

Entry category: Innovation Pacemaker | Entry: The Red Line Project AI Storytelling section

Link to the AI storytelling section: <https://redlineproject.news/category/ai-storytelling/>

Link to the site's homepage: <https://redlineproject.news/>

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What is The Red Line Project? University of Illinois Chicago cover news and urban issues in Chicago neighborhoods, including the UIC campus in the Little Italy neighborhood on Chicago's southwest side. They use mobile, data and other digital tools to tell their stories. The site was founded in 2011 when Adviser Mike Reilley was teaching at DePaul.

Overview: For the 2024-25 academic year, Red Line Project reporters experimented with AI tools and Large Language Models to tell stories and write opinion pieces for their website. They followed the ethical principles listed in the [site's AI policy](#) and received additional training about disclosure and audience building from class visits with Lynn Walsh of TrustingNews.org. Red Line Project Adviser Mike Reilley also trained the students on how to use various tools ethically and how to implement them into the storytelling process. This didn't replace boots-on-the-ground reporting – they still interviewed people, pulled data, wrote their own stories, etc. But the AI gave them opportunities to create photo illustrations, process videos, build social media videos and do deep research (mainly Perplexity) to research stories and prepare interview questions.

Why it's out-of-the-box thinking: While some journalism programs and student media fear AI, The Red Line Project found ways to implement the tools and techniques into their workflow without sacrificing quality. They implemented The Associated Press "80/20" rule the says if up to 80 percent of the work is done by AI, then at least 20 percent of the work on the backend must be human interaction (editing, fact-checking, quality control). (In most cases, the breakdown was 60/40 or 70/30 AI to human interaction).

Students learned how to write prompts for Large Language Models such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Co-Pilot and many multimedia tools: Midjourney, Adobe Firefly, Sora, Eleven Labs, Google NotebookLM and many more. They learned how to edit their work, develop summaries, generate social media videos, develop interview questions and do deep research on a topic.

The students did not use the tools to write their AI stories, only to edit and repackage finished stories.

Students also were required to write AI disclosures at the top of the stories, citing what software they used and how. This was influenced by a 2024 Trusting News study showed that 95 percent of readers want to know if AI was used in the reporting/editing/production process.

Examples of Stories and Editorial Pieces:

Ticketed by Design

<https://redlineproject.news/2024/12/14/ticketed-by-design-the-unequal-toll-of-chicagos-speed-camera-program/>

Kyra Theodore's story was a combination of data reporting mixed with some AI research tools and photo illustrations.

AI Copyright and Ethics in Journalism

<https://redlineproject.news/2024/11/11/opinion-the-copyright-and-ethical-situation-of-ai-and-journalism/>

Taeya Borek authored this opinion piece about the issues journalists face when using AI tools in the reporting process.