

# Helping Faculty Create Assignments to Advance Students' Critical Thinking about AI: A Case Study from Anthropology

Dr. Pete Sinelli, Senior Lecturer

Dr. John J. Schultz, Professor and Chair

Department of Anthropology

University of Central Florida

# The Inspiration

Kevin Yee's visit to our August  
2023 faculty meeting:

AI is here to stay and students  
WILL use it no matter what we say.

*"The genie is out of the bottle..."*

Thus, thinking critically about  
HOW to harness it is essential.



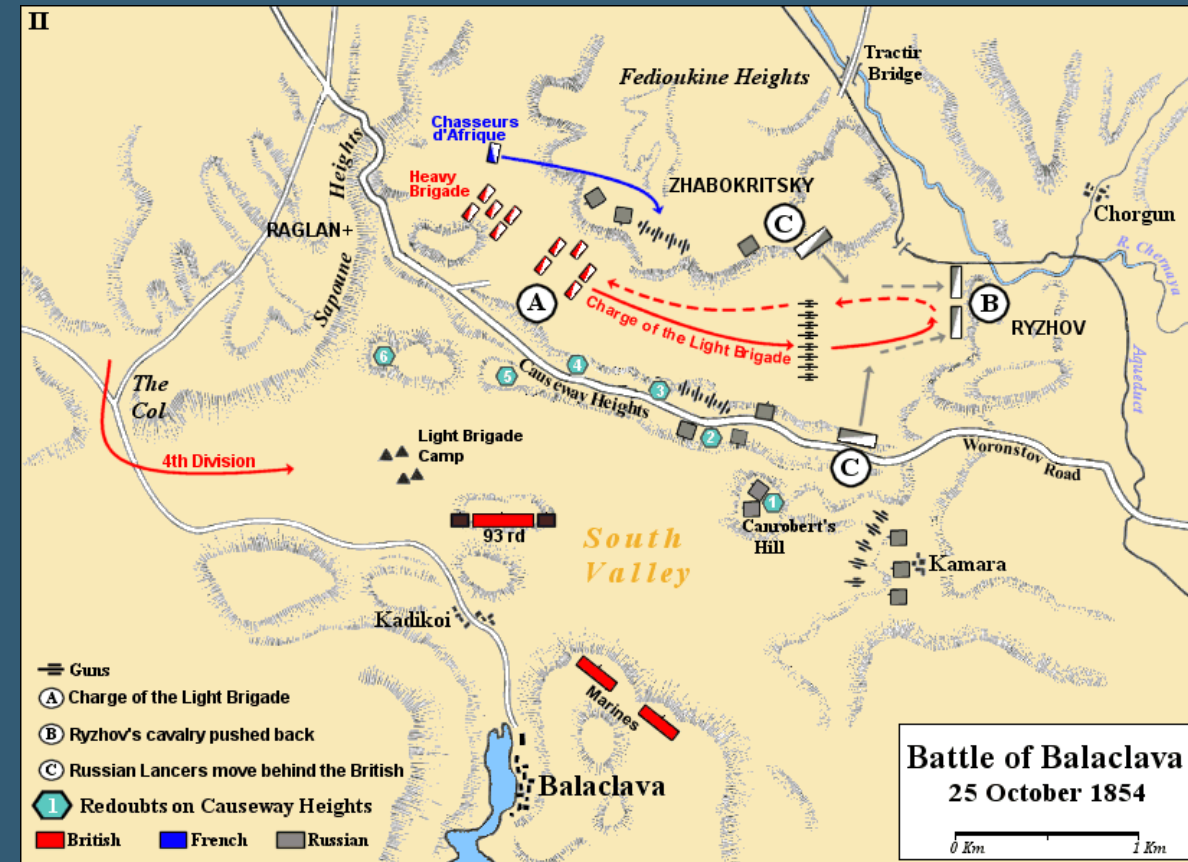
# The Purpose

- Create and test a model for faculty in the Department of Anthropology to use in their classes.
- Evaluate student familiarity and engagement with AI.
- Inspire critical thinking about using AI as a tool.
- (Personal...) See if turnitin.com's AI detector worked.

# The Class



- An archaeological perspective of fields of combat and military infrastructure from the Classical Age to WWI.
- Explores the human and cultural dimension of warfare.



# Battlefield Archaeology Profile

- Upper division (juniors and seniors) with fewer students.
- Variety of majors.
- Significant research and writing assignment.
- Course design already includes time for discussions.
- Topics are tempting to use AI.

**EVERY DEPARTMENT HAS CLASSES THAT FIT THIS PROFILE!**



# The Model

# AI Assignment Objectives

## 1. STUDENTS KICK THE TIRES:

- Discover how AI works (most said they hadn't used it...).
- Use AI as a tool to develop a more comprehensive final product than they might have produced through traditional research (they thought I was crazy...).

## 2. STUDENTS ASSESS AND REFLECT:

- How can I use AI, and what are the plusses and minuses?
- Where is it strong and weak?
- Think critically about when and where and how it's use might be appropriate and productive, both in college and beyond.

# The Assignment

(30% of course grade)

1. Project Proposal (15/150)
2. AI “First Stab” (10/150)
3. Group Analysis (25/150)
4. Group Paper Submission (50/150)
5. Individual Reflection (40/150)
6. Peer Review (10/150)

**50% of the project grade was AI use, AI content analysis, and critical thinking about applying AI.**

## 2. AI “First Stab”

- 1. Create a Chat GPT account and instruct it to write a five-paragraph paper on your topic.**
- 2. Cut and paste the entire AI product into a Word file and upload so turnitin.com can run.**

Note: Turnitin.com identified 11 of 11 submissions as being 100% AI.

# 3. Group Analysis of AI “First Stab”

Completed BEFORE the literature-based research.

- What is helpful?
- Where did it go off on a tangent?
- What else do you want to know?
- Did you like the style?
- Did it come across as "you"? If not, why?

# 4. Individual Reflection

Completed AFTER the literature-based research.

- Based on what you now know about the topic, what did it do well?
- Where did it fall short?
- How would you change AI to make it better?
- What did AI help you learn about...
  - The battle and conflict itself?
  - The broader uses and limitations of AI?
  - How this impacted your learning process about the battle?
- When and where and how is using AI appropriate and productive, both in college and beyond?

# The Results

# Student Analysis of Strengths

“Good at the Big Picture...”

- Generated new ideas to explore further
- Useful example for structure and organization.

**How the majority said they would use AI in the future.**



# Student Analysis of Weaknesses

But...“the devil’s in the details...”

- Irrelevant information
- **Too general and vague**
- No citations
- No details about:
  - Historical context of battle
  - Artifacts or Materials
  - Soldiers/ participants
  - Archaeological conclusions

# Overall Impressions

“Like someone skimmed wikipedia or puffed up an essay with extra words to make it sound more full than it is”.

“Saying a lot while also saying nothing.”

“Like a college student procrastinated and needed to reach the word limit before the deadline.”

**NO ONE complimented AI's writing style!**

# Something We Noticed...

**AI's frequent use of hyperbole, superlatives, and clichés.**

## Out of 11 “First Stabs”...

- Pivotal: 15
- Crucial / critical: 13
- Valuable / invaluable: 10
- Significant: 10
- Immense / enormous: 8
- Enduring: 8
- Poignant: 6
- Brutal / bloody: 6
- Shed or shedding light: 11
- Wealth / abundance / treasure trove of artifacts: 9
- Insights: 9
- Offer a glimpse: 8
- Tangible connection: 5

# The Takeaways

# Things We Learned

## **Students:**

- Recognize that AI still needs adult supervision.
- See utility in AI as a source of leads and ideas but wouldn't want to attach their name to the raw product.
- Generally WANT to do the right thing.

## **Ourselves:**

- AI can be easily incorporated into assignments, with enthusiastic student buy in.
- AI product has a defined and identifiable “feel” once you know what to look for.
- AI isn't a harbinger of an educational apocalypse.

# What We'd Do Differently

1. Prompt AI to write a longer First Stab
  - May produce more ideas and substance.
  - More details for students to fact check.
2. Require a red pen “correction” of the First Stab
  - Direct ID of strengths and weaknesses vs. a narration.
3. A more “individual” Individual Reflection
  - Greater focus on specific utility in their future line of work.

# The Takeaway For You

1. This is easy for professors, and fun and instructive for students.
  - I'm giving this presentation to the Anthropology faculty at our first meeting next month.
2. Our model assignment is easily adaptable to any discipline.
3. It is also easy to beef up for a bigger project or tone down for a small assignment.

**PLEASE CONTACT ME IF YOU'D LIKE  
THIS PRESENTATION OR  
THE MODEL / ASSIGNMENT DOCUMENTS!**

[peter.sinelli@ucf.edu](mailto:peter.sinelli@ucf.edu)