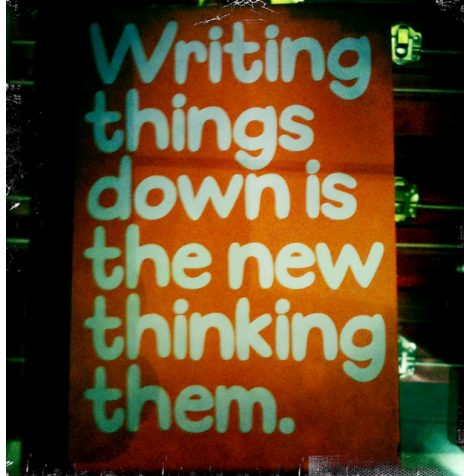# IDH 3931, Un(Common) Writes: Prompt & Circumstance

Section UW06 / Course# 26494 / This is an honor's course: Spring 2025
Wednesdays, 4th period (10:40 am - 11:30 am), LIT 119

- Instructor: Mickey S Schafer, PhD / 2215D Turlington Hall / msscha@ufl.edu /
  846-1138 / or via Canvas Inbox (which guarantees attention!)
- Office Hours: Mondays, 4th - 5th (10:40 am - 12:40 pm) and by appointment

Ethan Mollick of "co-intelligence" and "One Useful Thing" fame claims that to make AI/LLMs work **for** you, you must learn how to help them work **with** you. The key is prompting — using the right set of instructions so the program understands what you want it to do (a.k.a., "prompt engineering"). Mollick recommends spending time **each day** using AI (at least 10 minutes) in various ways until you become comfortable with what LLMs can and cannot seem to do for/with you. He also advises choosing **one big thing** that you'd like AI/LLMs to accomplish.

In the interests of transparency, **I am NOT an expert in AI**. Like you, I'm learning how to use this new technology tool and struggling to find the time to do so effectively. In the spirit of curiosity and experimentation, this class aims to spend a semester using UF's suite of LLMs to write prompts and accomplish writing (or writing-adjacent) tasks. We'll collectively create a toolkit of inquiries to effectively direct our co-intellects to accomplish at least one useful thing! In doing so, we'll discover how to use LLMs to do work that is valuable, effective, and ethical.

Texts and Technologies

There is no required textbook for this class. There are required readings, about one article per week during the first half of the semester, which will be supplied in Canvas. Articles are meant to help you do the writing work!

Please bring an internet-capable device to each class. The device should be able to access LLMs, Canvas, and to write in class.

Per UF policy, using Canvas is required in this class. IDH 3931 adheres to the UF Student Computing Requirements.
Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of class, students will be able to:
- (Content) explain the difference between LLMs and human discourse.
- (Critical Thinking) analyze LLM output in terms of value, efficacy, and appropriateness.
- (Communication) write LLM prompts and explain them to others.

Assignments
- Readings – 25%
  - Be prepared to use for class discussion
- Project Notebooks – 50%
  - The majority of work for the class takes place in project notebooks which you will use to record, explain, and speculate on your LLM experiences.
  - There will be a combination of in-class and out-of-class PN entries
  - Some entries are instructor provided and some will be student choice
  - We will use the Canvas Discussion Function for these assignments – each student will have a personal notebook (you'll be in a discussion group of 1)
- Final Project: One Useful Thing – 25%
  - About halfway through the semester, each student will choose a task for the LLM to perform. I will be doing this, too! Students will explain the task itself, the motivation for this task, how they accomplished it, and how they might continue using it.

Grading

This course follows [UF grades and grading policies](). This class will use the UF recommended grading scale.

A	100 %	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 %	to 64.0%

D-	< 64.0 %	to 60.0%
F	< 60.0 %	to 0.0%

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Class only meets once a week, so attendance is important. Grades will drop by one letter grade for every 3 absences, starting the second week of class.

Only those absences due to university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, religious holidays, quarantine, illness, or serious family emergencies will be exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor **prior** to the date that will be missed. For absences due to quarantine or illness, your instructor may require a signed doctor's note.

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this class are consistent with university policies that can be found at https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Please note: If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a scheduled event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

Tardiness: If students enter class after roll has been taken, they are late, which disrupts the entire class. Two instances of tardiness count as one absence.

Class Recording Policy

The State of Florida has passed a law regarding the recording of classes by students.

- A Student may record a **class lecture** for three specified purposes as outlined in House Bill 233/Section 1004.097, Florida Statutes:

    1. For the student's own personal educational use;

2. In connection with a complaint to the University where the recording is made

3. As evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding.

- Students may audio or video record a class lecture for a class in which the student is enrolled. Students do not need advance permission, or to provide notice, to record.
- A class lecture is defined as an educational presentation delivered by faculty (instructor of record) or guest lecturer, as part of a University of Florida course, intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. Lecture is inclusive of faculty-led discussions that are integrated into the educational presentation.
- A class lecture **does not** include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, **academic exercises involving student participation**, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.
- A recording of a class lecture may not be published without the consent of the lecturer.
  - **Publish** is defined as sharing, transmitting, circulating, distributing, or providing access to a Recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section.
  - A recording, or transcript of the recording, is considered to be published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper or leaflet.
- A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Classroom Demeanor

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write may engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

In-Class Work

Active participation is a crucial part of success in this class. Students will be expected to work in small groups and participate in group discussions, writing workshops, peer reviews, and other in-class activities. Be prepared for unannounced quizzes or activities on the readings or classroom discussion. In general, students are expected to contribute constructively to each class session.

ACADEMIC HONESTY and PLAGIARISM

As a University of Florida student, your performance is governed by the UF Student Honor Code, As a University of Florida student, your performance is governed by the UF Student Honor Code, (https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx). The Honor Code requires Florida students to neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in completing all assignments. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, bribery, and misrepresentation, all defined in detail at the above site. The University Writing Program takes plagiarism very seriously and treats instances of plagiarism as dishonesty and as a failure to comply with the scholarly requirements of this course. You commit plagiarism when you present the ideas or words of someone else as your own. If you are unsure if what you are doing is considered academic dishonesty, ask your instructor before turning in an assignment.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

> **Plagiarism.** A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:
>
> 1. **Quoting oral or written materials** including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, **without proper attribution**.
>
> 2. **Submitting a document or assignment** which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment **not authored by the student**.

Cheating is defined as using or attempting to use "unauthorized materials or resources in any academic activity for academic advantage or benefit". Cheating includes use of "entities" to complete work.

Entity	This includes but is not limited to generative artificial intelligence, large language models, content generation bots, or other non-human intelligence or digital tools.

> 1. Using any materials or resources prepared by another person or **Entity** without the other person or Entity's express Consent or without proper attribution to the other person or Entity.
>
> 2. Using any materials or resources, through any medium, which the Faculty has not given express permission to use and that may confer an academic benefit to a Student.

5. Collaborating with another person or **Entity**, through any medium, on any academic activity, when Faculty has expressly prohibited collaboration.

6. Commissioning or seeking to commission another person or **Entity**, with or without compensation, to produce or complete academic work or to impersonate a student in any academic activity.

Instructors may choose if students can use an Entity for class assignments and if so, under what conditions. If you are not sure about the instructor's policy regarding the use of Entities for completing assignments, please ask *before submitting an assignment.*

 Each student's work will be tested for originality against a wide variety of databases by anti-plagiarism sites to which the University subscribes, and negative reports from such sites may constitute proof of plagiarism. Some (but not all!) examples of plagiarism are copying-and-pasting anything from the Internet without proper quotation, citation, or attributive tags, and using work you have previously submitted without permission from the instructor.

If you commit academic dishonesty, the instructor will submit the incident to the Dean of Students Office as an Honor Code violation.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/

NOTIFICATION LETTER FROM THE DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE

Students who experience a family or personal emergency (death in the family, unplanned hospitalization, etc.) may contact the Dean of Students Office and request notification letters be sent to their professors. Students are required to provide faculty members with appropriate documentation to support their absence unless, due to the nature of the issue, the information is provided to and verified by the Dean of Students' Office.

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Students in Distress

For guidance during distressing situations, please contact U Matter We Care or the Dean of Students Office. They can help students navigate resources and academic procedures for personal, medical, and academic issues.

- U Matter We Care: http://umatter.ufl.edu, umatter@ufl.edu, 352-294-2273 (CARE)Dean of Students: https://dso.ufl.edu/, 202 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-1261
- Counseling and Wellness Center: https://counseling.ufl.edu/, 3190 Radio Road, (352) 392-1575
- Field and Fork Pantry: https://fieldandfork.ufl.edu/, located near McCarty B, 352-294-2208
- Student Health Care Center: http://shcc.ufl.edu/, multiple locations, (352) 392-1161
- Aid-a-Gator: https://www.sfa.ufl.edu/aidagator/, S-107 Criser Hall, (352) 392-1275

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. Online only for Fall 2020.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.
- Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519
    - Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
    - Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising

Class Schedule

Readings are due before class on the week they are assigned.

Week One, Jan 15 – The human in the loop
- Readings
    - Aasgaard, "Generative AI vs. Large Language Models: Understanding the differences", Transformers.ai
        - https://transformers.ai/generative-ai-vs-large-language-models-understanding-the-differences/
- Project Notebooks
    - PN 1: Personal history with AI/LLM
    - PN 2: One Useful Thing: Life

Week Two, Jan 22 – All the LLMs (UF's Navigator AI)
- Readings
    - Ethan Mollick, "Thinking like an AI", One Useful Thing
        - https://www.oneusefulthing.org/p/thinking-like-an-ai
- Project Notebooks
    - PN 3: Do you have a fave LLM?
    - PN 4: One Useful Thing: Class

Week Three, Jan 29 – Strategy 1: Hierarchical Approach (multi-level tasks)
- Readings
    - Abbas, How to Implement Prompt Engineering for Optimizing LLM Performance?
        - https://dev.to/hakeem/how-to-implement-prompt-engineering-for-optimizing-llm-performance-bpn
    - Mollick and Mollick, 2023, "Assigning AI: Seven approaches for students with prompts"
        - https://ssrn.com/abstract=4475995
- Project Notebooks
    - PN 5: Fun with Hierarchy
    - PN 6: One Useful Thing: TBD

Week Four, Feb 5 – Strategy 2: Few shot learning (domain specific tasks)

- Readings
  - "In context Learning Guide", PromptHub
    - https://www.prompthub.us/blog/in-context-learning-guide
  - "The Few Shot Prompting Guide", PromptHub
    - https://www.prompthub.us/blog/the-few-shot-prompting-guide
- Project Notebooks
  - PN 7: Fun with Few Shot Learning
  - PN 8: One Useful Thing: TBD

Week Five, Feb 12 – Strategy 3: Chain of Thought Prompting (complex tasks)

- Readings
  - Aasgaard, "Exploring Chain of Thought Prompting: a beginner's guide," Transformers.ai
    - https://transformers.ai/exploring-chain-of-thought-prompting-a-beginners-guide/
  - Pankaj, "Chain of Thought Prompting: Guiding LLMs Step-by-Step"
    - https://medium.com/@pankaj_pandey/chain-of-thought-prompting-guiding-llms-step-by-step-e6eac32d02d8
- Project Notebooks
  - PN 9: Fun with Chain of Thought Prompting
  - PN 10: One Useful Thing: TBD

Week Six, Feb 19 – Valuable Work

- Readings
  - "Prompt Engineering for Content Creation", PromptHub
    - https://www.prompthub.us/blog/prompt-engineering-for-content-creation
- Project Notebooks
  - PN 11: what is valuable content for you?
  - PN 12: One Useful Thing: TBD

Week Seven, Feb 26 – Correct Work

- Readings
  - Eric Hudson, "AI skills that matter, Part 1: Extending the mind," Learning on Purpose
    - https://erichudson.substack.com/p/ai-skills-that-matter-part-1-extending

- Project Notebooks
    - PN 13: fun with extending the mind and lateral thinking
    - PN 14: One Useful Thing: TBD

Week Eight, Mar 5 – Ethical Work

- Readings
    - TBD
- Project Notebooks
    - PN 15: how much is enough to qualify as original work?
    - PN 16: One Useful Thing: TBD

Week Nine, Mar 12

- Readings
    - "Everything you need to do before prompting: Success criteria, test cases, evals", PromptHub
        - https://www.prompthub.us/blog/everything-you-need-to-do-before-prompting-success-criteria-test-cases-evals
- The Final Project
    - FP 1: planning thoughts

Week Ten – Spring Break

Week Eleven, Mar 26

- Readings
    - none
- Project Notebooks
    - FP 2: the plan

Week Twelve, Apr 2

- Readings
    - none
- Project Notebooks
    - FP 3: progress update

Week Thirteen, Apr 9

- Readings
    - none

- Project Notebooks
    - FP 4: progress update

Week Fourteen, Apr 16
- Readings
    - none
- Project Notebooks
    - FP 5: presentation planning

Week Fifteen, Apr 23
- Project Presentations