

AI Language (Student Handout)



AI Mastery Begins with Language

Key Terms for Shared Understanding

How we talk about AI shapes how we use it, how we learn with it, and how we make ethical decisions about it. Many conflicts around AI in education come not from misuse, but from unclear terms—words like *cheating*, *originality*, *critical thinking*, or even *AI* itself mean different things to different people. By building a shared vocabulary, we create shared expectations. This glossary is designed to support learning that is thoughtful, transparent, and transferable beyond the classroom.

Term	Definition	You might have said...
Academic Integrity	Being honest and transparent about your work and how you complete it, including following instructor rules about AI use.	"I used AI to brainstorm ideas, but I wrote the final draft myself and explained how AI helped."
Agentic AI (Not Approved for Use at Missouri S&T)	AI systems that act on their own by setting goals and taking actions without checking back with a human.	"I set up an AI tool to automatically research, write drafts, and submit work without reviewing it myself."
AI Agent (Approved for Use at Missouri S&T)	An AI tool that helps with specific tasks only when a human directs it and stays within clear limits.	"I asked the AI to explain a concept, but I decided whether the explanation made sense."
Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)	A hypothetical form of AI that could understand, learn, and perform any intellectual task a human can, across many domains. AGI does not currently exist, but it is often discussed in media and research as a possible future development.	"I hear people say AI is 'almost human,' but what they're usually talking about is AGI—which doesn't exist yet."
AI Competency	Knowing how to use AI appropriately and responsibly for specific tasks.	"I know when AI is allowed in this class or context, and I know how to use it without breaking rules or undermining my credibility."
AI Literacy	Basic understanding of what AI is, how it works in general, and what its limits are.	"I know AI doesn't actually 'understand'—it predicts responses based on patterns."



AI Mastery	Advanced, thoughtful use of AI that involves judgment, ethics, and discipline-specific knowledge. The combination of AI Literacy and AI Competency.	"I have a basic understanding of AI's use in various contexts, and I have a complex understanding of its use in my major field. I can honestly tell a future employer that I have experience with AI and that I can evaluate its use according to the context."
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human judgment, such as generating language, recognizing patterns, or analyzing data.	"I use AI systems to help with writing, coding, and studying."
Augmentation vs. Replacement	The difference between using AI to support learning and letting it do the thinking for you.	"AI helped organize my ideas, but I still had to understand the material."
Authentic Voice	Expressing your own perspective, reasoning, and style in your work, even when using AI as a support tool. Authentic voice reflects your choices, judgment, and understanding—not just polished language.	"Even though AI helped me rephrase a sentence, the ideas and decisions in the paper still sound like me."
Automation Bias	Trusting AI too much just because it sounds confident or authoritative.	"The answer sounded right, but when I checked it, it was wrong."
Cheating	Breaking course rules or expectations, which depend on how the assignment is designed.	"Using AI was allowed in one class but not in another."
Cognitive Offloading	Using tools to reduce mental effort.	"I used AI to summarize the reading so I could focus on understanding the main ideas."
Critical Thinking	Analyzing, questioning, and evaluating information to make reasoned decisions.	"I compared the AI's answer with my notes to see what it missed."
Data Privacy & Security	Being careful about what personal or academic information you share with AI tools.	"I didn't upload my lab data because I wasn't sure how the AI would store it."
Detection	Attempts to identify AI-generated content using tools or rules of thumb.	"I worried my writing might be flagged even though I wrote it myself."
Epistemic Trust	How much you trust a source of information.	"I stopped trusting the AI after it gave me different answers to the same question."



Ethical Use of AI	Using AI in fair, responsible, and transparent ways.	"Even though AI could do the whole assignment, I only used it where allowed."
Generative AI	AI systems that create new content like text, images, or code.	"I used generative AI to make practice questions before studying."
Hallucination	When AI confidently gives false or made-up information.	"The AI cited a source that didn't actually exist."
Human-in-the-Loop	Humans remain responsible for reviewing and deciding how AI output is used.	"I checked and edited the AI's response before using it."
Language Flattening	When AI-assisted writing starts to sound generic or uniform, reducing individuality, nuance, or personal style across different writers.	"After using AI a lot, I noticed my writing started to sound polished but kind of the same as everyone else's."
Lateral Reading	Checking information by leaving the original source to compare it with other reliable sources.	"When the AI gave me a statistic, I opened other tabs to see if credible sources said the same thing."
Large Language Model (LLM)	A type of AI trained on large amounts of text to generate language.	"The chatbot can write paragraphs, but it doesn't really understand the topic."
Learning Outcomes vs. Task Completion	The difference between finishing work and actually learning from it.	"AI helped me finish faster, but I still needed to learn this for the exam."
Metacognition	Thinking about your own thinking and learning process.	"I reflected on why I accepted some AI suggestions and rejected others."
Originality	Contributing your own thinking and judgment, even when using AI.	"The ideas are mine, even though AI helped with wording."
Overreliance	Depending too much on AI in ways that limit learning or skill development.	"I realized I couldn't solve the problem without AI, so I needed more practice."
Plagiarism	Presenting work or ideas as your own when they are not.	"Copying AI output without evaluating, editing, or saying I used AI felt misleading."
Probabilistic Output	AI gives likely answers, not guaranteed truths.	"The response sounded convincing but left out key details."
Prompt	The instructions or question you give an AI system.	"When I asked a clearer question, the AI gave a better answer."
Prompt Engineering	Writing thoughtful prompts to guide AI effectively.	"Adding constraints like audience and length improved the response."



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Relationship with AI	How you choose to use, trust, or limit AI.	"I use AI as a study partner, not a replacement for learning."
Skill Atrophy	Skills weakening because they aren't practiced.	"My writing felt harder after relying on AI too much."
Transparency / Disclosure	Clearly explaining when and how AI was used, when required.	"I included a note explaining how I used AI on the assignment."

AI Literacy (Faculty Building Blocks)

AI LITERACY - Faculty Building Blocks

Basic understanding for all students

What is AI? | What can it do? | What are the basic risks and responsibilities?

CLASS: _____

Literacy Term	In my <i>class</i> , this looks like:	Assessment:

ENG AI Literacy (Faculty Building Blocks)

AI LITERACY - Faculty Building Blocks (Course-Level)

Basic understanding for all students

What is AI? | What can it do? | What are the basic risks and responsibilities?

CLASS: ENGLISH 1120/1160: Freshman Composition

Literacy Term	In my class, this looks like:	Assessment:
Language Flattening	Student writing that is grammatically polished but sounds generic, predictable, or detached from the writer's own voice because it relies too heavily on AI-generated phrasing.	Students compare an AI-assisted draft with a revised version and write a brief reflection identifying where they restored specificity, voice, or rhetorical choice to counter language flattening.
Plagiarism	Submitting AI-generated or source-derived language as one's own without acknowledgment, evaluation, or meaningful revision, resulting in writing that misrepresents authorship and effort.	Students complete a revision-and-attribution exercise in which they transform an AI-generated paragraph into original prose and include a brief note explaining how they restored their own voice/ideas and cited the voice/ideas of others.
AI Agent	An AI tool that can autonomously perform multi-step, online tasks like research and document creation	The Agent is tasked with finding real-world examples of literary devices in online news articles or forums. Students evaluate the rhetoric of the sources the agent finds. The grade is based on the quality of their inquiry and how effectively they use the agent to deepen their understanding, documented through a transcript of the conversation.
Lateral Reading	Students leaving an AI-generated claim or source to check its accuracy, context, and credibility by consulting multiple independent and reliable texts rather than trusting a single polished explanation.	Students complete a claim-verification activity in which they trace an AI-generated statement across outside sources and reflect on how comparing voices and evidence helped them avoid accepting the AI output as authoritative.

PHYSICS AI Literacy (Faculty Building Blocks)

AI LITERACY - Faculty Building Blocks

Basic understanding for all students

What is AI? | What can it do? | What are the basic risks and responsibilities?

CLASS: PHYSICS 1111/1119: General Physics I & Lab

Literacy Term	In my class, this looks like:	Assessment:
Augmentation vs. Replacement	Students use AI to outline a lab report or organize data tables while personally interpreting results, error sources, and physical meaning.	A lab report paired with a conceptual follow-up question or viva-style prompt requiring students to verbally justify their conclusions and calculations.
Automation Bias	A student initially trusts an AI's confident explanation of a lab result or problem solution but discovers the error through recalculation, graph analysis, or experimental data.	A lab or exam question where students must validate a plausible-looking answer by checking units, limits, or empirical results and explain why the original answer fails.
AI Agent	Agent is directed to autonomously research a defined physics phenomenon, collect and organize data from online sources, and draft portions of a lab report	Students critically evaluate the agent's methods, verify its calculations, and complete the report by interpreting the physics and reflecting on the limits of AI-assisted research, documented through a transcript of the conversation.
Data Privacy & Security	Students choose not to upload raw lab data, graded work, or identifying information into AI tools and instead using AI only for conceptual guidance or publicly shareable examples.	A short scenario-based quiz or lab reflection where they identify what data can and cannot be shared with AI tools and justify their decision based on course or institutional policies.

AI Mastery (Faculty Building Blocks)

AI MASTERY - Faculty Building Blocks

Complex, contextual, discipline-specific understanding

When should AI be used here? | How does it change thinking in this field? |

What does responsible expertise look like?

DISCIPLINE: _____

[illegible]

ENG AI Mastery (Faculty Building Blocks)

AI MASTERY - Faculty Building Blocks

Complex, contextual, discipline-specific understanding

When should AI be used here? | How does it change thinking in this field? |

What does responsible expertise look like?

DISCIPLINE: English & Technical Communication

Mastery Term	In my <i>discipline</i> , this looks like:	Course(s) Encountered:
AI Agent (Approved for Use)	Students learn tool-supported drafting, editing, and documentation within defined professional constraints.	ENGLISH 2230 Literature And Film SP&M S 3283 Business And Professional Communication
Agentic AI (Not Approved)	Courses foreground human judgment, responsibility, and limits of automation in communication.	TCH COM 2560: Technical Marketing Communication ENGLISH 2243 Science Fiction
Augmentation vs. Replacement	Students distinguish AI-assisted process support from substitution for thinking, visual storytelling, and authorship.	TCH COM 4550 Proposal Writing ENGLISH 2232 Comics & Graphic Novels
Critical Thinking	Questioning AI outputs by evaluating evidence, logic, bias, and rhetorical context rather than accepting fluent language at face value.	TCH COM 2540 Layout and Design ENGLISH 2410 Theory of Written Communication
Metacognition	Students reflecting on when, why, and how they used AI and how it shaped their thinking, choices, and final text.	ENGLISH 1160 Writing & Research ENGLISH 2002 Critical Approaches To Literature
Epistemic Trust	Developing a calibrated trust in AI by verifying claims, checking sources, and understanding the limits of probabilistic language generation.	SP&M S 2181 Communication Theory TCH COM 3570 Writing in the Sciences
Ethical Use of AI	Transparent, responsible AI use that respects academic integrity, labor, authorship, accessibility, and community norms.	SP&M S 3265 Leadership Communication TCH COM 4450 International Dimensions of Tech Com

AI MASTERY - Faculty Building Blocks

Complex, contextual, discipline-specific understanding

When should AI be used here? | How does it change thinking in this field? |

What does responsible expertise look like?

Learning Outcomes vs. Task Completion	<i>Prioritizing the development of rhetorical skill, writing transfer, and judgment over simply producing a finished document.</i>	TCH COM 1600 Introduction to Tech Com ENGLISH 3170 Teaching And Supervising Reading and Writing
Originality	<i>Generating ideas, arguments, and structures that reflect a student's own thinking rather than recombined or generic AI language.</i>	SP&M S 1185 Principles Of Speech TCH COM 3440 Theory of Visual Technical Communication
Authentic Voice	<i>Maintaining a writer's distinctive tone, perspective, and rhetorical presence instead of defaulting to polished but impersonal AI prose.</i>	ENGLISH 3301 A Linguistic Study Of Modern English SP&M S 3245 Voice, Diction and Interpretation
Language Flattening	<i>Recognizing when AI-assisted writing erases nuance, risk, and specificity in favor of bland clarity.</i>	ENGLISH 3303 The Grammatical Structure of English TCH COM 3580 Business Communication
Relationship with AI	<i>Treating AI as a tool to interrogate and converse with—not an authority to defer to or a surrogate thinker.</i>	ENGLISH 3304 Language in Society TCH COM 3590 Game Studies
Prompt Engineering	<i>Crafting rhetorically precise prompts that reflect audience awareness, purpose, constraints, and ethical intent.</i>	SP&M S 3275 Foundations of Media Communication TCH COM 4410 Theory and Practice of Tech Com
Lateral Reading	<i>Verifying AI-generated claims by consulting multiple credible sources rather than relying on a single fluent response.</i>	ENGLISH 1120 Exposition & Argumentation ENGLISH 1160 Writing & Research