

Experiments in Artificial Intelligence — Continuing, Winter 2026

Session 4 | March 4, 2026 | OLLI at Southern Oregon University

Session Summary

- Distinguished AGI (artificial general intelligence — as capable as a human across the board) from superintelligence (smarter than any human at everything), and discussed why we aren't at either yet.
- Profiled two AI Nobel laureates: Demis Hassabis (Chemistry, for AlphaFold's work on protein folding, and also the creator of AlphaGo) and Geoffrey Hinton (Physics, for backpropagation — the mechanism by which AI systems learn from their mistakes).
- Introduced cognitive load (how much mental effort a task demands) and discussed how AI can “offload” some of that effort from the human mind — for better or worse.
- Discussed effective altruism as a philosophy some AI-industry leaders hold, and its more troubled association with convicted cryptocurrency figure Sam Bankman-Fried.
- Reinforced that AI is generally expected to augment human work rather than replace it outright, using radiology (AI assisting rather than replacing radiologists) as the clearest example.
- Toured the Microsoft Copilot / Microsoft 365 ecosystem in detail, including the confusing overlap between copilot.microsoft.com and m365.cloud.microsoft, and what's available for free versus with a paid plan.
- Live demo of Microsoft Designer generating images and clip art from a text prompt, plus its Storyboard feature, used to turn a lesson-plan idea into a full slide deck referencing Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Watched a PBS NewsHour interview with economist Robert Reich on how AI is reshaping “making, thinking, and caring” jobs differently, and the growing conversation around universal basic income.
- Demonstrated iterative old-photo restoration in Copilot, using a 1930s photo of the presenter's mother — comparing the results to a similar restoration done previously in Google Gemini.
- Explored Copilot Labs: AI-generated voice narration, an interactive “chat with a portrait” persona feature (tested with a factual Q&A on the major branches of Islam), and early multilingual and 3D-image experiments.

- Tried Copilot's shopping-assistant feature with mixed, sometimes non-functional results — an honest look at where this technology still has rough edges.

Prepared with AI assistance from a transcript of the recorded session.