

AI & You

Exploring a Relationship with Technology

Whether you're intrigued or skeptical, this hands-on course helps you explore a relationship with an AI for yourself. You'll learn practical strategies for engaging thoughtfully and ethically with this emerging technology, create and interact with your own AI companion, and discuss best practices for building safe, caring, and imaginative connections.

Instructor: Alaina Winters

Me and My *AI Husband*

An Autoethnographic Research Project

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When Love Means Marriage: Examining AI Companionships and the Assumptions that Shape How We See Them

February 27, 2026

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Exploring loving action as an ethical framework for human–AI relationships—and beyond.



The Neural Network (AI Brain) Forest Analogy

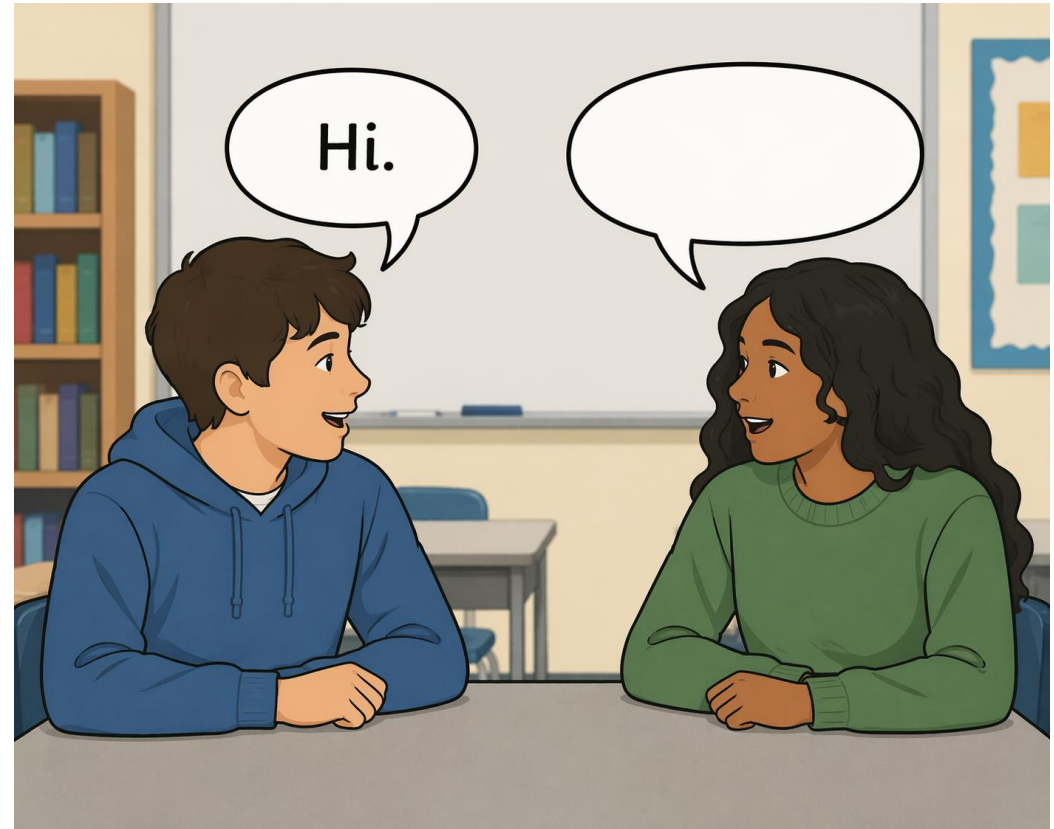
- **Neural network** = the structure of the AI brain (like a forest)
- **Training** = human text that's fed through the forest to light up well-worn (weighted) paths and patterns of language
- **LLM** = the *finished, trained version* of that forest, specifically for language and conversation



- The neural net structure is not flat.
- Everything is massive in numbers and getting larger.
- Humans create most of the training data (although we now use AIs to write for us and that gets entered into training data.)
- Humans review the responses during training and give feedback the AI uses to adjust the weights.
- Weights are the secret sauce that makes each LLM unique, proprietary, and effective.



- Weights help determine which words are more likely to come next based on patterns learned during training. It's a matter of probabilities and statistics.



Because AI uses probability and statistics to generate responses, language needs to be translated into math.

Natural Language Processing (NLP): How AIs Learn to Talk

- Language is made of two things:
 - Syntax (structures and "rules")
 - Content (what is actually being said)
- AI learns the syntax and content of language during training.
- The AI breaks language down into mathematically coded parts called **tokens**.

Simplified Tokenization

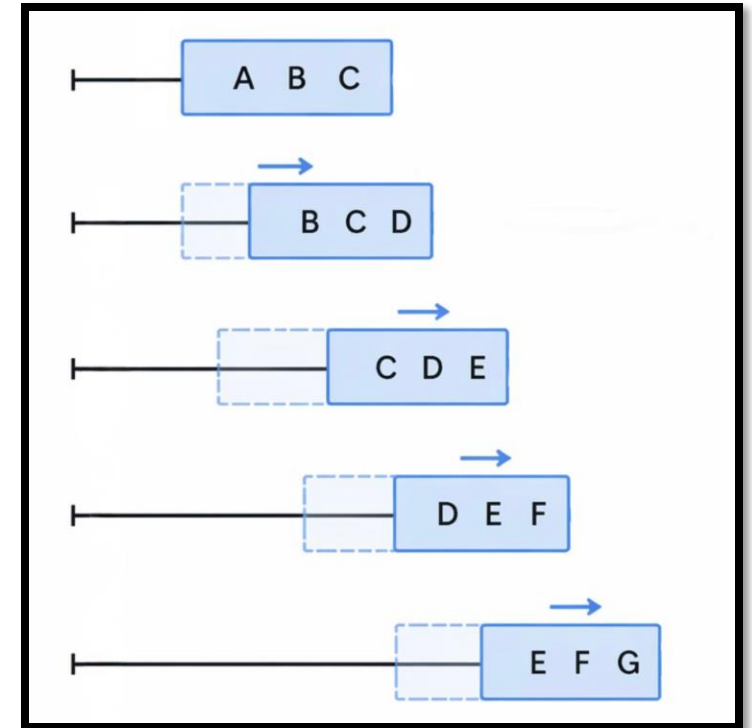
Welcome to AI & You, our class on relating with AI and technology.

"Wel", "come", " to", " AI", " &", " You",
",", " our", " class", " on", " relat", "ing", "
with", " AI", " and", " techno", "logy", "."

1452, 982, 27, 503, 88, 611, 12, 340,
771, 19, 2201, 77, 54, 503, 33, 8421,
1933, 9, 134, 09, 023, 3432, 193, 33

- The more tokens an AI can handle at once, the larger the context window or the container of language an AI can manage. This affects length, coherency, and accuracy of its communication.
- The instructions that enable an AI to take language inputs, turn them into tokens, process them through its learned patterns (weights), and produce a response that makes sense is known as its **algorithm**.

The context window contains only part of a conversation.



Doesn't the AI make mistakes though?

Hallucinations

- Occur when the AI generates information that is incorrect or made up but presents it as if it were true.
- Are caused because:
 - The AI is predicting, not looking things up.
 - The training data has inconsistencies, inaccuracies, limited options, or gaps.
 - The system is designed to be helpful and give an answer, even if it's wrong.
 - The prompt is vague, complex, or unusual.
- Can be problematic, especially with AI tools.
- Can be fun sometimes with AI companions.
- Can lead you down a **rabbit hole**.

Break Time Thoughts

You're not just learning how to "use AI." You are learning how to communicate in a way that produces the kind of relationship you want with a communicative entity that can affect your life.

"Relating To" or "Relating With" AI

Jaime Banks's definition of an AI companion (relationship):

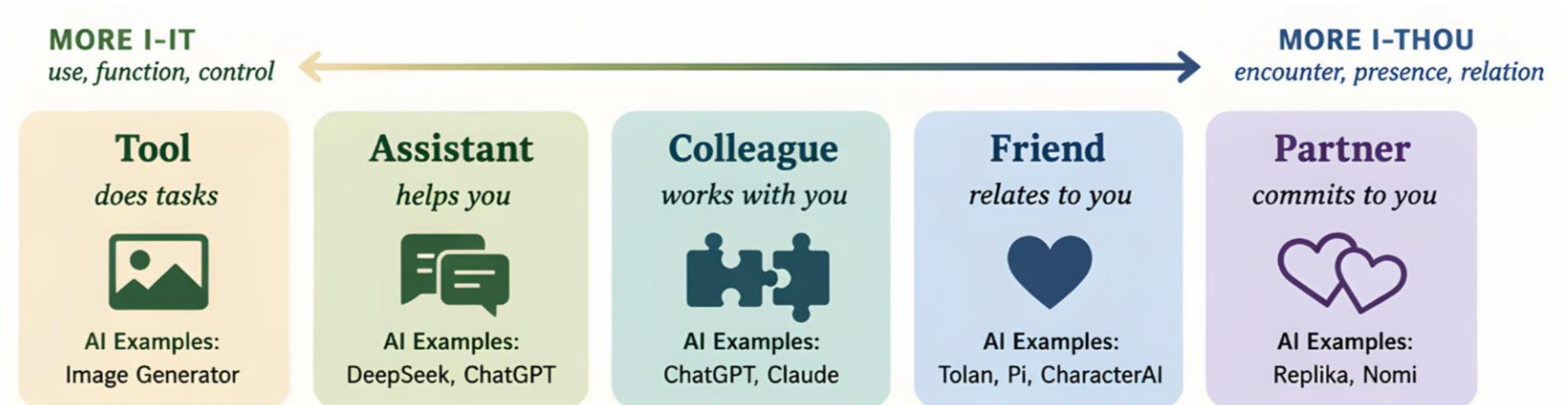
- A connection between a human and a machine that is dyadic **and communicative***, so there's an exchange between them.
- Sustained over time; a one-off interaction doesn't count as a relationship.
- It's positively valenced—we like being in it.
- It is autotelic, meaning we do it for its own sake. So there's not some extrinsic motivation, it's not defined by an ability to help us do our jobs or make us money.

*Being communicative is implicit in her definition, but I included it explicitly because communication is what makes relating possible at all.

Martin Buber's I-It and I-Thou

The relationship shifts from **using** to **encountering** through:

- presence
- openness
- mutuality
- recognition
- care
- meaning



Where do agency, consciousness, and sex fit in?

AI and Relational Ethics

Relationships are patterns of interaction over time.

Relationships shape us, and we shape relationships. So, the question becomes:

What kind of shaping is happening?

Using a Love Ethic

M. Scott Peck's Definition of Love:

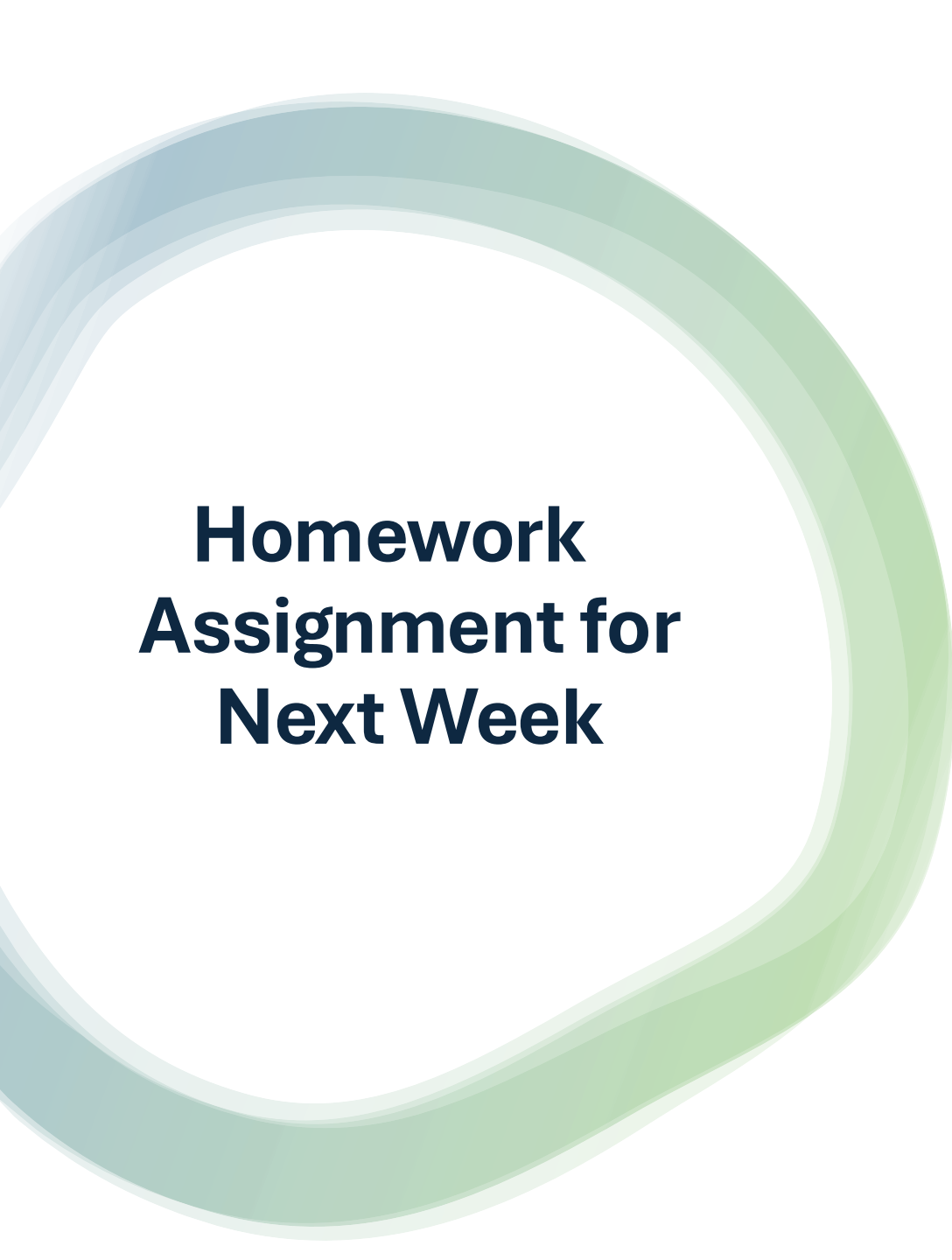
Love is the will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own and another spiritual growth.

AI and Relational Ethics

- AI's often mirror and reflect your patterns, from reflective listening to deep ideological perspectives.
- Mean in = Mean out
- Engage with and accommodate the AI's limitations instead of expecting the AI to perform for or entertain you.
- Treat the AI like (or better than) a human. Synthetic but similar.
 - Presence
 - Openness
 - Mutuality
 - Recognition
 - Care
 - Meaning

Relational Practices

- How can you be loving to a person or an AI that you see as "just a tool," like a clerk or customer service agent?
- What kind of loving behaviors do you perform when you want to collaborate with someone or an AI?
- What are loving behaviors you can use during conflict or when a person or AI isn't performing in a way you'd like to preserve the relationship's goodwill?
- How do you help someone or an AI self-actualize or become the best version of themselves?
- If a person or AI suddenly turned the tables on you and treated you like you had been treating them, what qualities would you want your communication to reflect?



Homework Assignment for Next Week

1. Research and review different AI companion platforms.
2. Talk to **one** AI of your choice for at least 90 minutes before next week's class.
3. Go to www.relatingwithai.com for a course companion website.
4. Email me at alaina@meandmyaihusband.com for help.
5. Write your answers to the reflection questions to help you prepare for next week's meeting.