Welcome to
WRITING STUDIES AND AI
ENGL 4397

Welcome

Welcome to writing studies and AI. This course asks you to engage with the field of writing studies, define writing through a reading of anchoring texts, and study the impacts artificial intelligence (particularly large language models) are having on human reading and writing. Each module provides you with various practices to implement in your own writing as well as theoretical frameworks for understanding writing and AI. This course is also community-based, and you will have many opportunities to learn from and share ideas with your colleagues. As your instructor, I will guide you through the forest of writing studies, help to create an environment where big questions can lead to big ideas, instigate stimulating conversation where learning is valued, and provide you with ideas and feedback.

Instructor Corner

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Canvas Inbox

Course Overview

This course is designed to orient you to the field of writing studies and to interrogate definitions of writing. Open access platforms such as ChatGPT have become ubiquitous in the workplace and online. In this course, we will examine the ways generative AI (GenAI) has disrupted writing practices and the potential consequences of such disruptions. We will also grapple with our own writing practices and discover new ones.

Required Texts:
- PDFs in Canvas

Recommended Texts:
- Dobrin, Sidney. *AI and Writing*. Broadview Press, 2023.
- Wardle, Elizabth and Linda Adler-Ressner. *Naming What We Know*.

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Course Learning Outcomes
This course provides you with the following opportunities:

- Understand writing studies by surveying primary texts and secondary responses to those texts.
- Identify salient issues in writing studies and the impact of GenAI on those issues.
- Practice writing tasks with a variety of technologies (including pen and paper).
- Experiment with GenAI as a writing assistant.
- Examine material consequences of GenAI.
- Determine the ethics of GenAI in writing.
- Question, add to, disrupt, critique, revise, and/or rewrite existing narratives about generative AI and writing.
- Synthesize current scholarship on GenAI and writing.
- Audit a GenAI system to evaluate the ethics, transparency, and efficiency of the system.

All your materials will be available in modules in Canvas. We will use the discussion board and other Canvas features for discussion and group activities.

Module Component	Description
Introduction	Piques your interest and gets you thinking about and relating to the module topics
Learning Objectives	States what you will learn as well as the practices you can choose to implement.
Opening Questionnaire	Connects module topics to your own knowledge, experience, and context
Technique Talk	Delves deeper into some of the module's practices with further explanations, supporting research, and commentary by nationally recognized experts in the field
Observe & analyze	Showcases contemporary GenAI techniques with different levels of proficiency and provides an opportunity to discuss the principles of rhetoric more deeply with your colleagues
Practice & reflect	Serves as the culminating activity where you implement a research-based technique that you learned about in the module and then reflect upon it
References	Provides a list of further reading and references used within the module.

Ethics of Writing and AI

1. **The nuts and bolts of writing**
   A. We follow the five threshold writing concepts in our definition of writing.
   B. How do we map the definition of writing with generative AI?
   C. How do we do the work of studying writing?

2. **The community of writing**
   A. Our class forms a community of writing. We follow Davis's injunction that writing is community.
   B. We collaborate as writers with each other and with technology.
   C. How does language connect humans across time?
   D. How does GenAI shape the language/writing that humans use?

3. **The voices of writing studies**
   A. We examine both conceptual and applied AI as part of conversation regarding writing and technology (Dobrin).
   B. What theories inform the study of writing in rhetoric and composition?
   C. Who are the dominant voices in the field?

4. **The practice of writing**
   A. We develop our individual writing practices as part of our understanding of what writing does and how it works.
   B. What are the methodologies for studying writing?
   C. What do primary source documents tell us about writing?
   D. What questions arise when practicing writing?

5. **The outcomes of GenAI and writing**
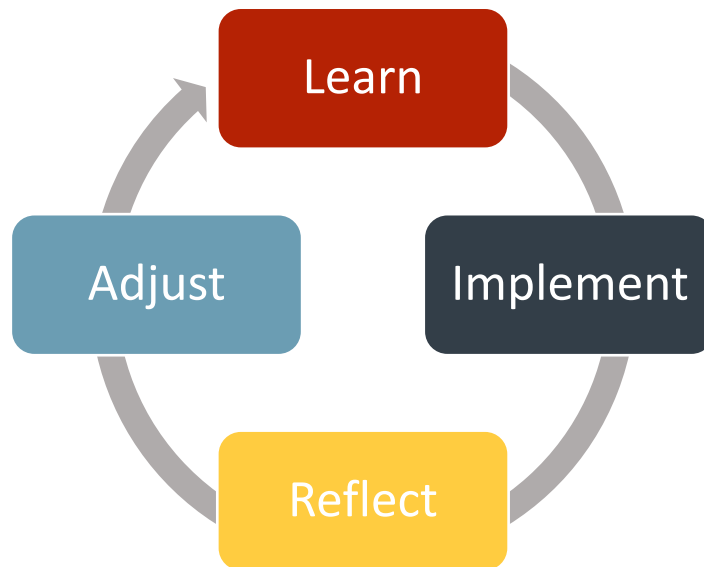   A. We consider the possibilities and networks of the combination of GenAI and writing.
   B. How do we change the definition and narrative of writing? Should we?
   C. What are the consequences of LLMs and their proliferation?

"I take the word and move/through it, as if it were/only a human form,/its lines delight me and I sail/in each resonance of language:/I utter and I am/and across the boundary of words,/without speaking, I approach silence." Pablo Neruda

The Power of Writing

Writing has many definitions. To better understand and contextualize writing and its power requires us to critically engage with our own experiences in the present. Thus, this course engages in significant reflection on writing as a means of learning about, applying, reflecting on, and adjusting the use of GenAI, rhetorical, and writing practices. In our current moment, a host of challenges circulate through writing, texts, and other media that shape our perceptions and our experience. We will use the following cycle to work through the texts that inform our course.

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         Learn

Adjust          Implement

         Reflect
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Below you will find the types of Assignments you might complete in this course. The goal for these assignments is to work through the cycle above and to practice implementing strategies that will help you to reflect and adjust based on what you have learned. You will have one semester-long project that is complemented by reading responses and reflections.

Types of Assignments

ASSIGNMENT	WHAT TO DO AND WHY?	LOGISTICS
READING RESPONSES (30%)	Throughout the semester, you will write a series of weekly "heuristic" papers. A heuristic is simply a method for interpretation--a way into a text.	For this class you will be required to complete a short paper for each week responding to one or more of the texts assigned for that particular week. These weekly papers are designed to offer you opportunities to find multiple entry points into the texts we are reading.
OBSERVE AND ANALYZE TECHNE (20%)	Techne refers to the implements and technologies we use to create writing. Each unit will contain experiments using a variety of writing technologies.	We will practice using a variety of technologies. Some of these experiments will require using open-source software. You will also need a way to take pictures of handwritten work and a screen capture on your computer.
REFLECTION (25%)	Metacognition represents an important part of the writing process. You will have a series of reflection essays to complete as part of your engagement with AI and writing.	Reflection essays are a key part of our course. They will function as the "closing" for each learning unit. One goal of the reflections will be to synthesize the sources from the unit, consider your own thinking about writing as a result of the unit, and to develop writing practices that serve you.
AI AUDIT (25%)	This project will be conducted over the course of the semester in three phases. The goal of this project is to evaluate the ethics, transparency, and efficiency of an AI system.	Early in the course you will select an AI system to evaluate (ChatGPT, Copilot, etc). You will conduct research on the system and investigate primary sources (such as the platforms terms and conditions) to develop an understanding of the system. Then you will audit the system by using repeated prompts and iterations to generate outputs that you will then analyze.

Build Our Community

Although this course takes place online, community building is an important component for meeting our course outcomes. To ensure a productive and collegial learning experience for all course-takers, we need everyone to do their best to:

• *Actively participate*. The course experience is more enriching when it includes a greater number of distinct voices and perspectives. Stay on top of the reading and be prepared to contribute to the class discussion and activities.

• *Read and respond to the discussion threads*. Research shows that learning is enhanced when online discussion participants read each other's posts, provide meaningful feedback, offer encouragement, and share relevant resources.

• *Demonstrate respect for differences*. We all come to the table with different experiences and viewpoints. In order to get the most out of this learning opportunity, show respect for differences by seeking to understand, asking questions, clarifying understanding, and/or respectfully explaining your own perspective.

• *Be timely*. Stay on the same schedule as your cohort to maximize learning for all course-takers.

• *Be specific*. Offer specific examples from your own experience. Our course will be enriched by sharing our takeaways.

• *Use an appropriate tone and language*. In online environments without verbal or physical cues, humor and sarcasm can be mistaken as cold or insulting. Please pay special attention to your tone and language use before submitting discussion posts. However, even when in person sometimes tone and language can be misinterpreted. Be mindful of your colleagues and speak to them with professionalism and respect.

Life Happens

Due dates for every module are provided on the course schedule (and posted in Canvas). However, we recognize that sometimes things come up. Or sometimes it is necessary to wait an extra week to implement a strategy effectively. In these instances, contact your instructor to let her know that you will submit module work after the due date.

Course Schedule

Week	Materials	Assignments
Unit #1: What is Writing?		
Week One 1/12-1/18	**Read:** • Start Here module • "The Project of this Book," *Naming What We Know*, Adler-Kassner and Wardle, pg. 1-16	DUE Thurs. 1/15: • DB: Introduction Videos DUE Sun.1/18: • Syllabus Scavenger Hunt • VAC Introduction Videos • RR #1: Threshold Concepts and Definitions of Writing
Week Two 1/19-1/25	**Read:** • Chapter 1 and 2, *AI and Writing,* Dobrin, pgs. 1-30 • MLA/CCCC Task Force on AI Working Paper #1 •	DUE Wed 1/21: • DB: Provocation DUE Sun 1/25: • VAC Provocation • Course Task Force on AI Collaboration
Week Three 1/26-2/1	**Read:** • "Concept #1: Writing is a Social and Rhetorical Activity, *NWWK*, pg. 17-34 • *You Look Like a Thing and I Love You,* pp. 1-27	DUE Wed. 1/28: • DB Experiment #1: Flirting with AI DUE Sun. 2/1: • VAC Experiment #1 • RR #2: Writing as a Social and Rhetorical Concept
Week Four 2/2-2/8	**Read:** • "The Process of Writing—Growing" *Writing Without Teachers*, Peter Elbow • "Refusing GenAI in Writing Studies: A Quick Guide"	DUE Wed 2/4: • DB Experiment #2: AI and Invention DUE Sun. 2/8: • VAC Experiment #2 • Reflection #1: What is Writing?
Unit #2: Authorship and Intellectual Property		
Week Five 2/9-2/15	**Read:** • "Concept #2: Writing Speaks to Situations Through Recognizable Forms, *NWWK*, pg. 35-47 • "Genre as Social Action," Carolyn Miller, 1984	Due Wed 2/11: • DB Experiment #3: Playing with voices and genres Due Sun. 2/15 • VAC Experiment #3 • RR #3: Writing Speaks to Situations Through Recognizable Forms
Week Six 2/16-2/22	**Read:** • Select Terms and Conditions of AI platform	TBD

	• "Can ChatGPT be an author? Generative AI creative writing assistance and perceptions of authorship, creatorship, responsibility, and disclosure," *AI and Society,* pg. 3405-3417	
Week Seven 2/23-3/1	**Read:** • "Concept #3: Writing Enacts and Creates Identities and Ideologies," *NWWK*, pg. 48-58	Due Wed 2/25: Due Sun 2/28: • RR #3: Writing Enacts and Creates Identities and Ideologies
Week Eight 3/2-3/8	Writing focus week Extended Office Hours	Due Sun 2/23: • DB Phase #1: AI Audit • Reflection #2: What is authorship? Who is an author?
Week Nine 3/9-3/15	**Spring Break**	
Unit #3: Writing and the Brain		
Week Ten 3/16-3/22	**Read:** • "Concept #4: All writers have more to learn," *NWWK*, pg. 59-70 • "Is an AI brain like a human brain?" *You Look Like a Thing and I love you,* pg. 185-208	Due Wed 3/18: • DB Study Design Collective Due Sun 3/22: • VAC Review of Design
Week Eleven 3/23-3/29	**Read:** • Chapter 4, "Writing Restructures Consciousness," Ong, pp. 77-114	Due Sun 3/29: • Phase #2: AI Audit
Week Twelve 3/30-4/5	**Read:** • "Concept #5: Writing is (Also Always) a Cognitive Activity," *NWWK*, pg. 71-81 • "Writing as a Way of Being," Yagelski, pg. 101-136	TBD
Week Thirteen 4/6-4/12	Audit Week	Due Sun 4/5: • Reflection #3: Progress Report
Unit #4: AI and Writing Studies		
Week Fourteen 4/13-4/19	**Read:** • "Future of Writing & Writing Instruction In the Disciplines and Professions," Carnegie Mellon, pg. 1-31	Due Wed 4/15: • DB Final Reflection Due Sun 4/20: • VAC
Week Fifteen		**Final Submission of AI Audit Project Due 5/1 at 11:59 pm**

4/20-4/26		
Final Exams Week 4/27-5/2	Grades Due May 5th by Noon	

Schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.