

Teaching AI Literacy in a Sociological Research Methods Course

Discipline: Sociology

Focus: Undergraduate, Research methods, Literature review

Overview

AI use is allowed throughout the course, and students document it on every assignment. A literature review assignment has students generate a review with Scite.ai and then evaluate it in stages.

How it works

1. **AI usage tracking (every assignment).** A short Canvas questionnaire asks whether AI was used, which platform, how it was used, the approximate share of the work (0–25% through 76–100%), how helpful it was, and whether and how outputs were verified.
2. **Scite.ai literature review (weeks 4–6).** As final project planning begins, students generate a 1,000–1,500 word review on their topic, then analyze it in three stages:
 - First impressions: what seems strong or weak, and whether the narrative fits the topic.
 - Source quality: journal quality, relevance, recency, and important work that is missing.
 - Accuracy check: for 3–4 articles they have read, whether the tool represents arguments accurately, omits nuance, or invents connections between sources.
3. **End-of-semester reflection.** A one-page essay on helpfulness, impact on learning research methods, how verification habits changed, limitations, ethical concerns, and future use.

Tools

Canvas, Scite.ai, ChatGPT, Claude

What the instructor observed

Even with demonstrations, students mostly used the chatbot they already knew rather than the one best suited to the task, and they lacked a reliable way to check accuracy. Students who resisted AI and students who already relied on it heavily both held to their existing views.

Advice for colleagues

- Spend class time, and possibly assignments, on what AI does well and where it falls short.

Adapting it

The usage questionnaire fits any course with an open AI policy. The three-stage critique works for any AI-generated summary or synthesis in your field.