
Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal for Sharon Beynon

To the Members of the Sabbatical Leave Committee,

I am writing to submit my proposal for a sabbatical leave for Fall 2024 and Spring 2025. As a tenured professor of English at Ventura College, I am deeply committed to the pursuit of excellence in education and the ongoing evolution of our curriculum. My proposal, entitled "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the College-Level English Classroom," seeks to explore the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in reshaping the pedagogical landscape of college-level English education.

I. Introduction

The profound impact of artificial intelligence on contemporary society necessitates a thorough investigation of its role in higher education. As educational philosopher John Dewey noted, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." Dewey's insight underscores the core philosophy of my proposal, which aims to enhance the educational experience by embracing the possibilities that AI offers.

In addition to Dewey, the philosophies of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky are foundational to understanding the learning process. Piaget's constructivism and Vygotsky's social development theory are central to how students acquire knowledge and develop critical thinking skills. They emphasize that education should be an active, collaborative process, aligning with the interactive and intellectually stimulating approach that AI can foster.

However, in today's educational landscape, it is essential to consider more recent thinkers who offer valuable insights into the potential of AI in education. As Seymour Papert, a pioneer in educational technology, notes, "Technology allows for new forms of learning, enabling students to actively construct their knowledge." In alignment with Mitch Resnick's work on Scratch, a programming language for learning, we must engage students in creative, hands-on activities. Likewise, Richard E. Mayer emphasizes that multimedia learning can enhance understanding, and Linda B. Nilson's focus on evidence-based teaching strategies supports the need for innovative approaches.

II. Statement of Purpose

My sabbatical seeks to delve into best practices, research, and winning strategies that harness AI's potential to transform college-level English education. In the words of Neil Selwyn, a renowned researcher in AI in education, "AI can personalize learning experiences and provide real-time feedback, fostering more effective teaching and learning."

III. Project Description

A. Objectives:

1. Investigate existing AI-driven tools and platforms suitable for enhancing the English classroom, promoting creativity, and encouraging critical thinking. As Benjamin D. Nye suggests, "AI can adapt content to individual learning needs, facilitating a personalized education experience."

2. Collaborate with experts in AI and educational technology to develop a practical framework for integrating AI into the college-level English curriculum. Neil Selwyn argues for the importance of collaboration: "Educators must work alongside technologists to design AI systems that support meaningful learning."
3. Design and implement pilot programs and workshops to assess the effectiveness of AI-based teaching strategies and provide clear timelines for each. As Rose Luckin highlights, "Piloting AI systems in real classrooms is crucial to understanding their impact."
4. Develop a comprehensive guide for educators interested in adopting AI tools in their English classrooms, emphasizing best practices and ethical considerations, guided by the principles of AI ethics, as advocated by Nick Bostrom, Joanna Bryson, and Kate Crawford.

B. Methodology:

1. Conduct an extensive literature review to identify current AI applications in education and their impact on learning outcomes. The research of Bransford and Schwartz underscores the importance of evidence-based practices in education.
2. Collaborate with AI experts and pedagogical specialists to explore innovative approaches to curriculum development, as recommended by contemporary researchers in the learning sciences.
3. Conduct case studies and pilot AI-driven assignments within my own classes to evaluate their impact on student engagement, critical thinking, and learning outcomes.
4. Host workshops and seminars to share findings and best practices with colleagues and other institutions, specifying the intended impact, in accordance with recommendations from educational technologists.

IV. Significance and Impact

The integration of AI in the English classroom holds transformative potential, resonating with the philosophies of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky. It allows for a dynamic learning environment that nurtures individuality, critical thinking, and creativity, acknowledging that education is not separate from life but an intrinsic part of it. As contemporary scholar Neil Selwyn affirms, "AI can act as a catalyst for nurturing 21st-century skills and preparing students for the ever-evolving demands of the future."

V. Examples of AI Impact in English Classes

AI has already made significant inroads into English classes, revolutionizing aspects of education:

1. **Automated Essay Scoring:** AI tools like Turnitin and Grammarly, as proposed by Richard E. Mayer, can provide instant feedback on grammar and style, reducing the burden on instructors and allowing for more comprehensive assessment.
2. **Natural Language Processing (NLP):** AI-driven NLP, in line with contemporary research, can analyze text for sentiment, bias, and rhetorical strategies, enabling students to engage in deeper textual analysis.

3. **Content Generation:** While AI can generate text, it has raised ethical concerns, as advocated by Nick Bostrom, Joanna Bryson, and Kate Crawford. Addressing these concerns is central to responsible AI use in education.

VI. Ethical Considerations

The adoption of AI in education is not without ethical challenges, as highlighted by recent thinkers in AI ethics. The ease of content generation by AI may promote plagiarism and compromise academic integrity. Robust ethical guidelines must be developed to navigate these concerns and ensure AI's responsible use in education.

VII. Impact and Beneficiaries

The impact of this research extends beyond the English classroom. It will benefit educators, students, and policymakers, with the potential to reshape the future of education. As contemporary scholar Benjamin D. Nye emphasizes, "AI has the potential to transform education, and our findings will guide its responsible integration into English education, ensuring that it aligns with ethical and pedagogical standards."

VIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, this sabbatical proposal seeks to merge the wisdom of classic educational philosophers with the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, enriched by the insights of contemporary thinkers in AI, education, and ethics. It endeavors to equip educators with the tools and knowledge needed to embrace AI and enrich the college-level English classroom, leading to improved student outcomes. This venture is not only timely but essential to preparing our students for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

I kindly request your support in granting me the sabbatical leave for the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters. This endeavor aligns with the mission and vision of Ventura College, ensuring that our institution continues to be at the forefront of educational innovation.

Thank you for your consideration. I am eager to embark on this journey and contribute to the evolution of our college-level English education.

Sincerely,

Sharon Beynon, Ed.D.
Professor of English

Works Cited / References:

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