

THE ANTHROPOCENE:

Are we living in the Age of Man or AI?

How will AI continue to impact the way users connect online?

“Tralalero Tralala,” “Tung Tung Tung Sahur,” “Ballerina Cappuccina!” A shark with blue shoes, a baseball bat with a face, and a cappuccino cup with arms and legs dressed as if it were in a ballet. These AI generated memes have taken over social media by storm, and have landed on many “For You” pages, whether that be TikTok, Instagram, or even Youtube Shorts.

There is no doubt

that humanity has been in the era of artificial intelligence (AI), for quite a few years now. AI has significantly impacted social media in many ways and will continue to do so. Whether it is good or bad is up to personal experience, but it’s important to explore the ethics of the wide usage of AI within social networks.

Arguably, one of the biggest ethical concerns that comes with the use of AI is the issue of deep-fakes.

Deepfakes are manipulated videos or images, often created with artificial intelligence, to depict a person doing or saying something they really didn’t do or

say. With the continued developments, AI gets more and more realistic every day. Keeping that in mind, these deepfakes are hyper-realistic, and more often than not, fool users.

Brooke Monk, a popular influencer, had found herself a victim of a deepfake. Someone used AI to create inappropriate and dehumanizing images of her that were clearly not real, and spread them around online. Monk is an example of how easy it is to become a victim of a deepfake. Due to its easy access, anyone can generate any photo they desire with a single tap. One tap that could ruin a career, a life, or a reputation.

Many states within the U.S. have passed legislation as well as bills aimed at combating the use of non consensual deepfakes. On Apr. 28, 2025, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass the Take it



This is an AI generated image

Down Act, which targets the misuse of AI created illicit imagery and Deepfake abuse. The DEFIANCE Act of 2024 improves rights to relief for individuals affected by non-consensual activities involving intimate digital forgeries and for other purposes, and hold accountable those responsible for the proliferation of that content.

The issue of deepfakes is quite similar to the concerns about the spreading of misinformation and AI generated news. According to NewsGaurd's article, "Tracking AI-enabled Misinformation: 1,254 'Unreliable AI-Generated News' Websites (and Counting), Plus the Top False Narratives Generated by Artificial Intelligence Tools," there have been quite a few AI news sites that have churned out dozens of articles filled with a plethora of false claims.

It is extremely easy for fake AI generated news to circulate among many social media platforms, especially TikTok and Instagram. In many cases, users tend to believe what they see without looking it up, and then spread around the information. This causes mass confusion that could have been avoided with a simple search.

Despite these ethical concerns, AI has made quite the impression within memes on social media.

On TikTok, an artificially generated influencer called John Pork became fairly popular and lingered for a while. Later on, a made up story had circulated around the character. With the story, AI generated images were put together into a series of videos to follow the story timeline. Another trending TikTok meme contains AI generated images

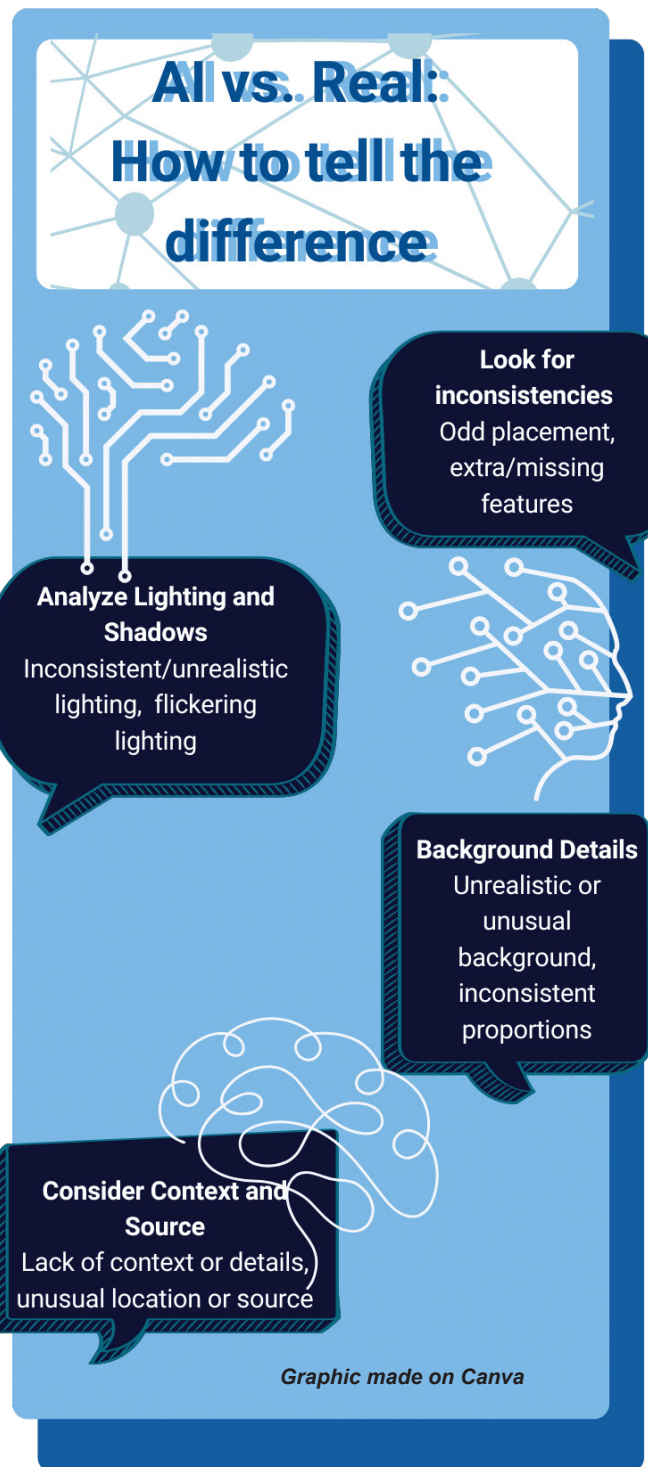
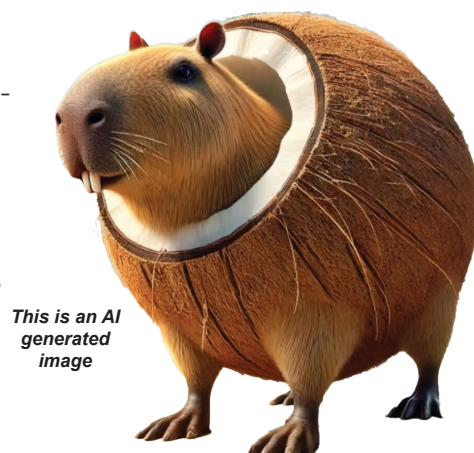
of animals combined with an object, and called some kind of name followed by an Italian phrase, widely known as "Italian Brainrot."

The preposterousness of it all adds to its appeal with younger generations, because what's funnier than a cross between a chimpanzee and a banana? Despite the hilarity, as well as the popularity, these computer generated memes raise a concern; Does it take away from human creativity?

Many studies have shown that AI-generated memes are often funnier than those created by humans. But it seems as if people have just gotten lazier in content creation. Because, frankly, are these memes actually funny, or just absurd? Many users online have expressed their distaste for the Italian Brainrot trend, stating that it is unfunny, so much so that it is funny. AI memes take less effort, less time, and less thinking. Consuming these mindless creations feels like regressing, because there truly is no meaning behind them. Artificially generated memes generally could lead to the decrease of human creation online.

AI, debatably, will be sticking around for years to come, and will continue to develop and upgrade over the years. It's just the matter of whether users will utilize or exploit it. AI certainly raises an abundance of ethical issues and concerns, and will continue to change the trajectory of the way social media works. But there are ways to operate it as a tool and use it beneficially rather than negatively.

After all, AI is the future of humanity.



This is an AI generated image

AI's influence in today's classrooms

Lida Prochaska | Staff Writer

GENERATE



******Jane Smith is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of a LSE student

Sophomore Jane Smith stared at her math homework that was due tomorrow. She hadn't even started it. With a few clicks and a photo, Smith solved her problem. The answers appeared before her in seconds. "When I have to get my math homework done last minute, I use Answer. AI because I can just take a picture of it and then it'll give me the answer," Smith said. As artificial intelligence platforms become more accessible, and advanced, students like Smith are now navigating the ever-thinning line between originality and imitation – and educators are trying to keep up.

In addition to quickly processing numbers for math homework, AI also has the ability to process articles and other text instantly. The average person can read between 200 and 300 words per minute. The average informative article has 1,000 or more words. This means that most people take about five minutes to read an article, not including the time it takes to pick out important information, figure out unknown words or summarize the main idea. ChatGPT can do all of this, and more, in seconds.

ChatGPT is an AI chatbot developed by OpenAI, created to understand and create human-like responses to any queries. It was launched on Nov. 30, 2022. Just five days after it was launched, it reached one million users, and has quickly become one of the fastest-growing apps ever with 400 million weekly users. In addition, it is the eighth most visited website in the world, behind sites like Google, Youtube and Facebook.

ChatGPT is not the only AI, but it is by far the most popular and most well known. Others like Google Gemini, Perplexity AI and Meta AI are newer, and not as prominent, but still have the same basic abilities as ChatGPT. Some are more subject specific, like Photomath and Grammarly. Sites like Suno and Udio can even generate original music.

Southeast High School is not immune to the spread of AI. Students in all different classes use it to gain information, and teachers use it as a tool to increase productivity and give students individual feedback. Jesse Reynolds, who teaches AP World History, Geography and Native American studies, uses AI in his classroom as a tool.

When AI was first making an appearance in schools, it was seen as just another way students can cheat. It was looked at as "a tool that students could use in an effort to not do the work that's being asked of them," Reynolds said.

For a lot of teachers and students, this was the extent of how AI was viewed. It was only seen as a way to cheat and get out of doing homework.

"Teachers have had increasing concerns about students engaging in academic dishonesty via AI," LSE English teacher Adriana Martinez said. This is still a huge concern for teachers and administrators, not only because it is so easy to do, but also because of AI's ability to write essays in a human-like way.

Recently, this has changed. About a year and a half ago, LSE teachers were introduced to a new way to use AI. "I was shown some tools or ways that teachers can use it to flesh out lesson plans, and to provide targeted specific feedback for large writing assignments," Reynolds said.

The most common way teachers use AI is to give student's individualized feedback on writing assignments, like essays. "I use AI to provide faster and more thorough feedback on student writing," Martinez said. "In order for student writers to grow, receiving feedback is critical."

The problem is, it is not always realistic for teachers to provide the amount of feedback that students would ideally have. Class sizes, limited time and the complexity of the writing or assignment can make it impossible for teachers to give in depth feedback to each student. This is where AI becomes helpful.

Multiple teachers have reported using a tool called Class Companion, which provides students feedback on writing on their own time. Teachers can build a rubric, and the AI site will tell students what is good about their writing, as well as what they need to improve on.

Class Companion also gives an overall score, but Martinez said that students often become frustrated with it, because it grades their writing higher than she does. Martinez tells her students that they should be looking at the feedback, not the score, because the feedback will make them better overall writers.

There are mixed feelings about the use of AI for grading, and some students don't like how certain teachers are using it. "Many teachers use AI to grade," Sopho-



more Holly Bowen said. “I’m not a huge fan of this because it creates a disconnect between the way we’re taught in class and the way we’re graded.”

This disconnect happens when the AI grades aspects of an assignment differently than how the teacher might grade it, or it makes mistakes connecting the writing to the inputting rubric. This is a situation where AI grading may be more harmful than helpful.

There is not a simple answer to whether or not teachers should use AI to grade or give feedback, because there are positives and negatives. Although it does give student’s individualized critiques, it can also leave students feeling like they got a lower grade than they deserved.

AI is not only being used by teachers. Like when it first emerged, AI is still being utilized by students to do their work for them. “Many of my peers use AI to help them write essays, sometimes taking all of their work from sites such as ChatGPT,” Bowen said. “Many people also use PhotoMath for math homework.”

Although some students may believe it is a simple and harmless way to get a good grade, teachers have other opinions.

“The reward from using it to get out of an assignment would be so much more detrimental in the long run when they don’t have the skill to demonstrate on an AP test,” Reynolds said.

He believes there is no point in even using AI to cheat because the point of homework is to practice important skills. These skills are needed on tests and are especially important for AP students to understand for the AP tests at the end of the year.

Reynolds relates using AI on assignments to basketball. “If I play basketball and I want to be good at basketball, I’m going to practice my free throw,” Reynolds said. “I’m not going to put a machine in there to make free throws while I’m sitting on the side.” This analogy shows students that using AI to simply cheat and not gain any understanding is not helpful in the long run, and it is actually detrimental.

“The point of assignments that teachers give students is to help them learn and assess their learning,” Martinez said. “If AI completes work for students, then students aren’t learning and the assessment is invalid.”

Although some students may not realize, teachers can tell easily when students use AI to complete the work for them. “You can tell when a student’s writing isn’t theirs. You know what their voice and style is, and so AI becomes super obvious to see,” Reynolds said.

Reynolds also finds that students in his class use the internet to answer questions for them on worksheets by just copying and pasting the question into Google. On most Google searches, the first

thing that pops up is an AI Overview that gathers information from all different websites and sources, condensing it into a few paragraphs. Reynolds knows this. “I do that ahead of time. I already know what the Google AI generated response is going to be, so if I see that, it’s just a null and void answer anyway.”

“The worry is the dependance on AI and not having the student doing the critical thinking,” LSE math teacher Brain Kaiser said. Kaiser notices many students using Photomath, and other sites, to complete their work in his classes. He believes that AI does have benefits in math, like personalization, its ability to help when a student is stuck and individual feedback.

Kaiser also notices the downsides. Many students become dependent on Photomath and other AI math equation solvers, causing them to pass their classes without really understanding the material. Kaiser thinks AI should be “used thoughtfully by teachers to enhance understanding and equity, not replace human interactions.”

The use of AI is not only affecting students while they are in school, but also after they graduate. Martinez believes that if an individual is a talented thinker and a problem solver, AI will just enhance those skills, making that person even better. On the contrary, if a person is not proficient at these skills because they had AI do it for them, they will be replaced with AI in the future. Martinez proposed an interesting question, “Why would an employer pay someone — wages, healthcare, retirement, etc. — to do a job that AI can do much cheaper?”

Although AI can be harmful, it depends on what it’s being used for. “I think it’s a tool, and just like any tool, it can be used or misused,” Reynolds said. “I think that AI shouldn’t be seen as a threat.” He believes that in the classroom, it shouldn’t be something worried about or seen in a negative way. “It doesn’t necessarily mean that someone’s doing the thinking for you. It can just be a source of inspiration or a new way of approaching a problem,” Reynolds said.

Graphics made by Lida Prochaska with Canva

AI IN EDUCATION

PROS AND CONS

- 1. SMART LEARNING** ✓

AI gives students the opportunity to understand things better, and check their answers on assignments.
- 2. HELPING TEACHERS** ✓

AI websites and apps like Class Companion can help teachers give students individual feedback and make grading more efficient.
- 3. OVER-RELIANCE** ✗

If AI is overused, students can fail to learn vital skills, like simple math, writing, and critical thinking.
- 4. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY** ✗

AI gives students another way to get out of doing assignments. With just a few clicks and a short prompt, AI can write entire essays or solve math problems in seconds.

In the end, whether or not the use of AI is ethical and acceptable in any scenario is based on the way it is being used. Both students and teachers can use AI in effective ways that support their learning and in ways to harm it. It all depends on the person’s intentions.