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Using Generative AI in the Classroom: Fact-Checking ChatGPT as Part of a Capstone Project

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**Using Generative AI in the Classroom: Fact-Checking ChatGPT as Part of a
Capstone Project
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***Note:** This assignment is part of a larger ES capstone project where students are writing a paper about a pioneering psychologist from a historically marginalized background.

Purpose and Objectives of the Assignment

- To familiarize you with ChatGPT and how it works.
- To demonstrate how to responsibly use ChatGPT as a student.
- To practice the skill of *information literacy* (which is also an Essential Studies capstone goal for this course). *Information literacy* is the ability to find information, understand where it comes from, and critically evaluate and use it appropriately.
- To get a head start on researching your group's assigned historical figure by evaluating the biographical information about your figure that's generated by ChatGPT.

What is ChatGPT? How Does it Work?

ChatGPT was launched last fall as an AI chat bot that's trained to interact with users with advanced capabilities. ChatGPT was created to generate human-like responses to a wide range of inputs by using algorithms. With its extensive knowledge, ChatGPT can generate an impressive amount of text across a variety of domains—from recipes to business plans to press releases. A [recent survey](#) reports up to one-third of college students have used ChatGPT to help complete assignments as well.

Despite its strengths, ChatGPT also comes with the risk of users believing what they're being told, even if it's not true. Because it draws on internet content, it doesn't always produce accurate information. ChatGPT also makes up citations and may produce biased responses. The latest iteration of ChatGPT says as much, with this warning at the bottom: "ChatGPT may produce inaccurate information about people, places, or facts." Being aware of and seeing these limitations firsthand is important as potential users of this tool.

Assignment Instructions

For this assignment, you'll be analyzing and evaluating what ChatGPT tells you about your assigned historical figure's educational background and history. I'll ask you to enter a prompt into ChatGPT and then read and fact-check the output by consulting reliable and trustworthy sources. Overall, you'll turn in a copy of your ChatGPT output, a list of the fact-checked claims and sources, and responses to reflection questions about this process.

Getting Started with ChatGPT

Before you get started on this assignment, make sure you know how to use ChatGPT and that you have an account. Here's a [quick video](#) on how to do this.

Fact-Checking ChatGPT

Next, enter the following prompt into ChatGPT: What was [insert your assigned historical figure's name here] educational history and background?

Take a screenshot (or screenshots) of what ChatGPT generates for you and turn it in with your assignment.

To practice using critical thinking when using ChatGPT, take a closer look at the output that was generated about your historical figure. Try to verify as much of the information in the output as you can. If you're able to verify that something ChatGPT told you is true, also share the source information. And if you aren't able to verify that something is true, explain why. Is it because you came up short and couldn't find any sources to verify it? Or is it because you found a source that tells you the information isn't correct?

You can structure this fact-checking process as follows:

- **What ChatGPT Says**
- **Could I Verify This? (Yes or No)**
- **If Yes, Where? If No, Explain**

For example, here's the first sentence ChatGPT generated when I asked about Mamie Phipps Clark's educational history and background:

What ChatGPT Says

- Mamie Phipps Clark was born on October 18, 1917, in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Could I Verify This? (Yes or No)

- Yes

If Yes, Where? If No, Explain

- I could verify all of these details were true from the following source: Butler, S. (2009). Mamie Katherine Phipps Clark (1917–1983). [The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture](#).

As an example of something I couldn't verify (because ChatGPT got it wrong), here's another part of ChatGPT's output when I asked about Mamie Phipps Clark's educational history and background:

What ChatGPT Says

- While Mamie Phipps Clark did not pursue a doctoral degree herself, her husband and collaborator, Kenneth B. Clark, completed his Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University.

Could I Verify This? (Yes or No)

- No

If Yes, Where? If No, Explain

- Mamie Phipps Clark *did* receive her Ph.D. from Columbia University alongside her husband, as verified here:
<https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/psychologists/clark>

Overall, fact-check as much of what ChatGPT tells you as you're able to. Some information might be easier to verify, and some may take a little more searching or reading.

When attempting to verify ChatGPT's output, search for and consult sources that appear to be trustworthy and reliable. Journal articles are preferable, but websites are okay to use for this, too. The criteria listed below should be helpful when evaluating a web source. You may also use the [CRAAP test](#), [the 5W's](#), and the [SMART test](#).

- **Reputable Site:** Any sources on .org, .edu, or .gov sites are the most reliable. Any others should probably be avoided, but there may be exceptions (run them by Dr. Kelly if you have questions).
- **Authority of the Source:** Is there an author name visible? Does the author have an affiliation with an organization or institution? If so, the source is likely to be reliable.
- **Accuracy/Objectivity of the Information:** Is there a bibliography or reference list included with the source? Is factual information included or are statistics cited? If so, the source is likely reliable.

Reflection Questions

After you've finished your fact checking, answer each of the following questions and include them with your assignment. Aim for at least 4-5 sentence responses for each question.

1. Had you heard of ChatGPT before this assignment? Have you used ChatGPT for anything? If so, how have you used it?
2. Overall, how accurate did the ChatGPT output about your historical figure appear to be? What types of things did it get right? What types of things did it get wrong?
3. Have your impressions of ChatGPT changed in any way after doing this assignment? Explain.