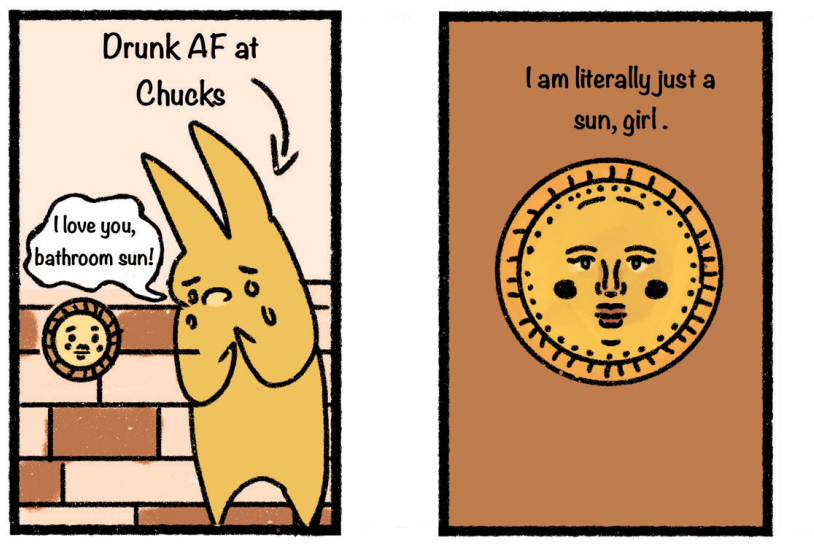
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COMIC BY JASON J. SAMPSON, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Alysa Liu proves there is no 'perfect aesthetic' for women



Alysa Liu at the Winter Olympics. Liu retired from figure skating at age 16 in 2022, but announced her return in 2024.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @VANITYFAIR ON INSTAGRAM

by Victoria Hancock
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
SHE/HER/HERS
vsh23002@uconn.edu

When it comes to classically female-oriented sports such as dance, gymnastics and figure skating, there is a deeply entrenched history of harmful control over the athletes. The image of women as dainty and lithe is a stereotype long withheld throughout society that continues to plague us to this day. Historically, the skinnier and more graceful a woman was, the more worth she had. Women were meant to be seen and not heard. When it comes to the athletic world, sports that are driven towards women do not highlight strength or athleticism such as with men. Instead, they serve to emphasize the imagery and grace of women that the public eye had wanted to see. But this unlocked a world of harmful coaching practices that continue to haunt the sport.

The idea of the "perfect" body is impractical to attain for the majority of people. But this has never stopped people from forcing women to gain this image by any means necessary, oftentimes involving strict discipline and control over what and when women eat. Sports such as dance and figure skating are synonymous with their drill sergeant-like coaching methods that place young girls under immense pressure. These sports require athletes to start at a very young age if they want to compete at a high level, conditioning countless girls to starve themselves or only be allowed to express one aesthetic. Not a strand of hair out of place or an unnatural color, a thin waist with a stomach that doesn't stick out, a painted perfect smile always on. Women who pursue these sports are forced to give up certain autonomy and tend to develop eating disorders, all while being put under extreme stress that could shatter them with one wrong move. These practices are wrong — everyone knows that. But because it's "tradition" and creates results, no one dares to break from the path.

Insert Alysa Liu, a young figure skating talent from the United States that's the perfect image of the classic skater. At just 10 years old, she became the youngest female skater to win intermediate gold medal at the 2016 US Championships. In her junior division debut, she won the 2018 US Championship while being too young to qualify for the World Junior Championship. At 14, she became the youngest two-time champion in the US, all before making her senior debut. She finally debuted at the senior level in 2021, eventually being named to the 2022 Winter Olympics team and placing third at that year's World Championships. She was the first American woman to medal since 2016.



ILLUSTRATION BY ALEXA PAPPAS STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

This all came to a halt, though, when Liu announced her retirement in a now deleted Instagram post on April 9, 2022, at the age of 16. Liu said her life was being taken over by skating. Despite following all of the rules and traditions, Liu lost her love for skating before she even graduated high school. Liu later revealed her retirement was due to the trauma of overtraining and control over what she ate and drank, something no child should have to experience.

Flash forward to March 1, 2024, when Liu posted a video announcing her comeback to skating as an entirely new person. Liu returned on her own terms, getting to pick her own music and claiming, "no one's going to starve me or tell me what I can and can't eat." Liu also rocked a new "alt" aesthetic, with wide eyeliner, halo raccoon hair dye, and a smiley piercing she did herself. This new Liu contrasted everything the figure skating world has taught, which implied that her success would never be the same since she abandoned tradition. However, Liu returned stronger than ever, placing on the podium or in fourth in almost every competition she faced until eventually being named to the 2026 Winter Olympic team. Liu went on to win not one but two gold medals, placing first in the women's singles with a captivating short program to "Promise" by Laufey and a near-perfect free skate to Donna Summer's "MacArthur Park Suite". Throughout it all, Liu skated with a smile on her face bigger than ever before, and with confidence she never had during her childhood.

Liu's success post-retirement is proof that controlling how women look and act isn't beneficial to their success and actually stunts growth. Developing an outdated view of beauty through harmful means such as diet control and strict coaching robs children of their personalities and perpetuates the image issues faced by women throughout society. When girls get to pick how they look, what they do and what they eat, they excel at a higher level than under the stress of perfectionism. Women should control what they do with their bodies for their own good and for their own success.

ChatGPT is not Stephen King or Mark Twain

by Jaylyn Davis
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
SHE/HER/HERS
iue25001@uconn.edu

We all know who Stephen King is — he's the king of horror, and he's written some marvelous novels such as "Carrie" and "The Shining." There's also Mark Twain, the "father of American literature." He's written some fabulous stories, including "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." These stories came from the authors' own minds. They didn't use Google to help write their stories, and they certainly didn't use artificial intelligence models like ChatGPT.

Many writers today can use ChatGPT for numerous aspects of creative writing, from brainstorming ideas to writing the entire story. But how creative is ChatGPT when it writes stories? ChatGPT is certainly not King or Twain. In other words, AI's process of writing is not as creative as the way King, Twain and other professional authors can write stories.

Before going into detail, let's define creative writing. Creative writing is a form of writing that uses ideas, emotions and thoughts to craft a story. When writing stories, authors often base the emotions and content of the story on their own personal experiences. ChatGPT doesn't have any memories or personal experiences to use when writing stories. As a result, the stories that AI creates either lack humor or flashbacks whenever it's asked by a user to put one or both of those elements in a story. Humor is classified as an emotion, so if ChatGPT's writing lacks humor, then it lacks an emotion. If it lacks an emotion, then its stories can't be as creative as King and Twain's writing.

Besides having a lack of personal experience in a story, ChatGPT is not very creative when coming up with prompts. AI models rely on outside sources to answer any statement or question a user throws at them. So, the prompts that ChatGPT hands a user aren't coming from ChatGPT's mind. Instead, they're coming from outside sources, demonstrating that ChatGPT doesn't exhibit creative writing. Instead, it exhibits plagiarism.

Not only does ChatGPT lack originality when coming up with prompts, but the prompts that ChatGPT creates are very vague. Specifically, when a user asks ChatGPT to create an entire outline for a story, ChatGPT will give the user an outline that's undefined in terms of plot. It'll also give unrelatable advice that isn't helpful when trying to write a story.

When a user asks ChatGPT to create a scene, the platform responds by giving the user a scene that is very boring and lacks figurative language, emotions and drama. An excellent scene is supposed to grab someone's attention, and it's supposed to have some sort of conflict that keeps the reader engaged throughout the story. But when ChatGPT tries to write a scene, it lacks just that.

Writer Celeste Kallio did an experiment to prove this concept. She asked ChatGPT to write a scene in which "a man asks a woman about her mother." Instead of getting a scene full of rich details, conflict and figurative language, Kallio received ten paragraphs that were bland and boring. After receiving these paragraphs, Kallio asked the platform to continue the scene, so that the women's mother has a very dark secret. ChatGPT still gave Kallio an output that lacked figurative language, had absolutely no drama, contained no conflict of any kind and used word choices that were equivalent to those of a kindergartener. So, if ChatGPT couldn't make one simple scene interesting to read, then how do you expect it to write an entire short story or novel that's fascinating enough to win a Pulitzer Prize?

ChatGPT is convenient. It allows users to avoid strenuous tasks such as brainstorming ideas for a story or writing the story themselves. But if ChatGPT can't create original ideas, inject humor into a story or create a scene that's at or above a toddler's imaginative ability, then what's the point? If you're struggling to come up with a story, then you might as well leave ChatGPT alone and seek out a friend or a professor instead.



Stephen King poses in a shirt gifted to him for his birthday. King is a prominent author of horror novels. PHOTO COURTESY OF @STEPHENKING ON INSTAGRAM