Optimize This! Why Do We Care If an AI Can Write Songs?

Andrew Goldman, Ph.D.

Supplemental Teaching Materials

This exercise accompanies the SMT-V video. Students have the opportunity to participate in a similar activity as is demonstrated in the video. The format of this material could be adapted into a writing assignment or serve as the basis for a class discussion.

Suno is a generative AI technology that produces music. You can go to their website and input a text prompt, and it will output the audio for a song, among other features.

https://suno.com/home

Choose an existing song that you know and like. Write a short text prompt (two sentences) that summarizes the song, including some information on the style, instrumentation, and meaning of the song. Then generate a new song with Suno based on that text prompt. For instance, if the song is "Happy Birthday," you could ask Suno to write "a short simple song that celebrates someone's birthday."

You will need to sign up for Suno. If you would prefer to not create an account, you can write answers based on one of the songs already posted on Suno's website.

Answer or discuss the following questions.

1. **What do you think Suno was successful at doing (if anything)? What was not as successful (if anything)?**

2. **Do any musical features distinguish between the human vs. AI song that might help you tell which is which?**

3. **Compare Suno's song to the original song. (If you didn't make an account, compare it to a song you like). How, specifically, was it similar, and how was it different?**

4. **Compare *how* Suno makes its song with how a human songwriter might do it.**

5. **Consider the social purpose of the original song. Why was it written? For whom? Who listens to it, and why?**

6. **Who might listen to Suno's song, and why? How might its social purpose be described?**