



# DISCIPLINARY REFLECTION IN THE AI AGE

CVC@ONE

# INTRODUCTION

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# INTRODUCTION

Does the rise of AI tools change how we teach?

- Yes

Does it change what we teach?

# INTRODUCTION

- How should we think about the discipline-specific skills and knowledge that we share with students in the age of AI?
- What are the core skills and concepts that each discipline needs to defend against the temptations of AI shortcuts?
- What new skills might we adopt? What old skills might we deemphasize?
- What do we want to keep, and what do we want to change?
- And how might targeted use of AI tools help students learn our core skills and values more effectively?

# INTRODUCTION

## **What I'll cover**

- Our story (Saddleback English)
- Disciplinary questions (that you can ask, too)
- Applications (assessments, SLOs, AI tools, etc.)

# OUR STORY

The English Department at  
Saddleback College



# OUR STORY

**Step 1: despair**



# OUR STORY

## Step 2: task force!

- A dedicated team to research + deploy strategies for AI adaptation



# OUR STORY

## Step 3: short-term triage

- What are the most immediate and impactful changes we can make to discourage inappropriate AI use, encourage teachers to be creative + innovative, and adapt our classes right now?
- Syllabus polices; procedures for responding to problematic use; lesson plans on AI literacy; changes in course structure (especially online); etc.



# OUR STORY

## Step 4: long-term thinking

- Experiments and reflections
- Structural: experimenting with modality, assessment, etc.
- Ex: regular 1-on-1 meetings with students and/or oral assessments in online courses
- Philosophical: what are we even doing here?





# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

What do we teach and why do we teach it?

- And how do our answers to those questions change given the rise of AI tools?

# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

What are your discipline's core ideas, skills, and values?

- vs. what is more peripheral?
- What *content* do you teach? What *skills* do you teach? What larger *values* do you teach?
- What do you want students to be able to do, or to remember, 5, 10, or 50 years after taking your classes?

# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

AI tools can likely produce many of the traditional products that you help students create.

- What is your discipline's purpose if those are now easier to make?
- Besides the specific outcomes of your specific classes, what does your discipline teach more broadly?
- What are the insights, theories, orientations, habits of thought, etc. that you want students to walk away with?
- Remember: the best users of AI are those with deep content knowledge + relevant skills OUTSIDE of the tool

# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

Which of your discipline's ideas, skills, and values might be less important for students to master given the rise of AI tools?

- Which are still important?
- Which are more important?

# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

What traditional assignments, activities, etc. in your discipline are likely to be less effective given the rise of AI tools? Which are likely to be equally or more effective?

- What traditional forms of assessment in your discipline are likely to be less effective given the rise of AI tools? Which are likely to be equally or more effective?

# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

Which of your core skills, etc. could be better taught through interactions with AI tools?

- What core skills, etc. are best taught under circumstances of limited AI interaction?

# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

**Ex: what does an English department teach?**

How to write in your career?

- How much writing will people be doing in their careers?
- Is it the sentences that matter? The paragraphs? The overall argument? The ideas?

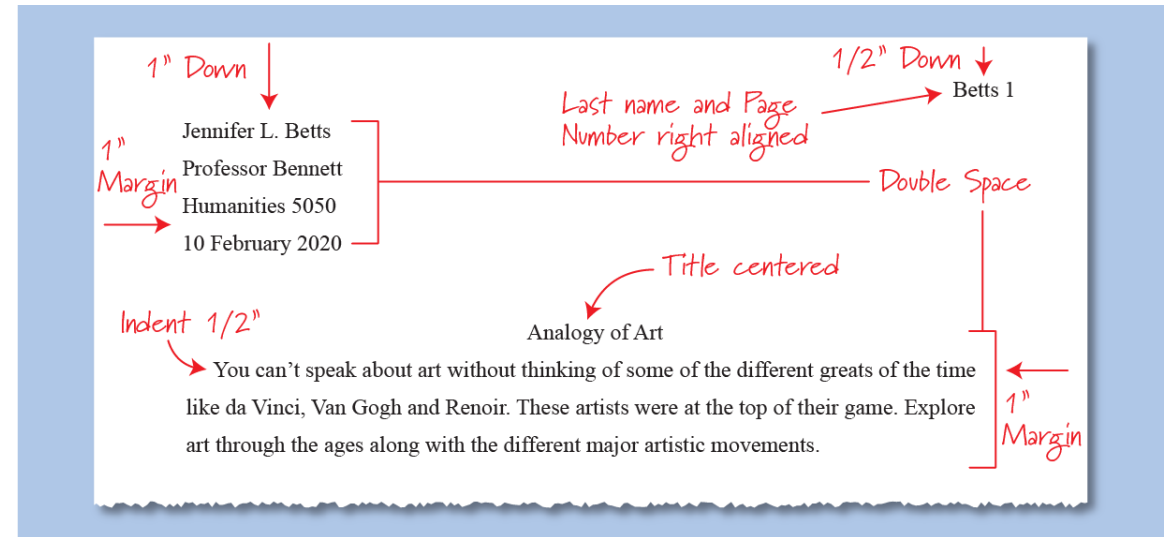


# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

**Ex: what does an English department teach?**

How to write a 'college paper'?

- Is that the crucial skill we offer?
- Is that the only kind of writing we want our students to do?



# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

**Ex: what does an English department teach?**

Broader skills?

- Writing? Reading?
- Argument? Research?
- Discussion? Reflection?
- 'Critical thinking'?



# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

**Ex: what does an English department teach?**

Literacy?

- Is our focus on traditional skills of reading and writing?
- Are these more important during the “literacy crisis”? Less?



# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

**Ex: what does an English department teach?**

Humanistic values?

- Inquiry? Curiosity?
- Conversation? Debate?
- Ethics? Community?



# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

**Ex: what does an English department teach?**

The (productive) tension:

career readiness ----- humanistic values

# DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

**We did not answer these questions! But we did decide to...**

- Move beyond the *paper* as the main unit of assessment
- Emphasize reading and writing as part of a larger process of becoming literate
- Deemphasize certain skills that seem less important now (correcting sentence errors, formatting, etc.)
- Foreground our discipline's role in students' processes of self-making: ethical reflection, community action, etc.



# APPLICATIONS

## **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

A statement of what you intend to measure and therefore what you intend to teach.

# APPLICATIONS

## **English C1000 Old SLOS:**

Students who complete this course will be able to write an essay that contains an arguable thesis.

Students who complete this course will be able to write an essay that contains at least 900 words and develops the thesis through summary, analysis and evaluation.

Students who complete this course will be able to write an essay that contains a variety of sentences that have no fragments, comma splices, and run on sentences.

Students who complete this course will be able to write an essay that integrates MLA standards to the following (8) items: heading, running header, fonts, spacing, indentation, works cited page, in-text citations and use of outside sources with minor errors.

## **English C1000 New SLOS:**

Students will demonstrate understanding of and the ability to analyze complex texts in different genres representing various forms of authority.

Students will engage in a process of recursive planning, writing, and revision.

Students will be able to make creative and effective choices in their use of language.

Students will develop an authentic authorial voice that reflects their values, identities, and/or communities.

Students will find, evaluate, and integrate credible and relevant sources that deepen their initial perspective and/or lead to new insight.

Students will reflect on the connections between assigned texts and real-world experiences and issues.

Students will produce original work that reflects their own thinking, documenting their composing processes and making ethical choices when using digital tools.

# APPLICATIONS

## **Assessment**

Are you assessing what actually matters?

- Is there a mismatch between your disciplinary goals and your assessment practices?

# APPLICATIONS

## Assessment

**Example:** if my goal in a literature class is to help students *read* more closely + thoughtfully, how can I shift away from assessments that exclusively focus on *writing*?

- Annotation exercises; informal response videos; students share photos of reading notes; reading logs/journals; etc.

# APPLICATIONS

## Assessment

**Example:** if my goal in a composition / critical thinking class is to help students analyze a source's reliability, how can I center that specific skill, instead of clustering it with other skills as part of a 'paper'?

- Students share their annotations on a source; students record a video discussing a source informally; students meet with me individually to discuss a source they want to use; etc.

# APPLICATIONS

## **Assessment**

**Example:** Are we too attached to the idea of the ‘paper’ as the proper unit of assessment?

- How can we disaggregate the skills that a paper assessed into specific, targeted assignments/activities?

# APPLICATIONS

## **AI tools**

Once you have a clearer sense of what skills + ideas matter most:

- Are there areas where students interacting with AI tools in a guided way could help them learn those?

# APPLICATIONS

**Ex: Does teaching *grammar* matter in the AI age?**

Correcting sentence errors?

- **Less relevant**

Using a variety of sentence forms to express a variety of thoughts?

- **Still relevant**

Understanding the formal choices another writer has made and why?

- **More relevant!**

# APPLICATIONS

## **How does that change my instruction?**

Less emphasis on *correcting errors*

→ remove “with a minimum of grammatical errors” from rubrics

More emphasis on *experiment* with a variety of sentence forms and on *explaining why*

→ new process-oriented rubrics that reward experiments + that assess students’ explanations for their choices

# APPLICATIONS

## **Example:**

Students often write paragraph-long sentences in their first drafts

- This is great! It's a clear sign of brainstorming + real thinking
- But it's hard to read! So they need to split the sentences up
- AI can certainly 'do this for them,' but that's removing a cognitively significant step.
- Can AI *help them do this?*



# APPLICATIONS

Yes!



# APPLICATIONS

**Traditional teaching tool:** sentence-combining + separating worksheets

**Practice:** Please read the excerpt below. Then, rewrite the excerpt in the space provided, with new sentence divisions.

- One day I went on a hike with my friends we really felt like we needed to get out of the city, especially in the middle of the winter when we were all stuck inside in boring jobs that's why we decided to look for hikes and I found one north of the city that sounded good, it was only 3 miles so I figured we wouldn't get lost which is why I didn't bother to bring a map and that's why my friends were so upset when we did get lost.

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**Practice**

Read each of the following sentences, and ask yourself: is this a complete sentence, a comma splice, or a sentence fragment? If it is a splice or a fragment, rewrite the sentence using the solutions above and/or the connector phrases from the “Connector Words + Phrases” handout.

1. Anh Do celebrates the way Vietnamese Americans have maintained their culture, she suggests that assimilation can undermine their sense of belonging.

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# APPLICATIONS

**AI-powered teaching tool:** interactive sentence-combining + separating workspace

# Sentence revision

Rewrite the run-on as shorter sentences. Use connectors where they clarify the relationships between ideas.

New sentence

Custom

## ORIGINAL SENTENCE

Clara had always been afraid of the ocean she grew up in a landlocked city she never learned to swim her cousin invited her to spend a summer at the coast Clara hesitated she finally agreed she signed up for swimming lessons by August she was diving into waves she laughed about her old fears.

[Use a custom sentence](#)

YOUR REVISION

1 Clara had always been afraid of the ocean.

×

2 She grew up in a landlocked city, and as a

×

3 One year, her cousin invited her to spend a

×

4 Clara hesitated.

×

5 Finally, however, she agreed.

×

6 She signed up for swimming lessons, and by August, she was diving

×

+ Add a sentence

Get feedback

Clear

FEEDBACK

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**Dividing the sentence:** The six sentences are all complete and correctly bounded — none are fused or fragmented, and no new ambiguity is introduced by the splits.

**Connectors:** "As a result" in sentence 2 does good work, clearly linking the landlocked upbringing to the gap in swimming experience. "Finally, however" in sentence 5 effectively signals both the delay and the turn. The one relationship left genuinely unclear is the logical link between signing up for lessons and diving into waves by August — a connector like "so" or "and so" would have made the cause-and-effect explicit, though the current "and" leaves it slightly ambiguous.

# APPLICATIONS

## **Why is this better than a worksheet?**

Students can work through any number of examples and get live feedback (that was still prompted + guided by me)

This more effective practice frees up time for me to focus on core skills and concepts that are *not* best taught through AI interactions

# ONE LAST (ENGLISH) EXAMPLE

## **Why does this matter?**

*Not* because students need to ‘correctly’ use connectors

But because they’re learning tools to express a wider range logical relationships + therefore a wider range of thoughts

And I can revise Claude’s feedback prompt to focus more on what I think matters: the relationship between sentence structures and ideas.

# ONE LAST (ENGLISH) EXAMPLE

**What core skills and concepts should *not* be taught this way?**

Ex: students choosing a story from their life that tells us something about the community they come from, its values, and their relationship to those values

# ONE LAST (ENGLISH) EXAMPLE

**How can we weave these approaches together?**

Ex: Students...


1. Reflect with me + their classmates on the story they want to tell
2. Write their first drafts without AI
3. Use AI-powered practice spaces I've designed to practice restructuring sentences + paragraphs
4. Apply those skills to their own drafts *without* AI guidance

# CONCLUSION

**By...**

- Clarifying our discipline's priorities
- Reflecting on what benefits students *today*
- Revising course goals, assessments, + activities to focus on the core skills + concepts that matter most
- Designing focused, AI-powered tools that help students focus on those...
- And making principles choices about when AI-powered practice is helpful vs. harmful...

We can equip our students to be better learners in the AI age.



# QUESTIONS? THOUGHTS?

Thank you!