Critical Digital Literacy in the Age of AI:
Responsible Integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Transfer Level English

Faculty Status: Full-time, tenured
Hire Date: August 2009
Previous Leaves: 1

Overview of the Sabbatical Project

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT are rapidly transforming higher education. This raises key questions around responsible integration to enrich rather than undermine learning. In English and composition courses especially, generative AI has significant implications for how we teach and assess critical thinking, writing, research and more. As the use of AI tools becomes increasingly prevalent, Critical Digital Literacy — the ability to interact with digital content while discerning power dynamics and biases inherent within — provides a framework to effectively navigate and critique these new digital landscapes. As community college English faculty, it is crucial that we develop thoughtful AI policies and pedagogies with a dual approach: integrating technological advancements while maintaining a critical lens on their implications. This project aims to:

1. Research AI integration models in writing courses at comparable institutions
2. Develop teaching resources tailored to VC's English V01A curriculum
3. Equip faculty with strategies for thoughtful AI incorporation

Issues at Stake:

- **Academic integrity** - Generative AI makes plagiarism and cheating easier but also harder to detect. We must establish clear policies and teach ethical use to students.
- **Critical thinking** - Passively consuming AI output does not build real skills. We need to focus on active learning and critique of sources.
- **Critical Digital literacy** - Students need the skills to evaluate strengths/limits of AI and use it as a tool, not a crutch. This literacy is now fundamental.
- **Equity** - Cost and mastery of AI tools could widen achievement gaps. It is important they are equally accessible.

- **Assessment** - Traditional assessment methods may need to evolve to focus less on content production and more on critical analysis.

In this project, I will:

- Research AI Integration Models
  - Survey research on AI classroom practices
  - Interview 4-6 faculty experienced with AI tools
  - Synthesize findings into landscape review report
- Develop AI Teaching Resources
  - Create repository of AI assignments and tutorials
  - Design writing prompts utilizing AI output
  - Curate materials on academic ethics and integrity
- Deliver Faculty Development
  - Lead a workshop on thoughtful AI integration strategies
  - Share sample activities aligned to English curriculum
  - Equip faculty with pedagogical approaches to enhance critical skills

Background of the Sabbatical Project:

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Bard, and Claude have experienced a rapid surge since late 2022, marking a seismic shift in educational technology. By Spring 2023, data from a survey by Intelligent.com highlighted that **one-third of college students had already turned to ChatGPT for their coursework, particularly in writing-intensive subjects such as English**.

Faculty reactions to this technological emergence are mixed. Lindsay Doukopoulos, an educational development leader from Auburn University, discussed this on the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast. While some educators prefer to sidestep or ignore generative AI due to the added demands it poses, others are keen on tapping into the potential benefits AI could offer students. Both reactions are understandable in the short run, but Doukopoulos emphasizes that as AI continues to evolve, **instructional faculty and higher education institutions must eventually adapt their pedagogies and policies to AI technologies.**

Students hold similarly varied views, expressing not only concern about potential unfair advantages if peers misuse AI but also fears of missing out on crucial AI skills for their careers. According to Cengage Group, over **half of the 2023 graduates feel unprepared for an AI-centric workforce**, and this sentiment is echoed by employers, with 79% emphasizing the need for AI training among employees.

The overarching objective of this project is to acknowledge these diverse perspectives on AI and to carve out a balanced path that thoughtfully integrates AI's capabilities while upholding the foundational elements of a college writing course.

At this pivotal moment, we are faced with this pressing question: **How can community colleges thoughtfully integrate generative AI to amplify (rather than stunt) critical thinking, reading, and writing competencies within the first-year composition curriculum?**

Purpose of the Sabbatical Project:

The overarching purpose is to integrate AI into English V01A in ways that enrich critical thinking and writing skills. Key goals include:

1. Understanding AI's Pedagogical Impact
   - Explore AI's influence on English curriculum and pedagogy
   - Evaluate strategies for integrating AI tools into the classroom
   - Harness AI capabilities to serve foundational English learning goals

2. Develop Framework for Ethical AI Integration
   - Understand capabilities and limitations of AI writing tools
   - Embed critical digital literacy practices into curriculum
   - Teach students to leverage AI strengths and mitigate pitfalls

3. Build Faculty Capacity for AI Integration
   - Equip faculty with knowledge, resources, and strategies
   - Establish confidence for navigating the AI landscape
   - Create a collaborative community ready to innovate

The overarching purpose of this sabbatical is to ensure that the integration of AI in English V01A does not dilute the essence of college writing but enriches it.

Components of the Sabbatical Project:

Component 1: Research AI Integration Models

- Survey integration approaches at 5 comparable institutions
- Interview 3-5 faculty on challenges, benefits, and best practices

- Synthesize findings into a landscape review report

Component 2: Develop Integration Framework for English Curriculum

- Propose methods to incorporate AI tools and Critical Digital Literacy into V01A curriculum
- Suggest techniques to utilize AI for drafting while ensuring original student work
- Emphasize importance of equitable AI accessibility

Component 3: Create AI-Enhanced Learning Materials

- Design AI writing prompts requiring critical analysis
- Develop assignments for students to evaluate AI content
- Curate resources on ethical AI use and recognizing biases
- Update Canvas modules to stay current on AI advances

Timeline of Sabbatical Project:

- Weeks 1-3: Conduct literature review on AI classroom impacts
- Weeks 4-5: Interview 3-5 educators experienced with AI tools
- Weeks 6-7: Draft landscape review report synthesizing findings
- Weeks 8-12: Develop AI teaching resources and sample assignments
- Weeks 13-15: Curate academic integrity and ethics materials
- Weeks 16-18: Finalize workshop presentation and materials
- Upon Return: Host faculty development workshop

Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College and District:

Integrating AI and critical digital literacy skills in English V01A will **benefit the broader college since transfer-level English is often one of the first classes taken by students**. Establishing policies and pedagogies for ethical AI use will train students to responsibly leverage these emerging technologies throughout their academic journey and beyond. Early adoption of critical perspectives on AI will serve students across disciplines.

This project also aligns with **VCCCD's 2021-2027 Strategic Goals** to enhance equitable student success, aiming to raise first-year English and Math completions to 45% by 2027. By responsibly integrating AI, the initiative caters to the college's diverse learners, bridges curriculum with

career readiness, and prioritizes faculty training. Utilizing AI tools responsibly is an equity-driven approach to engage diverse learners, vital for success in our modern economy.

Directly supporting **Ventura College's 2022-2025 Equity Plan**, it provides English faculty with equity-focused tools, targeting a crucial success metric, especially for vulnerable student populations as they complete transfer-level English and Math in their initial year

Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College Students

About 3,000 students enroll in English V01A at Ventura College each academic year. Integrating AI into the English curriculum has the potential to **boost their student engagement, preparedness, and success in critical thinking and writing**. Early mastery of these skills significantly improves student persistence and goal attainment.

Integrating AI tools like Explainpaper.com and MyEssayFeedback.ai into the English curriculum can enhance student learning. For instance, Explainpaper allows students to break down challenging texts at their own pace, promoting deeper comprehension. MyEssayFeedback acts as a revision assistant, helping students strengthen their analytical writing skills through detailed feedback but without generating textual revisions to the student's work.

This project will also **equip students with career-ready skills** for responsibly navigating AI tools in the workplace. Developing policies and assignments that teach ethical AI use and critical perspective-taking builds competencies demanded by employers. Strategic AI integration prepares students to harness these emerging technologies to augment their creativity and analysis.

In essence, this project **empowers students to achieve their academic and professional goals by providing faculty the tools and training to amplify their potential with AI**. Students feel supported to build skills essential for success in an AI-driven world.

Value of Sabbatical Project to Me as an Instructor:

As an English faculty member, I am not only dedicated to helping students enhance their critical thinking and writing skills essential for their academic and career aspirations but also deeply invested in integrating the latest technological advances into our curriculum. As a **campus leader in instructional and educational technology**, I have consistently been at the forefront, working hand in hand with our Instructional Designers and Technologists, leading my fellow English faculty in developing innovative online teaching materials and strategies. Notably, I was

also one of the first instructors on campus to have my online course POCR-badged by CVC-OEI at the state level, underscoring my **commitment to quality and excellence in online pedagogy**.

The current wave of AI presents an exciting and transformative potential to further address our students' needs in this evolving technological age. Ventura College's shift to the open-access English V01A curriculum, which emphasizes equitable outcomes, requires a fresh, innovative approach to pedagogy. This project not only allows me to **leverage my anti-racist and equity-focused training but also my technological expertise to craft AI-enhanced teaching methods**, especially benefiting students striving for mastery.

During my sabbatical, my aim is to refine resources and sculpt AI-centric assignments, furthering my professional **commitment to an equity-driven, technologically advanced education**. The end goal is clear: by providing faculty with the optimal tools and knowledge to harness AI, we can offer robust support to all students, especially those most vulnerable in our rapidly changing job landscape.

Embarking on this AI-integration initiative is a natural extension of my educational ethos and passion for technology. More than just a project; it is a **mission to ensure Ventura College students are prepared and empowered for an increasingly AI-centric academic and professional realm**.

Thank you for your time and energy in reading this proposal for a sabbatical project and considering how this project holds value for our district, college, faculty, and students.

Respectfully yours,

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