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SB: Welcome to Liminal Peers, a podcast dedicated to the research and exploration of peers occupying dual spaces.

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SB: Welcome to our podcast, and I'm joined here today with Dylan.

Dylan: Hi, welcome everyone.

SB: Dylan and I are co hosting this podcast episode talking about AI and academia.

Dylan: We're going to be talking specifically about the perspectives of students occupying dual and professional roles

SB: These are master's students, some who are working outside of academia as professionals, and others who are working inside of academia as teaching assistants.

Dylan: We have been offered their perspectives on utilizing AI in both their professional and student lives. We asked how AI impacts student learning and how they believe AI should be adopted by educational institutions

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SB: As a heads up for our listeners today, Dylan and I conducted our interviews with our liminal peers over email and throughout the episode we'll be hearing quotes from our peers read by text to speech AI voices.
Let's get into the episode

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Dylan: AI is an interesting and very controversial topic in today's time, and people have a lot to say about it, us included.

SB: Especially with its integration into academia, scholars aren't quite sure how we should adopt AI and what will be considered ethical.

Dylan: It's a hard topic to make set rules on, of course, gaining some perspectives from students who are experiencing the rise of AI in both their professional and academic lives might just get us one step closer to understanding ethical usage

SB: Right, We compiled 4 questions that focus on AI in academia and asked our liminal peers to provide insights on how they view and use AI

Dylan: let's kick it off with question number one. We asked, where and how have you encountered or utilized AI as a student?

SB: Our peers told us that they've used programs like ChatGPT. Grammarly and Socratic for writing support, research assistance, multiple choice answers, and data analysis. Here is a direct quote from one of our peers.

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AI VOICE 1: As a student, I've encountered AI in ways that have enhanced my learning experience. I've used tools like ChatGPT to help brainstorm ideas and find examples that aid in my understanding of difficult concepts

Dylan: It seems like these students are using AI as a form of assistance. A way to complete work in a timely manner where it might not have been possible before. What do you think about students using AI like this SB?

SB: makes a lot of sense to me that students are using AI like this. Um, as a student, I often feel very crunched for time and as a teacher, a lot of my students are taking seven or eight classes at some point, at some points, and like also working. So they're obviously like incredibly crunched for time as undergrads. I think my main concern with this is fearing that Um, you know, in kind of the ideal world, right, like, we would be able to cut time and do less and, like, spend time, like, resting and not thinking about school but I think sometimes the faster we're able to complete things, the more we're asked to complete. And it just, yeah, becomes, like, more and more.

Dylan: For sure.

SB: Yeah.

SB: Um, so in our next question, we asked, where and how have you encountered or utilized AI in your professional life?

Dylan: Our peers have also encountered AI plenty in their professional lives. From simple tasks like drafting emails and correcting grammar mistakes, to more difficult tasks like converting code and creating lesson plans, AI has been considered beneficial. One of our peers says

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AI VOICE 2: I've utilized AI to support various aspects of teaching preparation. AI tools are great for brainstorming lesson plans and fresh ideas for students who may learn better through different modalities.

SB: AI is used similarly in the professional realm for these students. It is used as an assistance tool and helps our peers create engaging lesson plans or save time converting code to a different language. What do you think of professionals using AI for these kinds of tasks, Dylan?

Dylan: You know, I think it definitely, uh, rolls over into what we're thinking about institutionally, too, as students. Like, uh, it's, you know, if you're producing so much, you know, the manager likes to do, because they think you don't have enough, and you just end up spreading yourself thinner and thinner. Um, so I think that doing it for, like, time saving is okay, but I wouldn't use it all the time Maybe, you know, you still got to do some work, right? Um, and I would like for things like creating lesson plans, let's say like, yes, maybe like let AI create it, but then go in there and sit with it and work with it yourself, right? And make it more geared to what you want it to be, edit it. And the same thing with like the converting code, like you need to make sure it converted it correctly. It runs correctly. Yeah. You know, you need to read through it. You can't just trust it 100%, right?

SB: Yeah, absolutely. Like, while AI can, like, help us get started on something or help us do, like, a base task, we have to take whatever AI produced and make it, like, work truly for us. You know, I know that I couldn't just generate an AI lesson plan and use it verbatim, um, because it wouldn't work for me or for my students to just use a generic template that AI had produced. But, it can kind of get me started on the base parts of a lesson plan, where I can then create like a more nuanced, uh, lesson plan.

Dylan: Yeah, I totally agree with you there. Just making sure you put yourself into it too. And it's not just this model, language model, doing everything for you. You know, put some personality in it and then I think that makes it better for everyone. Our next question asks, in what ways do you think AI impacts the learning process?

SB: Based on what we've heard, AI seems to play a significant role in making learning more efficient and accessible. However, some of our peers are worried about how the use of AI will impact our abilities to think and problem solve. One of our peers, Ghassan Sleiman, says,

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AI VOICE 3: I feel, when used wrongly, that it can let students give their brains to AI where it makes them not really critically think, and Critical Thinking is a great tool for everyone to have throughout life.

Dylan: I can totally agree with this perspective. Some students may take advantage of AI and go past using it as an assistance tool to using it to do everything for themselves. What do you think about AI in this perspective S.B.?

Yeah, I think that's like definitely one of the, um, big kind of, uh, things that we have to avoid when we start incorporating AI into education is making sure that students don't use it to do their critical thinking for them. Uh, one thing I think about a lot in my role as like an educator is, uh, because I'm a composition instructor, when I'm assigning students writing tasks, my goal for them is not that I just want to see a produced, finished product. My goal for them is for them to read other scholars, engage with that work, and think about what their own response to it is. And I think AI simply cannot do that for them.

Dylan:Right, it's not like it, I mean you can have it read something and then spit something out, but you know, it doesn't have that same, you know, human feeling that you get when you read someone else's stuff, and you sit with it, Maybe I can see it this way, or maybe I see it better this way, and, you know, argue with it a little bit, or accept it. Um, especially like, in the composition realm, anything in English. You know, it goes over into other realms too, for students. Like, in, uh, computer science, like, obviously they need to know those coding languages, right? They shouldn't depend on AI to do it for them. So, yeah, I totally agree.

SB: Yeah, I think a lot of people feel that, you know, AI should be an assistance for people who have expertise, um, but students haven't developed a lot of that expertise yet, so in some ways they kind of have to go through the process of developing expertise so that they can use AI as an assistant later.

Right, yeah. Totally agree with you.

SB: So, our final question asked, As a professiona/teacher, how do you think educational institutions should adopt the rise of AI technologies based on your experiences, and why?

Dylan: With the information we have gathered, it seems like there is a strong consensus that AI should be integrated into education as long as there are clear boundaries. One of our peers says

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AI VOICE 4: AI is inevitable and as educators, it should be our responsibility to teach students to use it ethically and responsibly. I think educational institutions should view it as a complementary tool for enhancing teaching rather than replacing traditional instruction. It should only be used as a secondary tool but never as a means to replace student writing in any capacity…

SB: So we must ensure that AI does not replace methods of teaching and learning like creativity and critical thinking. Institutions should also educate students on how to use AI ethically and

responsibly. What do you think some of the challenges institutions in using AI while maintaining these core educational values

Dylan: So, I think the biggest thing that these institutions are going to have trouble with is definitely the ethics of AI, deciding what they should use it on, what their rules are for it, and how does it vary institutionally, how does it vary per major, per area, like, is it going to change how you use it, like some people might interact with AI more than others. So I think it's going to be hard for institutions to lay out rules for these things, and I think, I'm not going to say it's impossible, but I just think with it being so new, I think its integration is going to take time, for sure.

SB: Yeah, I absolutely agree with the integration of AI, and I think the ethical integration of AI, we should allow it to take time, because like, we have to consider absolutely everything.

The ethics of what is like happening. I think academia too, what academics try to do, um, and like all their endeavors is to consider the larger context of things that they're approaching. So, while I think it's definitely a challenge for educational institutions, I think that we are prepared for the task of considering a tool in it's context. Of taking AI, and what it can do and making sure that we think about it not just as a decontextualized tool, but as a contextual tool where we have to consider environmental impacts, um, the impacts of like, um, work and time and using other people's work and what it means to have our own voice versus what it means to use an AI voice. But it is incredibly nuanced and it will vary by the specific context of specific assignments, specific majors, Specific roles.

Dylan: Yeah, like, that's gonna, that's gonna take some time away. And I guess, you know, like you said, we should take time for sure. We don't want to rush into anything. Kind of just like, right now, I guess educators should really just be thinking about guiding their students to use AI. Uh, since there's not really clear rules on it, and just kind of create some maybe ethical questions that the students might not be thinking about um like as a part of their lessons and using AI, and just make sure that there's like a sense of responsibility there for sure.

SB: Yeah, absolutely. I think asking students to think about ethical questions and embodying that sense of responsibility is, especially because while it may take time for the university to fully, uh, feel out how to integrate, ethically integrate it. Students already, are already exposed to it, are already using it, and we have to both respond and provide guidance of what they're already using, while also contemplating what it really means to ethically have AI be a part of something.

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SB: Thank you for listening to this episode of "Liminal Peers". This podcast episode was edited, recorded, and produced by S.B. Buckelew and Dylan Fisher as part of the New Media, Writing, and Rhetoric course taught by Dr. Joseph Robertshaw at the UAH English Department. Thank you to all of our peers who participated in these interviews. All of the music in the podcast is cut

from the song Préparatifs dans la Salle de Rédaction by Monroeville Music Center which is located on the free music archive under the creative commons attribution license. The chime sound that we utilized to introduce our AI speech to text recordings is Up Chime 2 by Fool Boy Media which is located on free sound under attribution license 4.0 All of the AI speech to text recordings were made through the Free Luv Voice software