SKL 175: A.I. Literacy

Fall 2026 — Block 2

Instructor:	Jared McBride	**Time:**	Sec 04: F 1:30–2:20pm Sec 10: W 12:30–1:20pm
Email:	jared.mcbride@svu.edu	**Place:**	Sec 04: ACD 108 Sec 10: ACD 211
Phone:	(480) 695-5627	**Office:**	Magnolia Hall 111

"Character is the aim of true education; and science, history, and literature are but means used to accomplish the desired end. Character is not the result of chance work but of continuous right thinking and right acting. . . . True education seeks, then to make men and women not only good mathematicians, proficient linguists, profound scientists, or brilliant literary lights, but also honest men, combined with virtue, temperance, and brotherly love — men and women who prize truth, justice, wisdom, benevolence, and self-control as the choicest acquisitions of a successful life. . . . It is regrettable, not to say deplorable, that modern education so little emphasizes these fundamental elements of true character. The principal aim of many of our schools and colleges seems to be to give the students purely intellectual attainments and to give but passing regard to the nobler and more necessary development along moral lines."

—David O. McKay
(*Gospel Ideals*, p. 440)

Information for all my students

Student Hours: Student hours are like office hours but they are not in my office. They are held, instead, right next door in the Magnolia Hall conference room (Magnolia Hall 109). They are at these times:

Tuesday and Thursday from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

or by appointment. If you can't make student hours physically but can drop in on Zoom, please let me know before hand. The Zoom link will be https://zoom.us/my/drmcbsvu. Please, feel free to drop in with your questions. No appointment is necessary.

If you have a private matter to discuss, please make an appointment to see me. If it is quick (these things usually are) feel free to come to student hours and we can step into my office.

My tentative weekly schedule is as follows:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 AM	MAT 305		MAT305		MAT305
9:00 AM	MAT 100	MAT221	MAT100	MAT221	MAT100
10:00 AM	MAT 343	MAT221	MAT343	MAT221	MAT343
11:00 AM	MAT 221		MAT221		Forum
12:00 PM	MAT 221	Student Hours	MAT221	Student Hours	
1:00 PM		Student Hours	SKL175*	Student Hours	SKL175*
2:00 PM		Student Hours		Student Hours	SKL175*
3:00 PM		Student Hours	Faculty Meeting	Student Hours	
4:00 PM			Faculty Meeting		

*SKL 175 (A.I. Literacy) meets Block 2 only, Oct 15–Dec 15: Sec 10 W 12:30–1:20, Sec 04 F 1:30–2:20.

Policies Specific to SKL 175: A.I. Literacy

Here is the class in a nutshell. This is a seven-meeting course on how artificial intelligence works, how to use it, and when you should. Everything we do sits under one of three questions: **How does it work?** (Weeks 1–2), **How do I use it?** (Weeks 3–4), and **When should I use it?** (Weeks 5–7). Every week has the same rhythm. **Before class** you complete one short assignment in Canvas — a video, a reading, a form, or a discussion post — that never takes more than about thirty minutes. **In class** we poll, demonstrate, build, and argue; nothing is handed in, and your participation is the grade. **During the week** you attend Forum and check in. The course ends not with an exam but with a **Field Report**: how AI is being used in a field you actually care about.

Meeting Dates: The two sections cover the same material on different days and in different rooms, both in the Academic Center (ACD).

Week	Topic	Sec 04 (Fri, ACD 108)	Sec 10 (Wed, ACD 211)
1	What Is AI?	Fri, Oct 16	Wed, Oct 21
2	Neural Nets and Natural Language	Fri, Oct 23	Wed, Oct 28
3	What Are the Tools?	Fri, Oct 30	Wed, Nov 4
4	Doing! — The Prompting Workshop	Fri, Nov 6	Wed, Nov 11
5	Ethical Considerations	Fri, Nov 13	Wed, Nov 18
6	Work vs. School: Cognitive Surrender	Fri, Nov 20	Wed, Dec 2
7	Field Reports	Fri, Dec 4	Tue, Dec 8

There are no meetings Thanksgiving week. Section 10's last meeting is on *Tuesday*, December 8 — the university's Curricular Wednesday, when Wednesday classes meet.

Required Materials:

- **No textbook.** Every video, article, and leaderboard is linked in Canvas, in the module for the week it is assigned.
- **A device every class meeting.** A laptop is best; a phone will do. Several meetings are hands-on and you will need to reach a chatbot.
- **A free account on at least one AI tool** (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, or similar), logged in before Week 4. Every task in the course is designed to be doable on a free tier; no paid subscription is required.
- **Slido**, our live polling tool. No account is needed, but you must enter your name: anonymous responses cannot be credited to you.

Course Description: An introduction to artificial intelligence for every student. Develops a conceptual understanding of AI systems as statistical programs trained on data; surveys the major tools and the vocabulary needed to talk about them; builds practical skill in prompting and in checking AI output; and examines the environmental, social, and ethical questions these systems raise, with the goal of using them wisely in school, at work, and beyond.

Prerequisites: None. No programming or mathematics background is assumed.

Course Expectations:

- Attend every meeting. There are only seven, each builds on the last, and most of the learning happens in the room — the polls, the demonstrations, the activities. A missed meeting cannot be recreated from the slides.
- Come having done the before-class assignment. Class assumes it; if you have not done it, you will be a spectator instead of a participant.
- Bring your device, and keep your phone away except when we are polling.

- Be willing to be wrong in public. Poll answers are frequently wrong on purpose; being wrong cheaply is how a room learns fast.

Grading Scheme:

Before-Class Work	25%
Participation (7 meetings)	30%
Field Report	25%
Forum Check-Ins (6)	20%
Total	100%

(The percentages guarantee at least the following letter grades.)

A	93%	C+	77%
A-	90%	C	73%
B+	87%	C-	70%
B	83%	D+	67%
B-	80%	D	63%

Before-Class Work (25%): Each week you complete a short assignment before the next meeting begins — a video, a reading, a form, a discussion post, or something similar. The assignments, their instructions, and their due dates are posted in Canvas, in the module for the week they are assigned. Before-class work exists to prepare you for the room, so it is due when class begins. Work submitted late, within one week, earns half credit.

Participation (30%): Each of the seven meetings is worth ten points, entered after class. Nothing is handed in during class — what counts is being there and being in it:

- answering the Slido polls — *answering* counts; being right does not;
- real effort in the activities, with your group and with the room;
- phones away except when we are polling.

Arriving late, or being present in body only, earns partial credit. If you must miss a meeting for an excused reason, tell me *before* class and we will arrange how you make it up.

Forum Check-Ins (20%): Forum is where the university gathers each week to hear someone think out loud about how to live and work well — the same question this course asks about AI — so it counts here. There are six check-ins, one for each of the weeks of Oct 19, Oct 26, Nov 2, Nov 9, Nov 16, Nov 30. For each, go to Forum, take a selfie there (your face and the Forum setting both visible), and upload it to that week's Forum Check-In in Canvas with the speaker's name and one sentence about something they said. Each check-in opens Monday and is due **Saturday at 11:59pm**, and is graded complete/incomplete. The selfie is not about distrust; it is the simplest honest record that you were in the room. If there is no Forum that week, or you are away for an excused reason, tell me before the deadline and the check-in will be excused.

Field Report (25%): In place of a final exam you will report on how AI is being used in a field you care about and what is ethically at stake there.

- **Released:** Week 5. Pick your field that week, not the week before it is due.
- **Submit:** One slide plus 150–250 words of speaker notes ending with your disclosure line, uploaded to Canvas *before* the Week 7 meeting.
- **Present:** Five minutes, in a small group of four or five, at the Week 7 meeting.

If you will miss the Week 7 meeting, contact me in advance; if an emergency keeps you away, contact me within 48 hours to present another way.

Schedule: The topics and before-class assignments for each week are in the separate *Session Schedule* handout and in the weekly modules on Canvas. They are subject to change; changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Course Goals: After completing this course you should be able to:

1. Explain that AI systems are statistical computer programs that have been "trained" on numerical data.
2. Recognize some of the ways natural language is processed into numerical vectors.
3. Converse using the most common terms and tools of AI today.
4. Develop, analyze, and iterate on prompts to generate useful output from an AI system.
5. Identify ethical and societal concerns associated with AI technologies.
6. Apply AI tools responsibly and appropriately in real-world contexts.

Core Learning Goals (CLG): Here is a reminder of the goals SVU has for each graduate. Students completing Southern Virginia's core curriculum are expected to attain the following college-level competencies:

- *Careful Writing:* Students will be able to present arguments in clear written English with proper spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and transitions.
- *Critical Thinking:* Students will be able to separate a conclusion from its premises and evaluate how well the premises support the conclusion.
- *Analytic Reasoning:* Students will be able to evaluate a body of evidence and draw appropriate conclusions.

Core Values: Lastly, Here is a reminder of the values SVU endeavors to foster in each student. Students demonstrate:

- *Scholarship* by coming prepared to class, focusing on activities in class, and meticulously completing homework assignments.
- *Discipleship* by being respectful of others and showing courtesy and concern for others and the learning environment.
- *Accountability* by faithfully attending class and coming on time, coming prepared, being aware of assignments given and completing them on time.
- *Enthusiasm* by participating in class discussions and completing in-class activities, showing interest in cultural material and discussions about mathematics in general.
- *Refinement* by going above and beyond in living the dress and grooming standards, their manner of speech and actions, cleaning up the classroom and following proper classroom etiquette. This includes not using cell phones (texting, etc.) or other electronic devices that may disrupt learning in the class.

Title IX

Southern Virginia University is committed to providing an environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect and is free of all forms of sex discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

Southern Virginia University, in compliance with Title IX, supports the academic success of pregnant students and students with pregnancy-related conditions (pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, lactation, and all related medical conditions or recovery). Students may request reasonable, related modifications from the University by contacting the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@svu.edu.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or

activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title IX applies to all employees and students and covers discrimination in programs, admissions, and activities.

You can report any concerns to the Title IX Coordinator, Nathan Friesema (titleix@svu.edu), your professor, the Wellness Center, or any university administrator. Please be aware that all instructors are mandated reporters, so by law, we must disclose details relayed to us about any possible Title IX infraction to the University's Title IX coordinator.

Accommodations: Southern Virginia University is committed to providing a learning environment that accommodates and supports students with disabilities through accommodations. The Office of Accessibility Services oversees Academic Accommodations. Students with any type of physical, medical, psychological, or emotional disability may be eligible - through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - to receive accommodations to provide equal access to the academic settings. Any student seeking accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility Services by emailing accessibility@svu.edu. Students are advised to take care of the necessary documentation and paperwork early in the semester. Accommodations are not made until the student follows the procedures outlined on the website, (`https://catalog.svu.edu/policies/accessibility-and-accommodations`) receives an official accommodation letter AND discusses it with their professors.

Academic Honesty: Following the code of conduct, (`https://svu.edu/about/faith/code-of-conduct/`), students are expected to "be honest in all things, obey the law and follow university policies, and not cheat, steal, or plagiarize." The objective of every faculty member is to empower students by providing opportunities for learning in the best environment possible. If there are questions about what is honest or dishonest behavior, please speak to your professor. Violations of academic honesty are reported to the Office of the Provost and appeals are handled through the student grievance process.

Wellness: We are located on the second floor of Main Hall, Room 234. We are open from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. To schedule an appointment with a therapist please Call or Text 540-261-8474, email counseling@svu.edu, or stop by in-person. We strive to accommodate same-day appointments for urgent needs whenever possible.

For Mental Health Emergencies After Hours:

Please use any of the following options:

- **Call or text 988** — Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- **1-855-222-2046** — Rockbridge Area Community Services Behavioral Health Hotline
- **540-261-4911** — SVU Campus Security
- **Visit the ER** — Carilion Rockbridge Community Hospital
  1 Health Circle, Lexington, VA 24450
- **Call 911**

AI was used in the development and editing of this document.