

This is supplementary material for Maggie Fernandes and Megan McIntyre's webtext, "Giving Voice to Generative AI Refusal in Rhetoric and Writing Studies," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 29(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/29.2/disputatio/mcintyre-fernandes/index.html>

Everyone's Writing with AI (Except Me!) Episode #1 Transcript

In this episode, hosts Megan McIntyre and Maggie Fernandes talk about the reason they started the podcast and what they hope to share with listeners in future episodes.

Part 1: Reacting to Rhetorics of Inevitability

Megan: Hi, I'm Dr. Megan McIntyre!

Maggie: And I'm Dr. Maggie Fernandes.

Megan: And this is *Everyone's Writing with AI (Except Me!)*, a cheeky writing studies podcast about refusing generative AI in higher education and writing studies specifically.

Maggie: This is our first episode! Today we're going to talk about why this podcast exists, why we're doing our best to refuse generative AI in our classes, and what we want for the future of this podcast.

Megan: All of the articles and texts that we talk about today will be in the show notes, so feel free to follow along.

Maggie: This podcast exists because we've been having a conversation about AI hype and teaching writing for going on two years now that we haven't yet seen emerge in the public conversation in writing studies. It's all been in the texts between us two. From the beginning, two main positions, in my opinion, related to generative AI have emerged: 1) this is the future and so we must adapt, and 2) this is the end of academia, and so we must stop it; we must police. We feel out of step with that, like we occupy a middle territory that refuses adoption (what with all of the integration happening), and we don't want to police (I'm too tired for that, frankly). We want to refuse this technology on the grounds that it's destroying the planet, it's rooted in the exploitation of global labor and intellectual property, and it's a huge threat to linguistic diversity and linguistic justice.

And I think that these are important topics in writing studies; this is my understanding of the field at least, that these are things that are important to us. But in nearly two years, these conversations have been largely absent. It's happening on Twitter to some degree (more and more every day, I feel), but it's not showing up in CFPs, in special issues, in newly published research, in some cases. I can think of two pieces that talk about ChatGPT and language diversity, for example: Carmen Kynard's (2023) blog post "[When Robots Come Home to Roost](#)" and [Alfred L. Owusu-Ansah's \(2023\) recent piece](#) in *Composition Studies* that talks about the erasure of marginalized Englishes, like Guyanese English. And those are the only two I can think of on that topic.

Megan: Yeah, to be totally frank, I feel a little crazy in this conversation. Are we the only ones talking about how the AI hype/AI inevitability cycle is overtaking the kinds of critical skills we've honed as academics? To misquote Ken from the *Barbie* movie, isn't our job literally question? Where is the skepticism with which many quarters of our discipline have treated new EdTech

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tools, like Turnitin, especially ones that invite increased surveillance of our classrooms and our students?

Maggie: This is our first episode, so maybe it's too soon to share a hot take, but I kind of feel like that skepticism that you're asking for, I'm not really sure what it means to be skeptical of generative AI anymore. When talking about critical AI literacy, I've seen people cite [Maha Bali's \(2023\) definition](#), which speaks to the need to be critical and skeptical of these tools and their outcomes *and* to think very carefully with students about when and *when not* to use these tools. I like that definition, and I was really grateful to have that definition when I was teaching a graduate class in digital cultural rhetorics last spring. But that definition kind of only works if we're open to both choices, when to and when not to use these tools. You know, we can choose to not teach with these tools. But are we being critical when we experiment with tools that overconsume resources like ChatGPT-4 does? Are we being really skeptical when we play with generative AI outcomes to test bias that research like [Safiya Noble's](#) (2018) has long confirmed for us? I feel like that's not being skeptical. That's pretending to be skeptical or performing skepticism. Maybe that's too much of a hot take. And to be clear, I love that definition from Maha Bali; I just don't know how well it's being taken up or if it's being taken up as she's kind of shared it.

Megan: No, I'm totally with you, and I guess, to a certain extent, this podcast feels like a chance to reclaim some of my agency in a conversation where I constantly feel like I'm being told that teachers have no choice but to just accept things. "It's inevitable," after all. I just don't think that's true! Maybe there's some inevitably, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe we lose. But not trying seems like a terrible choice. I think we have choices. I think we have agency, and I think, even if the inevitability arguments are proven right, fighting back against—as Maggie has already said—a planet-destroying technology, is still a good fight. Especially when that tech also erases linguistic variation and whitewashes languages in ways I find deeply disturbing.

Maggie: Yes, yes, to all of that. I really struggle with the inevitability argument because there's no real counterargument to it unless we do things differently. If we're all teaching it, of course it's inevitable. And so, I've been talking with my students about labor and intellectual property and algorithmic oppression. And I admit, it's tempting to play around with generative AI. I can imagine all the cool assignments. I'm reading the cool assignment ideas that people are putting out there about how to play with it for peer review, how to play with it for brainstorming. And it's tempting to play around with it, especially when my students don't seem worried about it, and they're so thoughtful. And I can only imagine my students doing cool things with it, too.

But I haven't yet, because they seem less worried about the ethics of it than I'd like them to be when we first start having conversations. And so that conversation feels important, and I don't know. I wanna do other things in class. I wanna talk about Sofiya Noble's work. I don't necessarily wanna replicate the findings of her research. And I don't want to police students about it. And so, I don't really want to have the conversation about what's acceptable use, what's not acceptable use. I just kind of want to say, hey, this is what we're doing, and walk them through writing processes like I've always done, and I'm not policing. I ask students to cite it if they want to. I teach them how to cite it. I explain my expectations. I'm teaching other things, and that's my stab at staving off the inevitable.

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Part 2: Refusing! In the Writing Program

Maggie: I think, for, like our first episode, I think it'd be really cool to talk about as a WPA, Megan. Can you talk through the choices that you've made here at the University of Arkansas for our writing program?

Megan: Absolutely. So, my day job involves a lot of supporting new writing teachers, drafting and implementing programmatic policies, and collaborating with other folks on campus in places like IT, student success, the academic integrity office. None of this will be surprising to my fellow WPAs or anybody who's done any kind of writing program work. But by the time we got to the summer of 2023, so last year, it was pretty clear to me that we needed a program-wide response to the use of AI writing tools in our classes, specifically. As Maggie can attest, we don't have much of an institution-wide policy or policy discussion happening at Arkansas. There are, you know, conversations happening in particular corners, but there's not like a rehashing or a rehearsing of that conversation widely, or a big policy change.

Maggie: Can I jump in?

Megan: Yeah.

Maggie: ...to clarify what it is? Essentially, it's up to individual instructors. Per our academic integrity policy, if the teacher says it's okay, it's okay, which I was actually pretty grateful for while working with the Faculty Senate to adopt the policy because I was really worried that there would be a totalitarian response to it that would only harm students. And instead, it was pretty chill. It was a lot more reasonable than I expected. That's a good thing! That's a good thing! So yeah, I just wanted to clarify that.

Megan: Yeah, absolutely. I was really pleased actually to see the care and thoughtfulness that I feel like is happening on our campus. There has not been a rush to additional surveillance tools. We are currently talking about AI detection tools in the future. I know it's exhausting, but it's been a careful conversation for the campus, but because, as Maggie said, there's this sort of up-to-the-teacher kind of thing, I didn't want to put the onus and labor on first-year teaching assistants teaching composition for the first time to make that sort of their own policies. And so, what we did was, with Maggie's help and the help of the amazing assistant directors here— shout out to Kat Gray and Llewellyn Hallett, who are the wind beneath my wings, quite frankly— we developed syllabus statements and an instructional policy about large language models in our first-year writing courses. And so, in terms of policies for students, we basically told TAs and instructors they could choose one of two paths: one, they could tell students that the things that we're doing in this class, in first-year writing, the things we want to learn in this class, they're not really supported by these tools, so don't use them, please.

Then, on the other hand, we said, look, I'm going to give you some really clear opportunities to potentially use these. And then the TA or instructor has to figure out where, in the writing process. Which writing assignments? How that would work. What are the permissible places? And write those down for students so students have a clear understanding. And they had to tell students, look, you have to cite the outputs from the AI. So, if you use it for brainstorming, you have to cite the ideas that came from the AI. If you use it for feedback or revision, or ask it to give you some sentences, you've got to quote those like you would quote any other source, and

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then they have to teach citation of the AI to their students in the first-year writing class. In addition, for the TAs and instructors that picked that second policy, they also have to take some class time to read through and lead class discussions about one or more of the ethical questions surrounding AI, which, as we've already talked a little bit about, there's a lot there. They could talk about the environmental consequences. They could talk about the impact on language variation and linguistic justice. They could talk about other kinds of ethical or intellectual property questions, labor questions. You know, here's a whole range of ethical concerns related to generative AI, but they had to take on the labor of assigning and talking about, and using class time to discuss with students, what some of those issues were and how that might impact students' decision-making around when or if to use these kinds of tools.

Then on the faculty side, we said to our TAs and instructors, look, you, one, cannot use an LLM to give feedback to your students because, especially in that first year, we saw people on Twitter talking about putting student work into the AI and asking it to give feedback. Like, absolutely not. Do not put your students' work into ChatGPT and ask it to give feedback. You can't feed your students' work into detectors. If you suspect unauthorized AI usage, you have to come talk to me. Come talk to the writing program office. We will talk through your options and guide you through—if it's necessary and reasonable—what our academic integrity office processes look like around this. But you have to come talk to me first, and we've got to talk through what you're thinking. No use of detectors on your own. And certainly, you cannot require students to use an LLM to complete some assignment or task in the class. So, you can make it open to them, but you can't have an assignment in class where they have to put something into ChatGPT and see its outputs. They should get to decide how and whether they interact with this tool, if they want to at all.

And you know it's been a year, and our house didn't fall down. The writing program is still standing. We did not have a huge influx of academic integrity cases or concerns. We did not add any additional surveillance or policing to our classes. And we're still focused on teaching the processes, habits, skills that we think set students up to become more thoughtful and confident readers and writers, which is ultimately the goal of the first-year writing program.

Maggie: Right.

Megan: Right. But I don't mean to sound Pollyanna about this. I'm aware that there are ways that we have to adapt. There are problems that we have had this year, some of which are related to the AI, and some of which are just related to being a big writing program with lots of humans in it. And I'm sure that there has been, quote unquote, unauthorized use of AI by students in our classes

Maggie: Oh, no!

Megan: ...that nobody noticed or talked about. There's lots of challenges for sure, and there's going to be lots of challenges to come. But my experience as a WPA this year has really made me feel even more strongly that this is an option. The middle ground that you mentioned at the beginning is an option. Full scale adoption, the inevitability discussion, I don't think is here yet. Maybe it's coming. Maybe I'm wrong. But I think we still have a chance right now to stop, think,

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talk, slow down, and be more critical of and skeptical of what's happening around us, especially regarding EdTech's entrance into the conversation, which was always gonna happen as soon...

Maggie: That's always gonna happen.

Megan: As soon as ChatGPT dropped.

Maggie: Yeah, there's so much that you just said that I want to respond to. I think, yeah, the way that the house didn't fall down, like you said; the fact that you're getting ready for a whole new cohort of new teachers. I'm sure you and Kat and LewEllyn are thinking through all kinds of new ways to talk about this with students. I know I'm gonna come to orientation. We're gonna have some chats about new ways to continue not doing the thing or to do the thing without disrupting the other work we do. And I guess I feel very defensive about the position that we've chosen, and so I oftentimes feel myself defending myself and how we're doing it, especially when I see descriptions of opposition and refusal characterized as moral. And listening to you, and through my own experiences working in this department with this policy paradigm, I'm convinced more and more that refusal is just as disciplinary of choice as uptake. Perhaps more so, you know, with our concerns about language diversity; I think it is a really disciplinary stance.

And you know, talking with graduate teaching assistants and students and faculty and other departments here at the University of Arkansas, it's shown me that there are many ways of teaching with AI without having to fully revise our course goals and classroom approaches to take up the work of learning prompt engineering, for example. And one of the main conversations I've had with folks is okay, so you want to teach with ChatGPT. What will you have to give up in order to do that? We only get, you know, 15, 16 weeks. Working with ChatGPT, it's not just a question of, is it environmentally devastating? Which it is, and that should maybe be enough. But it's a question of if this is what we want to give priority to. Do we need to subsume all that we do to make space for it? I think it's okay if we take time figuring out the answer to that question. You know, we're going into the second full year of ChatGPT. And I feel at home in a space where it feels like we're being attacked on all fronts, like to use a terrible metaphor, I guess. As EdTech is encroaching from all corners, it's been okay taking the time to figure out, you know, what are we doing? I've also had a lot of interesting conversations about what it means to make decisions as teachers based on what we can control. Not on what we think students will do or are doing. That might be a future episode, though.

Part 3: Beyond the Writing Classroom / What Comes Next

Megan: For sure. So, to sort of get toward a wrap up here, as we start to close this first episode, taking a step back. Here's what we do know, looking back almost two years after the initial release of ChatGPT. We want to acknowledge that we know that we can't get away from generative AI, and we're not pretending that we can. It's being integrated everywhere—in all [Meta](#) products, [the newest Apple iOS](#), [Google](#) docs and Gmail, [Microsoft products](#) including Word and Outlook, just to name a few (Fried, 2024b; Liedtke, 2024; Spataro, 2023; Wen, 2023). Just a few short months ago, [Google's AI search summaries](#) went viral for being wildly (and sometimes dangerously) inaccurate (Fried, 2024a), and newsflash! They're [permanently broken](#), according to most experts despite whatever recent fixes that Google has tried to roll out

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(Knight, 2024). And, Google and Microsoft are [both falling short of their climate goals](#), citing the enormous energy demands of AI (Collins, 2024).

Maggie: Turning to education, it's been six months since [Arizona State University announced its collaboration with OpenAI](#) (Arizona State University, 2024), with talks about how chatbots might be used as personalized tutors for ASU students. More recently, an investigation in [L.A. Schools](#) found that student data was misused by its now-defunct AI Chatbot, which had been hyped as a potentially transformative tool (Blume, 2024). And, in my opinion, things continue to get more bleak as [Morehouse has announced that it will be using AI teaching assistants in chemistry courses this fall](#) (Nobles, 2024). In my opinion, all of this points to a pretty bleak future. Speaking for myself, I'm not really sure that a few dedicated teachers can stave off the inevitable Silicon Valley takeover of higher education. I don't want to believe it's inevitable, but maybe it is, and all of this unchecked really scares me. But I guess my feeling, and part of my motivation for talking about this on the podcast is, I don't really want to help the inevitable along.

For my part, I'll admit to being overly confident when ChatGPT-3 first dropped. I thought there really wasn't anything to worry about, that writing studies was well equipped to ride things out because we care about writing process and language variation and talking to students about process and like being a student and blah, blah, blah. And I remember sitting specifically in the audience of the huge roundtable audience on ChatGPT at the 2023 Cs in Chicago, and the roundtable seemed largely to be about soothing anxieties, and you know, "We've always adapted to new technologies. We don't have to accept this surveillance technology as our discipline's demise. We're gonna teach writing the way we always have." And I felt really confident in that audience. I felt really good. Let's not police students. And let's teach, as always. Problem solved.

Now, I would say, I have different feelings. I started feeling really out of step with the disciplinary response—which I would describe as techno-determinist, which is to say, I feel like we're following OpenAI's lead rather than engaging the moment from a stance that would protect the most vulnerable among us. I started feeling really out of step with the field during the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. Being a writing teacher and thinking about how to teach students to "ethically"—quote, unquote—use ChatGPT at the same time that creatives were fighting for better pay and labor protections against theft bots kind of made me stop and question, Is this the only way? Do I feel good about this? Is this what I want to teach students? What are the consequences of teaching students that some writing should be done by people, and some writing should be done by robots, even with a little bit of human intervention? I don't know. How were you feeling about things, by the way, Megan?

Megan: Yeah, at the beginning, I, and it feels really naive to admit this, but I was just not that worried. My first, honest reaction was that ChatGPT sounded like a whole lot of hype and like a very small amount of technological progress. I think I also really felt like this thing was so contrary to what I understood the core values of our discipline to be and the core of what we wanted for our students. It seemed so clear to me that this was going to lead to more surveillance on students and on their work, and more EdTech tools built on stealing our students' intellectual property without ever compensating them or considering it. It also seemed like ChatGPT was going to do additional harm to linguistic variation and linguistic justice. And for me, that student-centeredness, that refusal to police students, and that emphasis on

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linguistic variation and linguistic justice were the core of the discipline, as I understood it. And so, I just thought, you know, we're going to be a voice of critique. We're going to be a voice of skepticism. I wasn't worried about adoption, wholesale adoption inside the discipline. I was more worried about the larger, you know, EdTech surveillance complex that exists within education and how that was going to influence our institutional decisions, and what impact that would have in the writing program. So, I felt a lot of naive confidence that, as a discipline who are invested in protecting students, promoting justice, we would respond really critically and skeptically. And there were people, and are people, who are critical. There are people that are skeptical, even some people who have a more pro-adoption stance than I do, but those initial conversations seem to have quickly given way to how-tos, and the how-tos were really aimed at integration. And that was surprising to me, and that, like you were saying, made me question my own understanding of where we are, who we are, what we want, and what we do now.

Maggie: Yeah, it's really true. And a good reminder that there are lots of people being critical of these tools who tend more toward adoption than we do, and I've learned so much from them, even though I'm not in that kind of headspace. I feel like I have learned a lot from people who are talking about what it means to be critical while using, and I don't necessarily think that that difference of opinion is too big that we can't keep learning from each other. But the conversation has been so much about adoption. The special issues that have come out since then are mostly about adoption. The tenor of the conversation is, don't panic. We can adapt, and the way that we are adapting seems to be largely one way. And that's why this podcast exists. But how are you feeling about the future, Megan?

Megan: I mean, look, like you, I'm worried about the future. To be fair, I'm always worried about the future. I am an anxious human being. But you know, I am worried. I'm worried about our first-year students. I'm worried about the graduate teaching assistants, these new writing teachers that I'll get to meet in 2 weeks. I'm worried about my discipline because I think we have got to have a conversation, especially about the linguistic justice and variation piece, and I am not seeing it in a way that makes me really nervous, especially given that [*Students Right to Their Own Language*](#) (CCCC, 1974) and [*This Ain't Another Demand*](#) (CCCC, 2020) remain the official position of our largest national organization. But you know, I'm actually weirdly hopeful, too. This is the time of year for me to be hopeful, honestly. The lead up to orientation for new TAs is sort of my favorite time of year. Everything feels possible, everything feels new. It feels like starting a new chapter every year, and I'm always really grateful for that. And I guess I'm also hopeful because I think there's a lot of very smart, thoughtful, caring teachers and scholars in our discipline. And I think there's still time to make a difference. Maybe AI is inevitable. Certainly, the integrations are moving forward with no signs of slowing down. But I do still think it's possible for us to have an impact on EdTech tool adoption on our campuses and across our programs and in our classrooms. We can still refuse. We can still say no. We can still turn our labor to the things we most care about. And even if that doesn't stave off some sort of OpenAI/Microsoft takeover of higher education, at least, as you said earlier, we're not participating in it. I have done my best in my classroom to give my students what I think they most benefit from in a writing class.

Maggie: You know, as you're saying, that I was thinking about this being a season of hope for you. I'm just kind of thinking about how, for WPAs this is sort of like the Christmas season and

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you're Santa; it's time to deliver all the presents. It's a busy time of year. But, boy! Oh, boy, are we jolly.

Megan: It's so true.

Maggie: We're jolly, and we're holly, and we're jolly and boy oh, boy, if only we're at 95 degrees.

Megan: My god.

Maggie: But yeah, I'm feeling anxious. I feel a little less good every day about the seemingly inevitable uptake of these technologies that I find really scary, really sad. Honestly, I'm the least sad about them when it comes to things like student writing that I have to read. I feel like I have to take a step back sometimes and go, this is actually not what I'm scared about. I'm scared about police departments using it. I'm scared about ChatGPT being used in your everyday workplace to make big decisions for people. Student writing is really small potatoes, and that's something I wanna try to hold on to. But I'm also feeling a little bit good about it, because for a couple of years now I've just kind of shoved these feelings down into group chats and posted the occasional Tweet about it. But every time I do talk about it, I find someone who's talking about it also. And so sometimes you get frustrated enough that you start a podcast and that's giving me a little bit of hope. But we could really, really, really keep going. But episode one has to stop somewhere, so let's wrap up now.

Megan: Yeah, we want to end by just saying we don't think that our way is the one way of responding to this moment. But we do feel like there's more to the conversation than what we've seen so far. We want to chat with folks whose research informs our thinking about the current AI moment as well as folks who are doing their own versions of AI refusal, resistance, skepticism, criticism, whatever they're calling it or however they're thinking about it. In the episodes to come, we'll have interviews with scholars and teachers whose work we adore, and we'll talk to you about the things we're reading right now that are helping us think more deeply about the current AI moment. So, that's all we have for episode one!

Maggie: Thank you so much for listening to this episode of *Everyone's Writing with AI (Except Me!)*. Follow the podcast on Twitter for updates at @EWWAlpod (that's E-W-W-A-I pod), where we'll share info about forthcoming episodes and news about AI hype in higher ed. And, if you're so inclined, you can follow me @magsfern.

Megan: You can also follow me on Twitter @rcmeg. You can find these handles and also the form to be a guest on the pod in the description for this episode.

Maggie: Stay tuned!