

**ST.JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU -27**

**IV SEMESTER L1 GE 322 GENERAL ENGLISH**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION: MAY 2023**

**(Examination conducted in May 2023)**

**SPECIAL COURSE (AROUND THE WORLD OF WORK)**

**This paper is for students who have chosen the SPECIAL COURSE: Around the World of Work**

**TIME: 2 hours Max marks: 60**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

**1. This question paper has FOUR printed sides.**

**2. You will lose marks for exceeding word limits.**

**3. Please write WORK SPECIAL on the front page of your answer booklet.**

**4. You are allowed to use a dictionary during the examination.**

**I Read the excerpts from the article “AI and the future of work: will Artificial Intelligence affect our jobs?” by Elijah Hoole  *(The Hindu)***

Experts thought that Artificial Intelligence (AI) would first automate the menial tasks. Driving, grocery delivery, and the like. For eight straight years, Elon Musk has promised full self-driving capabilities in his Tesla cars. There has been significant progress towards this goal, mostly by companies other than Tesla. But sipping chai as an autopilot drives us from Marina Beach to Mylapore is still a future too far away.

We may have made terrific — or terrifying, depending on how you see it — progress on another front. Today, AI is writing competent code, producing protein structures as well as product strategies, jotting down screenplays, reimagining our sorry bodies as ripped superhero avatars, generating film, playing music. All this in a fraction of the time it would take a semi-competent professional with current tools. News updates might have you thinking that your plumber Perumal’s job outlook shines brighter than your daughter Paromita’s, who is plotting a career in software engineering. So, is an AI about to make your job obsolete?

#### What is AI anyway?

It helps to have an accurate mental model on what AI systems actually are. Think of them as a sort of mapping: from inputs to outputs. The spam detector running underneath Gmail is an AI that maps from the content of emails to ‘spam’ or ‘ham’ categories. Dall-E, the AI art generator, is a mapping from English text to their visual representation. AI systems inside Waymo cars (formerly the Google self-driving car project) map from current location, speed, relative position of surrounding vehicles, desired destination and related cues to the next desirable driving action. Their driverless taxi fleet recently launched in the U.S.

#### Will an AI actually take my job?

AI historians will record this decade as the coming of age of generative AI technologies. This loosely-defined term differentiates AI models that generate images, music, and text from those that make decisions or do forecasting.

Text and image generative AI models released this year are more than decent at what they do. The proof is in the Gofundme campaign to protect artists from AI technologies that raised $150,000 just this week. Or the World Economic Forum report that estimated that by

Rarely does technology eliminate entire jobs. In practice, technologies only automate tasks and reduce the labour involved in a job. A farmer and his oxen used to plough an acre of land per day. With a tractor, the same farmer can now plough 15 acres in the same time window. Generative AI tools will introduce a similar rate of productivity increase in knowledge work. They will also render certain tools and skills obsolete in the process. Such productivity improvement and resulting profit often brings greater employment. This was the case in the United States. Between 2008 and 2018, across 11 jobs considered at risk from AI, employment rates, on average, went up by 13%

New technologies also create entirely new job categories. There were no pilots before the aeroplane. It is hard to imagine what new categories of employment generative AI will end up creating. Suggestions abound that prompt engineering — figuring out the best way to communicate your intent to an AI — could be one. I am not sold. First, as the AI researcher Andrej Karpathy has observed, such a role is more akin to a psychologist. Second, all we need is another AI that maps from plain English to the more descriptive prompt queries that generative AI models prefer. Ergo, don’t waste your time mastering skills for an imaginary job.

Some have proposed a three-step process to understand how humans and AI will collaborate on cognitive tasks in the future. The requirement comes from the humans, they consult an AI system for a menu of options, and then take the most aligned one and refine it further for their purposes. This is a helpful framework. But notice that AI is not really altering the structure of cognitive value production in institutions.

In the future, there may be little incentive to hire and mentor junior staff. However, I suspect the kids will be alright. What is about to be shattered is the current paradigm of how one acquires expertise. We need to restructure our education systems as well as our traditional career trajectories as a matter of urgency. ChatGPT produces B+ grade MBA essays on niche topics like relational contracts. High school teachers and college professors are in for a rude awakening.

#### How can we thrive in an AI-first world?

The answer is to become more human. Qualities such as agency, commitment, empathy, and perseverance will become more valuable in the workplace. The down side: we often structure these traits in our first jobs. So, where we might acquire them — when starting out as junior staff is nearly impossible — is a question for which I have no answer at the moment.

As a general recipe though, caring more deeply about your clients and colleagues, thinking more critically about your job and its place in the world, and mastering the finer details of its knowledge base should serve anyone well. Writing boilerplate code won’t get you very far as a software engineer. Instead, start understanding latency, algorithmic complexity, and clean abstractions. Across the board, there is going to be less incentive to tolerate the clever but combustible types in workplaces. So maybe a bit of humility and camaraderie is in order for those of us working white collar jobs.

The generative AI party is only getting started and the party will be mint.

**I.A. Answer the THREE questions in 150 words each (3X10=30)**

1. From your reading of the passage, reflect on the effects on human employment in the context of Artificial Intelligence being able to code, write screenplays and novels, make films, and create art.

2. Critically analyze the writer’s solution to humans thriving in a world dominated by Artificial Intelligence. Do you agree or disagree with the author?

3. As the writer suggests, do you think a plumber’s job prospects may seem more promising than a software engineer’s? Compare and contrast the ways in which the nature of these jobs will change with the intervention of generative AI.

**II.A. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in 200 words each (2X15=30)**

1. The Ima Keithel market or the Mother’s Market,in Imphal, Manipur Ima Keithel is a more than 500-year-old market that is run and managed entirely by as many as 5000 women, making it the largest and one-of-a-kind all women’s market in Asia. The market was established following the imposition of the labour system, lallup-kaba in 1533 CE. The lallup-kaba was a system of forced labour where the male members of the Meitei community were required to work in far off places and serve the army. As a result, the women took up the responsibility of supporting the household by cultivating their farm lands, weaving textiles, and then selling the products on improvised markets. This led to the formation of the Ima Keithel, which functioned as the primary and permanent market in Manipur until the 20th century.

How do you view such a market space? Do you think such measures to create public spheres exclusively for women are required? Do you think this space reworks traditional gender roles and subverts patriarchy in the workspace?

2. In recent times, there have been questions and anxieties regarding “IT sweatshops” and “software coolies” who are overworked techies, often outsourced as cheap labour. What do you understand by these terms? Do you think software workers can be legitimately compared to working-class laborers who are coolies or work in sweatshops? Discuss this in the context of class and caste.

3. The whirlwind surrounding “[quiet quitting](https://www.newyorker.com/tag/workplace)” first stirred in July when Zaid Khan, a twentysomething engineer, [posted a TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com/@zaidleppelin/video/7124414185282391342) of himself talking over a montage of urban scenes: waiting for the subway, looking up at leaves on a tree-lined street. “I recently learned about this term called quiet quitting, where you’re not outright quitting your job but you’re quitting the idea of going above and beyond,” Khan says. “You’re still performing your duties, but you’re no longer subscribing to the hustle-culture mentality that work has to be your life. The reality is it’s not. And your worth as a person is not defined by your labor.” (“The Year in Quiet Quitting”, *The New Yorker*)

Why do you think ‘quiet quitting’ has emerged as a phenomenon post the pandemic? How do you view this phenomenon? How does it impact work-life balance?