Graduate School of Theology
Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Its Use

Generative AI in the GST: the Centrality of Formation

Human beings bearing God's image are designed to honor God and have the potential for personal growth and transformation toward that end. GST faculty and programs strive to facilitate the flourishing of grace, truth, humility, and wisdom within and between human persons, especially those seeking to grow in their capacities for spiritual leadership. Given these aims, within the GST, acquiring wisdom is a higher priority than achieving technical proficiency; gaining discipline is more important than completing tasks efficiently; and growing in one's aptitudes for relating to God and others outranks the ability to prove knowledge.

Since GST programs emphasize formation, the human experience and the personal consequences of academic work remain central. Yet developing new or enhanced capacities requires engaging in various kinds of struggle for the sake of growth. With God's help, the struggle that accompanies a person's formation and learning lead to such things as deeper faith and discernment, sharper skills and expanded knowledge, greater compassion and richer imagination for ministry. Yet the *processes* of learning are at least as important and even constituent of the *products* of learning. Identifying and evaluating sources, analyzing texts, internalizing knowledge, constructing and verbalizing ideas, testing proposals, discerning apt solutions, writing and speaking well—such formative activities require the consistent investment of the person and entail a measure of struggle.

As part of this process, the GST seeks to help students learn to use various tools that can aid them in their studies and professional work, both traditional tools (e.g. books) and emergent ones (e.g. generative AI). However, it is unwise to let tools supplant humanity. Imprudent reliance on tools may dilute key formative experiences and undermine the potential for growth. It can be tempting to off-load some of the challenging formative experiences required for personal growth to handy tools or other agents. Such outsourcing can be unethical—such as when you claim the work of another agent as your own; but it can also impoverish learning by hindering your engagement with the healthy processes of struggle necessary for growth.

Using Generative AI: the Risks to Formation

Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence tool that can create new content (e.g. text, images, video) based on existing data and user prompts. Examples include: ChapGPT, NotebookLM, Grammarly, Copilot, Gemini, DeepSeek, DALL-E, and Sora. Such tools are readily available and fairly easy to use. Yet in the judgment of the GST faculty, the use of generative AI poses distinct risks to the aims of theological education and professional formation. Using AI tools to do your work for you is liable 1) to compromise the effectiveness of the learning *process* and 2) to produce poor *results*.

Risks to the product

- *Inaccuracy*: generative AI is known to make mistakes, fabricate data, invent sources, and push unsubstantiated conclusions as fact.
- *Inadequacy*: AI-assisted research may yield an abundance of results yet can also overlook key lines of inquiry or leave major gaps in evidence
- *Quality*: content generated by AI is often generic and descriptive, not synthetic or critically astute; AI tools using large language models are not skilled at entering discussion or contributing astutely to conversation.
- *Intellectual dishonesty*: AI is not always clear or honest about the sources of its content

Risks to the process

- *Learning:* it is difficult to internalize knowledge produced by AI rather than the student's applied efforts; the construction of new knowledge requires direct involvement with materials and tasks
- *Skill Development*: direct engagement with data, tasks, and processes are necessary to the development of many academic and professional skills
- *Problem-solving*: reliance on generative AI to provide answers and point the way impedes the growth of crucial problem-solving skills
- *Wisdom:* wise application depends on intensive and reflective experience in the acquisition, analysis, and use of knowledge, and the practice of tasks; outsourcing these activities impairs the growth of wisdom
- *Discipline:* persistent application of one's attention and effort is necessary for the development of discipline and the capacity for endurance in the face of difficult challenges
- *Motivation:* reliance on generative AI is liable to reduce motivation to perform basic tasks that prepare the student to master more complex tasks

GST Policy: the Use of Generative AI

In view of these risks, the GST has specific policies about the use of generative AI. *Failure to follow prescribed policies will be considered a violation of academic integrity* (see course syllabus and the Office of the Provost website for details regarding Academic Integrity Policy).

1. **GST Faculty Prerogative**
   a. faculty may choose to prohibit the use of generative AI for any and all aspects of assignments and student work; check your course syllabus, consult your teacher, and follow faculty instructions
   b. faculty will specify the allowable/prohibited uses of generative AI for each of their courses and communicate their policies in classes, syllabi, and Canvas course sites
   c. faculty may require students to disclose where and how they have employed generative AI in the process of their work
   d. submitted work may be analyzed for the probability of use from generative AI tools; work found to violate GST or faculty policy will be considered academically dishonest

2. **Prohibited Uses of Generative AI in the GST**
   a. using AI to generate outlines, to write essays and responses, or to revise written work
   b. using AI to replace assigned readings/resources (e.g. to generate summaries) or to evaluate assigned readings/resources
   c. using AI to translate language assignments
   d. submitting AI-generated work without attribution and clear description of the role AI played in the process
   e. submitting AI-generated work or responses as one's own, e.g. to generate arguments or interpretations that are not properly attributed

3. **Allowable use of generative AI in GST (unless prohibited by faculty)**
   a. to assist with literature reviews, help identify relevant sources, and summarize articles or other resources not explicitly assigned for reading
   b. to generate lines of inquiry for research
   c. to analyze large datasets or conduct pattern recognition (e.g. coding data)
   d. to generate visual aids or produce tables/graphs
   e. assignments or approved research having the explicit aim of using and evaluating generative AI as a tool

Tips for Faculty Use of the GST's AI Policy

The foregoing document addresses three matters pertinent to the use of generative AI in the GST: A) Rationale, B) Risks, and C) the Policy. Here are some suggestions about how seminary faculty use them:

1. Copy and paste the entire statement into a syllabus.
2. Put the entire document into a Canvas course along with the class policies, referencing it from the syllabus.
3. Put links to a shared version of the document into a Canvas course and/or syllabus.
4. Pull out the portions from Policy that specifically apply to a class and put them into the class syllabus, clarifying how the policy applies to the class.
5. In any instance, one should mention and/or discuss it in class, drawing attention to the specific applications of the policy to the class. The first two sections can be useful in helping faculty reflect with students on AI and formation.

If one believes that a violation has occurred, one should treat it as a violation of academic integrity, as the policy stipulated, which is already governed by faculty judgment and university policy. The Provost's website prescribes how to handle to handle of alleged violations is prescribed (see details here), but neither the university nor the GST mandates the specific means by which one might come to suspect violations of academic integrity (e.g. by faculty judgment, peer reporting, through the use of AI detectors or plagiarism detectors, etc.).