

Writing Spaces

Assignments & Activities Archive

GenAI Assignments for Critical Digital Literacy

Aurora Matzke & Angela Clark-Oates

This assignment is a selection from the *Writing Spaces* Assignment and Activity Archive, an open access companion resource to the *Writing Spaces* open textbook series.

To access additional selections, visit: <http://writingspaces.org/aaa>.

Assignment and activity selections © 2026 by the respective authors. Unless otherwise stated, these works are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) and are subject to the *Writing Spaces* Terms of Use.

To view a copy of this license, visit

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>, email info@creativecommons.org, or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA. To view the *Writing Spaces* Terms of Use, visit <http://writingspaces.org/terms-of-use>.

All rights reserved. For permission to reprint, please contact the author(s) of the individual articles, who are the respective copyright owners.

GenAI Assignments for Critical Digital Literacy

Aurora Matzke & Angela Clark-Oates

Overview

This assignment is about slowing down the composing process at the beginning, middle, and end of any given assignment to provide students the opportunity to critically examine the technologies they use/d to mediate the composing and designing of texts. Specifically, this assignment asks students to center the concept of consent during critical examination/reflection. To facilitate this reflection, faculty will provide students with a consent framework developed through the work of Varon and Peña that will aid in how students define and understand consent as well as how they apply this understanding through critical reflection. In using the framework to think deliberately about the constraints and affordances of technologies, students are encouraged to understand what is gained and lost when we create with (or refuse) differing technologies. It is especially useful for discussions in and around GenAI but can be used to interrogate the use of any technological tool available and supported pedagogically (presentation software, composition editing programs, synchronous video software, etc.) because all of these technologies have implications beyond the composing process (e.g., privacy, data mining, environmental consequences). When instructors provide guidance about these implications and center student consent, students build critical digital literacy more broadly. By using the framework, students are specifically encouraged to contemplate the concept of consent as more than an individual act, to contemplate the ethical, political, social, economic, personal, and communal costs and affordances of consent. This assignment is highly adaptable and can be utilized in introductory writing settings; advanced writing,

rhetorical, or digital courses; or classes focused on teacher-training and pedagogical development. The assignment can also be completed multiple times and is especially useful for prolonged or active reflection that is returned to pre and post course assignment completion.

Time Commitment

Minimum of 50 minutes to a maximum of several class sessions

This assignment is best embedded throughout one writing unit (pre, during, and post)

Materials

Students will need access to the consent framework. They will also need access to or be pointed toward resources that assist them in understanding the makeup and potential “costs” of the technologies utilized. This may come in the form of ecological impact, social/emotional reports, hard and software component breakdowns, industry examples, and usage reports.

Assignment or Activity Process

- Students are introduced to the consent framework (see Appendix A).
- Students create a listing of the technologies they understand as necessary to complete an assignment from their past, their present, or their future. This could be an assignment recently completed for the current class or any other, or an assignment they will soon complete.
- Students are directed to resources that discuss the costs of the technological consent or material consequences of particular technologies.

- Students then use their listings to interrogate the affordances and drawbacks of these technologies utilizing the Critical Digital Literacy Definitions and Framework (see Appendix A).
- Students then discuss/write alone or with partners which of these affordances/drawbacks they knowingly and purposefully consent to in their usage of the given technologies.
- This sequence is repeated before, during, and after the assignment to allow for further reflection and attention to consent's role in critical digital literacy practice.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity/assignment will:

- Develop a more ethically grounded stance in the use, production, distribution, and or refusal of technologies in regard to consent and educational spaces.
- Reflect on personal and communal assumptions and constraints in regard to developing technologies and consent.
- Interrogate technological infrastructures, including the ways in which educational spaces do or do not support broader social, political, practical, individual, and/or communal aims.

Learning Accommodations

- Students may ask for extended time and/or the option to complete at home, in order to reduce cognitive load and increase reflective time.
- Material should be presented in multiple formats to include

in-person instruction and asynchronous, digital delivery.

- Materials should be distributed ahead of time, to decrease cognitive load and increase reflective time.
- Students may work in pairs or alone in order to decrease workload and increase attention to a more limited set of questions.
- Students may be given the option to choose roles in relation to the assignment (e.g. note-taker, question-asker, conversation facilitator) to focus attention and decrease cognitive load.

Appendix A

Critical Literacy Framework

Instructions: Download table and adjust accordingly. During assignment design and reflection, Return as many times as is useful to take notes on the various frames influencing assignment creation, completion, or revision using the worksheet.

Category	Definition	Notes
Ethical	Address how humans belong to complex ecologies requiring attention	
Communal	Address practice, politics, and ethics as having consequences beyond the individual	
Practical	Acknowledge the embodied nature of the research and practice in particular contexts	
Political	Pay attention to and attempt to account for inequities and inequalities	
Individualistic	Consider autonomy within the system(s)	
[Other]		

Worksheet developed with assistance from Angela Laflen

Further Reading

- Bishop, Emily. "Critical Literacy: Bringing Theory to Praxis." *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, edited by [Editor(s) if known], Routledge, 2023, pp. 385–396.
- Burriss, Sara K., and Kevin Leander. "Critical Posthumanist Literacy: Building Theory for Reading, Writing, and Living Ethically with Everyday Artificial Intelligence." *Reading Research Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2024, pp. 560–569.
- Hutchinson, Les, and Maria Novotny. "Teaching a Critical Digital Literacy of Wearables: A Feminist Surveillance as Care Pedagogy." *Computers and Composition*, vol. 50, 2018, pp. 105–120, doi:10.1016/j.compcom.2018.07.006.
- Kalantzis, Mary, and Bill Cope. "Literacy in the Time of Artificial Intelligence." *Reading Research Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2025, article e591.
- Morrell, Ernest. *Becoming Critical Researchers: Literacy and Empowerment for Urban Youth*. Vol. 227, Peter Lang, 2004.
- Varon, Joana, and Paola Peña. "Artificial Intelligence and Consent: A Feminist Anti-Colonial Critique." *Internet Policy Review*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2021, pp. 1–25.