



## ChatGPT for Teaching Innovation at Villanova

With the support of the Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning (VPTL), twelve faculty members who had been active users of ChatGPT in their teaching participated in a 1-year pilot with ChatGPT Plus starting June 2025. The goal was to explore innovative, pedagogically grounded ways to engage students through the intentional integration of ChatGPT tools into their courses.

Several participants created Custom GPTs, sometimes called AI “agents,” to support specific teaching and learning goals in their course. A Custom GPT is an easy-to-create, tailored version of ChatGPT in which a professor can provide instructions, constraints, and/or upload course materials or link to relevant websites, so the system’s responses remain focused on particular course content and tasks. These agents can be designed to serve roles such as a guided revision coach, a disciplinary problem-solving partner, or a structured aide for complex learning activities. Rather than starting from a blank chat each time, Custom GPTs allow faculty to embed pedagogical intent directly into how students engage with AI, supporting disciplinary reasoning while reinforcing ethical and purposeful use.

Here are faculty key insights on opportunities or challenges associated with integrating AI into their courses:



Ricardo Silva, Part-Time Faculty, Computing Sciences:

I integrated ChatGPT extensively into both course design and student-facing work. I used it to redesign syllabi, develop structured assignments and grading rubrics, and build dedicated GPT-based teaching assistants tailored to specific courses. I also experimented with live classroom integration using voice-enabled AI, creating an environment where both the professor and the AI can engage student questions in real time. A major success has been positioning AI as a structured coach rather than a shortcut — particularly for helping students work through “stuck points” while staying aligned to clear evaluation criteria. A continuing challenge is teaching verification [of AI outputs], discipline and ethical discernment, especially given the confident tone AI can produce even when responses require scrutiny. My key insight is that AI is most transformative when it scaffolds higher-order thinking rather than replaces effort. With intentional integration and institutional support, it can meaningfully enhance feedback cycles, metacognition, and student agency across disciplines.

Christopher D. Brown, Associate Teaching Professor, Physics:

I aimed to integrate ChatGPT into my junior-level lab course using two customized GPTs that guided report revision and collaborated with students on large end-of-term projects. I noticed that none of my students interacted with these GPTs based off the number of chats reported by the GPT. I had a frank discussion with my admittedly small class (only six students) and discovered a fairly strong anti-AI sentiment among my students. Of course, there is a noted tendency among students to downplay the frequency of AI usage when talking with professors.

Christopher D. Brown cont.

Next time around, I think I'd like to collaborate earlier and more directly with students to better understand their usage habits and design ways of leveraging AI in my course. Bringing students into the discussion of AI usage earlier may lead to more authentic feedback [on their AI use].

Qianhong Wu, Professor, Mechanical Engineering:

I used GPT to record my lectures and generate homework questions and exam problems. This approach has supported student learning by encouraging deeper engagement with the material, as the questions are original and cannot be easily answered using widely available online solution manuals.

Mojtaba Vaezi, Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering:

I have not used ChatGPT directly in structured student-facing activities. However, I encourage students to use it to clarify concepts and ask questions related to ECE 8072 (Statistical Signal Processing). Some students have incorporated ChatGPT-assisted explanations into their homework, which raises both opportunities and challenges in assessing independent understanding.



I also conducted a survey and found that many students use ChatGPT frequently, often multiple times per week or even daily.

A key insight is that AI tools are already deeply integrated into students' learning habits, so the focus should shift toward guiding effective and responsible use rather than restricting access.

Rebecca L. Scilio, Associate Director of Academic Success, Charles Widger School of Law:

I used AI with my second-year legal writing students to show them two different ways in which AI can and will be used in their careers. They used AI to create client interview questions based on the client's issue and some initial research about that issue. They also used AI to edit a client letter that they first wrote without using AI. These exercises allowed the students to practice iterations and to gain a basic understanding of their professional responsibility to protect client confidentiality. These exercises also permitted the class to discuss the pros and cons of different AI sources and the need to always check the work produced. Finally, because they were required to use an open AI source for the first exercise and a locked AI source for the second exercise, the students were able to compare the different types of sources and gain an understanding as to how different systems may perform or need different interactions for the best output.

Although law students will need to learn how to use AI to draft documents, this was not the class for that learning as the students must first understand the law and the purpose of the document they are writing before they will have the expertise and discernment to review and edit the output received.

Kate Szumanski, Senior Director, Professional Development, Ellis Center, CLAS:

I used ChatGPT to assist me in brainstorming ideas for two courses: Journalism and the History of U.S. Journalism. The tool has helped me think more deeply about the structure of my syllabi and ways to build in more interactive, engaging activities for students. I've used the tool to help me think more deeply about "career readiness," a key concept related to our Arts and Sciences

Kate Szumanski cont.

Professional Development (ASPD) courses. In particular, I've prompted ChatGPT to dive deeper into what AI literacy means and what skills are associated with it.

We'll embed into our ASPD courses moving forward more content focused on AI literacy. We also want to help students communicate and articulate their AI literacy skills in meaningful and memorable ways during internship /job interviews.

Megan Quigley, Associate Professor, English & Tate Gibbons, MA Student, English:

We aimed to craft an AI exercise that would prompt students to think about the relationship between human writing and human existence—a relationship often traced in Virginia Woolf's formally experimental novels. We didn't want to create a “talk with Virginia Woolf” bot, who aped the historical personage Woolf. We did want students to be critical about the project: how did it feel to be discussing philosophical questions with a Large Language Model (LLM)?

Using an agentic AI platform called Replit, we built “The Lighthouse” by inputting “natural-language” prompts to Replit's AI agent. Selecting ChatGPT-5.2 as the bot's default LLM, we were interested in seeing whether students' engagement with the bot would elicit the kind of extratextual reflections—on language, self, consciousness, etc.—that might deepen their understanding of Woolf's fiction.

The student feedback to the assignment ranged from true appreciation for extended ‘personalized’ debate to horror about talking to a bot about life and death. One definite take-away: the exercise was very different in [in-person] group versus remote [individual, online, asynchronous] settings.

We are still processing student feedback to “The Lighthouse”!



Yasemin Akis, Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor,  
Theology and Religious Studies:

ChatGPT was helpful for creating in-class discussions and group study activities. It helped generate new ideas for classroom work, creative questions, and student presentations. Students could use it to explore topics and think of different perspectives [on the course content]. One challenge was making sure they used it thoughtfully [for their learning] and not just copied answers.

These faculty reflections illustrate not only the possibilities of AI-supported teaching and learning, but also pinpoint some of the tensions, limits, and open questions that emerge when such tools intersect with disciplinary values, course design, and student use. These observations all underscore how purposeful integration of AI into teaching is less about adopting a tool than about asking thoughtful pedagogical questions in context, over time.

For questions regarding the technological elements of AI integration, please contact [University Technology Services \(UTS\)](#). Pedagogical questions and consultations can be directed to [MTAL](mailto:MTAL) at [vitalinfo@villanova.edu](mailto:vitalinfo@villanova.edu).

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