Engineering 326: Writing Workshop

# **Co-Instructor Information**

Instructor name: Emily Lavrador

Email: erl271@humboldt.edu

# **Course Description**

This is a co-taught course. For more information on Computational Methods III and how you will be graded, see Dr. Eschenbach’s syllabus (also on Canvas).

*Why study writing?* We are often led to believe that writing is about avoiding errors, providing the right answer, or having a natural talent that some people have and some people don’t. We hear messages like “students can’t write,” “texting kills your ability to write well,” and “good writing never uses ‘I’.” We will question these assumptions and explore other modes of understanding writing.

This course is designed to support your development of writing knowledge in and beyond the Humboldt experience. You will study and compose in several genres and will study and develop how writing practices can be shaped to meet particular engineering situations. You will produce multiple drafts of writing assignments and devote significant time evaluating, synthesizing, and integrating research and other communication sources into your texts.

# **Learning Outcomes**

The goals of this Writing Workshop are to:

1. Develop and articulate engineering writing strategies and skills.

# Develop and apply flexible composing processes and practices.

# Develop and apply knowledge of engineering discourse, its genres, and rhetoric.

# **Evaluation and Grades: How You’ll Be Assessed**

This portion of theENGR 326 course will be worth 20% of your ENGR 326 grade. Assignments will not be weighted, so the grade calculation should be simple. In order to pass ENGR 326, you must complete 70% of assigned works in this category.

Assignments will be graded on a completion basis; this is to say you will receive full credit for completion (and feedback from me), if the assignment meets all necessary criteria (see assignment details).

**Late Work Policy**

Assignments labeled “Writing Workshop” will be accepted during Spring Break for 70% of full credit and no feedback. Quizzes will not be accepted late.

# **AI Policies and Information**

Recent advancements in generative artificial intelligence (AI) have made large language models such as ChatGPT and Google's Bard widely available. Sometimes, using these tools appropriately can help us overcome barriers and allow us to focus on deeper learning. However, overuse of these tools can undermine the development of our critical and creative thinking skills. In addition, AI outputs are often unreliable and frequently subject to bias. Please keep in mind that you are responsible for anything you submit; please carefully review all AI-generated outputs, screening them for accuracy, bias, appropriateness, and fidelity to your perspective. Assignments will explicitly note when you can use AI.

## **Editing AI - “AI OK” assignments**

AI makes noticeable word-choice and format decisions. When you choose to use AI, note that you will *need* to edit it prior to submission (whether it be an assignment, a resume, or otherwise). Refer to the following bulleted list for necessary considerations for AI use:

* If you provide minimum effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine prompts for better outcomes, which will take time and practice. If you simply copy/paste assignment instructions, you will likely submit broad and inaccurate information (which would receive a zero score).
* Don’t trust what the system says. Assume it is wrong, unless you already know the answer. AI works best for topics you deeply understand.
* AI is vulnerable to discrimination because it can inadvertently and intentionally perpetuate biases. This occurs for a few reasons:
	+ AI systems can learn and replicate biases if they exist in the training data.
	+ Lack of diversity in the training data - if the examples are not diverse, it will not perform well on diverse inputs, which can lead to discrimination.
	+ Erasure of writing style - AI attempts to model a standardized English, erasing true personality, literacy histories, and stylistic decisions that make our writing unique (and therefore, diverse).

## **“No AI” Assignments**

If an assignment marked “No AI” is noticeably AI generated, it will receive a zero score. Depending on the assignment, this score can be remediated by visiting office hours to discuss next steps. AI can be a valuable tool for supplementing human decision-making and critical thinking, but it is not a replacement. It doesn’t always make tasks easier and/or products better. When used critically, it can take a similar amount of time to edit AI *enough* as it would take to produce a first draft for our course.

All assignments have potential to be regraded this semester. For example, if an assignment in Week 10 seems generated by a large language model (LLM), assignments prior to Week 10 may be reassessed.

# **Course Schedule**

| Week 1: Chapter 1 of *Writing in Engineering: A Brief Guide* | Turn in Week 1 Quiz |
| --- | --- |
| Week 2: Semester Project Brainstorming and strong verbs | Turn in Semester Project Brainstorm and *Bad Ideas About Writing* “You Can Learn to Write in General” Reading Response |
| Week 3: Design Brief Example and Lists  | Design Briefs and ListsTurn in Design Brief First Draft and List Quiz |
| Week 4: Lab 1 and Topic Sentences | Turn in Design Brief Final Draft and Topic Sentences Quiz |
| Week 5: Peer Feedback + Reverse Outlining  | Turn in Lab 1 Draft |
| Week 6: Research - using credible sources and citations in your writing  | Turn in Annotated Bibliography  |
| Week 7: Executive Summaries | Turn in Executive Summary First Draft (second draft in your semester project/technical report) |
| Week 8: Writing Session  | No new assignments - turn in late work during Spring Break for 70% credit on past writing assignments |
| Week 9: Lab 2 and Project Check In  | Turn in Lab 2 First Draft  |
| Week 10: Translations and Accommodations  | Turn in Project Topic Translation Activity (engineering professional, 8th grader, kindergartener) |
| Week 11: Rhetorical Analysis of a Technical Report  | Turn in Rhetorical Analysis of *Your* Technical Report  |
| Week 12: Storyboarding - images, figures, and other visuals in your technical report  | Turn in Storyboard  |
| Week 13: Public Genres and wrapping up the Technical Report | Turn in Technical Report First DraftExtra Credit: Social Media Post  |
| Week 14: Presentations | Turn in Presentation Slides (Assertion-Evidence format)  |
| Week 15: Presentations  | Turn in Technical Report Final Draft |