

AIC-101 Introduction to Artificial Intelligence
Assessment Activity AIC-101:00010
Applying Knowledge of AI Systems and Concepts
Last update: 15 September 2024

Assignment General Instructions

For this assessment, you must read a document (see below for details), then write an essay about that document. We have provided a set of questions to guide your thinking and writing. You should consider and discuss these questions in your essay. However, do not view these questions as an exam. Do not answer them independently, but instead integrate your answers into a coherent presentation about the assigned document.

The purpose of this assessment is to demonstrate that you understand something about the principles, objectives, techniques, history and social issues related to AI; that you can think and write critically and clearly about these broader aspects of AI; and that you can reflect on and express your personal opinions about the field. We encourage you to refer to material from the lectures and resources provided in class to support your arguments, as well as additional external sources you might find doing individual research. All external sources must be listed in a References section at the end of the document. (See the lecture notes final pages for an example format.)

There is no minimum or maximum word limit for this assessment, but an effective response will probably be at least two to three pages long. Please put your name and nickname at the top of the first page of the essay. Submit your essay on Canvas in PDF format.

This assessment must be solely your work. You may do external research, as noted above, but everything in the essay must be in your own words. You may not use any sort of generative AI tools to produce your essay, although you are free to use them in exploring the background.

If you have questions about this assessment, please consult the instructor.

Choose one of the two assignments below. You will not get a higher grade if you do both! PDF versions of both reading assignments can be found on the Modules page in Canvas.

Option 1: “Historical Reflections: How the AI Boom Went Bust” by Thomas Haigh

Communications of the ACM, Vol. 67, No. 2, February 2024

Read this article, then write a coherent essay that includes answers to the following questions:

1. What are the author’s main points? Summarize the main ideas of the article in one or two paragraphs.
2. Based on what you know from the AIC-101 lectures, external reading and your own experience, do you agree or disagree with the author’s points? Provide evidence or logical arguments to support your opinion.
3. Following on from the historical events described in this article, what do you think is going to happen in the field of Artificial Intelligence over the next five years? Please be specific. Provide evidence or arguments to support your ideas.

Option 2: “ETAOIN SHRDLU” by Fredric Brown

Short story published in *Unknown Worlds* magazine, 1942

<https://archive.org/details/etaoin-shrdlu-fredric-brown>

To help you understand this story, you might also want to read this explanation of linotype technology.

<https://blogs.loc.gov/headlinesandheroes/2022/06/the-linotype-the-machine-that-revolutionized-movable-type/>

You might also want to watch this video of a refurbished linotype in action!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MI2sYvUb4_0

Read this story, then write a coherent essay that includes answers to the following questions:

1. What happens in this story? Summarize the plot in one or two paragraphs.
2. How does this story, written more than 80 years ago, relate to modern Artificial Intelligence? Does it deal with topics, themes or issues that are currently being studied or under debate? Which ones?
3. Consider the ending of the story. Does this ending make sense given what you know about current AI models and systems?
4. This story might be considered a “cautionary tale”, that is, a story with a moral or lesson. What are the most important lessons offered by the story? Do you think these lessons are relevant to modern AI? Why or why not?