high school was that horrible conversation with a teacher. And then I picked up ISP100 because I heard it would be useful for university writing and yeah, because it was part of English as well, and it just changed my mind. I- it was something incredibly novel to me to understand and learn and accept that you didn't have to write formally... in the passive voice all of the time with that reference to yourself. Like before that I- I did not touch any sorts of pronouns. I, he, they, we, etc. Before that, I just referred to everybody or hypothetical persons in my paper, is, as "one", because I was so fixated on the formal, passive structure that high school had instilled in me, and ISP really changed that for me and made me believe in my ability to write as myself.

10:39

Interviewer: That's great. I'm so happy to hear it. I've gotten some pretty negative reviews of the course, *[laughter]* so I'm very happy to hear that. Yeah, you touched on some of the questions I had.

10:51

Interviewer: So I feel like we talked about this a bit, but how useful do you think it's been to you in your other courses, like after you've taken it. You know, reflecting on other courses you took, do you feel like you've been using the content?

11:09

Laurie: Definitely. I mean, ISP from, with the professor I took class with, I think they really instilled some fundamental goal- goals and guidelines for writing in all my other courses about constructioning an argument while maintaining your own voice, being able to make a topic your

own rather than just writing on it for the sake of answering the question and the assignment. I think it really helps with my structure and my rhetoric. Yeah.

11:46

Interviewer: Yeah, that's great. Okay, and I'm wondering if you've used any writing supports at the university, for example, it's a very long name, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre. Have you used it?

11:59

Laurie: I- no, I haven't had a chance, not because I wouldn't like to use it, just because the opportunities, which I found I really need, needed it on, haven't aligned with my schedule. It's either been during a final exam period, a period when I have at least three other essays that don't require where it would be, yeah, I don't really need the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre to help. It's just- it doesn't quite fit into my schedule.

12:35

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, I've heard that as well. I mean, people are juggling, you know, sometimes jobs and they have all their courses, and it's like the time slots are just not convenient for them. What about peer editing? Do you ever exchange a draft or send a draft to a friend and then ask for help in terms of editing it?

12:52

Laurie: I do when I can, but then again, a lot of my friends are just as busy as I am. And more importantly, I noticed this from my time with ISP100 is, I expect people to read for things other than, like our- than what you would expect, like argumental strength, and that requires a lot of time and talking in person to figure out usually. If I were to explain the points of my argument and what I wanted them to look at and give their opinion on, I would need at least 20 minutes over the phone or like in person with the essay open on my laptop for them to get an idea. If they looked at it from a- at a glance, I don't think peer editing would help me at all.

13:37

Interviewer: Right. Yeah, okay. What about Grammarly. I know Grammarly is very popular.

13:44

Laurie: No, no, no, no, *[laughs]*. Grammarly was the bane of my existence. I remember when I came out in high school, a lot of my friends were using it, and I was horrified, because I was like, since when do I need something to automatically fix everything? But that being said, I do have, like, spell check and auto fill on my phone. I try to avoid it when I can, unless I need to type something quite quickly, and I know I have exactly what- on, what's on hand, but I don't use Grammarly. I kind of hate Grammarly.

14:13

Interviewer: Yeah, I've heard that too *[laughter]*. Okay, and so it's also helpful for me to hear about your actual writing process. So if you remember, thinking back to your last writing assignment, can you walk me through the process of doing that assignment?

14:31

Laurie: Well, in my writing assignment, these days, I've gotten to- better at outlining, just with time and practice and the advanced level of my assignments. I'll start by reading, by searching for source material and laying it out, see- reading through it, skimming through it and trying to find their main argument. And then from there, I will take their main arguments, put them on a separate document and start working on a thesis statement that I feel supports my own reading of this and the articles themselves, and then I'll start working on a tentative outline like I'll put out, "Hey, here's my thesis statement in this essay I want to etc, etc." And then I will try and get three major paragraph points out.

15:27

Interviewer: Okay, yeah. And then, did you find anything in particular being challenging in your writing assignment?

15:35

Laurie: Yeah, definitely. I think finding quotes and keeping them, keeping them organized, and most importantly, putting them, finding the right place to put them in an essay is quite difficult for me, because I tend to write the way I think, like the way I talk *[laughs]* is more or less the way I type or write on paper, except on paper I have more time to refine my words and make things flow more smoothly versus when I'm talking, it's a bit, disjointed from time to time, right? And I find that issue comes up again when I'm borrowing words by taking quotes out of different articles, like if I'm taking- taking a quote from here to here... the quote belongs in one spot in the original context of the article I'm pulling it from, but how do I put it into the framework of my essay? I need to restructure to fit the quote, but I can't restructure so much that it disrupts the other parts of it. So if I put it here and it bumps three other paragraphs to another irrelevant section, that becomes an issue in the writing, right?

16:42

Interviewer: Right, yeah, definitely. Structuring. Okay. Did you use any supports in writing that essay in terms of, you know, again, peers, the, I guess you haven't used the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre. Yeah, so you kind of just work through things on your own.

17:03

Laurie: I- I do try to work through things on my own, although I have to admit within the research process, and I want to clarify when I say I'm using AI within my writing, I mean, I'm using it primarily as a research partner. I will- because I find myself struggling to read, to summarize and process large amounts of information in one go. With the initial reading, I will sometimes, when I'm truly lost, ask the AI to provide a summary, and then following that summary, that's like, maybe a small paragraph, I'll read through it and try and sort of speed up the process there, and then I'll leave it for them. Sometimes I will ask it to generate an outline if I can't come up with something myself, but more or less, it's there to help me take out specific information and give me speculation questions.

17:56

Interviewer: Yeah, for sure, I've also heard students talking about using AI that way as an assistant. So that's definitely a common use. Okay, so that's been very helpful. So yeah, I mean this also kind of is a good segue to talking about AI. And, yeah, you probably know more about it than I do, coming of age with it. But yeah, as you know, there's programs like ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot and many more. So yeah, it'd be great to learn from you about how you use AI and maybe what you think other students are using it for. So the first kind of section to talk about is UTM students in general. To what extent do you think UTM students are using AI for their writing assignments.

18:42

Laurie: I think many UTM students are using AI. In the traditional sense of like AI-generated essays to get a task done with, and perhaps they'll edit to make it their own, but I feel like the average student is reliant on AI to construct the bulk of their argument and the bulk of their essay material. *[long pause]* Well, at least students younger than me, I can't say the same for my peers anymore.

19:15

Interviewer: That's very interesting. Can you elaborate on that?

19:18

Laurie: Well, I, I'm thinking about it this way, because when I... I'm... I was born in 2003, *[possible de-identify later]* I'm- people my- one of my friends have called me an elder Gen Z. I'm closer to people your age in terms of what's culturally relevant and what I'm familiar with than people, say, born in 2005 or younger, right? And so for the longest time, I remember seeing stories of like robots, where, for like, they're also calling it artificial intelligence, as in like, well, it's a metal man that can talk and think like the rest of us. But for the longest time that was something really artificial and strange to me, and it didn't quite make sense, and then 2020 mumbles around you see these things coming to life, and they're not what you expect. And so I think I have a natural sort of wariness to them. But on the other hand, I took a course last winter as well. It was talking

about language in a human and within our discussions in that class, because it was a seminar, we talked a lot about the impact of AI. Some of my friends were in that class, were anti-AI. I ended up feeling like very responsible for AI, because if you look around, there's many stories of artificial intelligence, maybe not the ones that we recognize now in the form of ChatGPT, etc., but we've all seen robot stories or stories of talking machines, from Thomas the Train to Star Wars that- I would say, Star Wars is a huge- especially the, the show from 2008, Star Wars: The Clone Wars is a huge cultural thing in terms of representations of artificial intelligence, not ChatGPT, not the modern language learning model artificial intelligence, but the concepts and the favourable, if quite unrealistic, expectation of them, and yeah, that's where I'm gonna leave it for now.

21:26

Interviewer: Yeah, sure and I know students tell me like, AI is everywhere. And so I'm always curious, like, what gives students that impression. So is it that you see it? Or like how do you get that impression?

21:38

Laurie: I mean, it depends on what you mean by like AI, if you say like language learning models that you can ask questions to and get a paragraph of clunky yet somewhat useful material, I would say, yes, it's everywhere nowadays. *[pause]* But also, I think the phrase AI is everywhere, has been in place for a while. We just haven't realized it, because whenever you auto correct or like you auto fill on your phone or Google picks up on your- on what you're searching for and gives you personalized ads. You can also say that's artificial intelligence. It's just not to the recognizable scale of the robot or ChatGPT, it's- it's always been with us. And so I think we need to really consider the definition of the working, practical, everyday definition of AI before we answer that.

22:41

Interviewer: Right. And so then thinking about students' use of AI with maybe the definition you want to go with, like, do you- do you feel like you hear peers talking about, "I'm using at my work"? Or are you sitting in the classroom when you notice people are actively using it?

22:58

Laurie: Oh yeah, I see that quite frequently. Yes. And I feel quite upset when I see that, not because I'm inherently against AI, but because I know that there are better, more responsible ways to use it and, using it to generate a thesis statement and copy pasting it into a Google Doc.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah.

Laurie: It doesn't seem like the best usage of it, because we all, we've all seen the kinds of responses AI has produced. They're clunky. I know I can write better than it, but if it's going to be

here and we're gonna be working with them- with it in the long run, we might as well use it as an assistant. I like to think of it as a bionic arm, like, or like an extension like, imagine if you had artificial finger extensions that allowed you to reach further and grab things with more precision than your natural hand. Yeah, they're still dependent on your natural fingers but these are extensions that you can use and you can control to your own dependence or, yeah, I'm gonna go with that analogy for now.

24:04

Interviewer: That's a great analogy, I like it a lot. What have professors in your classes said about their expectations around AI use?

24:14

Laurie: Most of them have been anti-AI. I don't blame them for that. AI is everywhere, and it does show up in everything, and it definitely affects how we write, but I think being anti-AI even if you're discussing it, or if it's in course policy, but one- upon elaboration your professor seems disdainful of it, I don't think that's a healthy way to talk about it, because... as impactful and as negative as AI can be when it's used to just replace writing, we are still responsible for it in that whatever we use whether it's professor generating test questions with AI and tweaking them, or if it's a student generating test questions or trying to figure out research, we are all inputting some level of thought and information. AI learns from our- what we write and what we feed into it, and if it, and if we're going at it with this, either destructive, disdainful or passive attitude, like when you're just asking it to produce content we're... we could be... messing with the potential to create a better AI. That's how I feel.

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you.

Laurie: It's like raising a child. Sort of. If you think about it that way.

25:45

Interviewer: I have a five-year-old, yes. *[laughter]* Okay, and so, I think you touched on this a bit. But why would generative AI be helpful for writing?

25:59

Laurie: I think generative AI is most helpful for writing because the quality of it is poor. There, from what I've seen so far, my own experiments with generative AI, the writing is simply not on par with human, actual human writing. Yes, it can borrow some advanced words and some advanced phrasing, but it will remain clunky and impartial, because that is how AIs have been designed in this age, and because we humans can recognize that, we can improve upon it, but within the creative aspect. However, if you take someone like me who struggles with the structure of writing and keeping everything organized into paragraphs, I think generative AI can be useful in

modeling very roughly what you should do and how you can improve. And that goes for research as well. If you use it to research and extract things you- it leaves more room for contemplation and reflection that results in better writing. But obviously this is something that needs to be learned with time, and instead of just, you can't expect somebody to learn how to do critical analysis with AI if they don't know how to do critical analysis on their own already.

27:21

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a great point. So other than obviously generating an assignment from scratch and using AI for outlines or for help with structuring things, what are other ways do you think students could use it to help them with writing?

27:39

Laurie: Other ways? I haven't really thought about that, because... I think anything more than that of like... what do you mean by asking them to, how do you think AI could help students write in other ways?

27:55

Interviewer: Yeah, so students have told me various ways that they themselves and their peers are using it. So I'm wondering if, I mean, it's perfectly fine if you don't have any other ideas of how people use it, but I'm wondering if there's other ways that AI can assist with help with writing.

28:08

Laurie: In my opinion, I don't think so. I think that is the most extent we should use it in terms of writing, because any further could be interfering with the writing process as it exists organically in humans.

28:23

Interviewer: Right, okay. Um... okay, so I'm wondering how you learn how to use AI, because one thing I've learned in these conversations is that it's not just a straightforward, you know, do this for me, but the better your prompts are and your instructions, the better the output you get. So maybe you can talk to me a bit about any sort of learning curve that you had with using AI.

28:51

Laurie: I think it definitely depends on what kind of AI you're using. For the- starters, I would not use generalized AI like ChatGPT because of the breadth of stuff it would do, and thus I don't think it would specialize in any sort of task. But if I'm talking to a specialized AI, I would first prepare a prompt in the same way that, like I would write an email to a professor, a friend asking for help, addressing maybe the AI by name from what I've known, sometimes I find that interesting or helpful. If you say, say, like, "Hey, ChatGPT, can you help me?" And then you write out, or you ask,

politely, "Please, help me create," whatever. And then you write out what you want it to create, how you want it to create, what you want it to write, include. It's very much like writing instructions and... writing prompts. If you can, I would say if you can write a good prompt to... for an essay or you can write a good starter sentence. You are best equipped to deal with a- to give AI prompts when you're using it to help you write otherwise... yeah.

30:13

Interviewer: Yeah. I wonder if you feel like, as you've, you have been using AI, do you feel like you've gotten better at giving it, I guess, better instructions?

30:23

Laurie: I can't say for sure, really, sometimes I give it good instructions. Sometimes different AIs require different strategies, and ultimately, I am aware that, like, it is going to impact my own writing style. So sometimes I will skimp out on prompts and I will just go simply, like, "Can you help me write this?" And I'll just black down a block of text. But, yeah, I think, I don't think I've gotten better at giving AI prompts, but using AI to help improve my writing has, yeah. I don't know what else to say here.

31:07

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. Do you feel like you're able to then learn from it? Because it sounds like that's where you were going with that?

31:14

Laurie: Yeah, you- you could say I've been able to learn from it, but I'm also aware that AI only knows what it picks up from me, and so I'm kind of using it... yes, I am using it learn from it, but it's also learning from me, and thus I- yeah, it's important to be mindful of that feedback whenever you use AI.

31:41

Interviewer: Right, yeah, thank you. That's very interesting. Okay, and have you had any negative experiences using it? I know you've mentioned like the writing is clunky, so it's, it's not something that's like great quality, but any other sort of negative experiences with it?

31:56

Laurie: Could you elaborate on what you mean by negative experience?

31:59

Interviewer: Sure. I mean, I've had students tell me, you know, the output is just plain wrong. *[laughter]* So then they're, they're basically cross referencing with another AI. Or I have students

who tell me, I just worry about whether what I'm doing is considered acceptable. So yeah, any sort of hesitations or negative experiences with it.

32:22

Laurie: I would say I've had occasional hesitation, but since stuff for- kind of warnings about like, AI doesn't check its sources, I've ensured to look for AI that are specialized for academic research, or AI that I know are credible by like, sometimes I will check Reddit. I'll check various AI articles from reputable sources, before I go about selecting one, and I'll run some practice tests and cross-check with the library to see if these are legitimate articles or cross-check the authors, and usually, I find I'm doing it with a credible source. The, the AI is reliable, not really as an AI, but as a search engine. Yeah.

33:05

Interviewer: Can you tell me some of the AIs you've used that, I think you said they're more sort of specialized?

33:10

Laurie: Well, mhm, sure. I- there's this one called Jenni AI. This one is mostly writing-based, but I believe it draws from a database of existing academic articles around the globe. I've seen stuff written by U of T professors there. I've seen stuff from South Africa, India, all around the globe, really. And I think this is a good example of an AI that is more of a search engine rather than a generative AI, because in its output, when you're writing stuff, it only goes off of, based of- what of what you've written or and I've noticed that every time, without fault, it quotes whatever paper it's drawing from, so... technically, it is an AI in the- in the sense that it's generated, but it is- it's only generating from a certain pool because of its training as an academic writing AI.

Interviewer: Right.

Laurie: If you try and write something informal- I tried to start a short story on it one time just to see what it would do, and it automatically switched into, "The importance of blah, blah, blah, blah." And it's like, oh, yeah, you, you are set to one goal only, and thus, oh, you're very good at what you do, but you can only really do that one task.

34:36

Interviewer: Right, I see, yeah. Have you heard of Perplexity?

34:40

Laurie: I have heard of Perplexity. I've also used it as well. I find it's similar to Google in terms of like, it... it being a search engine. Its primary goal is to bring you photos and bring you responses from across the internet. I... I would be careful about Perplexity as well, because for them, well, for

the most part, it is very effective. You can see the sources where it draws from. It does tend to draw a lot from newer or unreliable sources. I've seen it tap into its own database as Semantic Scholar, I'm not sure how updated that information is, because it seems to come from actual articles, but, yeah, it's... it's self-contained, and I think it tends to generalize in the same way as ChatGPT does, in that it sees a large pool of information, it draws its own conclusions and further spits them back at you. But it's better in the sense that it will... it's transparent about its sources. It... because, yeah, you have the links to everything, and you can cross-check, but once again, yeah... something that is more generalized and not something I would use per se for an essay unless say you're using its specialized functions.

36:06

Interviewer: Right, okay. Okay, so I think we talked about this a little bit, so I'm gonna make two questions into one. Do you recommend that other students use generative AI for their writing assignments, and if you would, what tips would you give them?

36:27

Laurie: Yeah, I would recommend that other students use generative AI for their writing assignments, because, at least in the sense that to improve their work, not to generate it for the reasons that I mentioned earlier. But, my tips for them would be to come up with- to approach the AI with your own set of expectations in terms of writing. Make sure you have an outline, make sure you have a thesis statement, and make sure you have a couple of questions that work both as prompts and as guidelines within your own discussions, whether it be on paper or with a professor with a friend, make sure that it's widely applicable. Make sure that you're treating the AI as a study partner, but- and a research assistant, maybe. Because, like I said earlier, I would highly recommend more specialized AIs for your task. If you're using it for writing, make sure it's research-based, or it's writing-based, and then yeah... and then approach it and- based on your own goals.

37:43

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. That's very helpful. I think that was good advice, especially with, coming to it with, like, a clear, with clear knowledge of what it is you're looking for.

Laurie: Yes. Mhm-hm.

Interviewer: What advice would you give instructors about AI in the classroom? AI use in the classroom?

38:00

Laurie: I think I would inform instructors more about the kinds of AI use in the classroom, because the general feeling I've sensed from speaking with professors casually about AI usage is

that they believe students are using AI to just generate answers to questions without considering the possibility and like, the range of AI, especially if these are professors that are against AI and thus haven't really looked into the field. I would... inform professors of the different types of AIs. And like, why students are using AI. Personally, sometimes I generate practice test questions because my professors don't provide test questions. So I'm kind of pressured to tap into their material using AI, which might be able to pull out the direct ideas of what my professor was trying to say, instead of... fumbling my way through it myself and I would like professors to be aware of that, of like the reasons, the ways in which students are using AI and to... within that, to like remind those who do use AI to generate their own material that we- not... it's of the necessity of doing it within an academic situation of not overall, but... if students are generating AI- using AI to generate... answers to questions or essays or anything like that, there, there must be a reason behind it.

39:57

Interviewer: Yeah, that's an excellent point for professors, instructors, to understand why students are using it, and I think that's you know, why we're having these discussions with students. So it's very helpful. You mentioned that you use sometimes AI for generating practice test questions, which, of course, I've heard other students refer to that use as well. I've also heard from students that sometimes the instructions, the guidelines for essays or assignments are just not that clear or straightforward, and so that sort of is an impetus for them to use AI to kind of, I think, get more confidence, or get some sort of ideas about what to do, because you just feel so unsure. Yeah, what do you think about that?

40:42

Laurie: I think that's one of the best ways to use this as well, because I do this quite frequently. I struggle with reading assignment instructions just because of the wording or the structure or the language that my professors are using, and I think that's helpful. However, I'm not gonna say that the AI explanations are perfect every time. Sometimes the AI does a worse job of explaining the concept than the *[laughs]* instructions did originally. And I'm like, okay, I think I'm just going to open up a YouTube video and give myself a miniature crash course on this. But I think sometimes- yeah, I think it's very helpful, because these are the sorts of things that are a necessity at the- in the classroom and learning process, but are not necessarily conducive to better writing or better reading comprehension. These are, this is just a matter of getting through a course. And if you can reduce the workload on that by asking an AI to summarize assignment instructions for you, I would say that's a good usage of it.

41:57

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. And so I also wonder whether you know, again, speaking to this idea of, why are students using AI, do you feel like there are more things or things that profs and TAs

could do to support students? So basically, my question is, if student- if profs and TAs offered better support, do you feel like students' use of AI would be different?

42:27

Laurie: Definitely, I feel like there would be a whole lot less of a demand for AI if professors and TAs were more accessible, because so much of the time I see that office hours are set according to the professor's availability, without considering the... the course times, especially for soc courses, because a lot of them happen at noon, and professors like to have their office hours right after or during the time slots of other classes, we find ourselves by necessity of the program and the courses we need to take... having office hours kind of barred from us.

43:13

Interviewer: That is a great point. I really appreciate that. Do you have any feedback that you want to give about ISP100. So I know we talked about it and that you've enjoyed it, but is there anything else you'd like to mention that could be helpful for instructors to know.

Laurie: In terms of the course structure?

Interviewer: Anything that you think is working well or was not working so well?

43:41

Laurie: I think I'm pretty satisfied with where ISP100 is, as I remember it. I think it's a good, low stakes way for you, for students to become familiar with the university writing process. And I say low stakes in terms of the... the feeling and the support. I appreciate that there's a... introductory sort of test that determines if you're prepared enough to take it. And I'll admit, although that made me anxious, I think it's a good benchmark to see if you need improvement and if you need time to come back to this course.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Laurie: So yeah, I- I really like how ISP is, just the way it is, the discussions, the... the assignments, yeah.

44:33

Interviewer: Yeah. And one thing I heard from students is the format of the class wasn't great. So these were, I believe, for most students, or all of them, three-hour lectures, and I'm wondering what you think of that?

44:47

Laurie: Hmm. Well, I would definitely say I'm biased, because I took it during the summer. I had, I made sure I had the free time to take three hours out of my day to study, and do the stuff *[unclear]*. But I think... on average, it's a needed time for a course that's meant to teach you this much. I just don't think it's necessarily a good idea... for students to take it during the school year, and while I recognize that there are alternative factors, like, how you want to arrange your timetable if you're working a summer job that might prevent you from taking ISP at, I believe, is the optimal time during the summer. But, yeah, I think it's a necessity that ISP100 takes three hours, and just by design of the university system, falls upon the student to manage and allocate that time properly.

45:48

Interviewer: Thank you. Okay, well, I think we covered basically all the questions that I had, and it does go by way faster with one person versus three. But I'm wondering if there's anything about generative AI, writing, or ISP100 that we haven't touched on, that you would like to discuss, and it's like sort of an open platform for you to voice any opinions or concerns you have.

46:18

Laurie: Well... I think for the most part... beforehand, I've stated my opinions on generative AI, how I think it's useful under the right conditions. I do notice that the general post-secondary academic violence *[unclear]* seems to be unnecessarily hostile towards AI because of a lack of knowledge on it and how to utilize it properly. We see AI and we think of a universal- we think of poorly generated art as anime girls and bad essay responses and your professors generating bad AI questions, and you get this very negative, incompetent, inefficient image, where, in reality, if you dig a little deeper, you can find new AI being developed that are specialized for this task, like Perplexity, like Jenni. There's also plug-ins like PDFgear, a platform that lets you edit PDFs, has a built-in AI. It's not very good, it's based on ChatGPT, but once again, this is an example of a specialized AI that works directly from source material to provide concepts, utilitarian, rather than like- it's a tool... for student success and overall learning, rather than just a replacement.

47:49

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Well, it sounds like you know a lot about different AIs and the AI tools. Is this just something you learn about from Googling, or are there any other sources of information?

48:01

Laurie: I follow a couple of online forums on it. I try and follow any articles I can get on it, academic... social. I- I read it a lot in context with philosophy, because as much as philosophy talks about the human experience, this is the post-human, and from what I've seen and like understood of AI, AI is sort of an imitation of the human experience, because it is based around us. Humans created it. Humans modeled what it wanted, what we wanted it to be. There's a reason why we call, online like bots, robots. We thought of that from our traditional idea of robots, beep boop *[imitated a robot voice]*, tin, tin guy in a box with buttons on his chest. And we kind of translate

that over and what- within the AI experience, yeah, it's, it's very important to remember that AI, both as a tool, a language learning model and a construct, are hu- are man-made and that we still have an influence on that, that we need to take responsibility for.

49:16

Laurie: Yeah, I love your answer. It's a very philosophical take on it. So, yeah, I appreciate that. Okay, well, that's, that's all I have. Anything to add?

Interviewer: Yeah, I think I'm gonna leave it there.

49:29

Laurie: Okay, perfect. So I'll stop the recording here and here.