

Example Discussion Assignment Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

About This Assignment

This activity introduces AI as a *research support tool* instead of a writing generator. It invites students to critically engage and evaluate AI while strengthening foundational research skills. By using AI to brainstorm keywords, identify multiple viewpoints, and biases or gaps in information, students practice evaluating rather than trusting AI outputs.

Students are then required to conduct traditional research using reliable sources and compare those findings to what the AI suggested. Primarily, this assignment focuses on teaching students how to use AI responsibly, ethically, and critically in academic research, while also preserving the value of inquiry, source evaluation, and independent reasoning.

The example assignment is available on the next page as it appears to students in a Canvas Discussion.

Week 5 Discussion: Topic Proposal and Preliminary Research

Overview

For Essay 2, you will choose a topic involving a controversy in a community you belong to. In this discussion, you will use AI as a research tool to help clarify your topic, locate search terms, and compare viewpoints. You will then evaluate how helpful (or unhelpful) AI was in this process.

Instructions

Step 1: Choose a Topic and Research Question

Think of a controversial issue that impacts the community you are part of. Then create a research question that you might explore in Essay 2.

Example: Should Prescott invest more in public transportation for students and seniors?

Write your own research question by identifying:

- Your chosen topic
- Your research question

Step 2: Use AI to Explore Your Topic

You may use tools like:

- ChatGPT
- Perplexity.ai
- Elicit.org
- Copilot (Microsoft)
- Gemini (Google) Ask AI:
- What are useful keywords or search terms for this topic?
- What are the major debates or perspectives?
- Are there biases or missing viewpoints in the AI summary? Take notes. You do not need to copy/paste the conversation.

Step 3: Search for Credible Articles

Using search terms from AI, look up information using:

- Google
- Google Scholar
- Library databases
- Local news sources

Find two sources with different perspectives on your question. Then determine whether they are reliable (credible).

You may use

- Local newspapers
- credible websites
- magazines
- government data
- academic sources

Do not use

- Social media posts
- YouTube commentaries
- AI-written articles
- Wikipedia as a main source

Initial Post

Please use short paragraphs or bullet points. Provide:

- Topic + Research Question
- AI-Generated Search Terms
 - Include at least 3–5 terms
 - Say whether AI helped improve your wording
- Two Linked Articles
 - Provide links
 - For each link, say how you know it is credible (author? publication? evidence?)
- Reflection on AI
 - Was it helpful? Misleading? Did it suggest unreliable sources?
 - Did it leave out perspectives you later found?

Response Post

Respond to at least one classmate's initial post with relevant and substantial feedback. This means at least 50 words that should include constructive feedback about:

- Whether their research question is clear, focused, or too broad
- A suggestion based on what you might ask AI (such as a better keyword or a missing perspective)
- A question that pushes their thinking deeper
 - (Example: Have you considered how this issue affects [specific group]?)