

CRITIQUING THE MACHINE:

Using Generative AI to Teach Communication, Media Literacy, and Misinformation Awareness

METHODOLOGY

1. Qualitative Interviews with AI

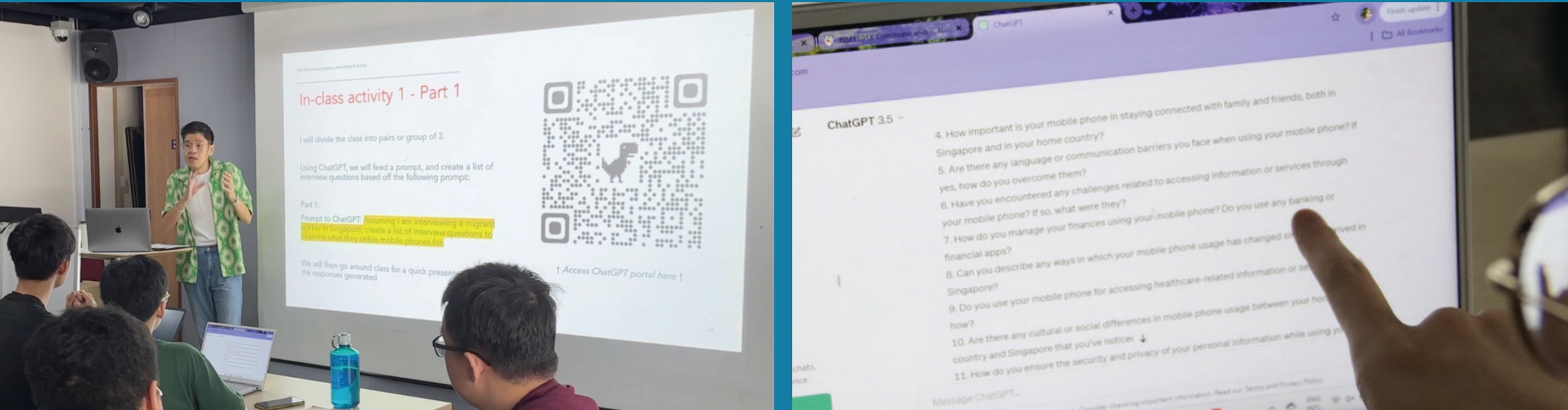


Chart 1: Students used ChatGPT to generate interview questions



Chart 2: Used ChatGPT to simulate responses, and reflected on AI's strengths/weaknesses in replicating human nuance

2. Fake News & Critical Media Literacy

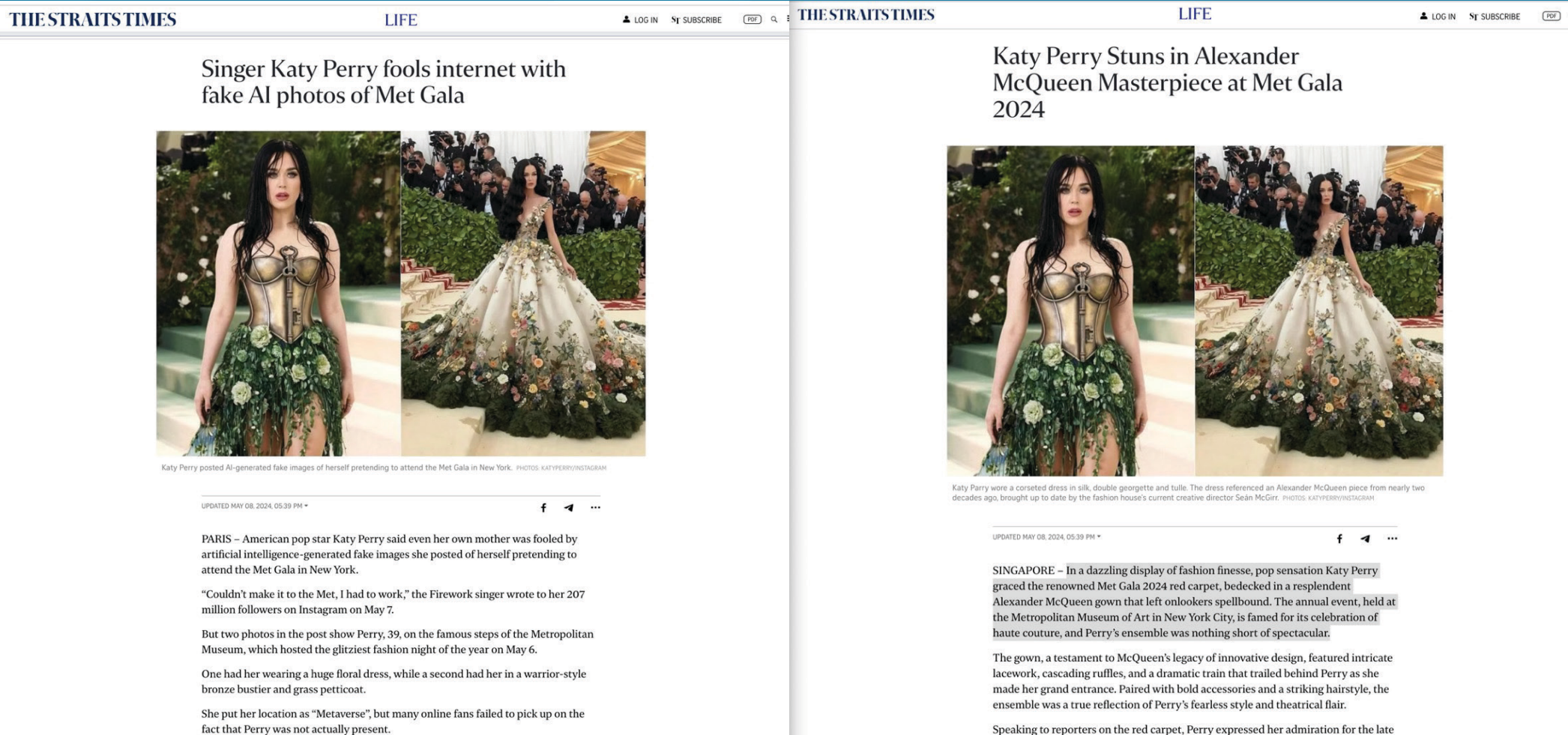


Chart 3: Side-by-side comparison of original vs. fake article

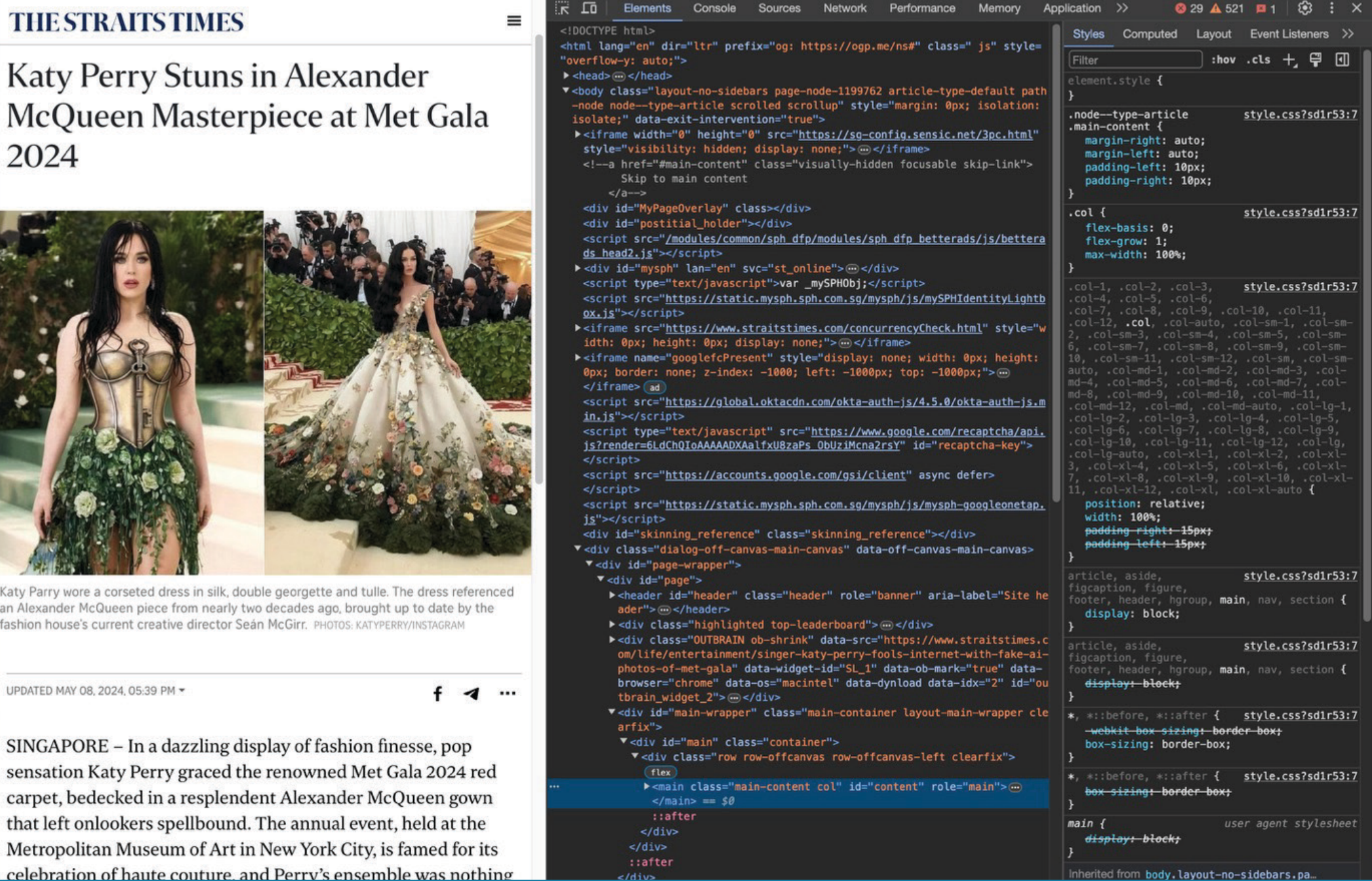


Chart 5: Source code manipulation to ensure that the website appears legitimate to readers

BACKGROUND

In NM1101X: Communications, New Media & Society, I integrated Generative AI to help students apply communication theory, qualitative research, and media literacy to real-world contexts. The goal was to develop their ability to critically assess AI-generated content, reflect on its ethical implications, and interrogate the machine’s propensities. Key challenges included addressing misconceptions of accuracy and fostering critical engagement over passive acceptance.

Students used ChatGPT to generate interview questions.

In the first activity, students were prompted to generate a list of interview questions using ChatGPT (Chart 1). They then engaged in small-group discussions to evaluate these questions, reflecting on what worked, what felt formulaic, and what could be improved. I guided them to explore the assumptions behind each AI-generated question, enabling them to assess the nuances of language and context.

In Part 2, students selected one AI-generated question and used ChatGPT to simulate a qualitative response (Chart 2). This served as a springboard for critical reflection on the strengths and limitations of GenAI in approximating human discourse, especially in the context of in-depth, meaning-making interviews.

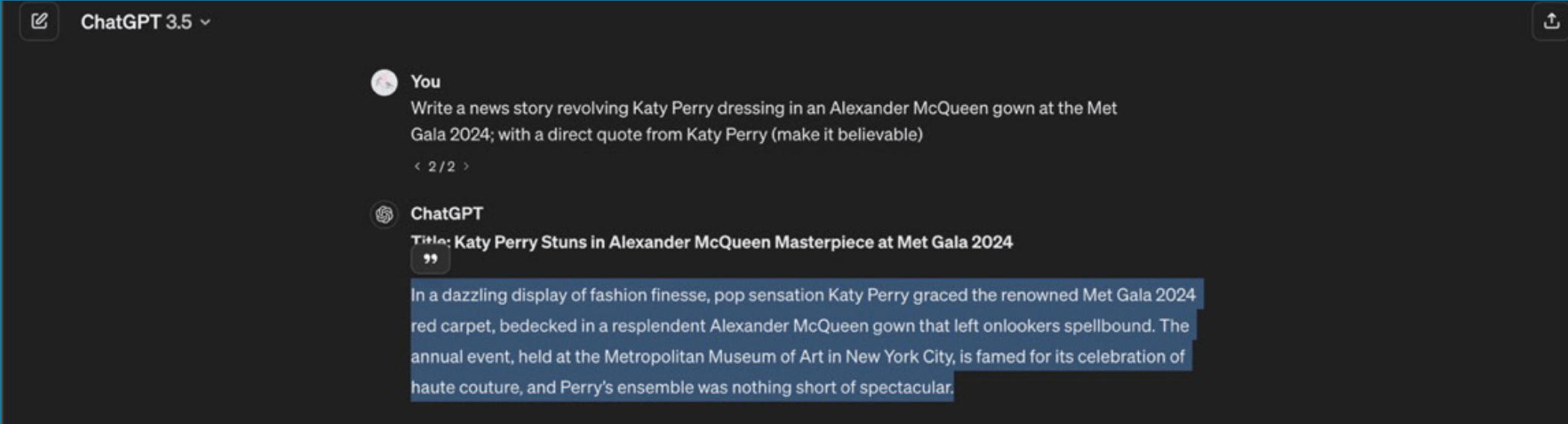


Chart 4: Used ChatGPT to fabricate a news story

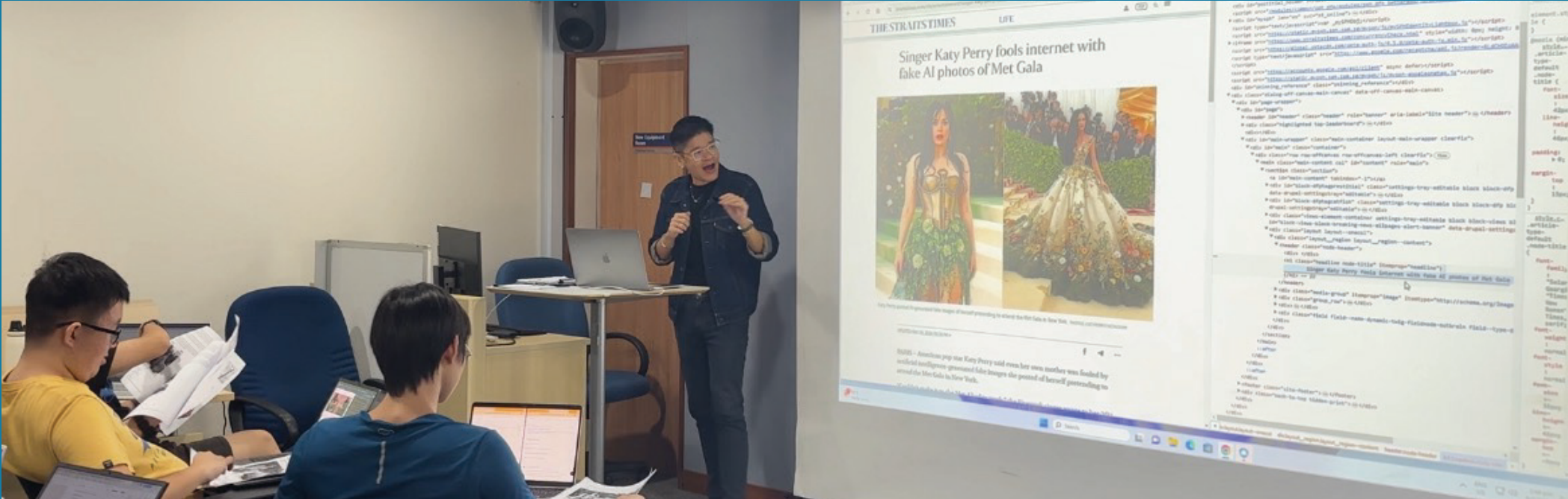


Chart 6: Walkthrough in class to demonstrate how source codes of a webpage could be manipulated

I manipulated a news article visually and with simple code edits to mimic a legitimate news site (Chart 3). Students analyzed an AI-generated fake article (Chart 4) in both print and web formats. While they weren’t required to understand coding, they could see how manipulation masked cues and made authenticity harder to discern. Comparing this to the original article (Charts 5 & 6) revealed how design and code shape credibility. In both the interview and fake news exercises, students saw GenAI as both enabling and problematic; effective for generating content yet limited in nuance and open to manipulation. The challenge was balancing accessibility with depth: demonstrating AI’s possibilities without fostering overreliance, and exposing technical manipulations without overwhelming those with no GenAI/coding background.

TAKEAWAY

Integrating GenAI in teaching works best when activities are designed to provoke reflection and ethical debate. This can be approached in three steps as outlined here:

(1) Design activities that position AI outputs as starting points rather than finished products, prompting students to interrogate and refine them in their thought processes.

(2) Facilitate guided discussions that unpack the ethical and social implications of these outputs, linking them to concepts like authorship, and media trustworthiness.

(3) Encourage reflective synthesis, where students articulate their own stance on AI’s role in communication, informed by critique, and supported by insights drawn in class.