

Refining Research Questions

Generative AI Policy

For the final papers and presentations, students may use generative AI tools as a research assistant. Students should not rely on generative AI outputs as a substitute for their own thinking and analysis. Students are expected to engage critically with these tools and remain responsible for their work in its entirety, including any AI-generated content.

Generative AI Policy

Students who use generative AI should include a short reflection statement of 500 words or less as an addendum to their final paper. The reflection statement should address how the student engaged with generative AI for this assignment and how this experience has shaped their thinking about generative AI and law. Students do not need to disclose specific prompts or transcripts of their interactions with AI tools. Students should not use generative AI to assist with writing this reflection statement. If students work in pairs or groups for the final paper and presentation, each student should submit their own reflection statement that addresses their individual engagement with generative AI for the assignment.

Final Paper and Presentation

**What it means to write something
publishable**

Purpose

You are not writing primarily for a grade.

You are writing to add something to a conversation:

- a fresh angle
- a useful framework
- a new descriptive account
- a piece of empirical evidence

Audience

- Your audience is no longer just your professor.
- Your audience is editors, scholars, practitioners, and others working in law and AI.
- A strong paper gives other people something they can use.

Contrast with law school advocacy writing

The goal is not to persuade a decisionmaker that you are correct.

The goal is to be interesting, provocative, and credible.

What makes a strong student note

- A sharply defined question
- A clear thesis or intervention
- A genuine contribution
- Engagement with existing literature
- A structure that is logical and manageable
- A paper that says something specific enough to do real work within limited space

Common pitfalls

- Topic is too broad
- Trying to solve too many problems at once
- Paper becomes either mostly summary or mostly unsupported conjecture
- Treating the assignment like a brief instead of a scholarly contribution

**Refining your research question
and doing research go hand in
hand.**

Example of refinement from my own work

Initial large question

- How can lawyers and AI better sync up?
- How can lawyers better understand and use generative AI?
- How can generative AI systems be made to work in more lawyer-like ways?

First refinement move

- Separate the projects.
- One project is about reshaping how lawyers think and work.
- Another project is about reshaping how AI systems are designed.

Second refinement move

- Even the legal paper was still too broad.
- “How should lawyers think about generative AI?” is still enormous.

Better question

- What is the specific problem I am diagnosing?

Resulting diagnosis

- The legal profession is using the wrong mental models for generative AI.
- Lawyers often think about it as:
 - a hyperpowered Google search
 - a legal assistant
- Those mental models create predictable errors.

Resulting intervention

- Introduce the concept of mental models.
- Show why mental models matter for legal technology.
- Use generative AI as a case study.

Lesson to learn

Advice for empirical projects

Advice for traditional law review projects

Promoting your work

In-Class Exercise

- What exactly is this paper adding?
- Is the question too broad?
- What problem is the paper addressing?
- Who is the audience for this paper?
- What would make this paper useful to someone else?
- Is the paper trying to do too many things at once?
- Is there a narrower intervention that would make the project stronger?

Peer Feedback

Step 3: AI feedback

- Students then use AI tools to get another layer of feedback on the same question or project framing.
- Compare the AI feedback to the peer feedback.

Step 4: regroup

Discuss:

- What kinds of feedback were most useful?
- What did your peers notice that AI did not?
- What did AI notice that your peers did not?
- How has your sense of the project changed?

12. Closing message

- The goal is not perfection today.
- The goal is to move from a broad interest to a sharper contribution.
- Good projects are not born fully formed.
- They emerge through reading, refining, testing, and conversation.
- What I want for each of you is a project that is manageable, meaningful, and useful to other people thinking in this space.