

AI-Generated Fake News

Lesson Plan

Materials

- Handout A: AI-Generated Fake News and Free Speech
- Handout B: Civil Conversation Guide
- Teacher Presentation

Standards and Topics

- CCSS.SL.6-12.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively
- CCSS.R.6-12.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- C3.D2.Civ.13.6-8. Analyze the purposes, implementation, and consequences of public policies in multiple settings.
- C3.D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.
- CA HSS-PoAD.12.8.1. Discuss the meaning and importance of a free and responsible press.

Topics: Fake news, artificial intelligence, misinformation, disinformation, digital citizenship strategies

Overview

In this Civil Conversation, students discuss the issue of AI-generated fake news. First, they examine a text that offers multiple perspectives on how to address AI-generated fake news. Next, they participate in a Civil Conversation on the text. In this structured discussion method, students are encouraged to engage intellectually with challenging materials, gain insight about their own point of view, and strive for a shared understanding of issues.

Objectives

1. Evaluate the potential impacts of public policy on society
2. Participate effectively in a civil discussion by expressing clear and persuasive arguments, while building on others' ideas
3. Consider other perspectives with a sense of empathy

Procedure

I. Focus Discussion

- A. Begin by showing the slide deck titled “How Much Do We Know About AI?”. This can be used as a presentation quiz or made interactive using an online quiz platform.

Go through the quiz one question at a time, allowing students to respond to each question. You can choose whether to collect individual or group responses. During the quiz, review the correct answers with students.

- B. Inform students that AI-generated fake news has made online information more difficult to navigate. Their task today is to consider how to address AI-generated fake news by examining multiple perspectives on the issue.

II. Reading : AI-Generated Fake News and Free Speech

- A. Briefly provide students with an overview of the purpose and rationale of the Civil Conversation activity. Use the overview above to help you.
- B. Give each student a copy of **Handout A: AI-Generated Fake News and Free Speech**.
- C. Distribute a copy of **Handout B: Civil Conversation Guide** to each student to complete as they read. Each student should fill in their own guide.

III. Civil Conversation

- A. Divide the class into groups of 3–4 students. You may want to have each group select a leader who will get the discussion started, ensure the group stays on-task, and finishes on time.
- B. Determine how much time the groups have to complete the discussion.

(You will know what's best for your students, depending on the length of the reading and how experienced your students are in student-directed discussion.)

- **Time:** Conversations for classroom purposes should have a time limit, generally ranging from 15 to 45 minutes and an additional five minutes to reflect on the effectiveness of the conversations. The reflection time is an opportunity to ask any students who have not spoken to comment on the things they have heard. Ask them who said something that gave them a new insight that they agreed or disagreed with.
 - **Small Groups:** This discussion strategy is designed to ensure the participation of every student. Groups of 3-4 students are ideal. If you are scaffolding text for various reading levels, group students who will use the same text together.
- C. Review the rules of a Civil Conversation (listed under Step 3 on the Guide) and direct the groups to follow the instructions on the guide to get started.
- D. Let groups know you will be circulating to listen in on their conversations and that each person in a group is expected to participate. The goal is for everyone to contribute equally to the conversation.
- E. If necessary, remind groups of the time and urge them to move to the next steps.

IV. Assessment / Closure

- A. After the groups have completed their discussions, debrief the activity by having the class reflect on the effectiveness of the conversation:
- What did you learn from the Civil Conversation?
 - What common ground did you find with other members of the group?
 - Ask all participants to suggest ways in which the conversation could be improved. If appropriate, have students add the suggestions to their list of conversation rules.
- B. If you want to also debrief the content of the Civil Conversation, you might ask students:
- Was there any surprising information you learned from the reading? What was it?
 - What are the problems today with AI-generated fake news?
 - What should we do about AI-generated fake news? Why?
- C. For assessment, look for the following on each student's Civil Conversation Guide:
- Step 2 – A, B: Basic understanding of text.
 - Step 2 – C, D: Text-based arguments.
 - Step 2 – E: Appropriate and compelling questions about the text.
 - Step 4 – A: Level of participation (should be “about the same as others”).
 - Step 4 – B: Answer is appropriately related to topic/issue presented in text.
 - Step 4 – C, D: Specificity/text-based.
- D. For additional assessment, you may want to collect the article/text students used to assess the annotations they made in terms of connections to prior knowledge/experience, questions they had while reading, and comments they made.

AI-GENERATED FAKE NEWS AND FREE SPEECH

Fake news is created by people to intentionally mislead others, it is a form of **disinformation**. Disinformation can be used to influence elections, especially on social media. A study published in 2022 by the National Center for Biotechnology Information found that the impact of disinformation impacted the United States' 2016 election, as well as elections in France in 2017 and India in 2019.

Social media sites use algorithms, or digital formulas, to show you content similar to what you have already liked or shared. This creates an “echo chamber” where people are mainly getting information they agree with or already have “liked.” If someone starts to engage with disinformation online, they will continue to see similar posts. It becomes harder to tell if a story is factual. Imagine how this could sway voters.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) has made fake news even more difficult to navigate. AI is technology that enables computers to create information and seemingly “think.” **Generative AI** creates information (text or images) in response to people’s prompts and questions. Generative AI has already provided benefits in various fields. In medicine, AI has provided fast, accurate medical diagnoses to help doctors treat patients. In business, AI has been used in accurate fraud detection, which protects consumers and businesses. Many teachers have used generative AI to help provide individualized learning for students.

However, some warn of generative AI’s harms. Many people fear unemployment for those whose jobs may be replaced by AI. The New York Times, Microsoft, and other companies have sued the AI system ChatGPT for violations of copyright. Many have warned of potential invasions of privacy, as well, as generative AI scours the internet for information.

AI has already spread **misinformation**, or false information. In 2023, a fake-news website used AI to “scrape” the internet where it found a 13-year-old satirical article about Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The article implicated him in the death of a psychiatrist. AI created a new article that was picked up as “news” by an Iranian TV show, as well as a Pakistani website. It was liked and shared tens of thousands of times on social media platforms such as Instagram and X (formerly Twitter).

Media watchdog organizations warn that misleading articles are only the beginning. AI can also produce **deepfake** photos and videos of politicians and others saying or doing outrageous or scandalous things. For example, the New

disinformation the spreading of false information to deceive

Generative AI Artificial Intelligence that creates new content, like images or text

misinformation false or incorrect information that is spread without the intent to deceive

deepfake realistic video or audio created using AI to make it appear someone is saying or doing something they didn't

York Times reported on a deepfake video in which President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine appeared to be announcing surrender to Russia — something he has never said.

It has been predicted that AI will increasingly interfere with elections. Politicians themselves might set up AI-based fake-news sites to create and spread disinformation about their opponents.

Can Anything Be Done?

Many social-media users have demanded that tech companies take action to prevent the circulation of fake news. The Community Notes program on X allows approved contributors to fact-check posts and images. It is crowd-sourced, so that users can give the fact-checks up-votes or down-votes. X claims that Community Notes' fact-checks receive tens of millions of views per day. But the nonprofit Mediawise group claims about 60 percent of the most rated fact-checks are not visible to the public.

Regulating AI-generated fake news poses a whole new set of challenges. Governments want to find the right balance between protecting against AI's dangers while not stifling its benefits. In 2023, the European Union (EU) passed an act that divides different AI functions into different risk levels and restricts or allows them accordingly. For example, facial recognition technology is deemed as an “unacceptable risk” and is banned. The EU sees deepfake photos and videos, however, as a “limited risk” that only need to be labeled as fake to be protected.

Restrictions on disinformation can come from governmental action as well as tech companies. Several states have passed laws aimed at stopping online harassment and bullying using deepfakes, whether created with AI or not. And they're concerned about false information interfering with elections. In 2024, California passed bills to prevent the sharing of political deepfakes on social media that are close in time to elections. Meanwhile, Colorado passed a law in 2024 that requires any deepfake video, image, or audio in a political advertisement to have a clear statement that it is not real. These laws reflect a growing concern about the potential harm caused by disinformation.

Many people are skeptical, however, about U.S. government regulation of misinformation or disinformation. They cite the First Amendment's protection of the freedom of speech. It was designed to prevent government control over citizens' expression of ideas. If people fear punishment for unintentionally posting or publishing false information, they may self-censor their opinions — even if they don't contain false information.

There are existing limits to posting or publishing false information. The First Amendment does not protect defamation, which is a false statement that purposefully harms someone's reputation. For example, defamation can include publicly calling someone — especially an ordinary person and not a public figure — a “murderer” when they have never been convicted of that crime. Courts can impose high monetary penalties for defamation.

Your Digital Citizenship

As an online user, you can strengthen your digital citizenship with a few simple tools. Whenever you want to fact-check a story:

- Use what Prof. Sam Wineburg at Stanford University calls “click restraint.” When searching the internet for information, do not immediately click on the first page of the options provided. These items may be at the top simply because they are popular, not necessarily because they are truthful.
- Wineburg also recommends “lateral reading.” Seek out information in multiple online sources about the website where you found a story.
- Find news about an event from a variety of sources, including those that may have a different political perspective than your own.
- Remember that news reporting may not always be neutral (having no opinion whatsoever). But reporters should still report facts as facts as objectively as possible and identify opinion pieces as such.

AI-Generated Fake News

Civil Conversation Guide

Step 1: Read.

- A. Read through the entire selection without stopping to think about any particular section.
- B. Re-read the selection and annotate (“talk to”) the text:
- Underline the main/most important points. You can comment on these points in the margins.
 - Circle words or phrases that are unknown or confusing to you.
 - Write down any questions you have in the margin labeling them with a “?”.
 - Draw an ➡ in the margin next to text that connects to something you know from outside the text. Note what the connection is, such as a news item or personal experience.

Step 2: Think about the reading to prepare for the discussion.

A. This reading is about...

B. The MAIN POINTS are:

C. In the reading, I agree with:

D. In the reading, I disagree with:

What Should We Do About
AI-Generated Fake News?

E. What are two questions about this reading that you think could be discussed? (The best questions for discussion are ones that have no simple answer and that can use the text as evidence.)

1.

2.

Step 3: Discuss and Listen.

You will have ____ minutes to discuss. Your goal is to engage with each other and the text to gain insight about your own point of view while finding a shared understanding of the issue.

At the end of the reading, you will likely find at least one discussion question. Use that question to get started. If time permits, you can also discuss questions you came up with in Section E above.

If the reading does not provide discussion questions, choose questions to discuss from Section E.

Rules for a Civil Conversation

1. Everyone in your group should participate in the conversation.
2. Listen carefully to what others are saying.
3. Ask clarifying questions if you do not understand a point raised.
4. Be respectful of what others are saying.
5. Refer to the text to support your ideas.

Step 4: After your conversation...

A. Compared to others in your group, did you speak? ____ Less than, ____ About the same as, ____ More than others.

B. Note some of the ways you added to the discussion.

C. What evidence did you use from the text to add to the discussion? Why was this evidence helpful?

D. What did you learn about the topic from the Civil Conversation? (Be sure to reference the text!)