

Cross-Course Meetups: Lessons Learned

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The Situation

CISC 352

- Artificial Intelligence
- ~140 3rd/4th year undergrads
- Fully asynchronous
- First exposure to AI

CISC 867

- Deep Learning
- ~35 1st/2nd year graduates
- Mostly asynchronous
- Most doing research in AI

Idea: Bring together students from both to build a community around the subject

The Process

1. 1hr weekly session
2. First 5min answering course-specific questions
3. Next 5min describing the tech/topic/site
4. Breakout rooms of 4-5 for ~40min
5. Collect “entries” from each group
6. Return to main discussion for another 5-10min
7. Post a single poll to both courses, and report to class

Topic of Conversation

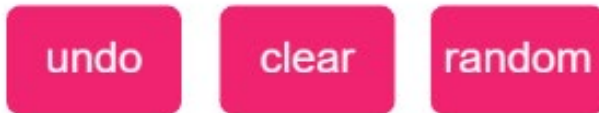
- Something to provoke discussion on the AI technique used
- Often a website for interactive engagement
- Always something they could “submit” as a group



<http://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>

Find the most realistic (fake) person and discuss how they're created.

INPUT



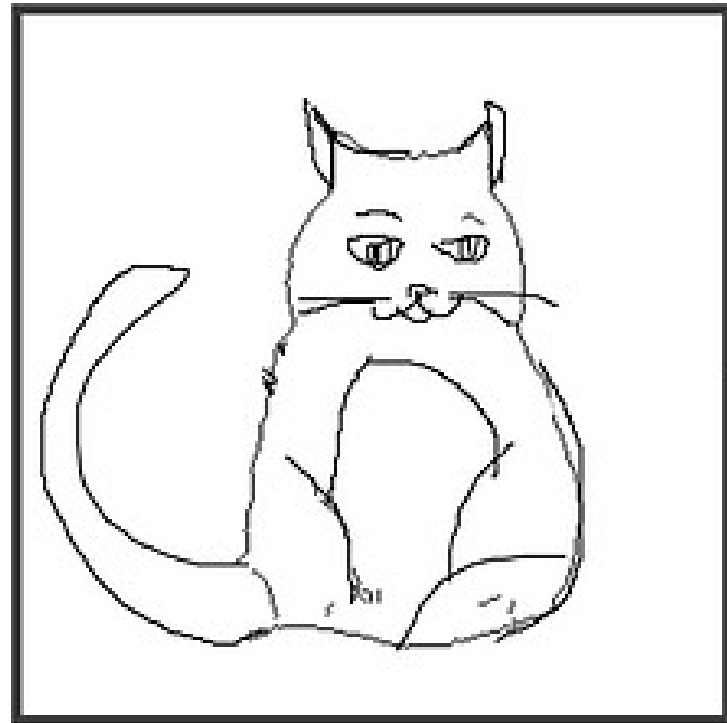
OUTPUT



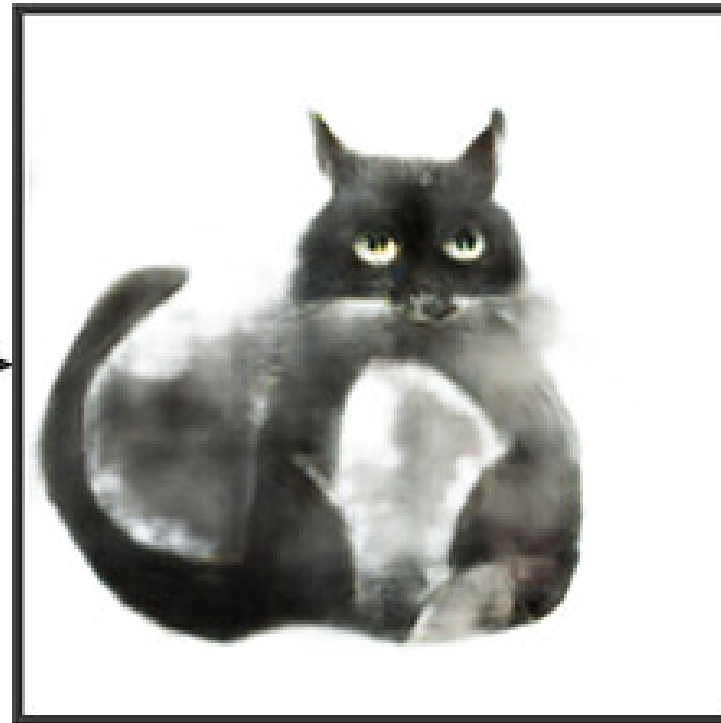
Cats and Bags (<https://affinelayer.com/pixsrv/>)

Draw the best-looking cat to have it automatically “filled in”

INPUT



OUTPUT



Cats and Bags (<https://affinelayer.com/pixsrv/>)

Draw the best-looking cat to have it automatically “filled in”

Prediction

Say ##ing sorry in Canada is **illegal** .

Say ##ing sorry in Canada is **wrong** .

Say ##ing sorry in Canada is **prohibited** .

Say ##ing sorry in Canada is **forbidden** .

Say ##ing sorry in Canada is **unacceptable** .

Prediction

The pan ##de ##mic will end on **Monday** .

The pan ##de ##mic will end on **Wednesday** .

The pan ##de ##mic will end on **Friday** .

The pan ##de ##mic will end on **me** .

The pan ##de ##mic will end on **us** .

AI Mad Lib (<https://demo.allennlp.org/masked-lm/>)

Seed a language model to “fill in the blanks”

All Topics

- This person does not exist
- Cats and Bags
- AI Mad Lib
- Most controversial use of AI
 - *Mass data collection*
- Best AI-related song
 - *Pink Floyd - Welcome To The Machine*
- Most absurd representation of what AGI from fiction
 - *Deep Thought from Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*
- Adventure Time
 - *Who-done-it mystery starring "Bobbert" the bar-goer*

All Topics

- This person does not exist
- Cats and Bags
- AI Mad Lib
- Most controversial use of AI
 - *Mass data collection*
- **Best AI-related song**
 - *Pink Floyd - Welcome To The Machine*
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What worked?

- Alternating timing a few times in the semester
- Priming grads to share their research and undergrads to ask about it
- Topics that had a rich interaction element
- Topics that could continually be interesting for the full 40min
- Turning it back to the full class for voting / building interest
- Dropping into the rooms to help spur on the discussion

What *didn't* work?

- No great way to ensure a mix between the cohorts
- Complicated tasks that took some training
- Allowing involved course-specific questions
- Cancelling sessions (it was a major highlight for some)

Further observations

- Cameras came on in the breakout rooms
- Grad students enjoyed & embraced talking about their research
- Undergrad students loved hearing about “real AI research”
- TAs started showing up and participating too
- Created a community, if only temporary, of like-minded Computing students interested in Artificial Intelligence

I love AI meeting, and dividing us into small groups is really nice to communicate with each other. We discuss new topic each time, and that's really interesting! I also meet new friends in this class.

I was able to connect with some students doing their master and am still in contact with them

I enjoyed every single AI meetup I was a part of

- *The questions and discussions that we had with each other were engaging but more importantly let me understand what everyone else was thinking of as well as the way they thought of their answers.*
- *This is something I try learning in every course but was only able to in this course.*
- *I was also able to meet other students in my course and those doing a masters.*

